

# PARTITION

By Sujata Bhatt

She was nineteen-years-old then  
and when she stood in her garden  
she could hear the cries of the people  
stranded in the Ahmedabad railway station.

She felt it was endless – their noise –  
a new sound added to the city.

Her aunt, her father's sister,  
would go to the station every day  
with food and water –

But she felt afraid,  
felt she could not go with her aunt –

So she stood in the garden  
listening. Even the birds sounded different –  
and the shadows cast by the neem trees  
brought no consolation.

And each day she wished  
she had the courage to go with her aunt –

And each day passed with her  
listening to the cries of the people.

Now, when my mother  
tells me this at midnight  
in her kitchen – she is  
seventy-years old and India  
is 'fifty'. 'But, of course,  
India is older than that,' she says,  
'India was always there.'

But how I wish I had  
gone with my aunt to the railway station –  
I still feel

guilty about that.'

And then she asks me:

'How could they  
have let a man  
who knew nothing  
about geography  
divide a country?'

