

Ayesha Faisal

QUESTIONS: 1947 PARTITION OF BRITISH INDIA: PARTITION STORIES

Before Partition

1. Describe life before Partition. Where were you before Partition happened? What were you doing? What were things like? What was the feeling then? (Your feelings, general atmosphere.)

My father was born the same year of the partition. His mother died while he was an infant due to prevalent cholera. At the time of partition, he was a couple of months old. His elder sister was about 10 to 12 years old. The younger two were between 6 to 10. It was panic. In fact, his eldest sister carried him in her lap. During the course, somehow he and his father and siblings split from the main family. So he was left with his father and sisters only.

What he heard from his sisters, as his father too died a few years later, he says that we came to Anarkali. There, some local resident gave them shelter. The person who gave them shelter adopted my father till my dada – paternal grandfather - relocated the rest of the family.

Elder sisters with my father reached Faisalabad. He was left behind. When they reached Faisalabad they found their relatives. The person who raised him did not tell him he was adopted. I think the one who raised him passed away. Then my father was further adopted by a lady who had remarried. She was a barren woman. She was very kind but the step-foster father was very cruel to him.

His second adoption was at age of 3 or so. As he grew up, perhaps during early teens, he started realizing how he was treated and was not given education. That's when he started enquiring – and so a chain of enquiry began. This is how he learnt truth about his family background and was finally able to unite with his biological sisters and his eldest uncle and a cousin. He stayed with them for a while but he was sent back to his foster mother, who raised him. Unfortunately, he was not educated. He had no particular skill set. However, by the age of 20 or so he started to build himself. There was no circle of support. The partition caused him a lot. While Muslims were getting identity, he lost his identity!

During Partition

2. When and how did you learn about Partition? Please tell us about your experience: What happened during Partition? Where were you when Partition happened? Did you stay where you were or did you have to leave?



I learnt about it from my father, who learnt about it from his sisters and relatives. There was immense panic. Families lost each other. Trauma! Fear of death! Frankly, it was a blind leap - economically, socially and politically. To leave everything behind – the fact that he could never visit his mother's grave or know how she was buried etc. is so terrifying.

Migration

If you *migrated*:

3a. Where did you leave from/to? Which towns did you cross or stay in? How was the decision to leave reached? All the Muslims were leaving and in fact they were being forced to leave by Hindus who had captured.

3b. Who did you travel with? What method(s) of transportation did you take? Did people in your area leave? Who left, who stayed back?

TRAIN! The entire family and neighbours left and saw massacre around.

3c. What did you take with you and why? What did you end up with? What happened on the journey? Same as separating from family. They hardly carried anything along like money and clothes etc.

If you *did not migrate*:

3a. Please describe how it was decided to stay. Where did you stay? Who did you stay with?

As mentioned above they came to Anarkali and that's where he was adopted by a stranger who came forth to help.

3b. Did you interact with migrants? How?

Locals and fellow immigrants were very supportive as this is how they perhaps reached Faisalabad

Refugee Camps

3. Were you at a refugee camp (at any point on the journey)?

If yes, then: 4a. Where was the camp? (Location)



4b. When were you there? (If you don't remember exact dates, try to remember season, recent events, or year.)

4c. How long were you there? How did you decide to leave the camp?

4d. How many people were there?

4e. Describe life at the camp. (Food, water, medicine/medical care, sanitation, activities at the camp, work/money, registration, deaths.)

4f. Was there any temporary education center? Did you study there? Do you have any certificate?

Health

4. Could you tell us what kind of diseases or illnesses were common at the time of Partition?

Cholera due to which his mother died. That's why people also panicked and ran to Pakistan.

5. Did you, or anyone you know of, experience any health-related issues during Partition (for e.g. diseases, injuries, or mental illnesses)? If yes, did you get any help to deal with those issues during that time? Who provided help?

There was hunger. No sources. Only God knows how an infant like my father survived!

Education

6. What was the impact of Partition on your education? Did you change your stream? Could you tell us if you missed school/ college, and if yes, for how long?

Couldn't be educated due to loss of family. His foster mother took care of him very well but his step-foster father wasn't kind at all.

Livelihood/ Profession

8. How did the Partition impact your livelihood/ professional life?

Response of the Government and Civil Society



9. How did the government and/or civil society in the new countries respond to the Partition? What do you think they did well and where did they falter? Do you remember any other individuals that were active during that time?
10. What do you remember about the role of the police and military during the Partition?

After Partition

11 What was it like after Partition? Was life any different than it was before Partition happened? (Did you undergo any lifestyle changes as a result of Partition? For example: change schools, eat different foods, aspects of daily life and care, etc.)

12. How do you feel about the decision of Partition? Is that any different than how you felt in 1947-8?

13. Have you been, or are you, in touch (present or in past) with anyone from your birth place/ location before Partition? Would you like to share anything about that communication?

No! It could not be formed. My father visited his mother's family once as they too had settled in Faisalabad. Sometimes, I think of my Dadi's (my father biological mother) family too. I wonder how they must be thinking of their grandchildren (my father and his siblings) and their son-in-law (my dada) or that how they cannot revisit her grave.

14. Can you share any photographs or memorabilia with us from the time of Partition?

15. Have you been interviewed before? If yes, by whom?
Never!

AFTER COMPLETING THE INTERVIEW, PLEASE CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY

- Permission to use your name, first name (or initials) in our study. Name **Ayesha Faisal** First name **YES** Initials
- Permission to use quotes/excerpts from this interview. Name **YES**
Short name Anonymous
- Permission to use age, location during Partition, audio (name as above). Age **YES** Location **YES** Audio
- Permission for the information above to be included on the Harvard **YES** (grant permission) No (research only)

South Asia Institute website devoted to the research



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