

## **A line in the Sand**

A line. A simple, one-dimensional mark. It may be the edge of a square, the shortest distance between two points, or markings on the road. Lines, gentlemen, are boring yet useful tools in life. Right? Wrong! There is one line I would like to tell you about. If you were seen stepping over this line, it would result in your death on the spot, no questions asked. This is a line drawn in the sand. This line has caused the largest population movement ever witnessed by humankind. Upon construction of this line, 3.5 million people had to move from one side and 5 million from the other. There are estimates that more than 20 million people were left homeless after the construction of this line. Who said lines were boring, not me!

However, it runs deeper than that. Not only did people have to move, more than one million people were butchered on the construction of this line. The positioning of this line has been the cause of three wars: three bloody brutal wars. Now can I ask you, who in the right mind would make such a line as this? They would have to be mighty inhuman to draw a line that would kill a million people. But in the end, all they had done, was to draw a line in the sand, just a line in sand...nothing more, nothing less

So where do you think this line is? Between Israel and Palestine...no Between North and South Korea...no. Between the former north and South Vietnam,...wrong again. The line, gentlemen was drawn in the state of Punjab, in 1947, in what was then undivided British India. The line created and separated Pakistan from India. Ancient India, which gave us modern numbering system, which gave us steel, which gave us surgery, was destroyed by a line in the sand. Culture and civilisations spanning thousands of years were split apart by a line in the sand. A country was shattered....shattered by a line in the sand.

Fifty-five years on and the trade of insults from leader to leader continues; two mighty armies stand poised to strike each other; the world sleeps uneasily knowing their nuclear capabilities; sporting, cultural and tourism ties are discouraged. The question must surely be raised-was it all worth in the end? Was the line the right answer? In my heart, I know it was not, as the tensions between Pakistan and India concerning the issue of Kashmir and terrorism continues to plague in present times.

However, this is not an isolated issue. If we look beyond India, there are similar lines all over the world. Israel and Palestine, North and South Korea, Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic, Pakistan and Bangladesh, Singapore and Malaysia, East and West Timor, the lines cut across former Yugoslavia. We all have this one home, our beautiful planet Earth- the only home we will ever have – and we keep trying to make it smaller and smaller and smaller.

The smaller it gets, the uglier it becomes. We create a them-and-us mentality. We rejoice in how much better our side of the line is as compared to theirs. We create hatred between fellow human beings. We allow people to hunt and kill other men, women and children-because they are on the other side of the line in the sand. We are willing to attack Iraq and kill its children as 'collateral damage'. However, do we realise that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. That all of us are entitled to all rights and freedom, without any distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other status. That every human being has a right to life, liberty and should not be subjected to torture or cruel inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. All this because we do not agree with that side of the line. If we could just remember that both sides are on the same side of Earth, we would not have terrorism to fight today. We could all instead be living in peace and harmony.

As the song says:

We are a rock revolving around a golden Sun;  
We are 6 billion children rolled into one;  
Why should one baby feel so hungry as she cries?  
Lines in the sand bring saltwater to my eyes.