

# Curated Walk 30 August, 2022

of exhibition **Partition of India...1947**

by the Arts and Cultural Heritage Trust for the students of  
School of Heritage Research & Management,  
Dr. B. R. Ambedkar University Delhi



Student Representation on the notice board at SHRM

The experiences of the Partition Exhibition have been well captured by the students of SHRM through their illustrative contributions to the notice board. The emotion chart beautifully curated by Puja Kumari is a collection of the emotional connections the students felt while going through the exhibition. The connections were enhanced with all the students adding heartfelt words, not devoid of constructive observations, to the illustrative chart on sticky notes. Furthermore, a student Interpretation section with contributions from Shenaj, Dushyant, Ankit, Pratishtha, Srishti, Puja and Aditi added an academic dimension to the board with the technical takeaways of a very educational experience. Furthermore, Rashi, Ritwika, and Dhruv made an attempt to verify the sources of the Exhibition through archival research and contributed to the compilation of the final report. With Ankit putting up a section on the presentation of the materials sourced at the gallery display and Puja Kumari captured the emotions evoked while witnessing the exhibits so displayed.

All students helped and supported each other in capturing the essence and knowledge of the Partition Exhibition through the board and report. The joint efforts of the students made the task an enjoyable one.

## STUDENT INTERPRETATION

### PRESENTATION :

It was a theme based Exhibition & intended to educate, perform, evoke & inspire people about the partition - the Exhibition Commemorated the Remembrance Day on the Occasion of 75<sup>th</sup> year of Independence. Through this an attempt was made to weave the personal experiences of the families who witnessed partition in the exhibition.

### EMOTIONAL :

Usually when we hear the term - 'Partition', immediately the idea of pain & suffering strikes in. But, here, I personally felt less connected as it was more of information centric than being emotional.

It was very informative and interactive. It captivated & audience giving them chills about the horrors of the partition.

It also had a positive outlook and gave us a hope that

सफर में दूष तो होगा जो चल सकते हो चलो

Given the temporary nature of the Exhibition, the management & handling of artefacts was well understood. The use of light & space was an important takeaway of the exhibition. Being a curated walk, we could create a personal connection with the curators and their VISION!

As the exhibition was based on oral history, personal anecdotes, material heritage (clothes, jewellery, letters, pictures) and archival resources from various museums & journals — were used & put up.

Exhibition Title: Partition of India... 1947

Duration: 14 August to 31 August

Venue: National Modern Art Gallery

Curated by: Ministry of Culture, Partition Museum and The Art and Cultural Heritage Trust

Inaugurated by: G Kishan Reddy (Union Culture Minister)

Supported by: National Gallery of Modern Art, Indira Gandhi National Center for the Arts

The students and faculty of the School of Heritage Research and Management, Dr B R Ambedkar University Delhi, visited the National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA) on 30<sup>th</sup> August 2022 for a curated walk on the Partition of India exhibition. The visit began with a brief introduction to the Exhibition, its purpose, and how it was made, which was explained to us by the Curators Ms. Alishah Ali and her assistant Uday. The objective of the exhibition was to educate, evoke, inspire, and inform the public about the history and experiences of the partition as it impacted the lives of thousands of people.



Courtesy: Ritwika Basak

The Partition of India is one of the most dreadful events in human history. It was so frightening that it is still in people's hearts, and its wound has not been healed even today. Millions of people lost everything overnight due to Partition. Several lakhs died, and several lakhs were rendered homeless. To understand the pain of those people, it is vital to talk about the Partition. To give physical space to the memory of the Partition Survivor, The Arts and Cultural Heritage Trust created the Museum in Amritsar, Punjab. A need was felt to provide partition survivors with a place where they could share with us (the public at large) their memories, good or bad and how Partition affected their lives. Keeping this idea in mind, the Partition Museum was created. Taking this idea forward, on completion of 75 years of India's independence, this exhibition was organized in Delhi by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, under the Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav initiative.

This exhibition is an attempt to present the bloody history of Partition to the people, and narrate how the Partition changed the lives of millions of people overnight. Highlights of the curation were:

- i. The exhibition presents a chronological survey of all political events from 1905 to 1950.
- ii. The exhibition is divided into three galleries, the first gallery begins with the Partition of Bengal in 1905 and ends with the letter being put in that post office.
- iii. The exhibition showcases some of the personal belongings donated by Partition Survivors.
- iv. Some sections of the exhibition guide visitors through historical events that formed a path to an independent India.
- v. Others show how people migrated and took refuge in parts of Delhi.

Of immense human interest was the commemoration of the horrors of Partition, through an art installation, 40 feet-long artworks, the 'Nadi Geet' by artist Debashish Mukherjee. The red and beige coloured cotton threads, represent people from both sides who lost everything in the unfortunate events of Partition. A vibrant red 'Postbox of Dreams and Hopes' has also been installed in the exhibition, where visitors can write letters to the future generation about what they want to achieve for India.



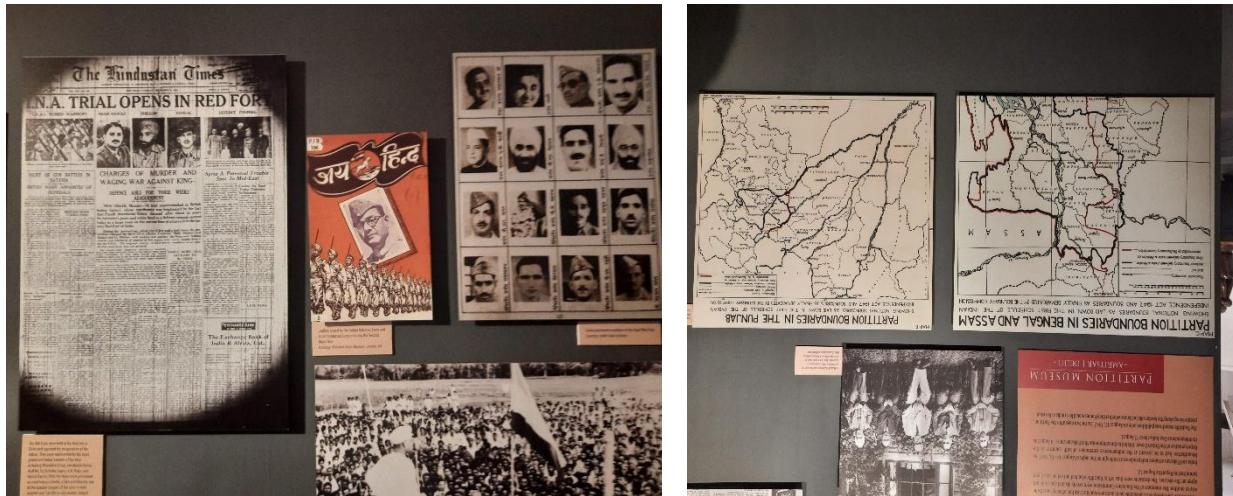
Students observations: *Emotive Chart curated by Puja Kumari*

#### Resources accessed

The exhibition is divided into six galleries on the basis of chronological order, for which were accessed archival resources such as academic publications, books, journals, and newspapers. Memory, recollections and oral narratives of contemporary people who had witnessed the partition, individual experiences, and interviews, photographs, letters, were the testimony to the component of oral history relied upon for the curation of the exhibition. The exhibitors have tried to weave personal experiences in the exhibition so that people can

experience and understand that the partition was not merely about the partition of boundaries, property, or nationality, but, it was the partition of souls, identity, time of tragedy, separation, displacement, and relocation.

Another interesting component of this exhibition were the artifacts generously donated by the families who survived the Partition. As people were displaced, they carried with them whatever little they could, and these objects are now not only important milestones of the events but symbols of losses suffered and trials endured.

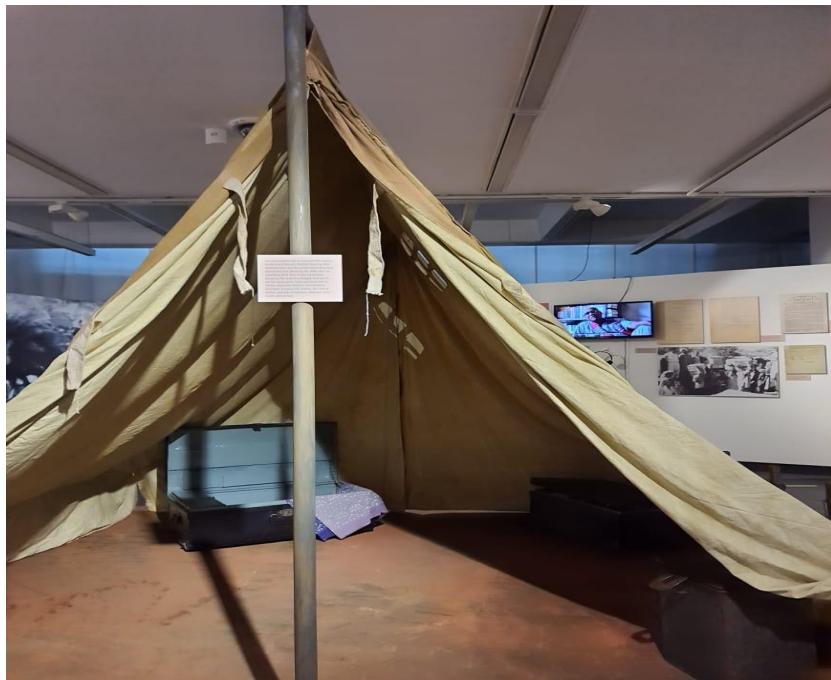


*Courtesy: Ritwika Basak*

The exhaustive listing of the documents relied upon are from :

- Nehru Memorial Library
- British Library
- Hindustan Times
- Centre of South Asia Study
- Delhi State Archive
- Letters
- National Army Museum, UK
- Delhi Archives
- INA Trials and History
- Getty Images
- Photographs of Margaret Bourke White
- Liaisons Library
- Central Secretariat Library
- National Archives of India
- ACME Photos
- The Tribune
- Documentaries: Briefings from survivors of the Partition Period
- Danik Patrika
- Amritsar Bazaar Patrika
- Hamdard Archives and Research Gate

- IMBD
- Swaraj Art Archives
- Wikipedia



*Courtesy: Rashi Karir*

The Experimental Models presented at the Exhibition were of the following:

- i. Camp
- ii. Well
- iii. Art & Sculptures
- iv. Letters and Receipts of refugees
- v. Letter of the bureaucrats to government
- vi. Personal belongings of survivors

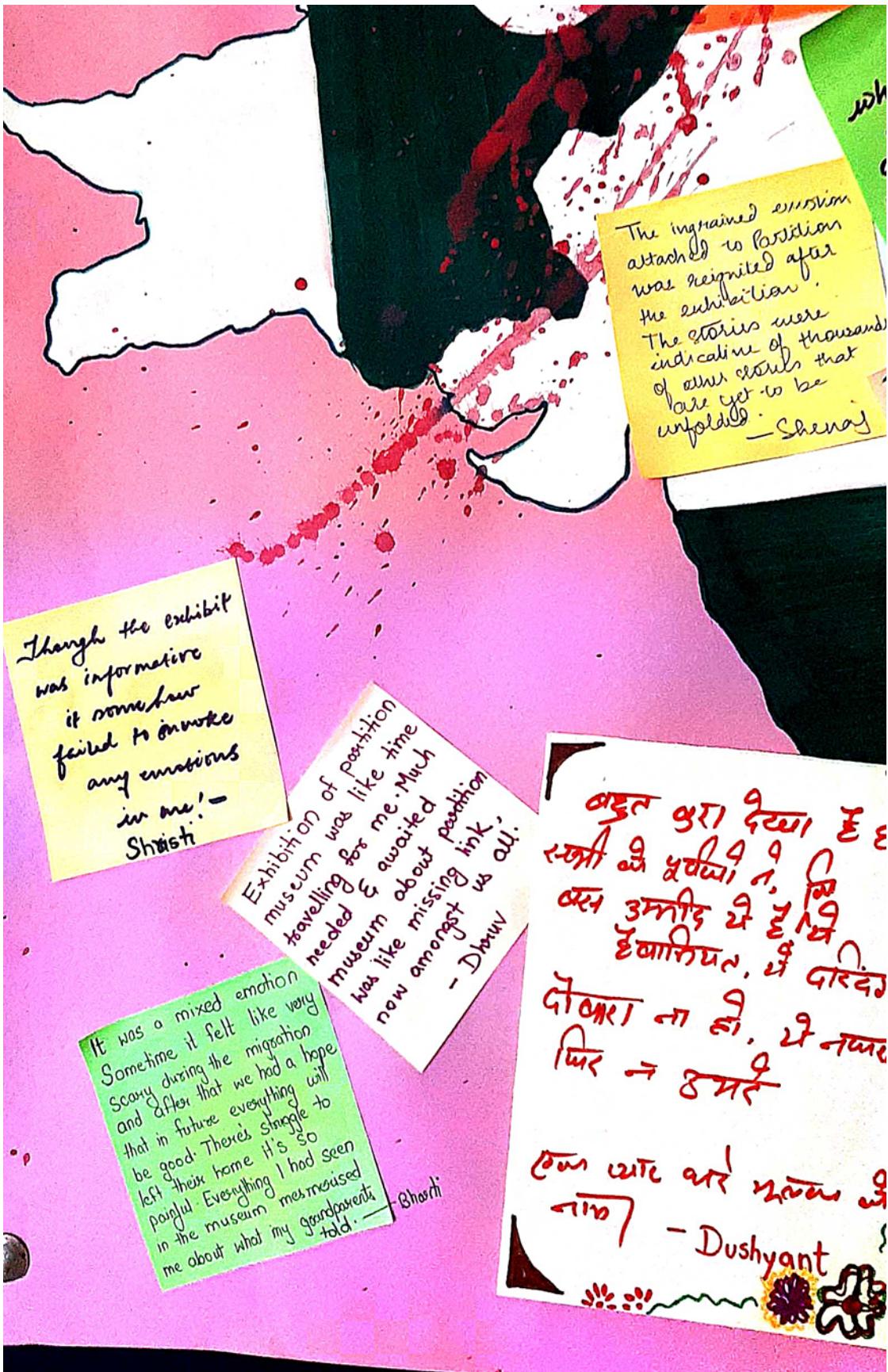
## **The Appeal of the Exhibition**

Partition, a dark period in the history of India, still evokes various emotions in people's lives on both sides of the border. The scar and pain of the incident have unfortunately not faded with time. Time has, again and again, scratched the wounds. The brotherhood and peaceful atmosphere have now been dominated by distrust, spying on each other, cross-border firing leading to loss of human lives and so on. When a child is born, and the umbilical cord is cut, the child gets a new identity and continues to survive but as a separate individual. This incident separates a mother from her child physically but is an occasion of celebration. Unlike this, when India was partitioned, though east and west Pakistan were born, and they gained a new identity, alas, it was not a matter of celebration. The separation created by the borders was not physical. It was the division between the love and care that till now, people had for each other. For the thousands of people who witnessed the partition and many more who were the victims of this treachery which came in the name of freedom, had put a question mark on the identity of people. The division on the basis of religion created a rift in the hearts and minds of people, which till now has not been filled. The idea of divide and rule was successful, and the people fell into its trap. The territorial land, though, was granted freedom, but the slavery still continued to exist in the lives of people, which came as a result of partition. A visit to the National Gallery of Modern Art for the Partition exhibition has left a very deep impact on the students. Though none of them has personally experienced this dreadful event, still the visit has sent chills down the spine of many. Since childhood, at one point of time or another, we all have listened to the stories of partition but witnessing the exhibition and knowing about it in depth is like living the horror to an extent. Many of the students were deeply touched by the exhibition, and it had a deep impact on their minds and soul. It was like time travel for them which they wished would have never happened. The pain of partition still can be felt and is soul-stirring for most of us. It invoked in us a sense of empathy, sympathy, and pride for those who stood by the people irrespective of their caste and religion to help and support them, a lesson on humanity, an understanding of foul play and politics and most importantly, a lesson for the future. Though this exhibition focused on the partition of India, it did give us a ray of hope also. A hope about the existence of humans with humanity, history and culture that still binds the people of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh together. A common understanding has been witnessed by the people of these countries, and they are trying to bridge the gulf at their level. In spite of the fact that the wound of partition may never heal, we can assume and hope that the citizens of these nations practice a sense of understanding, respect and brotherhood. This physical distance and separation by borders can actually create stronger bonds if handled carefully, and with a pure heart and right intention because sometimes- To come closer, we need to go afar



*Courtesy: Ritwika Basak*





Though the exhibit was informative it somehow failed to invoke any emotions in me! — Shristi

Exhibition of Partition museum was like time travelling for me. Much needed & awaited museum about Partition was like missing link, now amongst us all. — Dibyansu

It was a mixed emotion. Sometime it felt like very scary during the migration and after that we had a hope that in future everything will be good. There's struggle to left their home. It's so painful. Everything I had seen in the museum mesmerised me about what my grandparents told. — Bharti

The ingrained erosion attached to Partition was reignited after the exhibition. The stories were indicative of thousands of other stories that are yet to be unfolded. — Shreyas

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गति गति गति गति

Our culture is never lost — Dushyant

## Reflection on the Exhibition

It is difficult to say how successful this exhibition was, but there are a few things that can be noted as the title of the exhibition was "Partition of India," but this exhibition was utterly Delhi-centric. Most of the persons whose personal details were given here were related to Delhi, and the central nature of this exhibition was to show us the event in historical chronology. One limiting aspect of the exhibition was that administrative records were used in the exhibition, which was not easy for us to understand. If personal or family archives are used more, it will be easier for ordinary people to connect. We all know how frightening and dangerous Partition was for women, but their tragic suffering was given very limited space in this exhibition; for a better understanding of the Partition, we must show its emotional side very profoundly. As we all know, the effect of Partition was on the whole of India, so talking about Delhi only under this title seems misleading. The people visiting the exhibition may be from different states, and in this situation, they may not be able to connect themselves with the exhibition.



*Courtesy: Rashi Karir*

Other than SHRM students faculty members Dr Shalini Awasthi , Dr Sima Yadav, Dr Anand Burdhan, Dr Aman Kumar Singh, Dr Sailendra Swain, Dr R K Trivedi were part of this exposure visit

Photo Gallery: Courtesy: Dr Aman Kumar Singh



