

Dear Reader,

When I was a child, I often sat in my grandmother's room listening to her stories. At first, I thought they were fictional, things she made up to entertain me and my siblings. But as I got older, I understood that many of those stories—the scariest ones—were actually true. They were about the Partition of India, long before I was born.

Dadi never shied away from telling us the sad parts, or the parts full of violence. She told the unvarnished truth, and I never forgot it.

When I got married, my mother-in-law also had similar stories. By this time, I'd studied the Partition in high school and college in Pakistan, so it wasn't new information. But textbooks tell only dry, clinical accounts. Numbers and dates and places. The people they mention are the leaders, the heroes, and the villains. They don't tell the average person's story.

But as we all know, it's the personal story that brings something to life.

I've always wanted to write about the Partition, as a nod to my Dadi and my mother-in-law, and to all the other relatives who had the trauma of the Partition ingrained in their psyches. As I researched this book, I read and listened to numerous accounts of the elderly who shared their stories. It was a very difficult process for me, but I knew I had to bear witness. As that generation passes away, these stories are all we'll be left with.

I feel that it's my duty to pass on the knowledge in the form of Maha and her grandmother's story. I hope it's an enjoyable read, one that not only entertains but also informs and educates. I hope it encourages young people to talk to their elders, and ask them questions about their childhood. We all have incredible history in our families, and it's time we all learned about it.

Regards,

—Saadia Faruqi