

[Digital Dharma: History](#)

Category : [January/February/March 2014](#)

Published by dharmalingam on Dec. 14, 2013

DIGITAL DHARMA



By Madhuri Shekhar, Los Angeles

HISTORY

The 1947 India Partition Project

WHEN INDIA GAINED INDEPENDENCE from the British Raj in August of 1947, one of the most difficult chapters of the country's recent history ensued. The partition of India and Pakistan led to a period of unimaginable violence and bloodshed. Over 10 million people were uprooted as families fled their ancestral homes—Hindus and Sikhs fleeing Pakistan, and Muslims exiting India—in one of humanity's largest forced migrations. Even today the death toll is unknown. Estimates range anywhere from 250,000 to 2 million—with the number of abductions, attacks, rapes and other brutalities far, far higher. History's few comparable tragedies, such as Rwanda in 1994 and the Holocaust in World War II, are well documented and taught in schools; but most people have only a vague sense of the horrific

events of the Partition.

A project launched by research physicist Guneeta Singh Bhalla attempts to illuminate this dark corner of human history. Having heard many stories of the Partition from her grandmother, Bhalla felt compelled to make such accounts known before the survivors have all passed on. The 1947 Partition Archive is an oral history narrated by the calamity's survivors in a series of personal interviews.



SHOLAYEVENTS.COM

Recording memories: Volunteers interview a man about his experiences during the Partition.

• • • • •

Project members interview survivors and their family members, neighbors, friends and acquaintances, asking them to share what they witnessed. Many have rarely talked about it before. These interviews can be overpowering, as survivors recount

the terrible carnage they witnessed. They recall their shock and confusion as lifelong friends and neighbors suddenly turned against one another. But with every story of terror, there are moments of hope and courage. Survivor Ravi Chopra, for instance, tells how his family survived their journey from Pakistan to India only because a Muslim man concealed them when a bloodthirsty mob boarded their train.

These videos also serve as a testament to the strength, dignity and grace of the survivors. Interviewee Shane Ali recounts the awful story of his family's being killed in front of him. But his testament ends with a powerful message: "For me to forgive and move on was the only way. And the only way to do that was to not hate anybody. My own way of thinking is love everyone, hate no one."

Several of the project's videos and stories are available online already. The full works will be made available soon. Visit bit.ly/1947archives to find out more about the 1947 Partition Archive and learn how you can get involved.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Connecting Hindus Through Facebook

ALTHOUGH [FACEBOOK](#) HAS SEEN A DECLINE in active accounts over the last year, it still supports over one billion users. Facebook's social networking continues to be one of the largest in the world and, appropriately, millions of Hindus are using the site to help create, connect and maintain their diverse communities. Today, India has 43 million users, a number second only to the US.

Temples worldwide utilize Facebook to keep devotees informed of the latest news and happenings. A Hindu temple in Spain posts updates, alerting its community to the temple's events, while across the globe, Hindu temples in Los Angeles encourage their followers to post pictures or videos from temple gatherings. The [Nyama Braya Bali group](#) started by Balinese Hindus in Germany, began with just twelve people, and has united over 600 Hindus in their area for community gatherings and ceremonies.

Facebook is also a powerful tool for Hindu communities such as the [Pakistan Hindu Seva](#), which serves as a hub for the Hindu minority in Pakistan. Groups such as the [Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh, USA](#) present a broad view of activities across America, as do many others, who have created Facebook groups to maintain their communities at a local level.



SHUTTERSTOCK

Linked: A young Hindu explores group discussions, temple events and chats with other like-minded youth

• • • • •