

Reminiscing Partition in Constructing Indo-Pak Border in Punjab

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ABSTRACT

The process of state-building and nation-building in the post-colonial states of South Asia have been decisive in determining the nature of the borders and its management. Nation-building involves remembering and even re-writing of history. The nation-states are defined along borders and a common history binds people together. Partition of the Indian sub-continent in 1947 had far reaching consequences for the societies, lives of the people and public policies. The man-made catastrophe and the nature as well as magnitude of violence that accompanied has caused deep scars on the collective memories of the communities on both sides of the border. Living along the borders in Punjab on Indian side depicts a saga of re-living the devastating experience of partition every day. The lives of the people dwelling in the region is structured by historical, ideological, politico-legal and systemic order. The cumulative effect of these factors in this part of the region is that the denizens of the borderland are braving the hardships on the line of fire even during the peacetime. In this context, the present article attempts to examine the historical depiction of partition in determining the nature of Indo-Pak border in Punjab.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the socio-culturally heterogeneous societies of South Asia borders are inherited from their colonial masters. These states have inherited border disputes from their colonial masters tooⁱ. As the post-colonial states of South Asia embarked upon the project of state-building and nation-building the borders and border-disputes got further confounded [1]. The newly emerged states started emphasizing the 'sacrosanct' nature of these borders and strived hard to maintain their inviolability [2]. These are regarded as non-negotiable entities. As a result, we find borders in these states to be typically politicized, militarized and centrally controlled. India has an extensive land border of 15,106 kms. and a coastline of 7516.6 kmsⁱⁱ. Apart from her concerns of nation and state formation, approach towards her borders is determined by the larger politico-strategic canvass of South Asia [4].

Unto recent times the border studies in South Asia restricted to security and defence issues, treating boundaries as 'inert lines' assuming them to be 'zones of control' [5]. But of late there has been a spurt of studies that deal with the issues of development, livelihood, survival and other existential conditions of people living on the 'fringes of the nation'ⁱⁱⁱ. In this way, a human-centric approach to the studies of borderlands has become an acceptable norm. Borderlands are occupied by its inhabitants who are made of flesh and blood with living instincts. Their lives, ordeal with adverse conditions and the challenges to their socio-cultural systems from various quarters cannot be out rightly ignored.

In August 1947 India got independence which followed the creation of Pakistan as a separate state for Muslims of South Asia. Muslim League under the stewardship of Mohammad Ali Jinnah had been demanding the creation of a state of Pakistan constituting the Muslim-majority provinces of British India in the north-west and the eastern part. The demand for a separate state was finally conceded by the British by announcing and implementing the Mountbatten Plan (3rd June 1947). The division of the Indian subcontinent could be realized by partitioning of the two most populated, developed and Muslim-majority British provinces of Punjab in the west and Bengal in the east. The boundaries were decided by a single stroke as per the decisions of one-member Radcliffe Commission, who knew little about India or the provinces he was assigned to partition.^{iv} He gave his award very hastily [6] & [7]. While giving his recommendations the key term of reference that Sir Cyril Radcliffe followed was allocating majority/minority Hindu and/or Muslim districts to India or Pakistan, respectively. The Sikhs constituted a substantial and influential minority in the province of Punjab and demanded that 'other factors', which include the returns of the revenue, their historical role and the location of Sikh shrines, be also taken into consideration. But these considerations did not figure in the Radcliffe award [10]. Indo-Pak border in Punjab and Bengal is thus an implication of partition of the sub-continent that is described by Ayesha Jalal as 'central historical event in twentieth century South Asia' [11].

As far as the Punjab is concerned, Indo-Pak border along it is 503 kms long. It is one of the extremely volatile, politicized and heavily guarded borders in the world. It has been the site of war in the two major wars with Pakistan: in 1965 and in 1971. Forces were also mobilized along this border during Kargil war (1999) and in the aftermath of the terrorist attack on Indian Parliament by Pakistan based terrorist outfit Lashkar-e-Taiba, in

2001. Hence mobilization of army, increased patrolling along borders and strict control on the movements of the individuals is constant features of Indo-Pak borders in Punjab. BSF (Border Security Force) was instituted in 1965 to keep a constant vigil on the borders, even during the peacetime. One finds heavy presence of BSF personnel along the borders in Punjab also. Meanwhile, the people living in the borderbelt suffer from 'acute' developmental problems^{vi}. The region lacks basic amenities, like potable drinking water, educational infrastructure, health facilities, good roads and transportation. There are studies that point towards the paradox of "maximum security and minimum development" in this region [12]. Borders have indeed caused spatial, social and political exclusions for the people living in the borderland.

In 1986, when a militant sub-nationalist movement was at its peak in the state of Punjab, a committee headed by the then Chief Secretary S.L. Kapoor was set up to decide on the electrified barbed wire along the international borders with Pakistan. It was believed that the 'unfaithful neighbor'^{vii} was abetting the insurgents. As Pakistan rangers on the borders resorted to frequent firing in order to hinder the process of putting up the fencing, it was further recommended that barbed wire be erected within 50-100 yards inside the Indian side of the international border. However, the fencing was actually put up inside the Indian territory ranging from 1-2 kilometers from the international borders dividing India and Pakistan. With the erection of fencing as it is at present, a total of 19,775 acres of fertile land fell in-between international border and fencing line [13]. As a result, farmers of the border region have been affected by various problems^{viii}. It may be underlined here that erecting of fences across borders has affected not only the farmers but have hindered the cross-border movements of people across the borderlands. Besides restriction on cross-border terrorism erection of fences was also sought to constrict the movement of the contrabands into the Indian territory. However, incidents of smuggling across borders could not be tamed as was expected. Off and on local newspapers report incidents of cross-border smuggling in the region. To check it, more strictness on the movement of the individuals, particularly of the farmers having land beyond the fencing, is adopted. Besides, during wartime and standoff on any issue between the two countries, the residents are told to vacate their villages. This leads to disruption in their normal lives. Sometimes fields are mined, which further confound their problem [17]. It is also pointed out that it is difficult to find brides from non-border areas for marriageable young men living in the border belt, as it is feared that every time during tensions on border groom along with his extended family may not decide to come and stay at his in-laws place. Above all,

"...it (border) has brutalized the Punjabi composite culture nurtured for a long time since Baba Farid and articulated through the writings of the Sikh Gurus, Waris Shah, Dhani Ram Chatrik and recently by Shiv Kumar Batalvi and Surjit Pattar...Life at the border is full of uncertainty and devoid of charm the Punjabi culture is known for" [18].

2. COSTRUCTING MEMORIES OF PARTITION

In the light of the above and beyond the systemic, sub-systemic and existential realities, this paper attempts to venture into the humanist realms of experiences and memories. The prime objective of this paper is to explore that whether the nature of Indo-Pak border in Punjab is conditioned by the way its *raison d'être* that is the historical event of Partition is remembered? This is in view of the fact that recently, revisionist history of Partition has raised some pertinent issues regarding the way partition, a turning point in the history of South Asia, is remembered or forgotten. We tend to remember things that 'stand out' more, than those that are not as 'salient'. Therefore, what was it that stood out in the 'national memory'^{ix} of Partition, particularly in India? This section of the paper will focus on the dynamics of reminiscence of the Partition.

In the recent times 'memory studies' have emerged as an important area of research in sociology, cultural theories and cultural history. Analytical tools such as "social frameworks of memory" [20], "multidirectionality of memory"^x and "sites of memory"^{xi} prove to be significant in the analysis of 'collective memory' of a given community. These concepts are particularly helpful in dealing with traumatic histories of different societies. Besides, Mnemohistory^{xii} is regarded as a distinct approach to history. Unlike history proper, it is concerned not with the past as such, but only with the past as it is remembered and its later impact. Assmann [21] explains that: Mnemohistory is reception theory applied to history, but "reception" is not to be understood here merely in the narrow sense of transmitting and receiving. The past is not simply "received" by the present. The present is "haunted" by the past and the past is modelled, invented, reinvented, and reconstructed by the present.

Taking cue from these theoretical formulations, we can analyse the historicity of the Partition as well as its representation in the literature. Specifically, this section of the paper deals with how the Partition is remembered and gone down in the annals of the history, in the subcontinent. Gyanendra Pandey [22], speaks of different stages that finally led to the making of the Partition of 1947. Hence the first phase of the Partition begins and advances with the demand for a separate state for the Muslims of Indian subcontinent by the Muslim League. This demand found particular support among the urban educated youth. However, the 'idea of Pakistan' in this phase remained vague. In the initial months of 1947, it became evident that freedom can be attained only after the Muslim-majority Bengal and Punjab get divided. As the things unfolded, partitioning of the provinces was accepted in principle by the Congress leaders as well as non-Congress minority leaders in both the provinces. Though there was uncertainty

about 'how' these provinces will actually be divided^{xiii}. This phase was marked by prevailing sense of insecurity among the minority communities, aggressive postures taken by them, retaliation by the members of the majority community, violent eruptions and inter-communal strives. Once there was official announcement of the boundaries on *August 17, 1947*, i.e. two days *after* India got independence, large scale migrations of communities across them to the sides they 'belong', were witnessed. The people were *forced* to migrate by the colossal violence in the North Western part of the country. It is believed that neither the religion nor the politics but the feelings of insecurity made most of the common people choose India or Pakistan. According to Khan [25]:

"Even by the standards of the violent twentieth century, the Partition of India is remembered for its carnage, both for its scale....and for its seemingly indiscriminate callousness...It seems that the aim was not to kill, but to break people".

Indeed Partition was "...marked by extraordinary uncertainty..." [26] with regards to the ground implications of the partition, mutual relations between India and Pakistan and above all the fate of the people of different communities on the *wrong side of the dividing line*^{xiv}. It was only during 1947-48 that there was a "...gradual realization that *this tearing apart was permanent* (emphasis mine) - and that it necessitated new borders, communities, identities and histories" [27].

This vagueness was accompanied by a mayhem and violence of an unprecedented magnitude in the history of mankind.

"...It is believed that several hundred thousand people, estimated to be in between 200,000 to 500,000, were killed, innumerable women raped and abducted and millions, in all probability about 15 million, were uprooted, rendered homeless, lost all their immovable property and most of their movable assets, separated from many of their relatives and friends as well, torn asunder from their moorings, from their houses, fields and fortunes, from their childhood memories. Thus stripped of their local or regional cultures, they were forced to begin picking up their life from scratch [28].

However, in the post-independence period in India, the violence relating to the last phase of uncertainty and its accounts, have been *remembered* in a way that a nationalized community is *constructed* [28]. If we look at the mainstream historical accounts of the event in India, we find that this historical juncture of events has been overshadowed by the grand account of the independence movement. Partition is explained as culmination of communal politics which was a derivative of the freedom struggle. Once India attained independence she adopted a 'secular' constitution for her multi-religious, multi-cultural and multi-linguistic society. As the newly-independent country embarked upon the twin-project of nation-building and state-building, it had to determine its 'national identity' in terms of defining 'us and they'. It was upheld that *we* as a civilization always espouse the idea of 'unity among diversity' [28]. In this context, it was necessary for the new nation to *forget* the trauma of the Partition [28]. History of Partition was thus reduced to its causes and origins while "...representing the violence as a part not of this, but of some other history: an alien people or nation's doing" [30]. The accounts of violence are best described. Violence is 'localized in space' and it is not seen as a part of the national history [23]. On the contrary, as Saadat Hassa Manto figures out, the tragedy of Partition was not that there were now two countries instead of one but the realization that "human beings in both countries were slaves, slaves of bigotry. . . slaves of religious passions, slaves of animal instincts and barbarity" [11]. It is this aspect of the Partition that is conspicuously underrepresented in the national narrative and is taken up by the new histories^{xv}.

Indeed a lot of efforts into *re-constructing* the event through creative writing, by writers, journalists and biographers on both the sides of the divide, has gone down to bring out some of the finest. Where the historians were busy in presenting data and the facts behind this event, literature represented the enormity of the event. It transcended the borders and the agendas of nation-building and became the voice of the subalterns. Moreover, one discerns an insurmountable commitment of the Partition Literature to humanity [31]. Writers like, Krishan Chandar, Rajindar Singh Bedi, S.H. Manto, Ismat Chughtai, Qurratulain Hyder, YashPal, Bhisham Sahni, Rahi Masoom Raza, Kamaleshwar, Badi-uz-Zaman, Khushwant Singh, Amrita Preetam, etc., have created some fictional works of enduring value. They have reflected on different aspects of the holocaust of the Partition, about the tragedy of those who really fought for the unity of the country, culture and the identity crisis particularly, in the wake of displacement and migration [32]. The writers of this age had personal experience of the ground reality as this was the generation which had lived through the trauma of partition. To sum up:

The Partition Literature gives us a *complete picture of the Partition* (emphasis mine). The social, religious, and political conditions of the pre-Partitioned times; the harmony that existed then; the composite culture that emerged as a result of living together for a thousand years; the beginning and growth of communal differences; the widespread violence and suffering; the abduction of women; the break-up of families; the separation of relatives, friends, communities and regions; the migration and dislocation of people; the refugee problem; the feelings of alienation; the nostalgia; the question of identity; the rehabilitation of the displaced people; the impact of the Partition on the people; the continued feelings of suspicion and hatred between the two nations; etc., have all been represented in different forms of literature. Thus, literature signifies the synthesis of

the two nations. It always has the effect of unity, strength, and humanity; and not suspicion, division, and destruction [34].

From the above discussion, it can be inferred that regarding partition there are two conspicuously distinct discourses. One is concerned with the 'historical' aspect, which is implicated also by a specific political project, whereas the other one relates to the humanist and subaltern perspectives. The former is concerned with the construction of a community with a 'collective memory' save partition, which is believed to be not *our* past. On the contrary, the latter refers not only to the horrendous degree of violence, but expresses the "diasporic" vulnerabilities of the people who had to leave behind their hearth and homes for their lives. The creative writers have upheld humanism and the composite culture of the subcontinent [35]. The literary work on the partition affirms that the subject of the partition was first the human being- not the Hindu, nor the Muslim, nor the Sikh [22]. In fact they have tried to search for "meaning and healing" [22]. Meanwhile it is argued that there has been a continuous change in the focus of Partition literature, with the intervening years.

Hence: "in the first phase of response to Partition, writers concentrated on the depiction of overwhelming violence; in the next phase, they gave space to reconstruction as well as loss; and in the third phase, some writers such as Amitav Ghosh have concentrated on cosmopolitan modes of diasporic existence and tried to bridge the boundaries of national, cultural, and religious differences" [36].

According to Kavita Daiya [37], along with the literary works on Partition, oral testimonies of Partition survivors and witnesses have also contributed in the 'revisionist' history on partition. These testimonies have indeed made "audible the silences in the histories and memories of Partition" [37]. Guneeta Bhalla, a researcher based in Berkeley, California founded 'The Partition Archive' in 2011. The archive claims to have documented about 5,000 oral histories of Partition. Interestingly, in 2016, a partition archive was set up in the city of Amritsar (Punjab, India), after almost 70 years of independence. The homepage of the website of the museum states:

"Unlike most Museums that start with a private or government collection, the Partition Museum started only with the resolve to build this collection as a collective effort from hundreds of Partition-affected families."

It further highlights the mission of the Trustees^{xvi} as "...continued quest to document and remember the history of the millions impacted at the time of the Partition". Rajmohan Gandhi [22] has devoted a whole chapter entitled "1947: Insaniyat Amidst Insanity", depicting the untold stories of life-saving acts of ordinary Punjabis, who protected the helpless members of the susceptible communities in their villages and towns. These accounts signify that "enmity between non-Muslim and Muslim was not the Punjabi norm" [38]. Based on interviews and eye-witness accounts by the author himself^{xvii}, he confirms that though there were substantial numbers of such partition stories, but this 'insaniyat' (humanist) aspect of the partition has been under-reported in the historical accounts. Shamsul Islam [39] has also narrated a number of instances, where 'sane voices' prevailed over 'total madness'. His work highlights the role of "patriotic Muslims" who unfailingly stood for a united India. The author states:

"...both India and Pakistan seem to have *forgotten* (emphasis mine) the heroes of Punjab whose conduct during the horrific Partition violence remains a lesson to us on what it means to be human...Religion-based nationalism played havoc with an old civilization. Victims crossed the new borders and those who suffered had no role in the decision of Partition...Further compounding the tragedy was that the guilty of Partition-those who raised the banner of two-nation theory or those who succumbed to the theory ...were also destined to rule on both sides of the new border" [40].

There are different narratives on partition, in which certain aspects are remembered and some others are forgotten or underrepresented, which have definitely shaped the national, political, communal and cultural discourse in the partition-affected countries of the sub-continent. It has caused not only the marginalisation of the people in the borderlands^{xviii}, but has caused many partitions with regards to the consistent and persistent minority problems in all the three countries, viz. India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, created by the Great divide. It has certainly, shaped also the ways the borders between these post-colonial and post-partitioned states, have been constructed and managed.

3. RELIVING PARTITION ALONG INDO-PAK BORDER IN PUNJAB

Once the religion based two-nation theory triumphed in carving out two 'independent states' with demarcated territories and respective citizenry, it was 'geographical' borders rather than 'religion' that determined the identity of the nationals on both the sides. India, which immediately after independence, was readily receiving the Hindu and Sikh 'refugees', tended to check and discourage the returning of the Muslim migrants back to India. For this the Indian government introduced a permit system in 1948. This was later replaced by a passport system introduced by the Pakistani government in 1952 to control influx of Muslims migrating from United Provinces and from other Urdu speaking areas on the Indian side. Even though these systems were initially developed to control and restrict the movement across the India-Pakistan border, they eventually became means of defining citizenship of the migrant population on both the sides (Moatasim, 2010). Soon these geographical borders metamorphosed into 'national' borders and percolated down to the identity structures, while creating 'us' and 'they'

syndrome. Meanwhile, in the post-independence period instances of recurring tensions in the societies of the nations carved out of the divisions of the sub-continent, indicate that Partition was not yet over. India has a relatively weak secular structure. Thus in her quest for forging a homogeneous national identity, there were certain identities that remained on the fringes. In this context, communal overture by ardent supporters of 'cultural nationalism' of the majority community often find references like whosoever in the minority community, particularly Muslims finds problem with 'nationalism' as projected by the former and views it as intolerant should "go to Pakistan". Instances of violence against minority communities^{xix} in the post-independence period also remind of religious bigotry and partition violence. In the case of Muslim minority, "misunderstanding of the history" further compounds the problem. This is so:

"Because some teach the notion that all Muslims sided with the Muslim league, others also teach that Muslims to this day remain threat to the state. The notion that all Muslims are actual or potential traitors has been allowed to foster[45]"

As partition historians have failed to acknowledge the contribution of 'patriotic' Muslims who opposed the idea of Pakistan, in the post-independence period, they have rather become more vulnerable. Moot point is that the way Partition is remembered as an inevitable moment following the communal politics of Muslim League, which suddenly rose to popularity and power in the post-war period has deepened the faultlines within the 'nation'. Dr. Rajendra Chenni [46] has aptly brought home the point that:

"Remembering does not mean remembering only the numbers of deaths and dislocations. But the memories of the partition should become a part of our moral awakening, political awareness, and collective consciousness. If a society/community does not make the most distorted, massive, and shocking event of its history a part of its memory and imagination and does not understand the ABC of it, the society/community will lose its ability to face the same kind of violence when repeated. We will become weak against the forces which exhibit the violence in Gujarat as an act of bravery. These forces do not have memories. Therefore, there is no question of atonement. That is why, we find speeches like, 'We will build another Babri Masjid' and 'We will once again build Ayodhya' in their language. There are only desires of 'another' and 'once again' and nothing else. But for the human beings, in the real sense, these 'another' and 'once again' should not be there is a kind of moral code. This should not have happened' is the mature reaction of the human beings about the historical tragedy."

On the fringes of geographical and politico-national borders lies the state of Punjab in India, which happens to be a Sikh-majority state. Sikhs constitute national minority. Partition, indeed has happened in the most anomalous way, as the boundary line between east and west Punjab divides a single organic whole, a unit which was geographically contiguous and culturally a repository of a larger Punjabi identity. Punjab, in Persian, literally means "land of five rivers". Clearly, the Indian Punjab and Pakistani Punjab constituted a geographical entity, in pre-1947 era that constituted of land between rivers Ravi, Sutlej, Chenab, Jhelum and Beas. It was ecologically divided into six zones, viz., the central Punjab, the sub-mountainous districts, the northern districts, the southern districts, the western districts and the canal colonies. The central Punjab that ran from the Jhelum in the north to a little beyond Sutlej in the South constituted of Gujrat, Gujranwala, Lahore, Amritsar, Jullundur, Ludhiana and Ferozepur. Historically, this particular zone was "the core"^{xx} during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Sikh ruler in the nineteenth century [47]. Even under the British rule, this region remained home to hectic trade and commerce related activities as well as center of incipient industry in the region; though agriculture remained to be the prime economic activity of the people in the region. However, this single geographical entity was partitioned in 1947 and "the core" and "principal cities" were converted into "frontier towns" [47]. Eastern Punjab, after its linguistic reorganization (1966), is just one-seventh the size of the undivided Punjab [22].

In Punjab people of borderland are living with these unnatural^{xxi} borders. As mentioned earlier, they are confronting national and regional security issues as well as problems of existence and development. There have been demands by the people of the border area that they may be allowed to avail the health, education and other facilities from across the borders as that is at a lesser distance to travel [48]. Apart from this, the Sikhs, who constitute the majority in the Indian Punjab have some of their key shrines on the Pakistani soil. These include, Gurudwara Nankana Sahib, Panja Sahib and Kartarpur Sahib. Kartarpur Sahib is located in Narowal district of Pakistan, which is barely 2 kms from Dera Baba Nanak, a small town in Gurdaspur district in India. Sikh people and organizations have been insisting that a corridor be built from Dera Baba Nanak to Kartarpur, through which people could even walk to their destination and come back the same day [50]. In an interesting study, Surinder Singh [51] has cited the examples of the shrines of the *pirs*^{xxii} located near to the zero line on the Indian side of the borders along Fazilka^{xxiii} and Ferozepur^{xxiv} in Punjab, which are venerated by both East and West Punjabis. In the fairs organised at these shrines people across the border celebrate the syncretic traditions of Punjabin as they participate in the fair, intermingle with each other and play sports. Before the fences were erected, these fairs provided with an opportunity for the divided fraternity to meet with their friends and relatives across the boundaries. Though the security forces remained vigilant and supervised the whole affair, they allowed the people from Pakistani side to enter the Indian side without any visa formalities. Though the erection of fences have restricted the movement of the people, they defy the territorial boundaries and pay obeisance and seek blessings

from their deities while standing on their side of the border. People have been demanding that these shrines should be developed and promoted as a tourist destination like Wagah^{xxv} and Hussainiwala checkpost. Here it needs to be underlined that these voices are feeble and are subdued under the larger 'national security' concerns. Just like there is a striking *silence* in the mainstream history about Partition as experienced by the people, under the overarching influence of the project of nation-building, borders have been viewed in the context of defence and strategic concerns of a nation-state in making, rather than from the people-centric view.

The hardened policies towards borders were particularly witnessed after Sino-Indian war of 1962 as well as the subsequent Indo-Pak wars in 1965 and 1971. In fact, until these hostilities,

"Punjabis who had crossed the border in 1947 re-crossed it two or three years later for a brief glimpse of their home, village or town. Others managed to keep in touch with former neighbours. The postal service informed old friends of the loss felt after separation and conveyed remembrances... When in 1955, Pakistan announced that East Punjabis were welcome to witness a cricket match in Lahore, thousands of Sikhs and Hindus went across. It was difficult to say who was more moved when they met, the 'Indian' Punjabi or his old friend the 'Pakistani' Punjabi [52].

But as the bilateral relations between the two countries took a new low, the people to people contact were blocked thereafter [52]. These unnatural borders symbolise the agony caused by the slaughter of the *Punjabiya* and its past glory, at the hands of religious bigotry.

"The destruction caused by Partition was much more than that of lives and property. The later generations were also to lose their cultural and linguistic moorings" [49].

"But the present's demands and the present's controversies, which are dissimilar in the two Punjabs, have elbowed out recollections of history... During times of tension or conflict between India and Pakistan, ugly memories are recalled, and patriotic rhetoric seems to trump *Punjabiya*. When better times return, poets, musicians and artists from both sides of the border come together, find that *Punjabiya* is alive, and breathe fresh energy into it [54]".

As far as people to people contact and initiatives from the civil society is concerned, efforts have been few but worth noting. Hence, Hind-Pak Dosti Manch, which involve renowned human rights activists in both the countries have been working to promote friendship between the two countries. It has been a ritual to light candles on Wagah check post in the midnight between 14th and 15th August to commemorate the independence days of Pakistan and India, respectively. Various cultural forums and organizations like Punarjyot, Saanjh, etc. have been active in mutual cultural visits and exchanges.

As a matter of fact the people who live on the borderlands are still undergoing the pangs of partition. Post-partition Punjab is dominated by a queer and extreme duality of nationalism and *punjabiya*, of volatility and sublimity, both at a time. This has been the uncomfortable reality of the existence of people living on the borders also. It is conspicuous, paramount and much intense here. All the more, the denizens of borderlands have to live with it every day. This duality is also reflected in the way Partition is remembered in the country and the Punjab, on the Indian side of the border. The way it is remembered, Partition represents a permanent divide in terms of us and they. All the emotions and passions as aroused by the reminiscence of Partition is directed towards precipitating this division. Erecting fences and fomenting hatred along borders points towards *forgetting* the Partition and ensuing loss of life, property and humanity as a whole. People had not opted for or decided for this great divide in 1947, but had to pay a huge price for it. Similar conditions continue to exist on the borderlands where people on the fringes, geographical and political, have no choice, even now, about the lives they are living. They continue to exist in a state of deprivation, dispossession, dilemma, insecurity and uncertainty. It is high time that in order to make lives worth living on borders, whatever common of *Punjabiya* in the two entirely different Punjabs is left namely, language, culture literature, syncretic popular religion or even trade needs to be preserved and promoted. After the 'walls' have been erected it is pertinent to revisit the event in its right perspective and find ways to mend them as, "Good fences make good neighbours" [55].

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