REVISITING THE PARTITION MEMOIR
Talk At NMML, 24 Sept 2011

In the Preface to *Azaadi ki Chhaon Mein/In Freedom's Shade*, Anis Kidwai marvels at the fact it was she that Chance had thrust forward saying, 'Behold! Witness this saga of misfortune, and if you have the courage, safeguard this narrative!" The book was largely written over a period of about six months between September 1948 and January 1949, but remained unpublished until 1974. Its publication in Urdu in 1974 can be seen as the beginning of an unlocking of the Pandora's box of Partition memories, but unlike the many other fictional and some non-fictional accounts that were to come, Anis Kidwai's extraordinary memoir is an activist's *literary* memoir of her work in Delhi between 1947-48. In truth, her account was never written as a memoir, but as a report for the youth of India, but the intervention of 25 years between her writing and its publication ensured its reception as a remembrance of things past. Keeping this fact in mind is useful, as she writes as a witness who expects an immediate audience, which will not be far removed from the time and space as she is writing in. (Relate the anecdote that Rafi Ahmad Kidwai said the time for the book would come in fifty years and her indignant reaction).

Anis Kidwai's text is deeply conscious of the fact that to be a contemporary witness is a transactional role, in which not only must she present an account that will be meaningful to the memories that her readers have, she must also challenge the expected substance of their memories and strive to make her own account becomes the locus of memory itself. Impelled by the apprehension that the memorialisation of Partition in the popular imagination will be in terms of its sectarian violence and its 'Hindu' and 'Muslim' victims alone, and predicated upon the elision of memories of valiant and semi-organised resistance of ordinary citizens and the many Partitions it engendered, Anis Kidwai's 'memoir' seeks to safeguard a 'fuller' story of Partition than just its horror. In the words of Manas Ray, her imperative is not for a brand of the politics of memory that gestures at the treatment meted out to the Hindus by Muslims and vice versa, but because as Ray states, a past bereft of memories is the ideal ground for state sponsored nostalgia or even hate.

Further, because such a near-to-contemporaneous rendering of recent events must necessarily be an interpretive and constitutive one, her 'I' is an integral aspect of the narrative. This has an important consequence for the credibility of her account: to believe Anis Kidwai's I-witness account as a legitimate account of Partition, the reader must believe in *her*, and her witnessing eye. (This is frequently the case with influential memoirs of terrible events – the diary of *Anne Frank*, *All quiet on the western front*, *A Woman of Berlin*, and Kamlaben Patels's *Torn from the Roots*). Sixty years on, the response the book expects remains largely the same – to (re)visit the Partition(s) is undeniably to revisit *her* interpretation of it. Anis Kidwai wanted that this book should reach the hands of the younger generation before they set out, I think, for them to develop a memory that will serve as the truth that must trigger reconciliation.

The points I wish to make are illustrated at various points in the book – through

her direct interlocution with the reader, underspecified references to events, her interpretive meditations– but most powerfully in the first chapter.

I remember well that first 15 August—the designated day of liberation, rung in by the horrifying shrieks of terror resounding from Calcutta across to East and West Punjab. The day when the corpse of Delhi was being mangled underfoot, the day when women were being dishonoured. A day of freedom, yes, but a freedom slashed and streaked with blood. A day choked by smoke and fire.

The Government House echoed with the victims' moans and entreaties, yet we were happy. Or, truthfully, we forced ourselves to be happy. All else aside, the long years of struggle had borne fruit. Whatever else had happened, at least the yoke of slavery was undone. Perhaps with this freedom, the demons of communalism would also soon be exorcized. True, the nation was divided but even separate, the two parts could live in peace and prosperity.

> But on this day, even this feeble consolation was not to be available to many of us and we were to experience again a sense of servitude, of alienation, of otherness. I went searching for happiness that day but everywhere I went—and Begum Hayatullah and I had scoured the best part of the city by foot, rickshaw, car—there was the same gloom, the pall of despair that stifled the hope we once nurtured.
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> The tricolour's flutter could not lift our hearts, nor the roars of 'Inquilab Zindabad! ', or celebratory slogans charge us with triumphant pride. Signboards and posters in Hindi seemed to mock us. Hearts and spirits benumbed, our blood was cold.
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> On that day, India took its first steps back into the past. Foreheads were being anointed with tilaks. Why were brahmins from Banaras being summoned? Why were there frenetic searches for karis to enunciate the Quran? Why was chandan being prepared? Why were those long beards being carefully groomed? What could Buddhist bhikshus possibly have to do in the Government House? Were we to grow accustomed to the sound of wooden khadaus slapping its smooth floors?
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> Fretting and fuming, I made my way to the Government House that night. At the threshold, my head lifted with pride. This imposing entrance to this magnificent building, on which the tricolour proudly fluttered, was now to be the thoroughfare for all citizens—everything here was now ours, everyone who lived here, our comrade. Just as quickly though, the light in my heart was extinguished. The language being spoken around me was even more alien than English.
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> Seated all around on chaukis were Buddhist monks, brahmin priests, Muslim clerics, and God knows who else. Many languages were spoken that day—English, Sanskrit, Arabic, difficult Hindi—but not the sweet tongue that belongs to us all, in every expression of which a hundred flowers perfume the air
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> So much was said that day but none of us understood a word. Like me, the many women seated around, gaped at the spectacle with choked throats and incredulous eyes and, when it was over, returned home feeling as if the ground

> had shifted beneath our feet. Despite her best efforts, the first governor of independent India, Sarojini Naidu, could not read out the oath of office correctly. All of us who listened were stupefied. Truly, the new dhobi starches even the rags that come his way.
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> All the years we had waited and struggled, were they all for this moment? Who wanted to resurrect long-buried corpses of the past? Or wanted self-proclaimed stakeholders of religion to reign instead of democracy? Which fool could have aspired to a future in which the past—fat Hindu priests and all—held sway, where a few padres and karis were charged with consoling the minorities?
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> This was too painful. To witness this spectacle of Brahminism made our hair stand on end. We had been shown a glimpse of the terrible future. And those who had been cynical bystanders for the past twenty years could now gleefully taunt us, 'Now you see it, don't you? Hadn't we said that as soon as freedom is won, India would become a Hindu rashtra? This is why Pakistan is necessary; in fact, it was this mindset that gave birth to Pakistan in the first place!'
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> Chaudhary Ridaulvi gloated: 'It's all there in an article I wrote— the brahmin has always been dominant in India. Buddhism prospered but Brahminism ensured its ultimate obliteration. Islam shone only briefly, soon losing its identity to be coloured in the same hues as Brahminism. Christianity too bowed before Brahminism in the shape of the Theosophical Society, which acknowledges brahmin supremacy. Brahminism is hegemonic by nature. However much Gandhi may struggle, and all of you rant and rave, India will never be free of the Brahminical order.'
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> To listen to these taunts required great patience. We held our breath, waited, but no light shone through. Some of us wondered—what about ordinary people? The working classes, the poor, the farmers, the middle classes, how would they find a way out of this labyrinth? Those of us who willingly wore the burqa that the Congress gave us—only to be disappointed with the farce that was being enacted— felt that it was now our responsibility to lift this veil of deceit.

In this brief passage, right in the first few pages of the book, lie many the issues that Anis Kidwai's record demonstrates that the Partition posed to its witness, in terms of the range of things that were actually Partitioned. Besides geography itself, the Partition of India and Pakistan signifies a partitioning/separation of:

1. The nationalist ideal from the state that was now available -- All the years we had waited and struggled, were they all for this moment? (And throughout the book, the administrators [political leaders, police/army, officials] from its citizens); and of the new politics as distinct from which won the nation;
2. Of women from men: Like me, the many women seated around, gaped at the spectacle with choked throats and incredulous eyes and, when it was over, returned home feeling as if the ground had shifted beneath our feet. Later in the book, the abducted vs. the recovered woman, the woman social worker vs. society/ the woman forced to stay inside the house.

3. Of 'Muslims' and 'Hindus', of the self-proclaimed stakeholders of religion from those who merely are its believers; and elsewhere in the book, of the gentry/rich versus the poor/rural Muslim, the Dalit vs. the Brahmin, the nationalist/reformist Muslim vs. the conservative Muslim League one, within Hindu and Muslim Jats and Gujjars, and refugee Hindu\Sikh vs. the rural population.
4. Of language: the official vs. non official (English, Sanskrit, Arabic, difficult Hindi), and of women's multi-codal speech from those of men's.
5. Of Hindu refugees and sanctuary seekers (the Muslim internally displaced), of those who could return to their homes, and those who were forced to leave the country.
6. Of city and rural spaces in and around Delhi: the Muslim zones, the refugee camps, the mosques and monuments razed to the ground.
7. Of activists vs. Congressmen, of the Gandhian vs. the bigots, of male\Hindu and Muslim\upper caste activists from women\ students.
8. Of the future that awaits the refugees and sanctuary seekers vs. the ones who would not grant them a home; of a society that does not pay attention to the past.

I could go on and on, but this list suffices for making the point that thus far, reference to works like AKCM and Kamla Patel's *Torn from the Roots*, only a handful of partitions that these two books speak of have been explored – the partition between women and men, the partition of nation and state, and the partition between religions and faith. However, these two books are very significant than any other non-fiction account in the popular domain, for our (popular) understanding of what Partition exactly entailed. The societal decision to shut up and put away the period has societally disabled us in defining anything that was done then in terms of law and criminality, and establishing historical antecedence for many of the ills that plague us today, for many of these either originated or were fortified by what happened then. Just a few examples:

- The criminal collusion of state authorities in communal violence and internal displacement.
- Honour killings, khap panchayats, and the sexual exploitation of women by state officials (e.g. Rathore)
- Land grab, and the role of the state in facilitating it.
- Forced conversion (recall Vajpayee's call for a national debate on religious conversion
- The occupation and desecration of religious places (including the Babri Masjid, in which idols were installed in 1949), the most recent being the violence in Meo.
- The delinking of nationalism from its core components of social and redistributive justice and social reform.
- The denial of a secure access for women to the public spaces of the city in North India\Delhi.

I will now read two extracts from IFS that illustrate these points. The first extract is from Chapter 6:

[In December 1947], new waves of sanctuary seekers began to arrive, including villagers of Tihar, arriving in a 5,000-strong contingent, with sacks of grain, cots and sieves laden on trucks and bullock carts. Women in their finery trooped behind strapping men in striking pagdis, with the majestic bearing of conquerors. We were all taken aback by this new breed of refugees. We found that neither had their village been attacked nor had they lost clan members, but they were off to Pakistan because of an exchange of property between landlords on either side of the border.

Apparently, the deputy commissioner of police, Mr M.S. Randhawa, had arranged for the 40,000 bighas of land that he, his relatives and friends had to leave behind in Multan and Sindh to be exchanged with the 13,000 bighas belonging to a certain Badre Alam of Tihar. This had ruined the lives of 5,000 Muslims and 2,000 Harijans who lived and worked on his land. The Muslims, having The Muslims, having decided to follow their land, now trooped into Humayun's Tomb, but the 2,000 Harijans ... had been thrown out; the Delhi administration had decided to settle refugees there. She said to me, 'You always have a jeep, don't you? Why don't we go and see for ourselves?' We decided to go the next morning.

Tihar village is ten miles outside Delhi. On the way, we saw an unusual camp, where squads of young men were exercising. I asked Subhadra whether she knew what it was. She replied that they were RSS activists, assembled for the rally the Sangh was holding in Delhi soon. Of course! The build-up for the rally had been enormous.

Distinguished maharajas had descended on Delhi to participate; the Maharaja of Patiala (whose principality had seen the most barbarous slaughter) was to preside. (We later learnt that Sardar Patel graced the gathering and blessed the gathered heroes.) Progressives in Delhi were astounded that the rally was being allowed at all. In spite of Bapu's presence in the city, despite a Congress government being in power, this organization of malevolents was being permitted to congregate in Delhi, where rivers of blood had flowed barely months ago. To what dastardly end were these new efforts directed? Why did the government not comprehend the danger, not react? Was it so incapable of distinguishing friend from foe that it was ready to have rioters and murderers as fellow travellers?

Discussing these things, Subhadra and I reached Tihar. Outside the village, we encountered three old men, gazing at their lost homeland with longing. One said, '*Behenji*, see what injustice is being done to us! Our houses and lands will be given to refugees. We aren't allowed to even enter the village. For one month, our cattle have been tied up in the neighbouring village. Our children and our cattle are dying in the cold! Today the village is being cleaned up and soon . . .' He burst into tears. Poor man, to have to witness all this in the winter of his life! We asked, 'Who is responsible for all this?' The answer: 'The government.'

I nearly laughed out loud. When I asked the Muslims, 'Why have all of you come here? Who was it that made you leave the village?' I invariably heard, 'The government.' When I asked the Hindus who forcibly converted Muslims,

or the Muslims who were converted, 'Why did you force them to convert? And you, why did you give up your religion?' the reply always was, 'The government wanted it.' Both the persecutors and the ones they oppressed, both murderers and the ones they slaughtered, were killing and being killed in service of the government . . .

The old man narrated his tale of woe: 'Our village is the largest here, so the government made it into a camp and gathered all Muslims here. Soon, the population trebled. We exchanged sharp words with the new entrants whereas we had no conflict with our old Muslim neighbours. Then the government ordered all Muslims to be taken to the city camp. The *tehsildar* arrived with the police, the Muslims sold their ploughs and bullocks and were borne away in trucks. We hear they have been given land in Pakistan. Shortly after they left, we were evicted and, as you can see, it is now being prepared for refugees. All the houses are going to be handed over to them. We can't even enter— when they see us coming, they shout at us to leave.'

Touring the village, talking, I saw that it was quite large and fairly prosperous, with two-storeyed pakka houses and modest shacks. Hearing our footfalls, dogs peeped out from houses with pleading eyes—awaiting their masters. Their hollow stomachs, their wobbly legs spoke of how hunger had brought them to the brink of death.

Hailing a passing policeman, we asked for the custodian inspector. He took us to where the gentleman, seated on a bamboo stool under a shady tree, was overseeing men at work. Houses were being emptied, belongings being piled on to a raised platform outside a zamindar's house. Seeing us, he rose. Catching sight of the three old men with us, he snapped, 'What are you doing here? Leave at once!' I intervened, 'My brother, this is their village, their homes are being emptied, and you order them to leave? What violence is this!' He said, 'Madam, you don't understand. These fellows are all thieves—if I take my eyes off them for a second, they will nick something!' My intervention had bolstered the courage of our three old companions, but these words robbed them of their courage. The inspector scolded them again, 'Hurry up and get out! Don't loiter!' Wiping their tears, the poor old men started retracing their steps.

Deliberately not introducing ourselves, we drew up a charpoy and sat down to chat, 'So, you are having the village cleaned up? It would have been quite dirty, no? Are refugees going to be settled here?' The inspector replied, 'Yes, this village and all the lands that abut it have been allotted to them.' We enquired further, 'And all this is now with the Custodian of Evacuee Property, isn't it?'

'Yes, that's correct. It has also been decided that an agricultural college and its farm will be instituted here. There's a grand scheme in the works.' In a friendly tone, we asked, 'But, how can the property of a Hindu brother be classified as evacuee property?' Nonchalantly, he replied, 'Why, there's no problem. The Hindus have also fled.' We persisted, 'But we don't understand. While the Muslims will get the land and houses left behind by the Hindu refugees in Pakistan, what will the Hindu farmers do? Without their lands, they will starve.'

He replied indifferently, ‘Why, they could be given some land in the farms that will be established here. At worst, they could find work on the refugees’ lands.’

Amazed, we asked, ‘Do you see no injustice in this at all? Your plans will make someone who is a landowner in his own right a mere labourer on the very land that was once his?’ ‘Well, if he is desperate, that is what he will have to accept, won’t he?’

Angered, we now felt it necessary to interrogate him fully. We asked sternly, ‘By whose order was this done? Whose decision was it? What is your name?’

The inspector was flustered, ‘But you haven’t told me who you are yet. I gather you have come from the city, but why?’ We didn’t answer and rose to leave. Panicking, he rattled off his name. I must say I quite enjoyed his obvious discomfiture.

As we walked back, he trailed us and, to impress us of his compassion, remarked, ‘Madam, what really moves me is the state of these dogs. See how they start at every approaching footstep. Hunger has weakened them beyond words. We will really have to do something for their sustenance. I wonder how we can help them?’ I could no longer restrain my laughter. ‘You had no qualms in throwing out people from their homes, but are consumed with concern for the well-being of their dogs. Wonderful!’

Smiling sheepishly, he followed us to our car. A few feet away stood the three villagers, still wiping their tears. Wordlessly, they folded their hands before Subhadra in an urgent plea for help—they had now recognized who she was.

On the way back, Subhadra and I discussed our plan of action. She would go to Bapu and I was to try to meet the prime minister. Bapu was dismayed and said, ‘It appears that I must die now!’ Our hearts wept at hearing this. Quite frequently these days, Bapu would speak thus, ‘I’ve been born here only to die,’ ‘I’ve staked my life,’ ‘I won’t live for another ten years . . .’

The prime minister was equally distraught. He asked, ‘But why did the villagers leave at all? My daughter and I had visited them and asked them to stay.’ How was he to know that his officials didn’t share his convictions? Two parallel administrations were in existence—the reins of one were in the hands of some divisive hooligans, of the other in Bapu’s hallowed hands. Truth was weak, untruth powerful. That which Bapu sought to accomplish required patience but all that these merchants of terror, these adversaries of the nation, desired could be accomplished in a trice.

Nevertheless, Bapu and Nehru said that they would again ask the local government for an explanation. Bapu advised us to at once resettle the evicted in their homes. Subhadra left immediately, and by 10 p.m., cattle had been brought back to the village and tethered outside their owners’ houses. ‘This is Bapu’s command—return to your houses. If anyone challenges you, don’t pay attention. We will handle it.’

The inspector and his men left at night, and early the next day, 2,000 Hindus were restored their homes. As Subhadra was leaving, the villagers had another request, ‘Can you perform another act of mercy? Please bring our Muslim brothers back as well.’ Many also went to the camp to beg their Muslim

> brothers to return with them. That which had been effected at Bapu's command, no one dared question. The prime minister announced that if the Muslims were ready to return from the camp, their property would be restored to them just as it had been to the Hindus. It was up to us to persuade the Muslims to return. Alas! We were unsuccessful.

The second extract is from Chapter 15, and has been chosen I confess as much for the writing as the information it gives us.

> One day, sometime in July or August 1948, Chaudhary Abdul Sattar, a member of Ahrar Party, asked me to see what was being done to Dargah-e- Shah-e-Mardaa, also known as 'Old Karbala'.
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> In the magnificent gateway of this monument, wrought in the finest marble, refugees had set up residence. In small rooms lining the walls on either side too, people lived. Some had even settled into parts of the monument proper. The little plaques of marble once affixed to graves (taveezes) were now used as mosaic in courtyards and as tiles for bathing places.
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> The cemetery was full of centuries-old blocks of engraved marble, now wrenched from the ground and put aside for use. The courtyard of the exquisitely inlaid mausoleum still bore the footmarks of Hazrat Ali (may Allah have mercy on his soul) but almost everything else— door frames, thresholds, inlays, mirrors—had been broken. Coarse white gravel dusted the ground, as stone worth lakhs of rupees lay in shards. Such destruction could only have been wrought by the hard labour of scores of men over several weeks.
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> My companions told me that this was the most sacred of Delhi's Shia monuments. Every year during Muharram and other holy occasions, Shias from as far as Iran and Iraq would arrive on pilgrimage. Spotting a small black engraved stone, I bent to pick it up—it was a piece of a taveez of a sultan's grave. From this shard, I could not learn his name or his years, as this information must have been given below. Spotting another, I stooped again—was this beautifully calligraphed piece the remembrance of some pleasure-seeking prince? Or of a wise man rich with learning about the faith? Or of a fakir who had renounced the ways of the world?
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> All the fragments spoke, communicating to us the stories of imams, learned men, princes, fakirs. They too had once roamed a world like ours, alive and sentient. In a Delhi not so different from ours, their greatness had once been heralded and the foundations of their knowledge and morality firmed. In this very city, they had spent the heady days of their youth in pleasure and celebration, and some corner of this place may once have become a spot for piety and contemplation. And to all these people must have come others, in the quest for enlightenment of the spirit or the riches of the world; on occasion, they too would have made the supplicants a victim of their arrogance. And on this very land would also have been some that called to Allah and steered His wretched towards compassion. Today, hammers pounded at all these people's bones; in Aliganj, tractors drove across them. If any of them were to return today, how incredulous they would be to find that this desecration was not the handiwork of beasts but the work of educated,

cultured men!

This is the way the world has always been. At times, the living are killed and graves made for them; at others, the dead are dug up to make way for monuments for the living. In the great circle of Creation, all this has the significance of a mere moment; but Man cannot comprehend this.

After inspecting the monument, when we returned to the courtyard, we were surrounded by irate refugees. Some women stepped up to throw their children at my feet, 'Look at our children, dying, and you have no concern. We are rotting here and nobody even gets us a house.' Some shouted, 'And these Muslims trouble us night and day.' Surprised, I asked, 'Muslims? But my dear bibis, no Muslims are left for miles around. Where do they come from to trouble you?'

The reply: the 'Muslims' they referred to were snakes, which had bitten and killed many children and elders. I was incredulous. 'So, Muslims are snakes?' Then I explained that their own mistakes had led to this situation. 'By disturbing this monument and cemetery which is scores of years old, you have invited the snakes. These old structures must have been their homes. You dug up their homes, so they revenge themselves upon you.

'As for getting you houses, we will certainly help you. Approach the Shanti Dal, apply for help, we will give you all the assistance you need to tackle your difficulties. And just reflect on the appalling thing you have done. You needn't have destroyed the cemetery—what harm could graves do to you? You could have just left out that portion and lived in the monument.'

The crowd protested that it was not responsible for the destruction of the cemetery. They had arrived later, after truckloads of people had dug it up. My companion told me that until April 1948, the monument and the cemetery had been unharmed, which meant that the destruction took place in May–June 1948.

Nizamuddin Dargah nearly met the same fate, as it had been declared as Evacuee Property, and was to be destroyed, until Anis Kidwai intervened. It took her nearly eight years to wrest it back from the clutches of the Custodian.

Two final points before I close. In the course of this translation, I have been struck by the fact that our gaze on these women social workers implicitly casts them as covert agents of the state's patriarchal agenda, variously hapless and/or sympathetic. Our appraisal of them has been from the perspective of those that were charged with, but perhaps today we need to consider the issue more fully than we have done so far. My research for the translation alerted me to significant gender differences in the form, style, and content in the non-fiction contemporary accounts of Partition that I have read. Very briefly, although both Kamla Patel's memoir and AKCM are based on diaries, the narratives their reminiscences produce have a deeply personal and confessional tone, and the narrative form is essentially that of an *aap-beeti*, where the reflections, doubts, and the introspections of the witnessing eye inhere in the text. Comparing these to the diary record of Ganda Singh (*A Diary of Partition Days*, published in 1960, written in Patiala), and the narrative account of Khushdeva Singh (*Love is Stronger than Hate*, published in 1973, about his time in Dharampore) is

instructive, as they indicate another perspective we may bring to understanding Partition.
The gender distinction here is not between sensitivity or secularism; while Ganda Singh's diaries speak to a less than secular recording self, as not one entry in his diary records a crime committed against the Muslims, Khushdeva Singh's record of his efforts to save the lives of Sikhs, Muslims, and Hindu cannot be doubted. Rather, the distinction lies in that both women writers are conscious of the fact that as women, they must earn the autonomy and credibility of the eyewitness role that is available to men. The women's narrative is therefore as much as an account of personal growth and liberation, so that their relationship to the events they participate is one in which the events 'talk back' to them, and enable them to lay more claim to the public space they have now come to occupy. This difference, I would suggest, should lead us to examine the Partition experience as not only *rupture*, but possibly in some cases, an almost necessary situation in which a *transformational* freedom for elite women came to be a possibility.

My final point actually ties up with this last one – in order to grasp the reality of what happened then, we need to broaden our notion of the period of Partition to accommodate the fact that it was also the moment of freedom. The first extension I suggest, is in terms of the *length* of our gaze, -- what is the period that counts for 'Partition? It is possible, and perhaps even necessary, that we ask what happened to this eyewitness after Partition. What did he/she do with this experience? The question is important because our opinion today about what happened during Partition is obviously a mediated reception – whether through that of the generations that have preceded ours or through the narratives that have won. This interrogation does not necessarily produce only a personal biography -- in my own exploration of these questions for Anis Kidwai in the book, I have come to realize that many of the other women that Anis Kidwai worked with took the lessons they learnt from their experiences and sought to alter the public space itself. The fact that Anis Kidwai and Savitry Devi moved the first Punishment for Molestation of Women Bill in 1958 and that the amendment to the CrPC that outlawed bigamy was moved by Subhadra Joshi in 1957.

The second extension I would suggest is in terms of *breadth*, the scope of what we consider as literature relevant to this transformational aspect. It seems to me – unfortunately completely anecdotally – that there is more non-fiction out there on the matter than we think. For example, I have learnt that the nuclear scientist Anil Kakodkar's mother Kamla Kakodkar too was deputed by Gandhi and wrote a memoir about her experiences of working with the refugees, and of others as well. But even further extension is possible, if we are to consider the fact that Partition was perhaps the first time that the public space was populated with women as never before – as migrants, victims, social workers, and students, and that this radically altered notions of living in the world even for women that were relatively untouched by the trauma of rupture. Again, completely anecdotally, there seems to be quite a lot of aap beetis out there that need to be read and understood for what independence meant for (again, some elite) women and men.