

# THE PARTITION OF INDIA 1947: MYTH OR REALITY ABOUT THE HINDU-WOMEN CONVERSION TO ISLAMIC BELIEF DURING THE NOAKHALI RIOTS

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## Introduction

The partition of India in 1947 caused one of the great migrations in human history. In 1947, in the blink of an eye, the British colonial power partitioned India on the basis of Hindu and Muslim majority. Pakistan was pieced together combining two far-apart wings of India: East Pakistan and West Pakistan. Within a short space of a few months, around twelve million people moved to newly created Pakistan and India. The wave of the partition forced people to change their homes at a rapid pace. Across the India subcontinent neighbors and communities, who lived with relative love and affection for each other for generations, were caught up in an unimaginable violence; the mutual respect turned into a mutual genocide. And yet, people also helped each other to survive the unimaginable cruelty. The scale of violence would have been more unconscionable if the love had not existed. My project focuses on this mutual love and help relation that have not been told yet or properly looked upon.

## Gandhi's Visit at Noakhali



## Literature Review

Historians have often failed to portray the Hindu-Muslim relations in Bangladesh, which then became Bengal. The good relation between the Hindu-Muslim community has constantly been overlooked by the historians' narrative. There were stories that would not manifest the fear of 'other' religion in the Noakhali-Tippera areas. Thus, the partition historians use context-free lens when they talk about Hindu and Muslim identities based on religion. For instance, historians Suranjan Das and Yasmin Khan reiterate the same points such as looting Hindus' property, dishonoring their women, and forcibly converting them to Islam (1993:169). Yasmin Khan argued, "religious 'conversions' which ranged from perfunctory recitations of the *Kalma* to fully-fledged conversion processes involving regular prayer, re-education programs and ritualized beef-eating, were frequently followed up by the rape of women (2007:69)." We buy the narrative of course. It is true that religion is inextricably intertwined with violence. But I argue that there were people who could not resort to religion to set their priorities. They have helped people, especially Hindu neighbors. Historian Das and Khan did clarity and tell the events that happened however, I argue, there were mutual respect among the community and without bringing community love and affection to each other, writing the history of partition would be incomplete, in fact biased. Therefore, I am offering a narrative which would not have been colored by insularity, selfishness, greet but love.

## A Hindu Family in Noakhali

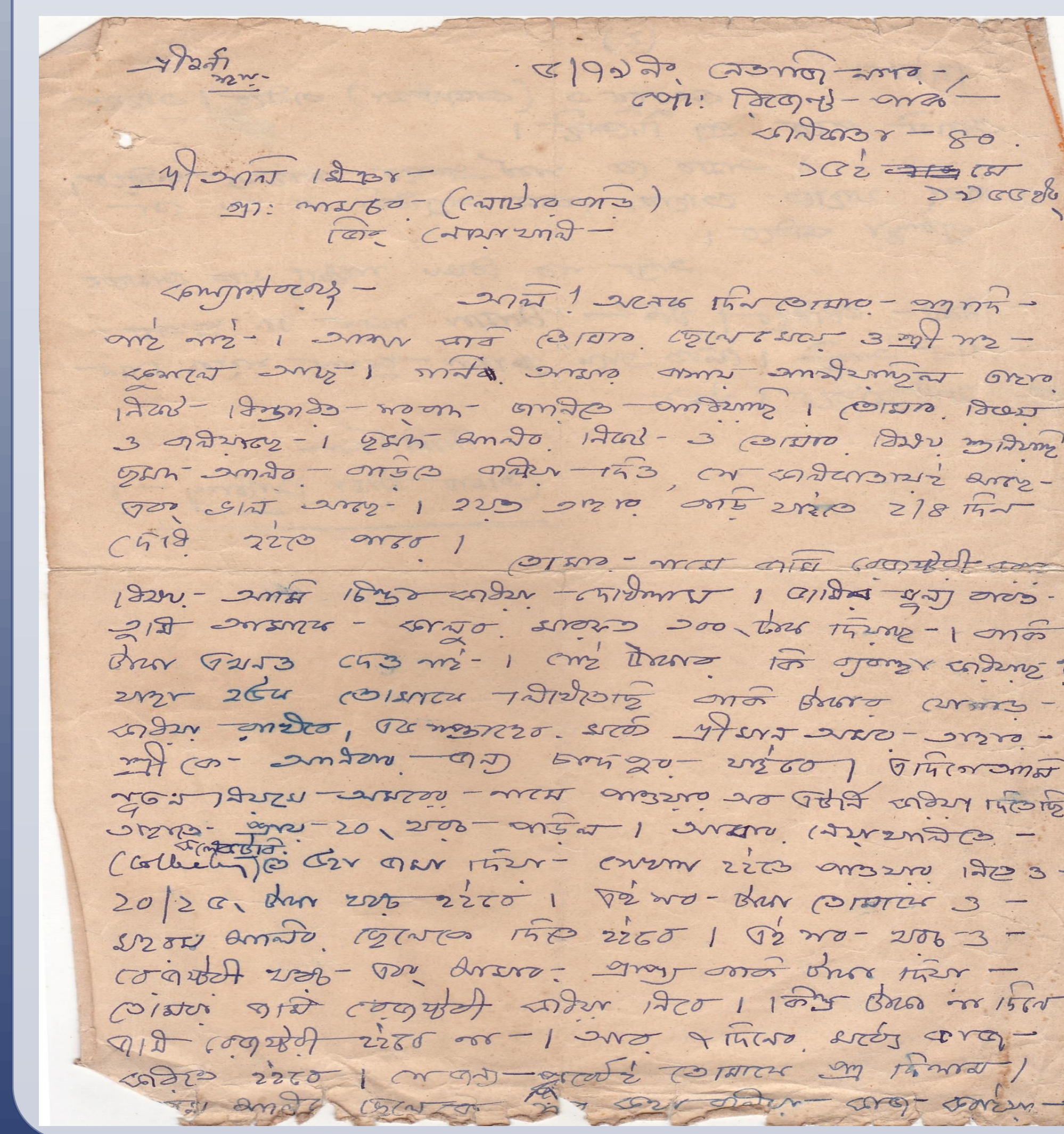


## Methodology

1. Interviews, archival study, historical photos, ethical procedures;
- 2 Written memories and letters;
3. Gandhi sojourned to Noakhali: November 6, 1946: (many people accepted and acted as Gandhi; he just got the most attention. Kindness was always a primary part of the narrative.

The project examines the long-rooted narrative of Hindu-women conversion to Islam during the time of riots and aftermath of partition in Bengal, what is now Bangladesh. It primarily argues that there was an account about the forced conversion of the Hindu-women to Islam which does not underline the true story of riots or distorted it. The second aim of this project is to historicize the Hindu-Muslim relations during time of partition; in other words, how a new perspective of a case study in Bangladesh provides positive correlation of Hindu-Muslim community. The third inquiry of this project is to reveal the tiny little story of the Muslim people who have provided security and shelter to help their Hindu neighbors.

## A Bengali Letter from a Hindu Survivor in Noakhali Riots



## Gandhi Preached in Noakhali to Bridge the Gap between Hindus and Muslims



## Conclusion

It concludes that religious could not be able to make a rift among the Hindu-Muslim relationship during the time of riots. These people never framed their priorities based on religious or convenient but on morality. Meanwhile Gandhi sojourned to Noakhali had been accepted by people which mitigated the riots and violence. The partition riots that has been published by historians needs to encompass and balance each narrative.

## References

1. Khan Yasmin, *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan* (Yale University Press: New Haven and London, 2007)
2. Das Suranjan, *Communal Riots in Bengal 1905-1947* (Oxford University Press: New Delhi, 1993)
3. Oral Interview: Interviewee- Dipak Charabarty (July 20, 2019), Abul Khaiyar Bhuyain (July 25, 2019).

Interviewer: Md. Pervejur Rahaman