1. Why is Partition important to the post 1947 history of India? What specific problems of the post-colonial Indian state, from the period we have studied, do you see as direct results of Partition?

Partition serves as a singularly important part of Indian history post-1947 because the cultural displacement and tensions it caused became the source of nearly every political challenge the new leaders of India faced in the first years of the new government. For instance

1. The Division of Kashmir

- Perfect example of cultural/religious issue turned political. The issue stemmed from the fact that a state with a Muslim majority was ruled a Hindu prince, Hari Singh, and therein had no clear choice as to whether to join India or Pakistan. While being a cultural issue at heart, the conflict was highly political in nature because it would have been considered a political statement for either nation to make a military move to secure Kashmir for themselves. For instance, Hari Singh is quoted in Ramachandra Guha’s book, *India After Gandhi*, saying, “The only thing that will change our mind is one side or the other decides to use force against us” (Guha 79). Moreover, the cultural conflict between the Hindus of Kashmir and the Muslims of Poonch in Pakistan gave India an excuse to move in and claim Kashmir, as their forces defended Kashmir from the invading Pakistani forces.

2. Refugee Placement – Another cultural problem which became a massive political issue was the care and rehabilitation of refugees flooding in from Pakistan and the areas ravaged by riots and religious violence. The new Indian government suddenly found themselves faced with the problem of helping countless refugees, with no skills aside from working the land, into a position where they could fend for themselves. While the government’s methods, such as the graded cut and standard acre, were effective, the government still had to face the reality that a massive piece of their population remained traumatized and culturally displaced. As Guha stated, “The economy could be rebuilt, but the cultural wrongs of partition could never be undone. […] The Sikhs once more had land to cultivate, but they would never get back much loved places of worship” (Guha 100).

2. Gandhi envisaged a very different state from the one that emerged in 1947-50. Do you think the leaders of the INC and Constituent Assembly took the right path in moving away from Gandhi’s vision for independent India? Why or why not?

While Gandhi’s vision for India would be the best solution in a better situation, in 1947-1950 it was highly idealistic to think that the villages of India would be able to effectively govern themselves after decades of British colonialism ruling their daily lives. In this regard, the INC was wise not to surrender all power to the villages, however, leaving more power in the hands of the princely states could have avoided a great deal of trouble in deciding representation of minorities and appeasing the nation at large.

1. Many felt that the republican system was a sign of surrender to Western influence. – Had Gandhi’s vision for the new Indian state been carried out,
there could have been no complaints that the new government was selling out to Western principles. However, since the Constituent Assembly chose a governmental model which placed more power in federal hands, the echoes of Western government haunted many who had fought to remove the British and Western influence from India. Guha quotes K. Hanumanthaiya saying that “freedom fighters like himself had wanted the music of *Veena* or *Sitar*, what they had got instead was the music of an English band” (Guha121).

2. Minorities would have been better represented in smaller assemblies – In a system which placed power in the hands of the states, each state could allow their own minorities to be represent appropriately. In states with Muslim majorities, the Muslim community would have a voice in decisions, rather than the national model, in which religious minorities such as Muslims and Seikhs had little chance of pulling a majority vote in the favor. For instance, when Muslim member of the Constituent Assembly, B. Pocker Bahadur, requested separate electorates to protect the voice of the Muslim community, he was told by home minister, Sardar Patel, that “those who want that kind of thing have a place in Pakistan, not here. Here, we are building a nation and we are laying the foundations of One Nation, and those who chose to divide again and sow the seeds of disruption will have no place, no quarter, here” (Guha 124).

3. What do you see as the biggest problem confronting the newly-independent Indian state? You can choose from the following or make your own case from some other problem:

Refugees; Integration of Princely States; Extremist Hindu Nationalists such as the RSS; Fissures within the INC.

Refugees posed the biggest threat to the stability of the newly formed Indian state due to the fact that they drained the nation’s resources and were unable to contribute to the economy. Moreover, efforts made by the new government to make the individual into the ultimate political unit were wasted if their population was displaced and unable to participate in politics.

1. The government wasted valuable time and resources tracking down abducted women – Women abducted during the migration were meticulously tracked down by the government, often to their displeasure, for the women had in many case acclimated to their new environment. Also, many who were returned were pregnant with the children of their kidnappers; children who would have no place in the world as both refugees and children born of two religions. Guha describes the women’s plight saying, “They had been ‘defiled’ and, in further complication, many were pregnant. These women knew that even if they accepted, their children – born out of a union with ‘the enemy’ – would never be” (Guha 108).

2. Lack of food because the land workers had all lost their land – “A politician […] found men and women surviving on tararind seeds, palmyra fruits, and the bark of the jeelugu tree – these were boiled together into gruel that caused bloating, diarrhea, and sometimes death” (Guha 108).
3. Embittered refugees posed threat to new government – Displaced and living in terrible conditions, it was only too easy for refugees to turn against the government and fall prey to extremist ideologies. The Communist Party, for example, gained much support from refugee communities. Guha states, “it was the communists who organized the processions to government offices, and it was they who orchestrated the forcible occupation of fallow land in Calcutta, land to which the refugees ‘had no sanction other than organized strength and dire necessity’” (Guha 106).

4. Do you think the film, *Dynasty: the Nehru Gandhi Story* adds to our understanding of this period of Indian History or does it oversimplify the situation. Provide specific reasons from Guha and the film to support your thesis.

   I think that the film both adds to our understanding and oversimplifies the situation, in that the film offers a more concise and linear description of the situation, which makes it easier to follow and understand the progression of events. However, the film also focuses so intently on the life of Nehru and his family members, that it gives the impression he was the only player in the birth of independent India.

   1. Nehru’s affair with Lady Montbatten – While there was a decent portion of the film devoted to this pair and their relationship, Guha points out that it is unconfirmed whether or not the two even had an affair. Also, in terms of telling the tale of how India gained its independence, Nehru and Lady Montbatten’s potential affair is hardly relevant, interesting though it may be. For instance, Guha simply describes their relationship saying, “one who with both delicacy and truth can be referred to as his closest woman friend” (Guha 152).

   2. Focus on individuals rather than events – In the film, a great amount of time was devoted to Nehru’s family members and their various stints in prison, despite that these were time during which Nehru and his family could accomplish very little. While this aids to understanding Nehru’s role in independence, it doesn’t necessarily warrant more attention than larger issues, such as the conflict in Kashmir, which was covered very quickly in the film, but that had a whole chapter in Guha’s book.