

The **Partition of India** was the process of dividing the subcontinent along sectarian lines, which took place in 1947 as India gained its independence from the British Raj. The northern, predominantly Muslim sections of India became the nation of Pakistan, while the southern and majority Hindu section became the Republic of India. (thoughtco.com)



Before we begin reading Jhumpa Lahiri's stories in *Interpreter of Maladies*, it is useful to understand some of India's geopolitical history and related terminology. **Partition**, in particular, is especially prominent in some of her stories and is a very significant historical event that still impacts Indian culture and citizens today. In Lahiri's stories, **partition** serves both as a plot point as well as a metaphor for some of the characters, their relationships, and their inner turmoil.

To more understand **partition** in more depth, please:

1. Take **very basic notes** on the following terms **as they relate to the Indian Partition.**
2. Read and annotate the opinion piece "Partition is Not Cricket" by Rahul Singh. (Side 2)

Key Places

Dacca

East Bengal

The Princely State of Kashmir

Punjab

Dhaka

East Pakistan

Bangladesh

Lahore

Key Dates

August 16, 1946

August 14, 1947

August 15, 1947

January 30, 1948

1958

1971

Key People / Groups of People

Mohammed Ali Jinnah

British Raj

Lord Louis Mountbatten

Jawaharlal Nehru

Cyril Radcliffe

Clement Atlee

The Muslim League

Hindus

Muslims

Sikhs

Key Events & Movements

"Direct Action Day"

"Quit India"

Partition is Not Cricket

By Rahul Singh, International Herald Tribune
April 14, 2004

I was brought up in Lahore, in what was undivided India. Then in 1947, when I was 7, came Partition, the name Pakistanis and Indians give to the division by the British colonial rulers of the Indian subcontinent into India and Pakistan. The birth of the two countries was accompanied by horrific, numbing violence, as Hindus and Sikhs fled areas that were designated to become Pakistan and Muslims abandoned their homes in India.

Partition left a legacy of hate and mistrust that was partly responsible for the three wars India and Pakistan fought against each other (the last one, in 1971, leading to the division of Pakistan and the formation of Bangladesh). As a result, there has been little cross-border mingling by Indians and Pakistanis, even though they have so much in common. The politicians and bureaucrats on both sides have made it extremely difficult for Indians to travel to Pakistan and vice versa.

Then, a few months ago, something miraculous happened. To cheer the reaction of the Pakistanis was the most touching. They cheered the Indian players, waved Indian flags and even had the flag painted on their faces.

Their message was clear: they wanted Indians and Pakistanis to be friends, to resume the ties so cruelly shattered almost six decades ago. This was a new generation of Pakistanis, born after 1947, without the bitter baggage of the Partition. I hope that Indian and Pakistani politicians and bureaucrats, many of them still frozen in antagonistic stereotypes, have taken note.

In Lahore, one of my teammates, Ram Khanna, took me along to visit the widow of a legendary Pakistani tennis player, Iftikar Ahmed, who had been his close friend and playing partner before Partition. Ram and Iftikar's widow had not met since Partition. As soon as she saw Ram, she started weeping. Ram, too, could not hold back his tears. They sat there holding hands, saying nothing, letting the tears say it all. I am sure similar moving scenes must have been taking place — and will continue to take place — as Indians met old and dear friends separated so tragically and suddenly by a quirk of history.

Table tennis diplomacy once led to a breakthrough in Chinese-U.S. relations. Cricket diplomacy has done even more for Indian-Pakistani ties. It has brought the peoples of the two countries together in a manner that was inconceivable only a year ago. The politicians must now take the cue.



Rahul Singh is former editor of The Indian Express, a daily in New Delhi.