

Child of the Divide

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Extract

Scene One Pali's House

[WE COME UP ON PALI, A BOY OF NEARLY FIVE WITH HIS PARENTS, MANOHAR LAL AND KAUSHALYA IN THEIR HOUSE. THEY HAVE A FEW POSSESSIONS IN BUNDLES AND A SUITCASE CLEARLY AS THOUGH THEY ARE LEAVING. KAUSHALYA IS CARRYING A BABY IN HER ARMS. SHE IS LOOKING AROUND THE PLACE NOT WANTING TO LEAVE. THE SOUNDS CONTINUE]

MANOHAR LAL

Chalo Kaushalya. We agreed. No looking back.

PALI

I want to take my marbles.

KAUSHALYA

What will you do with them?

PALI

My marbles from my secret hidey hole!

MANOHAR LAL

Your mother had to bury her bridal jewellery. Everything will be safe.

KAUSHALYA

A married woman with a bare neck and wrists....

MANOHAR LAL

Don't look for omens Kaushalya. This is real.

[TO PALI]

We'll buy you marbles there.

PALI

I don't want to go.

KAUSHALYA

We have no choice....

PALI

But my friends?

KAUSHALYA

You'll make new friends.

PALI

I want the same friends.

MANOHAR LAL

One day, god willing we'll come back home.

PALI

Where are we going?

MANOHAR LAL

Across the border. India.

PALI

This is India.

MANOHAR LAL

It was. But not any more.....

MANOHAR LAL

[INNER VOICE]

How to say to my boy

The soil he stands on

No longer welcomes him as a son?

MANOHAR LAL

[TO PALI]

Now they've made this into a new country. Pakistan.

PALI

Did God make it?

MANOHAR LAL

Not God...

PALI

Who then?

KAUSHALYA

So many questions.

MANOHAR LAL

People...the whites rulers.....and us who don't trust ourselves to live together.

PALI

I didn't see you make it.

[A HUGE FIREWORK IS LET OFF. PALI GETS VERY SCARED]

MANOHAR LAL

It's all right son. Just the Freedom celebrations.

PALI

Scaring me.

KAUSHALYA

Adults are jumping out of their skins, let alone children.

MANOHAR LAL

[INTERNAL VOICE]

Fireworks drown
screams and cries
of people divided
A new dawn they said
And carved my country in two
Borders and lines
The price of freedom

Hindus to the right,
Muslims to the left.
I bundle up my family
And follow blind
I would have liked a say
In our fate.

MANOHAR LAL

We're in the hands of god.

KAUSHALYA

God has lost his faith today. Where does it leave us?

PALI

If I die will my soul come back?

KAUSHALYA

Sh..... You have your whole life ahead of you.

MANOHAR LAL

Your soul is everlasting son. Atma is Amar. No sword can kill it or water drown it, nor can fire burn it or wind dry it.

KAUSHALYA

Don't encourage him.

PALI

When Pitaji's a granddad and you're a grandma, you'll die and me and Gudiya (meaning the baby) will be on our own.

KAUSHALYA

You'll have each other. (looking at the thread round Pali's wrist) This rakhi she tied on you.....

PALI

She didn't tie it....she's a baby.

KAUSHALYA

You know what it means?

PALI

I know, I have to look after her forever...

KAUSHALYA

And her prayers will keep you safe.

PALI

She can't pray.

[AN URGENT VOICE FROM OUTSIDE SHOUTING SOMETHING ALONG THE LINES OF 'IT'S NOT SAFE FOR HINDUS. LORRIES ARE LEAVING FOR THE BORDER. HURRY']