[Oral history with Parul Ghosh, 2025 March 25](https://exhibits.stanford.edu/1947-partition/catalog/wb507sk3243)

Title:

Oral history with Parul Ghosh, 2025 March 25

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Description:

Parul Ghosh was born in 1962 (her passport states 1964, but it was issued by her husband, who guessed the year without confirming with her) in Dhaka. She was around 8-9 years old during the liberation war of 1971. She had 4 brothers and 3 sisters. Her father was a very renowned businessman and had a huge reputation over the area. Their house was the biggest house in that area. As prior to war childhood experience, she recalled playing with his siblings, going on boat journeys with his father. As Bangladesh is a land of river, despite living amidst urban life, her father often took her and his siblings to boat journeys, where they stayed on boat all day, cooking, eating and sleeping all day on boat. She also mentioned their house which was so big and full of greenery. They had different types of plants and trees on their roof and in their garden, and they kept pigeons, chickens and ducks as pets. As most people do not have that big garden and rooftop, in the afternoon, children from other houses also visit them everyday. They used to play together, enjoy all festivals together, regardless of religion. People did not have that much communal perspective that time so it was quite common for people of one religion to join the festivals of another religion. They were in Dhaka on the night of March 25,1971. They were sleeping that night. Suddenly, they heard a loud sound. Before realizing what happened, she saw her father running to the room, waking up everyone. As she was sleepy, she didn't understand the reason. Then she looked outside, and saw a huge fire near English road. Houses on the other side of the road were burning, people were shouting. There was smoke all around. There was the Awami league office in their area. The Pakistan army set fire to the office and started their activities from there. Her parents woke up all the children. There were a lot of people on the road. She was going to the Buri Ganga river on foot with her parents. There were firing sounds as well as shouting noise on their way. She said, "The situation was very terrible". After reaching the river, it was very hard for them to find a boat because of the large crowd. Her father somehow managed a boat with great effort. They crossed the river using the boat, went to Kaliganj . They spent lots of days without food. She told, "We spent countless nights hungry. Back then, we barely had anything to eat. On top of that, there were so many siblings". Some people were not accepting them seeing that many people. Once, some villagers gave them sweet potatoes to eat, as there was nothing else to eat. Another day, villagers were cooking only rice for their family and also for mrs.Ghosh's family. Some people were eating nearby. Suddenly they heard that, the Pakistan military was going to attack the village soon. Hearing the news, they left behind pots full of rice, some even left their plates of food, and started moving. As everyone started running, many were trampled underfoot and died. After walking for a long time, many people's feet got swollen. Bit by bit, through much hardship, crossing many villages and rural areas, sometimes with agents, sometimes through people, they made it to India. But, since they had many siblings, they faced a lot of difficulties. Once, the siblings got separated on the way. Their father went one way with three younger siblings, and the rest of them ended up in another direction. Her mother started crying as they couldn't find them. At last, they somehow found each other and regrouped. While recounting the incident, her gaze becomes fixed at one spot, perhaps, she was remembering that time and feeling the terror of those moments again. She continued, "We had to move while staying submerged in pond, hiding and sneaking along the way. Even, once, the agent looted us, as we had no other choice than believing what others say ". They trusted the agent. The agent told them he would lead them to the border, but he took them to a quiet forest, and took everything -money, gold from them. They tied up their hands. She and her family were held captured there for nearly two days. They became so weak. Then the agent took them to another unknown village, and then, they disappeared. When they were taking all money, her elder brother cleverly hid some of it in the drain behind them, and did not give them everything. That small amount of money was their only remaining possession. From there, they did not know where to go next. She added that, that time, they were seeking just for a safe place from Pakistan army. Fortunately, they saw that some people were walking in a certain direction. Her father decided to follow them, not knowing where they would lead them. She recounted, she had an elder sister who was very beautiful, and her mother used to smear her face with soot to hide her beauty. She kept saying that," We never thought at that time that everything would be normal. We would be able to come back home and lead a normal life as before". She told that a 14 years old girl, her neighbour , ran with her younger brother, when the army killed her elder brother and father as well as her husband. It was her marriage ceremony. She was running with her brother, a bullet passed touching his brother's ears, blood was coming from there but still they were running. She had no idea about her mother and other neighbours . After running for hours, they took shelter near a mosque. But the Pakistan army controlled the mosque, gathered all the villagers there. They told them to say their prayer. Her little brother was too small. He was so frightened. So, he made some mistakes while saying his prayer. The Pakistan army shot him instantly in front of his sister. She was so traumatized that she lived her entire life alone. But the incident that kept scar in her life was- the missing of her sister-in-law. She shared, on March 24th, her sister-in-law fell ill and was admitted to Dhaka Medical College. After chaos broke out on March 25th, the entire family left Dhaka, but at that time, no one remembered her sister-in-law. By the time they did remember her, it was already too late. The situation in Dhaka had deteriorated severely, and there was no way to return or get permission to enter the city. Later, there was no further news of her sister-in-law. The last time they saw her was on March 24th, when she left the house. Despite many efforts to find her, she was never found. Her one-month-old baby never got to see its mother again. She gloomily stated, “That child never even got the chance to understand what a mother truly is”.

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