

## **Bengal Partition Repository**

Bengal Partition Repository is a project based on a digital archive focusing on the Partition of Bengal. It has been steadily shaping up under the aegis of the Centre for Language, Translation & Cultural Studies which is an initiation of the School of Humanities (SoH), Netaji Subhas Open University. A series of research activities focused on Partition literature, international seminars, workshops and “Collaboration Research Project” organised by SoH yielded rich materials which have gone into the making of this archive.

The archive maintains a collection of digital copies of various post-Partition (1947) materials such as personal memoirs, correspondences, reminiscences, books, diaries and the like. The project aims at tracking and collecting “oral history”, “hearsay”, personal narratives and similar other materials lying outside official archives. Naturally, what receives here the utmost emphasis is the quest for the multilinear, multi-layered, multi-nuanced narratives of the Partition as refracted through personal writings and Partition literature which come under the overarching discipline of liberal arts and humanities. It is hoped that the materials collected through this project would naturally link up with, and build a bridgehead on, the emerging territory of “Trauma Studies.” Simultaneously, such materials as part of collective ethnic memory would stay afloat in the larger domain of retrieval narratives.

The archive will showcase the once lost but now recovered voices of the marginal and amorphous people of Bangladesh and West Bengal. Their accounts of Partition trauma would be seen as an integral part of a newly minted self-identity. The archive is particularly rich in bringing out the flipside of the Bengal Partition as experienced directly by people who are now septuagenarian citizens residing in the districts of West Bengal. This unique project simultaneously taps into the living past and unfolding present of the people living on both sides of the India-Bangladesh border. The archive digitally preserves photographs, recorded conversations, private memories, letters, memorials and miscellaneous documents. It urges on the need to keep ‘material memory’ alive. All necessary permissions have been duly obtained for archiving these materials. It also contains rare books, maps, pamphlets, monographs and carefully structured compilation of reviews of various books on the Partition. Each review thus compiled has so far remained unpublished and its copyright is held by CLTCS.

The characteristic feature of the project is its bilingual nature. Both Bengali and English have been used. The archive is also a notable site for upcoming translation projects based on the innumerable personal accounts of misery and pain caused by the Partition. An initiative of NSOU, the archive would be useful for research scholars and the general public alike. Such a huge project is quite naturally the result of the efforts of a large number of scholars engaged at the grassroots level in identifying potentially useful sources, contacting and interviewing the right individuals, and of course recording and transcribing the contents of the interactions. “Bengal Partition Repository” is steadily emerging as a site for re-living the experience of the Partition. And that’s exactly what constitutes its *raison d’être*.

