

## INDIAN INDEPENDENCE AND PARTITION

*an introduction*

### BEFORE YOU READ

01

What does 'partition' mean? Look it up in a dictionary. How does the word apply to nations and borders?

02

What defines a country? Discuss.

03

Compare your own ideas with the dictionary's definition.

04

Look at the photographs of Partition in this chapter and describe them. You can find more online if you type 'Partition India' in your browser.

Until 1947, India was a British colony, but after the Second World War political unrest made it impossible for Britain to continue to rule the country, and the process of independence began. However, there were different aspirations for the country: On one side, figures such as Jawaharlal Nehru and Mohandas ('Mahatma') Gandhi wanted a united India, while on the other side the All-India Muslim League and Mohammad Ali Jinnah wanted two separate countries – India for the Hindus and Pakistan for the Muslims. Fearing that a united independent India would be dominated by Hindus, the Muslims started arguing for a separate Muslim state where they would no longer be a minority. Mohammad Ali Jinnah, among others, argued that religion constituted nationality, and therefore all Muslims should gather in one separate Muslim country. Another major religious group in India is the Sikhs. While Muslims constituted the majority in the Punjab region before Partition, Punjab was holy to the Sikhs, so their presence and power were strong. The Sikhs sided with the Indian National Congress and wanted to be part of India as they feared becoming a minority in the Muslim nation of Pakistan. The Sikhs had lived under Muslim rule in the Mughal Empire, and they did not want to do so again. As they put their trust in the Congress Party and its secular agenda, the Sikhs were promised a level of autonomy in the new India – something they were not offered in Pakistan.

**unrest** uroligheder

**aspiration** forhåbning

**argue** tale for

**constitute** udgøre

**autonomy** selvstyre

In Urdu, 'pak' means 'pure' and '-istan' means 'place'.

**Viceroy** statholder, guvernør,  
den der er udpeget til at  
styre et land

**flare** blusse op

**intervene** gribe ind

**appeal** appellere, tiltrække

**supremacy** dominans,  
herredømme

At the Shimla Conference in March 1946, the Viceroy Lord Wavell and Indian political leaders such as Nehru and Jinnah gathered to make a plan for Indian self-government. Jinnah, representing the All-India Muslim League, and Nehru, representing the Indian National Congress, could not agree on the terms for a united India, and thus Jinnah began advocating for a two-state solution. Religious violence flared up between Hindus and Muslims. Riots broke out in Calcutta, and in three days around 5,000 people were killed. The British did not intervene. Gandhi, however, still believed in a united India. He tried to bring people together, but he failed to appeal to the majority of the Muslim communities because the Muslims felt that Gandhi represented Hindu supremacy. Later, at the time of Partition, Gandhi called the partition of India "a spiritual tragedy".

Jawaharlal Nehru is a hard name to pronounce.  
Here is how you do it:

Take one syllable at a time ja-wa-har-lal Nehru. Now repeat it 10 times, and you've got it.

**to no avail** til ingen nytte

A new Viceroy, Louis Mountbatten, was appointed to India, arriving in March 1947. He tried negotiating for a united India with Jinnah and Nehru, but to no avail. Religious tensions grew. In Punjab, in particular, riots broke out between Sikhs, Muslims, and Hindus who each tried to claim the area as their own. Nehru had to accept the two-state solution, and on 3 June 1947 Mountbatten, Jinnah, and Nehru announced their compromise – a divided India.

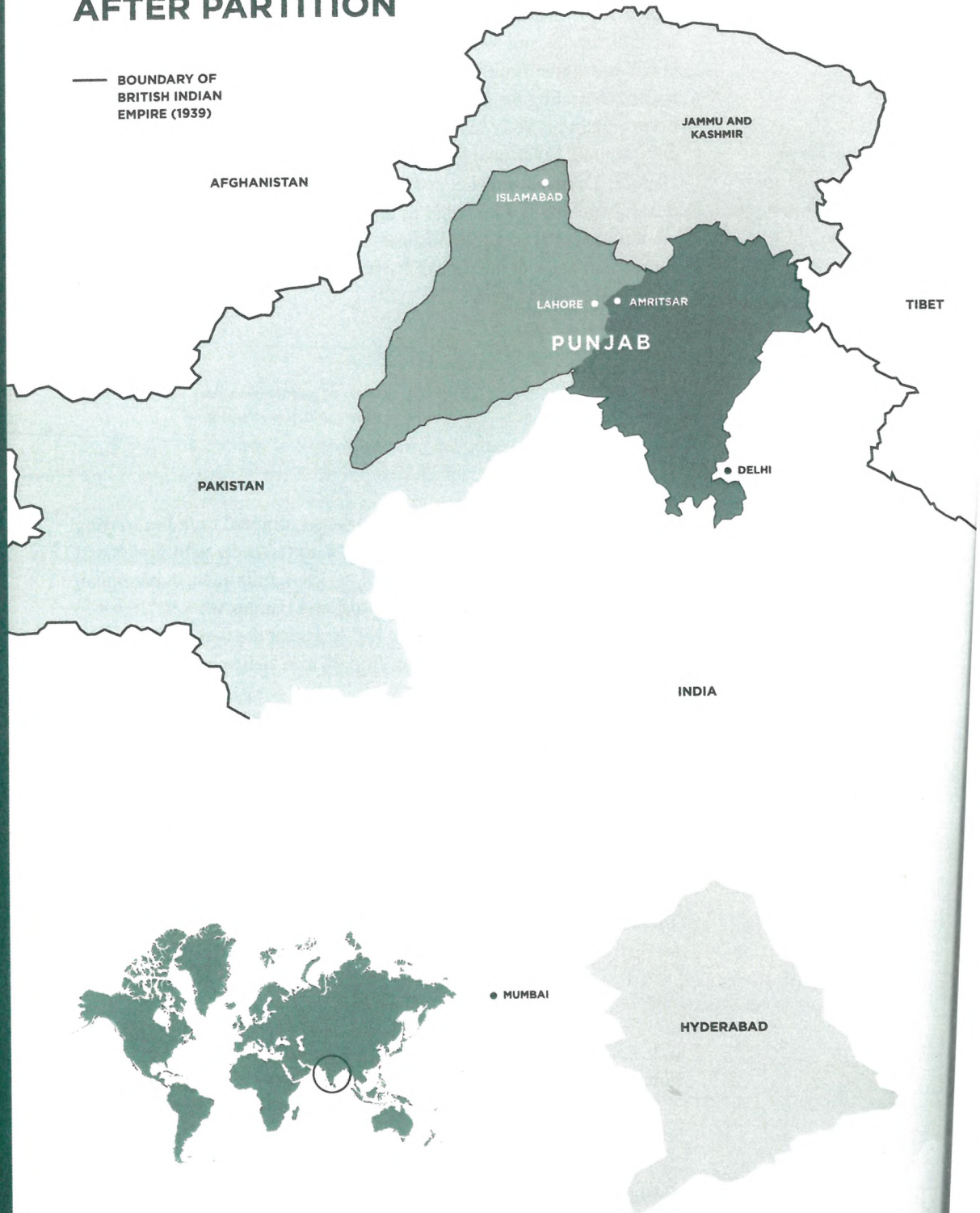
Punjab and Bengal would be divided between India and Pakistan. The process was rushed. Three months before independence and Partition, the location of the border had yet to be decided. Sir Cyril Radcliffe, a British lawyer and chairman of the Indo-Pakistan Boundary Commission, was chosen to draw the lines on the map which would be borders in reality. On 8 July 1947, Radcliffe came to India for the first (and only) time, and on 9 August he submitted his map of the new border. A month before Partition, despite rising tensions, most of the British soldiers left India.

The new borders were primarily to be based on which religious group formed the majority in a specific area. For example, areas with a majority of Hindus would become part of India and areas with a majority of Muslims would become part of Pakistan. In many villages and cities, Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims began killing each other. Especially in the city of Lahore, which was of great cultural and economic value, the violence grew.

**annex** annektere (indlemme  
som en del af sin egen stat)

The princely states (areas not annexed by the British), which had been somewhat autonomous, thought they would be able to decide if they wanted to be part of India or Pakistan, but Nehru and Mountbatten had agreed that they should belong to India.

## MAP OF INDIA BEFORE AND AFTER PARTITION



Lahore is a city in present-day Pakistan, but in 1947 it was in the area where the new border between the two countries would be drawn. It was an important

city both culturally and financially, and therefore Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs fought to make the city a part of their country.

The borders were drawn up on 9 August 1947, but they were kept secret until after independence, so the British would not be blamed for the violence that followed.

**migration** udvandring,  
folkevandring  
**demarcation** grænsedragning

Migration between India and Pakistan had been going on for some time, but as the demarcations of the borders became public, approximately 10-15 million people migrated across the new borders – Hindus and Sikhs into India and Muslims into Pakistan. A lot of people would migrate aboard special trains, but many more people would walk for days, leaving their belongings and sometimes small babies behind in the desert. About one million people died.

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10



### AFTER YOU READ

01

Mohandas Gandhi is often referred to as 'Mahatma' Gandhi. What does this title mean?

02

Discuss whether this is an apt name for a political figure.

03

Who was Louis Mountbatten, and what does it mean to be 'Viceroy'?

04

Who was Sir Cyril Radcliffe, and under what conditions did he draw up the borders?

05

What is a 'princely state', and what regions were they in?

06

What is the relationship between India and Pakistan today? Give examples from current news stories.

07

Where is Jammu and Kashmir, and what is the situation in the area today? Give examples from current news stories.

08

Look at the maps on the following pages and compare the map of Jammu and Kashmir with the map of India from Incredible India – the official tourist agency of India.