

SCRIPT

# Partition is not Migration

a DCS Monologue

Part of the 'Dear Children, Sincerely ...' project



Written by  
**RUWANTHIE DE CHICKERA**

Based on interviews conducted through  
the DCS theatre research project

stages  
theatre  
group

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or in any form or by any means, without the prior permission in writing of the publisher, nor be otherwise circulated in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent publisher.

*Performing rights for amateur performances will be enquired at:  
info@stages.lk*

**Partition is not Migration – a DCS Monologue**

First published (online) 2020  
© 2020 Ruwanthie de Chickera  
ISBN - 978-624-5487-05-9

Script Content and Layout – Dinushika Seneviratne and Piumi Wijesundara  
Cover Design – Prasad Aluthwattha

# ***Partition is not Migration***

a DCS Monologue

Part of the 'Dear Children, Sincerely ...' project

written by

Ruwanthie de Chickera

Based on interviews conducted through  
the DCS theatre research project

First Performed  
As a dramatized reading at  
The NAPA Festival of Theatre  
Karachi, Pakistan  
March 2020

Directed by Tracy Holsinger  
Reader of the monologue - Osama Tahir

## **An Introduction to the *DCS Project***

### **‘Dear Children, Sincerely...’ a conversation across generations**

#### **What is the *DCS Project*?**

“**Dear Children, Sincerely... a conversation across generations**” (or the *DCS project*) is a research theatre project begun in Sri Lanka in 2015 by Stages Theatre Group. *DCS* collects the stories and experiences of the generation born in the 1930s and takes them to the present-day audiences in the form of storytelling and live performance.

Under the *DCS project*, short performance pieces are created from extensive conversations conducted with senior citizens, with each performance piece not more than 15 minutes long. These stories stand alone as individual performance pieces and can also be linked together to create longer theatrical productions.

Between 2015 and 2020, through the *DCS project*, over 70 senior citizens of Sri Lanka were interviewed and performance pieces created from these conversations.

The *DCS project* has also been implemented in Rwanda, Palestine, Pakistan, the UK, Serbia and DRC.

#### **The *DCS Monologues***

The monologues under *DCS project* (the *DCS Monologues*) are personal stories of individuals who belonged to the generation born in the 1930s. Each *DCS monologue* tells us the story of one such individual. Together they give us some historical perspective on what people consider important, what people easily forget and what they find unforgettable.

*A Tamil sportsman who left the country after securing a Gold Medal for it, an old lady displaced for the first time at the age of 90, a faithful butler who observed the infamous attempted Military Coup, a woman lawyer heading the country’s first Disappearance Commission, a doctor who trusted her family inheritance to a riotous drunk...* These are but some of the *DCS Monologues*.

*Partition is not Migration* is the first monologue created in Pakistan.

## **An Introduction to the *Partition is not Migration***

This *DCS Monologue* is based on conversations with Khalid Ahmed.  
Interview Conducted by Meher Jiffir, Sunil Shankar and Tracy Holsinger.

### **About the Monologue**

This monologue traces the story of an artist and activist, born in India (New Delhi), and then, still as a child sent to West Pakistan (Dhaka) and then later on to Pakistan (Karachi) in search of his ‘country’.

The civil rights activist, speaks about the painful disintegration of two families he belonged to – his biological family which, even today, lies separated over three countries (India, Bangladesh and Pakistan) at odds with each other; and his ideological family – the global family of socialism.

This monologue traces the birth of the idea and the nation of Pakistan – and how it evolved in parallel lines to macro political maneuvers in the region. It also mourns the change of the Muslim identity, from liberal to conservative, with the rise of nationalism and the influx of capitalism. The young boy in this monologue is born afresh in 3 different countries – all of which he loves and feels he belongs to, all from which he has to move on and to which he can never return. As with the experience of Partition, this monologue shows us that with somethings in life, it is never possible to return to what you once knew.

### **Performance History**

First directed by : Tracy Holsinger

As part of : DCS Remembrance Day

**Note** – *DCS Remembrance Day*, scheduled for performance at the NAPA festival in Karachchi in March 2020, had to be cancelled due to the COVID 19 pandemic. A reading of the play was done instead and *Partition is not Migration* was incorporated within that reading.

The reading took place in Karachchi in March 2020.

For more detailed insights on this play, including the back story about how it was made, an analysis of all its design elements, its production video, soundtrack, publicity campaign, all press reviews and audience comments, and more, please visit its production page on the Stages Theatre Group website [www.stages.lk](http://www.stages.lk)

# ***Partition is not Migration***

**Character**      An elderly socialist.

•

I don't know how to start... I don't know what to say... something as simple as being asked to tell a story about 'your country'... do you have any idea how complicated that choice can be? For someone like me, for example....

(With all the conflicts that you have had in this country – your country/Sri Lanka – the fact that it's an island, the fact that it's surrounded by ocean, the fact that it's always had one size, one place... means that you have always, and you *will* always have a very clear idea about what your country is.)

But for me... when you ask me to tell you a story about my country... I see myself at 18 years old.... By the time I was 18 I had already been born to three different countries.

Can you imagine that?

I was born in India. I was then told that that was not my country. Then I was sent to what I thought was Pakistan. Because I was told that *that* was my country. Until suddenly that was also not my country. That became Bangladesh – and then I was sent on to Karachi. And each time I moved to a new country – I had to leave behind a part of me, but also there was a big part I would carry forward.

These were such powerful identities – 'India', 'Pakistan', 'Bangladesh' – all of them such grand and great ideas... created with such passion.

Initially, all I knew was India. I was born in India... The first 16 years of my life I lived in India. But even among my earliest memories of childhood - from the time I was 5 or 6 – I remember being aware of this land called 'Pakistan'.

One of my four older sisters moved to Karachi after marriage. So there used to be letters that came to India – from this place called 'Pakistan'. ("Karachi", "Pakistan" these words were big, colourful words).

Every now and then relatives would visit us from this 'Pakistan'. And this was always very exciting... they used to have Nylon sarees and imported goods, and perfumes ...and they would show off a lot – you know - *"in Pakistan we have all this foreign stuff, we have this car and that car. You lot in India, you only have your bulky Ambassadors and your Fiats..."*

These were the only two cars we had in India at that time... (India was on an austerity drive under Nehru, hardly anything imported, a completely different India at that time) ... So yes, even when I was very little, I was aware of this land of abundance and opportunity called Pakistan.

Later on, when I was a young boy and sent from India to Pakistan it was the complete opposite. *Then* I was fed stories of the unbelievable grandeur of India...



... My uncle and my father – they never left India. They insisted that they were Indian. They took pride in being Indian. My parents never came to Pakistan. Two of my four sisters never came to Pakistan. Their children never came to Pakistan. A large part of my family – my aunt, uncle – my father’s elder brother – he used to live in my family’s ancestral house in Delhi. He had about 8 – 10 sons and daughters. They all decided to migrate to Pakistan. But their father – my uncle – refused. He remained in India. He remained in our huge ancestral home. He died there.

... So, as a young boy – far away from the country that I was born in, far away from my parents - I would be fed stories about life back in our ancestral home in India. A gate so huge that an elephant could pass through ... a Shannai player waking up the household in the morning. Stories of India - a land of grandeur. That dream of India was kept alive in me through my family.

My family used to be one of the feudal families in India. Landowners. Then in 1947 when the Congress govt took over, they abolished feudalism and landlordism and a very tiny compensation was given to the landlords. Immediately the landed aristocracy was pauperized. They really became poor. They collapsed. Emotionally, they collapsed. Their morale was very down. And on top of this if they were Muslim they were told – “*now Pakistan has been made, just go to Pakistan will you – why are you here?*”

It was very difficult for us. I remember, it was very difficult for my family. They didn’t all want to leave.

Of course some of my family left. One sister married moved to one Pakistan – ‘Karachi’. Another sister married and moved to the other Pakistan – ‘Dhaka’. The other two remained in India – and they always stayed there. They never left.

My father... He thought that it would be a good idea to send me to Pakistan – because I would have a better future. That was 1969. I was just a young boy. So I was packed off to my sister in Dhaka. And I loved it in Dhaka. I didn’t speak Bengali well but I felt a real affinity with the people there. I loved the fact that there was so much water there – there were ponds and rivers all over Dhaka you know... and amazing rain... I was always fascinated with water-ways as a child... and so I thought... I really fell in love with Dhaka. It was such an exciting place to be for me... I thought I had found my resting place. I was learning the language...

Of course, I didn’t know it, but we were close to another disaster...

It was 1971...

1971 was such a tragedy. It was terrible. 1971 was one big chance for Pakistan to enter into a real democratic existence. And that chance was destroyed. We chose the tragedy over the opportunity.

I remember how desperate people were to get out of Dhaka in 1971. My sister was terrified to keep me because I could not speak Bengali properly. I had to be sent away. It was incredibly difficult to get plane tickets. Nearly impossible. People were fleeing in huge numbers. I got a ticket in the afternoon of the 25<sup>th</sup> of March. That was my birthday. I still have that ticket. No one knew that it was going to be the last flight. Then, though I had that ticket, once I was at the airport it was impossible to get to the terminal. It was so crowded. Then I met a Pakistan army captain who knew us. Somehow, somehow he got me onto that plane. That was the last civilian flight. The last civilian flight before the armed assault.

That night – 25<sup>th</sup> March 1971 - the army action took place. The next morning the streets were strewn with bodies. Thank god I was not there to see that. Wherever you went there was the stench of death. Gullies and lanes packed with bodies – dead. Students killed by the 1000s. Intellectuals killed by the 100s. They attacked every hostel, every university. I don't know how many, I don't have figures... But all over Pakistan they killed lakhs and lakhs of people, raped thousands of women, burnt... I don't know...

1971 was such a tragedy. The army action, the division of the country, the collapse of the two-nation idea. It was not just a military defeat. We lost ... half of our country you know... Pakistan lost half of our people. Imagine that? The two-nation theory was smashed. It just didn't make sense after all that violence. There was nothing that could be done to bring us back together. Smashed. The two-nation theory just smashed.

So yes. Another new country was born. And I had to move on again. In search of another new beginning. I moved now from Dhaka to Karachi.

When I left for Dhaka, my parents were to follow. But soon after I left, my father was taken ill very seriously. And then things got very bad between India and Pakistan and Pakistan and Bangladesh.

I got the news of my father. That he was sick. That he was dying. And then that he passed away. But I could not visit, I could not go.

My father died alone in India. He always saw himself as nothing but Indian.

You know the tragedy of Partition? It's not just moving from one country to another. India to Pakistan – or for Hindus Pakistan to India. Partition is cruel. It is an irreversible process.

When I went from India to Dhaka at the age of 16, I was an Indian going to Pakistan. India was all the home and family I knew. That Indianness was within me. It is still within me.

But after coming to Pakistan, I cannot go back to India and be an Indian again. Similarly, a Hindu Sindhi who has moved to India now cannot come back to Sindh and be a Sindhi again. It is a very particular and a very cruel kind of migration.

Think about it - you migrate to the US, Europe – or anywhere on this earth. You have all been to so many countries... You know you can always come back to your country right? If you want to, you can come back to your parent country.

But Partition was not migration. How was anyone to know that? The thousands of people who were here who wanted to go back? The thousands of people who were over there who wanted to come back here? How were they to know? That Partition was not migration.

When Partition happened, a lot of people who left, left under the notion that once things calmed down, once the riots stopped, they would come back. They hadn't really *come* from there. They hadn't really ever *gone from here*. Most of the people had given the keys of their house to their neighbour... *"look after the house", "Please have it cleaned once in a while... because... you see... we are coming back. Now there is this riot, but it will all settle down and we will be back."*

Our governments played such games with people... with families... After the 1965 war between India and Pakistan, all communication between India and Pakistan stopped. The govts stopped all communication. But these two countries had families that lived across them. So we had to write letters to England. To a friend or relative there. We would send letters all the way to England and those letters would then be sent all the way back to India. And then, the letter coming back from India would – again – go to England and then come back to Pakistan.

Letters from brother to brother, letters from mother to daughter – having to travel to the other side of the world – to the country that colonized us, to the country that gave us Partition - in order to get back to us... The games that were played with our lives...

This is not easy you know... remembering all of this...

Actually ... for me the most painful experience ... the tragedy that transformed everything irreversibly ... was .... I would say it was the collapse of socialism. Yes... that for me was the most painful...

Socialism gave me a family and gave me hope when I lost my family and when I lost all hope. Marxism taught me that the countries are not apart, the people are not apart. We had the same cause here, we had the same cause there. Whenever I could I met comrades from India and I felt that we were one. I felt we were family.

And then... In the early 90s, we witnessed the collapse of the socialist world. Not only in Pakistan, all over the world!

The Vietnam movement had been a torchbearer for all of us. We had all felt so strongly about it ... we all moved towards Marxism. And then... In the early 90s... The collapse of the socialist world. I remember watching that happen. I remember the utter helplessness we all felt. Everything we believed in...

Before that, people felt that they had an alternative - of ideology... of hope ... of idealism. After the collapse of socialism, there was before us either the capitalist imperialist way of life or it was fundamentalist Islam. This was how it was in Pakistan. Those were the two choices. Before us. Those were the two polarities. Nothing in between.

What a big blow that was... Pakistan had already committed itself to being ... the ... what would you call it? The henchman of the US in the Afghan-Soviet war. So when the Soviet Union fell... These were the two polarities. Nothing in between. Capitalism. Fundamentalism...

And if you are not drawn to either of these? Then what? You don't belong here, or there. You don't' belong anywhere.

That change was social, cultural, religious transformation. It had a very far-reaching impact on our society. And we are still reeling under this. I don't think Pakistan ever recovered from that.

And its not getting any better. Actually it's getting worse. People have totally transformed. My own family.... cousins... totally transformed.

Pakistan was created in the name of religion, we always had a Muslim identity but initially it was a liberal Muslim identity. After this transformation it became a fundamentalist Muslim ideology, and this has prevailed.

I feel totally isolated now... I can't speak my mind ... I am an old man and I am scared to speak my mind. It's dangerous. Isn't that a tragedy?

**END**

## **Production Credits**

*Partition is not Migration* was first performed within a reading of a larger play called *DCS Remembrance Day* at the National Academy of Performing Arts theatre festival in Karachchi, in March 2020.

**Read by**

Osama Tahir

**Directed by**

Tracy Holsinger

For more detailed insights on this play, including the back story about how it was made, an analysis of all its design elements, its production video, soundtrack, publicity campaign, all press reviews and audience comments, and more, please visit its production page on the Stages Theatre Group website [www.stages.lk](http://www.stages.lk)

stages  
theatre  
group

| stages  
| theatre  
| group