**PERSONAL PROFILE: Tilak Raj**

In 1947, Tilak Raj was 16 and living with his family in Lahore. In July 1947, his brother sent news that it was no longer safe for Hindus to stay in Lahore and Tilak Raj fled with part of his family. In August 1947, during the time of Indian Independence, he was in Patiala, awaiting the safe arrival to India of his remaining family.

Tilak Raj arrived in the UK in 1964, after arranging to meet two friends of friends at Victoria station, neither of whom turned up. It was getting late and with nowhere to stay, he managed after some negotiation to secure himself a bed for the night at a Gurdwara (Sikh temple).

Tilak Raj and his wife lived in West London since arriving in Britain. He has four children and four grandchildren.

**ASSIGNMENT**:

**PART 1**:

Read the transcript of the interview with Tilak Raj on the following page (additional option: watch the video and read more about Tilak Raj here: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/panjab1947/raj.htm>

Then, answer the questions below on a separate piece of paper:

1. In a paragraph (in your own words) describe how the partition of India affected Tilak Raj personally (be specific).

2. What would you have done if you were in his position during the partition? Why?

**PART 2**: After meeting the other people in your round table discussion, answer the following questions:

1. Which people do you think Talak Raj would have the most in common with? Why?

2. Which people do you think Tilak Raj would have the least in common with? Why?

3. If this group of people was called upon to solve political, ethnic, and social tension during the partition, what do you think they would have suggested as the most important thing for political leaders to do?

**Transcript**

My name is Tilak Raj Betab. I was born in Lahore and was the tenth of my brothers and sisters. I lived in quite a big house, five Muslim houses were around us and one Hindu and one Sikh house. Our street was between the Shah' Almi Gate and the Lahori Gate. It was the place where the riots started.

We were living in our house at the time of the first disturbances. There was violence for a few days and calm for a few days. There were certain people who wanted to make sure the rioting continued.

The first incident in Lahore was pre-planned for when a Hindu procession was going on. Some ringleaders/troublemakers organised that there will be an attack at a certain point. There was a procession around our area which was Chowk Mati. There were a lot of butchers there. They started stabbing and there was brick throwing from the rooftops.

I felt furious when I saw somebody carrying the dead bodies right in front of our house from the Chowk Mati area because by that time, the police had arrived. There was one man; he was carrying one body at a time. There were 12-14 people killed at that time by stabbing.

We stayed in our house for a long time, then there came a time when we had to jump over the walls to the house of a Sikh next to us. From there we had to jump over walls to another street, then another street… We stayed with a friend of our father for a couple of months. We had to live with one auntie and then another auntie…

Not all the family left; three members of the family were always in the house in the evening, talking to the next door neighbours - they were Muslims - right up until the middle of the night, they'd be talking to each other and keeping watch.

Shah' Almi Gate was burned to ashes, which was the biggest trading centre owned by Hindus. Millions of goods and property was destroyed. Almost all that area was decimated and reduced to ashes.

On the good side we knew a family of artists who were very close to us. On 11 or 14 August they sent a message to my father: 'Uncle. Don't stay at night. If you stay you will be killed'. So we left Lahore and Pakistan at that time.

(Dominic:) What was the impact of Partition on yourself and your family?

(Raj:) Family - scattered; instead of being in one or two units, it was all over the place. No work, no home, great hardship and reduced to poverty from riches.

Such a thing had never happened in the history of India. We never thought it would happen that we would not be able to come back to Lahore.