**CHAPTER 1 Contd.....**

**Consequences of Partition**

1947 witnessed the largest, most abrupt, unplanned and tragic transfer of population that was a shame in human history. There were killings, atrocities and on the basis of religion, people of one community ruthlessly killed and maimed people of the other community. Lahore, Amritsar and Kolkata became divided into ‘communal zones’. Muslims would avoid going into an area where mainly Hindus or Sikhs lived; similarly the Hindus and Sikhs stayed away from areas of Muslim predominance.

 People are forced to abandon their homes and move across borders. Minorities on both sides of the border had to take secured temporary shelter called ‘refugee camps’. They travelled to the other side of the new by foot which we have even witnessed in the lockdown and they were often attacked, killed or raped. Thousands of women were abducted on both sides of the border were made to convert to the religion of the abductor and were forced into marriage. In many cases women were killed by their own family members to preserve the ‘family honour’. Even the children were separated from their parents. Those who did manage to cross the border found that they had no home. For lakhs of these ‘refugees’ the country’s freedom meant life in ‘refugee camps’, for months and sometimes for years.
Survivors themselves used to describe Partition — as a ‘division of hearts’. The Partition was not merely a division of properties, liabilities

and assets, or a political division of the country and the administrative apparatus. What also got divided were the financial assets, and things like tables, chairs, typewriters, paper-clips, books and also musical instruments of the police band! The employees of the government and the railways were also ‘divided’. Above all, it was a violent separation of communities who had hitherto lived together as neighbours.

 It is estimated that the Partition forced about 80 lakh people to migrate across the new border.

About five to ten lakh people were killed in Partition related violence.

Partition posed another deeper issue. The leaders of the Indian national struggle did not believe in the two-nation theory. And yet, partition on religious basis had taken place. Did that make India a Hindu nation automatically? Even after large scale migration of Muslims to the newly created Pakistan, the Muslim population in India accounted for 12 per cent of the total population in 1951. So, how would the government of India treat its Muslim citizens and other religious minorities (Sikhs, Christians, Jains, Buddhists, Parsis and Jews)? The Partition had already created severe conflict between the two communities. Most leaders of the national movement believed that India must treat persons of all religions equally.