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Felice Mathur

The luckier one

*Felice Mathur was born in 1920 in Vienna. Her father was Jewish. In 1939 she left Austria for Great Britain. Her father and her younger sister Grete perished in the Holocaust. Her mother died from cancer during the war. Today Mrs. Mathur lives in India. The following text is a letter written by Felice Mathur to the National Fund.*

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Sir,

[...]

As I am a victim – I shall tell you in short my story.

I was born Felice Spiegel in Vienna on the 15th of May 1920 of Austrian born parents. My father Adolf Spiegel was Jewish – my mother Karoline Spiegel pure "Aryan". I had a younger sister Grete (who was Catholic like my mother). My father and sister were supposedly killed in Auschwitz.

I – the luckier one – escaped and left on a domestic-permit end of March 1939 for England. May I mention that until March 1938 my family was comfortably off. We lived in a large flat in Wien III [1]. [...] We had two cars, my father was in business, had several meat-shops – which were after the "Anschluss" [2] confiscated. I studied in a *Realgymnasium* [3].

So I arrived in England. Until that day I had been overprotected, a governess constantly around me, [...] etc. etc. – I got a job as a housemaid – and survived. In May (on the 5th) 1941 I married an Indian scientist [...] in London [...], which made me a British citizen and I therefore could take on any job I liked and qualified for – so I worked on and off as an accounting clerk.

In 1950 I left England for India – where I have been living ever since. As India was by then independent – I was informed by the British High Commission that I had no right to be a British citizen. I therefore wrote to the Austrian Embassy (Delhi) [and] was informed I had no right to that citizenship either.

As I had to be something – I became a nationalized citizen of India in 1966.

For the past 20 years or so – I am living here in Bangalore alone – as I had left my husband. [...]

So this in short is my story. [...]

*Ich hätte natürlich ebenso gut in Deutsch schreiben können. Es tut mir leid, dass ich nicht anfangs daran dachte.*

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[1] 3rd District of Vienna.

[2] The "Anschluss" refers to the annexation of Austria and its integration into the German Reich on March 13th, 1938.

[3] A type of secondary school.