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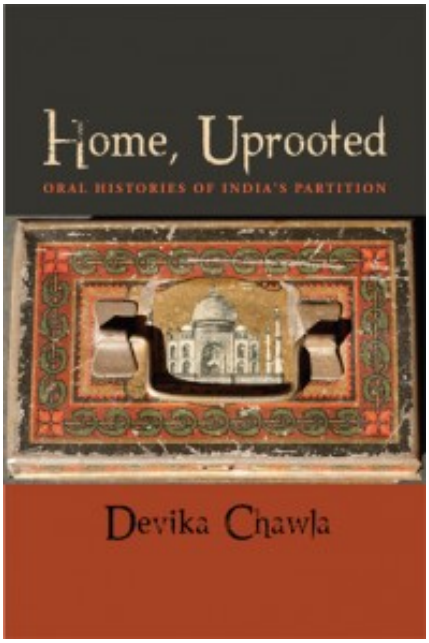
Home, Uprooted: Oral Histories of Indias Partition



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About the Book

The Indian Independence Act of 1947 granted India freedom from British rule, signaling the formal end of the British Raj in the subcontinent. This freedom, though, came at a price: partition, the division of the country into India and Pakistan, and the communal riots that followed. These riots resulted in the deaths of an estimated 1 million Hindus and Muslims and the displacement of about 20 million persons on both sides of the border. This watershed socioeconomic–geopolitical moment cast an enduring shadow on India's relationship with neighboring Pakistan. Presenting a perspective of the middle-class refugees who were forced from their homes, jobs, and lives with the withdrawal of British rule in India, *Home, Uprooted* delves into the lives of forty-five Partition refugees and their descendants to show how this epochal event continues to shape their lives.

Exploring the oral histories of three generations of refugees from India's Partition—ten Hindu and Sikh families in Delhi, *Home, Uprooted* melds oral histories with a fresh perspective on current literature to unravel the emergent conceptual nexus of home, travel, and identity in the stories of the participants. Author Devika Chawla argues that the ways in which her participants imagine, recollect, memorialize, or "abandon" home in their everyday narratives give us unique insights into how refugee identities are constituted. These stories reveal how migrations are enacted and what home—in its sense, absence, and presence—can mean for displaced populations.

Written in an accessible and experimental style that blends biography, autobiography, essay, and performative writing, Home, Uprooted folds in field narratives with Chawla's own family history, which was also shaped by the Partition event and her self-

propelled migration to North America. In contemplating and living their stories of home, she attempts to show how her own ancestral legacies of Partition displacement bear relief.

Home—how we experience it and what it says about the "selves" we come to occupy—is a crucial question of our contemporary moment. *Home, Uprooted* delivers a unique and poignant perspective on this timely question. This compilation of stories offers an iteration of how diasporic migrations might be enacted and what "home" means to displaced populations.

About the Author

Devika Chawla is Associate Professor in the School of Communication Studies at Ohio University. She is the co-author of Intercultural Communication: An Ecological Approach and co-author of Liminal Traces: Storying, Performing, and Embodying Postcoloniality.

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Second Floor, Prakashdeep 22, Delhi Medical Association Road, Darya Ganj, New Delhi – 110 002
Phone No : +91-11-4357-2647
Email ID : info@devbooks.co.in
Website : devbooks.co.in