

Naseema Akhtar

Interviewer: Do I have your consent to send this interview to the Harvard archives.

Naseema Akhtar: yes, I give my permission.

Interviewer: what is your name?

Naseema Akhtar: My name is Naseema Akhtar. I'm the wife of Muhammad Yusuf.

Interviewer: how was your life before the partition?

Naseema Akhtar: It was very good. Hindus and Muslims used to live together. Then conflicts began and the partition happened. The process of the partition was very bad. People from both sides suffered. Some became homeless. Some lost their families and were stripped from their children. The Sikh used to kill any Muslims they saw. Fights could be seen happening on the streets and chowks. This was done by Lord Mountbatten. The British made the decisions about the distribution of land

Interviewer: where were you before the partition?

Naseema Akhtar: we used to be in Lahore, Punjab.

Interviewer: what were you doing at the time?

Naseema Akhtar: I was a student.

Interviewer: how were things before the partition?

Naseema Akhtar: very good

Interviewer: how was the atmosphere?

Naseema Akhtar: It was all very nice. Hindus and Muslims used to live together but when the conflict happened they became enemies.

Interviewer: what was it like during the partition? How did you learn about it.

Naseema Akhtar: conflicts used to happen. Hindus and Sikhs used to attack Muslims. I found about out through the news and through the fights on the streets. It was very bad.

Interviewer: where did you live during the partition?

Naseema Akhtar: Lahore, Punjab

Interviewer: did you migrate?

Naseema Akhtar: no, we were locals. We did not migrate. Shops and homes became abandoned.

Interviewer: how was it like in your house?

Naseema Akhtar: it wasn't nice. We couldn't leave our house due to all the riots and fights outside on the streets.

Interviewer: how was your area?

Naseema Akhtar: it was relatively better

Interviewer: who did you stay with?

Naseema Akhtar: with my mother and father. When my father died, I stayed with my mother and my brother, Iqbal.

Interviewer: did you interact with any migrants. How

Naseema Akhtar: some were satisfied, some weren't because they left all their belongings. The government helped them and the locals treated them nicely.

Interviewer: did you visit any refugee camps

Naseema Akhtar: no, but my father was there. My father used to look after the migrants. He used to look after their medical needs

Interviewer: did he tell you any stories about the camp

Naseema Akhtar: he used to look after the medical needs of the refugees. Once a train came which had mutilated people inside of it. It was very bad. There were dead kids, violated women in that train. the3 locals took care of the surviving people

Interviewer: what kind of diseases was common at the time?

Naseema Akhtar: it was mostly gastric problems. People had dysentery. It was due to bad food and negligence.

Interviewer: did your family suffer from them.

Naseema Akhtar: no

Interviewer: how was your education affected?

Naseema Akhtar: It wasn't affected a lot. Colleges were open. The locals helped the migrants a lot. They gave the migrant girls and boys scholarships. The poor got relief through these. I did not miss any school days

Interviewer: how was your families' livelihood affected?

Naseema Akhtar: it wasn't affected much as he was a major captain in the British army. So he remained that and was thus professionally set

Interviewer: how old were you?

Naseema Akhtar: 13 or 14 years, the result of matric came out later than expected due to the partition.

Interviewer: how was the response of the government and the civil society to the partition?

Naseema Akhtar: I don't know much about that. The government was fine but it was mostly the civilians being very helpful to the refugees.

Interviewer: how did the police and the army respond to the partition?

Naseema Akhtar: my father used to get posted where fights happened and then he used to medically look after the victims. The police was also alright

Interviewer: what was it like after the partition?

Naseema Akhtar: people were very helpful to each other. The civilians used to help the refugees

Interviewer: how was this life different from the life you had before the partition.

Naseema Akhtar: before the partition, we were a part of the British kingdom. It wasn't that bad but in that Hindus and Muslims had some conflicts between them. This is why Quaid e azam created a separate nation. The British used to prefer non Muslims in work.

Interviewer: how was your food and daily life affected?

Naseema Akhtar: it wasn't affected much.

Interviewer: did you go out during the partition.

Naseema Akhtar: we didn't have private cars, we had public buses etc.

Interviewer: what do you feel about the decision of the partition?

Naseema Akhtar: this was done by quaid e azam and liaqat Ali khan. They saw Muslims being mistreated and thus decided to make a new nation. This step was looked at negatively by some and positive by some others. It was seen as something bad due to people losing their homes, belongings, friends etc. so there were 2 opinions in the public

Interviewer: which opinion does u support?

Naseema Akhtar: I believe the partition was something good. You need to sacrifice what you have to gain something that you want.

Interviewer: was your opinion different during the partition.

Naseema Akhtar: it was the same but I was small then so I hadn't formulated my opinion back then. Now that I'm older and the partition has happened many people say it was something that shouldn't have happened but I disagree with them and say it was a needed step. Now people don't discriminate as much. The Hindus and Sikhs at the time were very bad.

Interviewer: can you tell us if you are still in contact with any of your friends from the period before the partition.

Naseema Akhtar: no

Interviewer: do you have any photographs

Naseema Akhtar: I might have a group photo. I'm not sure.

Interviewer: has anyone interviewed you about the partition before?

Naseema Akhtar: no. When the partition happened we were in Gujrat Punjab and Lahore Punjab so I only know things which happened in these 2 areas. We didn't migrate. This country has a lot of food like wheat, rice so things didn't get short as much in Punjab.

Interviewer: did you see any fights outside.

Naseema Akhtar: riots were very common. Warnings used to be sent in the middle of the night and messages were sent that "they are here they are here, the Hindus are here" so then we used to hide.

Interviewer: who controlled the messages?

Naseema Akhtar: the people used to control them themselves

Interviewer: were there any sirens

Naseema Akhtar: I think so.

Interviewer: thank you for giving the interview.

: