FEMALE RESPONSE TO THE PARTITION:

A STUDY OF SELECT PARTITION STORIES BY WOMEN WRITERS

A Thesis Submitted to Kuvempu University for the Award of
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English

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DECLARATION

I, hereby declare that the thesis entitled **Female Response to the Partition: A Study of Select Partition Stories by Women Writers** submitted to Kuvempu University,Shimoga district, Karnataka, India, for the fulfilment of the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English is a record of original and independent research work done by me during 2009-2015 under the supervision and guidance of **Dr.B.V. Rama Prasad** ,Associate Professor, Dept. of English, Kuvempu University, and it has not previsously formed the basis for the award of any Degree, Diploma, Fellowship or other similar title to any candidate of this University or any other University.

Place: Shankaraghatta
Date: 23-06-2015

Nazia Obed
Research Scholar

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled **Female Response to the Partition: A Study of Select Partition Stories by Women Writers** is a record of original and independent research work done by **Nazia Obed** at the Dept. of English, Kuvempu University, Shimoga district, Karnataka, India, as a Part Time Research Scholar during the period of study 2009-2015 under my guidence and supervision for the fulfilment of the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English I further certify that this research work has not previsously formed the basis for the award of any Degree, Diploma, Fellowship or other similar title to any candidate of this University or any other University.

Place: Shankaraghatta
Date: 23-06-2015

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TO

MAMA AND PAPA

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CONTENTS

Introduction

The thesis aims to analyze select Partition stories by women writers from a gender perspective. It has mainly focused on fourteen short stories by women writers that highlight different issues and offer fresh insights into the Partition.The stories are written in regional languages such as Urdu, Hindi, Sindhi, Kannada and Malayalam. All of them are available in translation, except *Krouncha Pakshigalu* (Kannada) by Vaidehi. Most of the stories were written in the first three decades after the Partition.

One of the central concerns of the thesis is to examine each of these writer's and their characters' response to the Partition as women.The thesis also explores the ways in which the narratives resist the authority of official history and the grand narratives of patriarchy, nation, religion and other hegemonic institutions.The stories are rich archives of alternate history. Each of the authors plays a crucial role in reconstructing history, from the perspective of the marginalized.

The research work has endeavored to explore the stories, with special emphasis on gender issues.That does not mean the writers touch upon only women's concerns or write only for women. Rather, they deal with a range of themes, such as displacement, trauma, migration, assimilation, politics, communalism, and nationalism, identity and others.

Chapter one is an introduction to the thesis. Unlike some other research works on the Partition, it does not discuss the political events leading up to the Partition. Instead, the stories are analyzed within the context of the socio-political, cultural and ideological forces that governed society. The Introduction provides the larger analytical and ideological framework of the thesis. The chapter begins with a brief synopsis of the national movement, emphasizing its ideals and vision, and how the ideals were violated ruthlessly during the Partition. It discusses the inadequacies of the mainstream history in doing justice to the common people, who were the real victims. The chapter also sheds light on the new histories of the Partition that are concerned with the experiences of the ordinary people, particularly women. As women have no visibility in mainstream history, we have to look for other sources. Partition narratives by women writers then acquire new significance, as valuable sources of history. In the chapter, the need to read women writers has been emphasized as they are important chroniclers of the hidden side of the past.

If one were to ask any Indian to choose one date which they consider as the most important in the history of India, he or she would most likely say 15th August 1947. It is a moment of immense pride for every Indian; for it was the day on which India achieved independence, putting an end to more than hundred years of British rule. The freedom was accomplished after a prolonged struggle and numerous sacrifices. The advent of freedom was celebrated across the country with great joy and enthusiasm. After all, freedom meant new hope of liberty, equality, happiness, and prosperity for people. However, when the entire nation was immersed in

celebration, Punjab, Sindh, Kashmir, and the Indo-Gangetic valley witnessed an orgy of communal violence of the worst kind. The nation was horrified by heart wrenching scenes of bodies strewn across streets, trains filled with mutilated bodies, children orphaned, burnt houses and markets, and millions of refugees moving across the borders. The cause of this tragic upheaval was the Partition of India.

Every year August 15th is celebrated as a National Festival, with great splendor and joy. The day is marked by celebration, gatherings, parades, commemoration ceremonies and other events. We venerate the sacrifices of numerous martyrs and heroes of independence. However, there were millions of people whose lives were profoundly affected and irrevocably changed by the Partition; people whom nobody seems to remember.

The Partition has continued to baffle historians, scholars and the ordinary people on both sides of the border for more than sixty years. It is a bitter irony that the Indian National Movement, known for non-violence and for uniting people of diverse regions, languages, religions, classes, castes, and ideologies, should be followed by such communal hatred and slaughter. The eminent historian Mushirul Hasan says that "….no other country in the twentieth century has seen two such contrary move ments taking place at the same time." (1995 9)

He continues "If one was a popular nationalist movement, unique in the annals of world history for ousting the colonizers through non-violent means, the other, in its underbelly, was the counter movement of the Partition, marked by violence, cruelty, bloodshed, displacement and massacres." (1995 9)

The 20th century, especially after the Second World War, marked the decline of the European colonialism. America had long become independent, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, achieved political autonomy as *dominions* of the British empire. South Asia and the Caribbean saw powerful anti-colonial movements and armed struggle. The Indian National Movement was the most revolutionary and innovative movement in its time. It was not just political, but an ideological struggle; a combination of the Western liberal ideals and Indian values.

> "….it was built around the basic notion that the people had to and could play an active role in politics and their own liberation, and it succeeded in politicizing, and drawing into political action a large part of the Indian people. Gandhiji, the leader who moved and mobilized millions into politics, all his life propagated the view that the people and not leaders created a mass movement movement…." (Chandra 54)

Although the crucial role played by the eminent nationalist leaders cannot be discounted, the National Movement could not have succeeded without the active participation of the millions of ordinary people - peasants, workers, students, traders and women - who discontinued education, quit jobs, abandoned families, donated wealth, underwent hardship, and sacrificed lives. It is undoubtedly the greatest mass movement in world history.

The masses strengthened the National Movement at the grass root level. The decision to Partition India on religious lines, however, was taken by a handful of leaders based in the large cities without consulting the people who had made

independence a reality. Cyril Radcliffe, a British lawyer, wholly unfamiliar with the cultural, historical, and social nuances of a heterogeneous and complex land like India was given the task of drawing the borders of India and Pakistan. What is even more shocking is that the Committee was given only six weeks to complete the enormous responsibility. Hastily drawn without any preparation, experience, reliable data or organization, the arbitrary, illogical, and confusing border, not just divided a nation, but also tore apart families, friends, and hearts, not to mention the large scale bloodshed and destruction.

The British poet W. H. Auden depicts boundary commissioner Cyril Radcliffe's demarcation of the boundaries of India and Pakistan in 1947 in the following words:

> He got down to work, to the task of settling the fate
> Of millions. The maps at his disposal were out of date
> And the Census Returns almost certainly incorrect,
> But there was no time to check them, no time to inspect
> Contested areas. The weather was frightfully hot,
> And a bout of dysentery kept him constantly on the trot,
> But in seven weeks it was done, the frontiers decided,
> A continent for better or worse divided.

According to Mushirul Hassan, "(the leaders)…. Conducted their deliberations in cozy surroundings and presided over the destiny of millions without their mandate". (2002 173)

Since the inception of the National Movement, the leaders promoted democratic institutions, such as the Parliament, elections, civil liberties, and freedom of the press. Secularism, religious tolerance, minority rights, equality, and religious freedom, no discrimination, and state neutrality in religious matters were the hallmarks of the movement. The founding principle and the most distinctive feature of the National Movement, however, was non-violence inspired by Gandhi. Scenes of men and women braving the *lathis* of the police during various campaigns are permanently etched in our memories. It is a paradox that the same people, who together brought down the mighty British Empire, killed each other mercilessly, drove their neighbors from their homes, looted, raped, and abducted in the name of religion. All the ideals of the National Move ment, which gave a new hope to the world, were inhumanly violated during the Partition.

The term Partition which is employed to describe the extraordinary events of 1947 could be misleading. The word implies a peaceful and simple division of the country into two sovereign nations called India and Pakistan. But the Partition was anything but peaceful. It unleashed large scale migration, communal riots, genocide, arson, loot, forced mass conversions, rape, and abduction. According to available figures 200,000 to 500,000 people died, some 15 million moved across frontiers, 75,000 to 1,00,000 women raped and abducted, and thousands of children were orphaned. (Butalia 1998 3) People lost lives, families, friends, property, and their sense of identity. Innocent people were forced to leave their homes and migrate to unknown territories with nothing but the burden of memory, sorrow, and despair. The loss and suffering were not confined to any one territory or community; there were victims and perpetrators in every community.

The Partition is frequently compared to the holocaust. James Young says in relation to the Holocaust that :

> "As much as through its 'history', we know the holocaust through its historical, fictional, political representations, and through its personal, testimonial representations, for it is not the facts of any event that are important, but equally,how people remember those facts and how they represent them." (Butalia 1998 9)

An event like the Partition could not have gone unrecorded in history. Numerous books, articles, documents, and theories have been produced over the years. Eminent historians – Indian, Pakistani and the British – have written about the Partition. Tarun K. Saint divides earlier historical accounts of the Partition into two categories – colonialist historiography and Nationalist Historiography (both in India and Pakistan). Colonialist historiography describes Partition as the resurfacing of age old hostilities between the Hindus and the Muslims, which had remained temporarily dormant, after the peaceful and benign British rule.

In the Indian Nationalistic historiography there is an overemphasis on the divide and rule policy of the British, events in the realm of high politics, and the commendable role of the leaders; and the demonization of Jinnah and the Muslim League. In conventional historical records, Indians are basically secular, Partition violence being a tragic aberration. Whereas in Pakistani accounts, the *Hindu* leaders are the culprits. So the Muslim League had no other option but to fight for a separate nation for the Muslims, fearing oppression and subjugation in a Hindu majority India. The official

historical narratives indulge in finding out who was responsible for the Partition. All three groups of historians keep violence outside the domain of history. Instead official history is about figures, statistics, and political events that led up to the Partition. Even when there is mention of violence, it is so brief, and often so one sided that we are left with a profound sense of dissatisfaction.

In an interesting analysis of school text books in India and Pakistan, Krishna Kumar observes that in the Indian text books the Partition is perceived as a tragedy, described in terms such as "the price of freedom", "the only option available", and "an irreparable loss" (21-22). In Pakistani books it is celebrated as independence, achievement, assertion of rights and unjust handing over of certain parts. He further points out that it is surprising how in both Indian and the Pakistani text books, Partition receives brief mention, and that violence is not elaborated.

Ritu Menon and Kamala Bhasin lament this erasure in these lines

> "…. How is it that an event of such tremendous societal impact and importance has been passed over virtually in silence by the other social sciences? Why has there been an absence of enquiry into its cultural, psychological, and social ramifications?" (1998 6)

There is no memorial to the victims of the Partition unlike the victims of the holocaust, and the two world wars. No photographs, first hand journalistic accounts, video etc exist to remember the catastrophic event. Little efforts were made by both the governments to bring the perpetrators to justice or to give people a sense of closure to the victims. Instead, there is a tradition of calculated silence.

The reason for this attitude could be many. The historians, in India and Pakistan, adopted the colonial methodology of historiography, with its emphasis on objectivity, linearity, and logic. The vocabulary available to a historian does not allow the voices of the ordinary people to be heard. The discipline of history, inspired by the West, is therefore ill equipped to represent the horrors of an event like the Partition. The evidence, methodology, and tools employed by the historian are hardly shared with the audience. The history text books are rarely subjected to critical scrutiny, unlike literary and scientific text books. The method is largely prescriptive and authoritative, and discourages doubt, conflict, uncertainty, and difference of opinion.

The political situation at the time of history writing is another constriction upon the historian. The first decade after the independence on both sides of the border can be described as an era of nation building activities, identity formation, and consolidation of the position of the State. Bitter memories of the Partition were fresh in the minds and there was a sense of mutual suspicion and rivalry in both the countries. The demands of nationalism have also prevented scholars and historians from producing a balanced account of the Partition in all its dimensions. In the subsequent years, any inconvenient narrative on the Partition has been stopped in the name of communal peace and harmony. For instance, Tamas, a tele series based on Bhisham Sahni's novel on the Partition with the same title, aired on Doordarshan in 1986 was given a 10 pm slot instead of a prime slot, as it was considered *sensitive*.

Moreover every piece of historical writing is governed by the writer's ideology, political inclination and the target audience.

Historical writings are painfully inadequate in capturing the intense pain, suffering, anguish, and dislocation of the people. Urvashi Butalia points out that there is an absence of "human element". She continues, "The generality of the Partition is found easily in every history book. But it is harder to find the particular. It exists privately in the stories told and retold inside so many households in India and Pakistan." (1998 4) The present generation is not even aware of the immense agonies people went through. The emotions are rather found in art, especially literature. This is not an attempt to discredit history; but fiction provides an alternative perspective. It brings to light those aspects of the past which have remained in the dark.

Literary works on the Partition are few considering the magnitude of the event, and did not receive serious scholarly attention for many years. Many feel that there is no point in scratching old wounds. However, in the last two decades there has been a renewed interest in the Partition and Partition literature. Several factors are responsible for the transformation in attitude.

The failure of the Nehruvian vision of a socialist secular India, discontent with the state, polarization of religious communities, recurring communal violence, emergence of right wing Hindutva have contributed to this. In Pakistan, the suppression of democracy, overthrow of civilian government, military dictatorship, defeat in 1965, and 71, the division of Pakistan in 71, have led to a sense of betrayal, and disillusionment. All these factors necessitated the need to re-examine the past. Many of the scholars working on the Partition have admitted that the anti-Sikh riots of 1984 which resulted in the killing of thousands of Sikhs were the trigger that compelled them to rethink about the partition. It reminded them of the Partition not

just because most of the victims were refugees from Pakistan, but also the inhumanity of the attacks.

In the realm of scholarship, the emergence of the Critical Theory, Feminist Studies, and subaltern Studies have changed the way we look at the world. Critical Theory questions the notion that literature is a sublime art that contains irrefutable universal truths, and serves the benevolent purpose of entertainment and moral uplift; that it is homogenous and has fixed easily decipherable meanings. Theory grounds literature firmly in material reality. It asserts that literature has an implicit political agenda and function, apart from inconsistencies and contradictions. In the last century, as a result of the increasing influence of postcolonial Studies and Gender Studies, there have been intense deliberations and debates on categories such as class, race, gender, ethnicity, language and sexuality. Also, the ideas of truth, universality, and objectivity have been seriously disputed.

Feminist theory, one of the most influential of this century, has drawn attention to the mechanisms of patriarchy in literary texts. It has also problematized the concept of representation by unmasking gender stereotypes and male bias in literary canon. It seeks to uncover a female literary tradition; to read women's writing from a female point of view and to recover women's texts lost in obscurity.

The Subaltern Studies group exposes the tendency of the South Asian historians to focus on elite classes and their interpretation of events. They argue that the Nationalist historiography is essentially elitist; such historiography asserts that the Indian national consciousness was the sole accomplishment of colonial administrators,

nationalist leaders, and their ideologies. It overlooks the contributions made by millions of ordinary people, independent of the elite. Subaltern historians argue that the project of nationalism was unsuccessful and incomplete because the dominant elite prevented the Subaltern from finding its own political space. The marginalized groups such as the peasants, women, workers, and the Dalits were pushed to the background. The Subaltern Studies group strives for a wider understanding of the National Movement and reconstructs history from the point of view of the subaltern.

Consequentially, there has been a radical shift in the discipline of history; history is no longer a linear record of kings and queens. It has been recognized that all history is interpretive and shares many of its tropes with fictional narratives; and that every history has an overt or covert agenda. It has become more and more inclusive in the recent years and has lent voice to the marginalized people, who were deprived of a place in history. Such a view resists the idea of a single, *true* account of the past and accommodates multiplicity of perspectives and experiences. As the grand narratives of history have failed to represent the subaltern experience, there is an urgent need to retrieve the history of the subaltern.

And women constitute the largest subaltern group in the world. And women have been excluded from history all along. In her seminal work *Women in Modern India*, Geraldine Forbes says that the first historical account of Indian women can be traced back to the 19th century. These accounts, written both by the British colonists and the Indian reformers, were aimed at their respective political purposes. What is common to both these versions is that they talk of an ancient time, a golden age, when women enjoyed supreme regard followed by a long period of decline in status,

which was a result of Muslim invasion. They were rescued of years of degeneration and servitude by the European colonizers, who brought their forms of governance, technology, and values to India. The liberal European ideas about women and their place in society were adopted by progressive Indians. Until recently this was the standard version of women's history in India. This kind of history shows a linear progression, which is essentially European.(1)

Both European and Indian texts endorsed the notion of a unique female nature; most of the texts projected an essentialized image of the Indian women as devoted, nurturing, and self-sacrificing. Since the last few decades, this perception has undergone a fundamental transformation, with the emergence of Gender Studies and Feminism. The drastic changes in the discipline of history and the feminist perspective have led to what is now termed as feminist historiography.

The scholars and writers of feminist historiography rejected the notion of a natural and essential female nature and held that femininity is a patriarchal construction. Since then there have been rigorous attempts to rewrite women's history. Indian historians are now producing gendered histories, with special attention to the hegemonic structures that suppress women's agency, representation of women in history and culture, and women's lives and experiences. One of the biggest concerns of the feminist historiographers is to locate and preserve women's writing and memories. In the absence of official data, they rely on unconventional sources of history such as records, journals, photographs, letters, pamphlets, magazines, folk songs, folk tales, oral testimony, and literature. (1)

The historiography of the Partition, in the last decade, has transferred focus from political history to socio-cultural concerns and individual experiences, the event as perceived by ordinary people. The woman question that had been intentionally suppressed for so long has resurfaced; scholars endeavor to unearth women's experience of the Partition. In this context, literature has emerged as a non-official historical archive.Partition narratives by women writers, then acquire new significance, as unofficial records of history.

As we are well aware, women were the worst victims of the Partition. Millions of women were not only killed, they were raped, mutilated, abducted and branded; and not always by men of the *Other* community. They have suffered in silence for years and continue to do so. It is strange that while the survivors of the Partition are so vocal about their suffering and loss, they almost never speak about their women, who underwent untold sufferings. Under such circumstances, it becomes increasingly difficult to penetrate the silence and understand what women went through. It is not that women's plight has gone unrepresented in literature. Several male writers have written about women's suffering, but we want to know what women have to say. And Partition stories can play a crucial role in filling in the gap. There is a wealth of novels, poems, and short stories by women writers on the Partition in various regional languages as well as in English, many of which have not received the kind of recognition that they deserve. While a few novels have gained popularity and critical appreciation, the short stories, with few exceptions, have remained largely unexplored. Therefore, the thesis is an attempt to analyze these narratives, in order to understand how Partition affected the lives of women. This is not to say that these women

writers can be seen as the representatives of all women, or more authentic than the others, but the stories definitely provide a fresh vantage point, particularly those aspects of history that have remained in shadows. The Partition stories can play a remarkable role in restoring history to women.

But writing has never been easy for women. In the last century women writers have gained greater acceptance, visibility, and recognition all over the world. The sheer number of journals, books, and conferences dedicated to women writers, literature courses and papers offered in universities, thesis and dissertations produced every year demonstrate this. Still it is neither adequate, nor satisfactory. Women writers still have a long way to go.

Immense prejudice and regressive attitudes still prevail towards women's writing across the world. We are well aware that literature can never be viewed in isolation; it is a product of the history and culture of its time. Hence, it is determined by the same ideologies and institutions that govern the society at large. And societies at any given time and place have been patriarchal; women have the same secondary status in canonical texts as they have in society. Culture uses the male, especially upper class/caste, perspective and experience as the standard against which the experience of both the sexes is evaluated. It is a deeply rooted cultural attitude that ignores, and undervalues women's experiences and points of view. A writer can only write about the world he/she is familiar with.A woman's world, owing to thousands of years of tradition, is domestic.Hence women's writing deal with domestic issues such as household, childbirth, child rearing, agriculture, sentiments, fashion,

marriage, relationships etc.As women's writing does not always strictly adhere to the male standard, it does not become a part of the canon. Their work is often dismissed as insignificant, trivial, and narrow, not worthy of serious critical attention.

Virginia Woolf in her book 'A Room of Her Own' says:

> "This is an important book the critic assumes, because it deals with war. This is an insignificant book because it deals with the feelings of women in a drawing room. A scene in a battlefield is more important than a scene in a shop." (147).

On the other hand it is taken for granted that male writers have universal appeal. As a result,women's writing has not received reverence on a par with their male counterparts, in the literary field, in spite of the immense popularity of many women writers, over the years.

Women writers have to deal with a number of practical problems at every level. Traditionally women are conditioned to believe that their primary duty is that of a homemaker; everything else is of secondary importance. Moreover, writing is an intellectual activity, and intellect has traditionally been a male domain. In the literary sphere, women have been treated as trespassers. For a woman to be intelligent, ambitious, and outspoken is considered unfeminine.Therefore women are not able to devote the kind of time and energy required for a creative enterprise like writing. Patriarchal institutions like marriage, motherhood,and family prevent women from utilizing their full potential. Women have less access to education, mobility and information, the means to self representation. Publishers are often reluctant to publish

women's work. In addition to these, society has evolved various tactics to keep women out of the mainstream. For instance, ignoring women's work, devoting separate chapters for women writers in books, treating women's writing as a separate area of study, refusal to read etc.

There is also an underlying bias against feminism. Many women writers refuse to be called feminists, for fear of rejection, even though their work is centered on women's lives. Nabaneeta Dev Sen's comparison of two women writers – Mahashwetha Devi and Ashapurna Devi –can be used as an illustration. Mahashwetha Devi does not write exclusively on women's issues; she is more concerned with the oppression of the dispossessed communities like the tribals and the peasants whereas Ashapurna writes about the predicament of the middle class women. But the reception that they have recived within the literary circles has been very different. While Mahashwetha has been praised for showing the plight of the exploited communities, Ashapurna's writing has been labeled as dealing with the narrow domestic scene. Although women resist the tag of feminism, we notice that a common trait in women's writing is the consciousness of their marginality. (7-8)

Unfortunately, women have not always been able to say what they want to say or the way they want to say. Social taboos are a major constraint on women's writing. There are certain issues that they cannot address. There are three things women can't write about – sex, religion, and politics. Women are programmed since childhood to develop a strong sense of modesty, and shame, to suppress their body and desires. The woman writer, therefore, becomes one with the text; people think the writing is about her personal life. The moral codes for women's writing are the same as for

their bodies. It is a well known fact that women who have dared to expess themselves have been brutally persecuted. Women writes like Charlotte Bronte, Emily Bronte, Kate Chopan, Ismat Chughtai, Sara Aboobakar, Nawal El Sedawi, and Tasleema Nasreen have been *punished* for speaking out.

> "… a woman writer was not supposed to cross the proverbial line of control, not only in behavior, also in expression, and even in thought" (Devi 40).

Women have been excluded from the realm of power by denying them agency. Despite innumerable obstacles, women have written, and continue to write. Caught between the desire to articulate herself and the social pressure on her to remain silent, the woman writer has had to devise strategies to violate the social norms and tradition. Writing, therefore, for a woman is an act of transgression, assertion of selfhood and immensely liberating.

Women's writing places women's experiences,which had been marginalized, at the centre.After reading these texts we realize that there is another compelling and meaningful way of looking at the world. Writing by women can tell those aspects of women's lives that have been ignored and devalued, in the majority of traditional texts.

We can say, women's writing provides a different viewpoint. Their writings can also be considered as protest writings against patriarchal oppression. It is taken for granted that women write only about women, for an exclusive women audience.

But it is not true; women write about the oppression of not just women, but any marginalized group.

The Partition stories selected for analysis were written by women during the first two decades after independence. The writers wrote amidst a sense of disillusionment, shock, and trauma of the Partition, apart from social constraints, and State pressure. We should also keep in mind that women had fought for freedom shoulder to shoulder with men, with the hope of equality and liberation in the independent nation. The hope, however, was short-lived.

Their position in the newly independent India and Pakistan did not change. After playing their part in the National Movement, they were expected to withdraw to their suitable place, the home, and assume their domestic duties. It would be interesting to see how the stories written by women negotiated these forces and responded to the Partition in their own unique way and what new light they shed on the catastrophe called the Partition, considering their proximity to the event.

The thesis is an attempt the read the Partition narratives from a gender point view. Most of the stories were written during the first three decades of independence and in regional languages such as Urdu, Hindi, Dogri, Sindhi, Malayalam, and Kannada and translated into English except one Attia Hosain's 'After the Storm' is in English. It endeavors to examine how gender issues are addressed in the stories, placing them within the social, political, and cultural context.

The approach is ideological, rather than exclusively feminist. However, Feminist theory is a strong influence on the thesis. Applying feminist theory

indiscriminately is problematic as it is produced the West based on the Western socio-cultural reality. So, it is used only where it is relevant and necessary. The similarities between the stories, in terms of themes, characterization, symbols, motifs, issues, and ideology, if any, is another concern. Also comparisons have been made with fiction produced by the male writes on the Partition to see if gender influences the process of writing, and to examine if men and women respond to the same event differently.

The arguments presented and the conclusions in the thesis are not based entirely on the women's short stories alone. Rather the observations are based on the careful analysis of the vast body of literary work on the Partition that includes fiction as well as non-fiction.In this sense the short stories are representational.

Women, Violence and the Partition

The chapter explores narratives that focus on violence against women during the Partition. In official discourse, sexual violence perpetrated on women is dismissed as inevitable, natural, tragic and rare. In the chapter, it is argued that sexual violence is not sporadic; rather, it is a product of socio-economic relations that keep women in a position of subservience. Partition violence is a reflection of these hegemonic structures. An attempt has been made to examine how women writers, through the action and thoughts of their characters, represent to violence.

The communal frenzy that the Partition unleashed is unparalleled in the history of South Asia. In the few months that preceded and followed the Partition, the Northern and Eastern parts of India witnessed one of the worst communal riots in human history. According to official reports, nearly one million people were killed, actual figures could be higher. Mass murders, looting, arson, rape and abduction were widespread. Thousands were injured and property worth crores was destroyed. There was a complete breakdown of law and order as violent mobs of all the three communities went on a rampage. Mutual slaughter continued unabated and without any fear of punishment for months. Cities and villages were in the grip of religious fanaticism and terror.

In both Punjab and Bengal, the inter-communal relations during the pre-partition days were cordial barring a few incidents of communal violence. The three communities, over the years, had evolved elaborate mechanisms such as neighborly ties and cultural forms such as Sufism to contain hostilities and maintain peace.

These carefully built socio-cultural structures that had played vital role in sustaining religious tolerance and harmony collapsed. Therefore, the Partition violence has remained a perplexing puzzle even to this day. One of the biggest challenges faced by historians and writers is to provide an adequate explanation for the brutal and senseless massacre of thousands.

Gyanendra Pandey, identifies three kinds of mass violence. State organized violence against its own citizens. For eg.,Germany and Russia during the World Wars. Collective violence – for instance the communal riots that followed the Babri Masjid demolition in 1992 and the Godhra riots in 2002. He defines the third kind of violence as 'Moment of insanity' where people kill each other as it happened during the Partition. (60-61)

The third type of violence, it is emphasised, must be forgotten for re-establishing peace, harmony, and normal everyday life. However, it is very important to remember the Partition so that the victims could come to terms with the tragic event; and gain a sense of closure so that lessons could be learnt.

In terms of the sheer magnitude of violence, the Partition is compared to the holocaust. However,there are a number of basic differences.There is wealth of Europ -ean and American scholarship on the Holocaust.The holocaust violence is histor icizable as it was state organized.Partition violence was unhistorical, therefore, unexp lainable.The most bewildering aspect of the Partition violence was that, unlike the holocaust, it was not State sponsored. Common People who had lived together for centuries turned against each other and violence was face to face.There was no apparent reason

for killing innocent people apart from the fact that they belonged to the other religion.

In mainstream history Partition violence is treated as sporadic, spontaneous, and an aberration from the norm in what is basically a civilized and cultured society. However, meticulous research about mob violence in the recent years has disclosed that this is far from truth. The attacks were organized, and pre-planned, often with the support of the police, army, administration and the local people. Confidential information such as timings of refugee trains was leaked, doors of the homes of the targeted communities were marked, census reports were available with the mobs etc.

Scholars and researchers have suggested that divisive politics and intense propaganda carried out by various political parties and organizations, driven by political and personal agendas had already created an atmosphere of mutual suspicion and distrust among communities. Deep-rooted fear of the 'Other', sense of insecurity, self-defense, religious fanaticism, and opportunity for seeking personal revenge, settling scores etc were some of the factors that caused violence. Economic factors also played a decisive role in escalating violence.Forcible evacuation of the minorities would help to occupy their land and property.The Partition, for instance, provided an occasion for the agricultural laborers to seize land by driving out landlords. Debtors wanted to get rid of money lenders.

Cultural and psychological factors also contributed. Deep seated prejudice and antagonisms between communities that were lying dormant found an outlet during the Partition. In official history, Partition Violence is usually attributed to the masses.

The enlightened and educated middle classes were believed to have played no part in the communal riots. However, partition literature has shown the active participation of the middle classes in communal violence.

Mutual distrust among different religious communities mounted in the early part of the 20th century. As a result of the divisive British policies, the influence of religious leaders on their respective communities, consolidation of religious identities and communal polarization, religious intolerance was growing. The Minto-Morley Reforms of 1909 created separate electorates for Hindus and Muslims that worsened the already fragile state of affairs. The discharge of a large number of Indian soldiers from military service after World War II militarized communities; the failure of the Cripps Mission, the Muslim League's call for Direct Action Day on August 16th 1946 were some of the political factors that ultimately led to violence. Communal riots spread in many parts of Northern and Eastern India even before the announcement of the Partition. The feeble attempts of the British government as well as the Princely states to stop the riots didn't help to improve the situation. The date of transfer of power was advanced from June 1948 to August 15th 1947. This deepened the already growing anxieties among people.

Communal tension heightened in 1946 after the Naokhali riots. Convoys were attacked, families were separated, women raped and kidnapped, rioting, inflammatory speeches by leaders, pamphlets, rumors, the arrival of the refugees who carried sordid tales of suffering at the hands of the *Other* community led to revenge attacks.

Women, irrespective of religion, were the worst victims of violent attacks. They were killed, mutilated, branded, stripped and paraded, raped and abducted in large numbers. According to Butalia seventy five thousand to one lakh women were abducted during the Partition. The enormity and sheer brutality of violence against women was horrifying. Violence against women was a widely discussed issue at the time. In fact, it was one of the most debated subjects in the parliaments of both the countries. It invoked emotions, among general public and the leaders in both the countries, like no other issue did. National leaders of both the countries expressed great concern for the women and appealed the families to accept raped and abducted women; historians, writers and poets lamented the humiliation of women in the name of religion.

However, representation of violence against women in history and political discourse is extremely problematic. The early Partition discourse does not engage with the gendered nature of violence; sexual violence against women is treated as part of large scale killing, riots and plunder. Even in the writings of the most enlightened and liberal writers, we observe a sense of despair, and a tone of unavoidability. There is no difference between the violence perpetrated on men and women. The sexual violence was termed as madness, the result of temporary breakdown of the order, retaliation, and spontaneous reaction to an adverse situation. Historians and political leaders argued that the savage attacks on women were impulsive and retaliatory in nature, but rarely premeditated. Such simplistic, convenient assumptions view sexual violence as representing the general chaos of the time, not requiring any special consideration. We have come up with strategies to distance ourselves from the disturbing past.

However violence against women was neither spontaneous nor impulsive. The roots of gender violence run deeper than this. Gender violence has its origin in an entire social system, in the socio-economic structures of society that create hierarchical gender relations. It has to do with the subservient position women are relegated to in a patriarchal society.

Violence against women did not take place during the Partition alone. Since the beginning of civilization, even before that, women have been subjected to violence in wars, ethnic, racial and other conflicts, rape being the most common form of violence.During wars the authorities often turn a blind eye to incidents of rape committed by the armed forces.In the popular discourse it is considered a natural behavior on the part of young, ill trained men, free from social constraints; rape is also viewed as an unacknowledged reward for underpaid soldiers, part of the booty. In most wars rape is strategically used as a tool, in order to grind the enemy into submission and to instill terror. Women have been targeted in ethnic conflicts and civil wars everywhere. In the World War II, Russian and Jewish women were raped; Soviet soldiers raped German women in thousands, Vietnamese women were raped by the Americans (Drakulic 180). Unlike organized warfare, civil and ethnic wars are not fought at the battlefields; action is moved to towns, villages, fields and forests rendering women much more vulnerable to violence.

Sexual violence against women is not confined to wars and conflicts. For most women across the globe violence is part of their everyday experience. In fact, gender violence is an inherent part of the social order. Gender violence during the Partition, therefore, cannot be separated from violence that takes place during *normal*

times. The primary difference between violence in *normal* times and violence during conflicts is that the former is inflicted by members of the family and the latter by the *Other* men. The same socio-cultural institutions and ideologies that govern everyday practices of violence against women in everyday life are also responsible for gender violence during the Partition.

Violence pervades every aspect of women's lives. It cuts across boundaries of all kinds – nationality, religion, class, caste, and race. There is a tendency among families and communities, however, to deny its existence. In fact, in many communities, it is not perceived as a problem at all. Instead, it is viewed as natural, justified, and sometimes necessary. Families and communities live in a perpetual state of denial. One of the reasons for this denial is the fear it would not only break up families, but also bring dishonor to the family and the community. Continuation of the patriarchal family, the most important site of violence against women, is essential for the sustenance of the male dominated social structure.

Sociologists and scholars have come up with various causes of gender violence. Those are alcohol and drugs, the victim's action, mental illness, stress, frustration, underdevelopment, poverty, and history of violence in the family. The problem with such explanations is that they view gender violence as individual and economic, rather than social and cultural. It also implies that economic development can put an end to gender violence. Nothing can be far from truth. Research has proved that gender violence takes place in affluent and educated families and developed societies. In fact the persistence and blatant acceptance of violence within the family and

outside have raised serious doubts about the validity of these explanations.

It is important that we change our mindset about the problem. Gender violence is an outcome of a complex set of values, traditions, customs, rituals, and beliefs that foster gender disparity. The social structures and institutions such as family, marriage, religion, and culture naturalize and to an extent justify violence against women. For instance, violence against women at home- be it wife beating, marital rape, or curtailing mobility- is widely tolerated and accepted; it is essential to keep the women in their place, an important part of the role men are expected to play as heads of the families. Gender Violence is a manifestation of an unyielding belief in most societies that women are inferior to men; they are physically weak, socially and economically dependent on men and in continuous need of male protection. Therefore they are men's possessions, just like land and property and can be treated as men consider appropriate. Keeping the women of the family in control is seen as a sign of manhood. (Davies 1-8)

Violence directed at women is inextricably related to the notion of honor. Women are silenced to protect the honor and sanctity of the family and community. Religion, mythology and culture have been used more than any other to defend and reinforce oppressive practices. Sexual violation of women, during conflicts and otherwise, is a product of these repressive structures and practices.

> "Sociologists agree that rape evolved from the concept of theft, a crime connected to the ownership of women and women's sexuality – all these are male defined notions" (Davies 60).

According to Bharati Ray "…. in times of external wars or civil war, it is

women who are inevitably singled out for particularly humiliating treatment- molestation, rape, abduction or forcible marriage- and it is they who have to suffer for the imposed ignominy. Women's bodies are considered by Indian men, Hindu, Muslim or Sikh, as the repository of men's honor. 'Power Rape', the raping of women to demonstrate and defeat rival men in patriarchal societies, is quite common in many parts of India, as indeed in many parts of the world. The rape of a woman is akin to the rape of a community to which she belongs". (14)

Ritu Menon and Kamala Bhasin in Borders and Boundaries state that:

> "The most predictable from of violence experienced by women, as women, is when women of one community are sexually assaulted by the men of the other, in an overt assertion of their identity and a simultaneous humiliation of the other by "dishonoring" their women." (41)

Everything that is held sacred by the *Other* must be defiled. For instance, pigs and cows were butchered and thrown near places of worship frequently during the Partition to flare up communal feelings. In *Tamas*, for instance, the discovery of the carcass of a pig near a mosque becomes the trigger for the terrible communal violence that follows. The body of a woman is also held sacred in all the communities in the context of matrimony and motherhood. As the begetter of the next generation, she ensures the continuity of not only the family line, but also community and religion. Therefore her body has to be polluted. Bodh Prakash says that rape became the means through which men from one community "recorded their bizarre victory over another." (197)

During riots, the *Other* Women faced specific forms of violence – forced conversions, disfigurement, mutilation, branding, knifing open the womb, rape and abduction. These were not mere acts inhumanity; every act had a symbolic meaning. Marking, tattooing, and branding women's bodies with slogans meant permanent record of one community's victory over another. Marking genitalia meant sexual appropriation of the woman and symbolic violation of the future generations. Amputating breasts implied rendering the woman permanently undesirable and destroying the means of reproduction. Stripping and parading women in the presence of their men signals emasculation, failure on the part of men to protect the women. Menon and Bhasin point out that each act treats women's bodies as territory to be conquered, claimed, or marked by the assailant .

Cultural memory is another compelling reason for violence aimed at women. Sudhir Kakkar is of the opinion that "Cultural memory is a group's history freed from rootedness in time – it is as much imagination as the actual events that go into its construction". (Menon 1998 39)

Veena Das is of the opinion that "There is no contradiction between the fact that, on the one hand mob violence may be highly organized and crowds provided with such instruments such as voters' list or combustible powders, and on the other, that crowds draw upon repositories of unconscious images to spur them on". (Bhasin and Menon 1998 39)

Great epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata are highly influential in India irrespective of religious differences. Sita, the mythical heroine of Ramayana, was

abducted by Ravana who sought revenge against Rama for humiliating his sister. Here Sita is not so much a person, but a symbol of Rama's honor. Draupadi, the wife of the Pandavas in Mahabharata, was dragged to the court and disrobed again to humiliate her husbands.These ingrained sub-conscious memories drive men to assault women to seek revenge against the *Other*. Memories of Rajput women committing *Jauhar* (lage number of women jumping into fire to protect their honor from the enemy when their men are on the verge of defeat) prompted women to commit suicide and men to spur them on.

In many places, the threat of abduction of their women by the *Other* was enough to compel families to leave their homes.When escape was not possible women were killed by the men of their own families.Women were told that death is preferable to dishonor.Honor killings were widespread and accepted, especially among Hindus and the Sikhs. Men thought that the murder of their women was a brave alternative to the defilement of women through forced inter-religious marriages and conversion. Fathers, brothers and kinsmen are traditionally the guardians of their women's chastity, until they are ceremoniously handed over to the husband and his family. After marriage preserving their *purity* becomes the responsibility of the husband and his kinsmen. That is why during wars and conflicts men's humanity is debased by placing them in powerless situations, where they can't defend a female.Women are subjected to brutal sexual assault in their presence.

In the instances of honor killings the father/husband, retains his own honor by refusing to renounce control over his daughter/wife's sexuality by handing them

over to the *Other*. Women were also compelled to kill themselves in many places. In some cases Hindus and Sikhs were offered safe passage if they agreed to marry their daughters off to Muslim men.

Hundreds of women took their own lives. They took poison, jumped off bridges, and drowned themselves in wells. These acts were called as "willing sacrifice" and the women martyrs. However, the concept of free will is problematic because in a society where patriarchal values are so deeply absorbed, there is no question of free will. Thoa Khalsa was a Punjabi village near Rawalpindi. In 1947, ninety women threw themselves into a well in order to preserve the honor of the family and community and the purity of the religion. Even to this day their sacrifice is celebrated in Gurudwaras as a heroic act. They have been elevated to the status of martyrs. A few days before the incident twenty six girls had already been killed by men of their families to *protect* them from conversion and defilement. In interviews conducted many years later, men who killed women of their family said that those deaths were *voluntary*.However, extensive research carried out by scholars has shown that the women were encouraged and compelled by their families and communities to kill themselves.

Mass suicide by women to save their honor enhances the prestige of the family. Such incidents are recalled with a sense of pride. Men talk about extreme hardships and stories of survival; but hardly speak about the women who were raped or abducted.

What is violence in one context is not violence in another. Violence, we can conclude, is culturally defined. On the other hand, women who refused to kill themselves and chose to live were branded as cowards and betrayers. They were

made to feel ashamed of themselves.

> "The violent resolution (to die) was part of a continuum of violence that had deaths at the hands of one's own kinsmen at one end, and rape and brutalization by men of the Other community at the Other". In between lay the possibility of killing yourself.
>
> (Menon 1998 45-46)

Women writers represent women's experience of the Partition; by doing this they not only depict the impact of a catastrophic event on the lives of ordinary women but also throw light on the way women coped with the horrible reality of their lives. Although men and women were victims of the Partition, women's suffering was much more distressing and enduring that that of men. Women writers portray the gendered nature of the experience of Partition violence in specific ways as women were not only the victims of violence but also witnesses. They remember and respond to it differently.

Bodh Prakash, in "The Woman Protagonist in Partition Literature" sums up Rajeshwari Sunderrajan's observations on the difference between male and female representation of sexual violation in fiction. In male texts, rape is the central event; it discusses the motive and rationale for rape. Though rape is the focus, it is viewed as part of large scale rioting, looting and abduction. The victim in these narratives is not individualized. The act is described, at least in some of the male texts, in horrifyingly graphic details.

Partition stories by women writers deal with the aftermath. "Rape is assumed,

not overly mentioned. There is shift away from the physicality of the event to the consciousness of the victim. We see a move away from history and political explanations. Instead women's fiction explores the inner self of the protagonist". (197-198)

Though some of the male writers such as Saadat Hasan Manto and Rajinder Singh Bedi have sensitively portrayed women's plight, we observe that they do not fully grasp the nuances and intensity of women's affliction. "Open It" and "Cold Meat" are two of the finest short stories written by Manto on the impact of collective violence. "Open It" charts the frantic search of a father for his daughter who was lost during the Partition. Sirajuddin seeks the help of the *razaakars* to locate his daughter Sakina. The *razaakars*, instead of fulfilling their duty as volunteers, themselves violate the girl and dump her to be discovered by her father. At the hospital the doctor requests someone to open the window. Sakina's response to this is to untie her *salwar* and lower it; an act signifying total surrender to sexual violence. The story depicts the extent of the dreadful violence perpetrated on Sakina. The experience has led to psychological numbing. Although the story addresses the trauma of a woman repeatedly raped, Manto does not stay on the subject. The main thrust of the story is the shock, betrayal and resultant trauma undergone by the father, and the doctor to an extent.

"Cold Meat" explores the effect of a near-necrophiliac experience on the psyche of Ishar Singh, who actively participates in communal violence. Ishar Singh is characterized as hyper masculine and sexually assertive. The story powerfully conveys Ishar Singh's sense of horror at realizing that he had raped a dead Muslim woman.

Haunted by the memory of his own beastliness, he must now suffer the consequences. His subsequent impotence in the face of his wife's overpowering desire implies loss of identity as a man. Just like his dead victim, now he is turned into cold meat. According to Priyamvada Gopal in "Bodies Inflicting Pain: Masculinity, Morality and Cultural Identity in Manto's 'Cold Meat'", the question that Manto confronts is "…what it is to be a male in the context of patriarchal violence…. What it is to be violent; and what that violence means for our existence as men". (253)

"Lajwanti" by Rajinder Singh Bedi traces the subtle change Partition brings in the relationship of a couple. Lajo, Sunder Lal's wife is abducted by men of the *Other* community. Sunder Lal, a broken man, dedicates himself to the rehabilitation of other women like Lajo. He is on the committee for the rehabilitation of the abducted women.

In a few days Lajo is rescued and returned. Sundar Lal's feelings upon hearing the news of his wife's recovery are ambiguous.Though he accepts her and takes her home, he is also very apprehensive.While he publicly argues for the acceptance of abducted women, he is unable to handle himself when he is in the same situation.He resolves his inner conflict by distancing himself from his wife physically and emotionally. The distancing is complete when he elevates her to the status of a *Devi*. In the past Sunder Lal was a dominating husband; he beat up Lajo regularly. But Lajwanti's entire being revolves around her relationship with her husband. She cannot deal with this worshipping husband and wants to be Lajo again.She wants to unburden herself by talking about her ordeal. But Sunder Lal is unwilling to listen; he fails to

acknowledge her past. Paradoxically *Devi* reminds Lajo of her tarnished status. This silence between the husband and the wife is disorienting, especially for Lajo.She desperately wants to be the dominated wife again, but also understands that is not to be.

Male writers have delicately represented the anguish of women who were victims of Partition violence.However, all the three stories are narrated from the male protagonists' point of view. They deal with the male experience of violence.The three stories can be described as delineating the crisis of masculinity. Women are central to the texts, but they remain silent.We can say they lack agency. By placing the marginalized female subjectivities at the center, fiction by women writers breaks the silence imposed on women; and resists the dominance of the metanarratives of history and fiction that exclude women's voices.

Three short stories by prominent women writers are selected for analysis in the first part of this chapter. They are "A Leaf in the Storm" by Lalitambika Antarjanam, "Exile" by Jamila Hashmi and "Krouncha Pakshigalu" by Vaidehi. In all the three short stories, the women are abducted and raped during the Partition. The stories relive the psychological trauma and intense torment that the women were forced to undergo.

Lalitambika Antarjanam's "A Leaf in the Storm" centers on a young girl who had actively participated in the National Movement. Jyotirmoyi Devpal grew up in "perfect happiness" (142). Unlike other girls in her community, she had gone to college and refused to wear purdah. She was influenced by the nationalist zeal; she suffered police brutality because of her participation in the freedom movement. From being a fearless woman, crusader of women's rights, she is reduced to a state of utter helplessness.

When it becomes impossible for the people of her community to remain in their town, she decides to migrate to India. Along with fourteen other women, all dressed in *Ghosha*, she is concealed in a bullock cart with bundles of hay by her kind Muslim friends. However, they are discovered on the way to a refuge camp by a violent mob. The women are dragged out of the cart one by one. She remembers hearing "Loud, thunderous laughter and "Wild shouts" (144). Jyoti and other girls are brutally raped by several men, until they lay unconscious.

Women were raped to humiliate the *Other* community is a well known fact. But eyewitnesses have noted the sadistic pleasure with which these acts were committed. Satish Gujral, in "Crossing the Jhelum" describes the attack on a Muslim girls' hostel at Amritsar in these words, "The site was packed with a dense and wild crowd, which had gathered to watch the ghastly 'tamasha' staged at the hall Bazaar. From the window of my car, I tried to search for signs of horror or compassion on the faces of those who stood around me, I could find none". (53) Participation in acts of communal sexual violence is a necessary step for both the individual's self identity as a fully fledged man and for group solidity. Deep rooted fear of other men, a fear that other men will view them as less than manly is at the heart of men taking part in collective violence.

Man's self-perception is also based on the notion of entitlement. Men, since childhood, learn to feel entitled to constant emotional attention and service from women in the form of mothers, sisters and wives; they grow unbelieving that they are entitled to unlimited sexual access to women.

Jyoti is recovered and brought to a refugee camp with several women who had undergone the same experience. At the camp she is utterly lonely and dejected. Her independent and fiery spirit is completely crushed. She is full of anger and outrage at the entire humanity. Her pain is deeper because she was among those who had hoped and struggled for independence; among those who had dreamt of a humane, just and liberal India. Her faith in humanity is completely shattered. At the camp she discovers that she is pregnant. She wishes to destroy "the seed of damnation" (139) as it is "conceived in consequence of inhuman rape and ignorance" (139). For her the child is a symbol of her humiliation "everything womanhood and humanity found despicable in nature" (141). Jyoti is deeply affected when she witnesses the lifeless body of an infant which is remorselessly dragged away and put in a garbage bin. The author ironically points out that such is the fate of the first citizens of free India; they are conceived in hate and not in love.

The story captures Jyoti's inner turmoil, her sense of outrage, and betrayal. She is torn between two conflicting emotions- her motherly instinct on the one hand and hatred for the child growing in her.

When a doctor visits the camp, she requests him to abort the child. The doctor refuses as he is a disciple of Gandhi and a firm believer in Ahimsa. He consoles Jyoti in these words "We will overcome this storm that rages over the east and west of our land. Bharat will endure; are you not a woman of India?" (139).Gandhi had encouraged women's participation in the National Movement. He asked women from all walks of life to join the Satyagraha Movement, to facilitate participation of men. He asked

women to emulate their great mythical ancestresses like Sita, Damyanti and Draupadi, emphasizing great feminine virtues such as purity, sacrifice and self-control (Forbes 124). One of the major achievements of Gandhi was that he redefined passivity and self-suffering, the most desirable qualities in women as well as markers of their weakness, as strength. The identification of the nation with women is also influenced by this ideology. The doctor, like the typical educated, middle class elite of his time, believes in the strength of these attributes. Therefore he equates women with *Bharat*; just the way *Bharat* endured the onslaught of foreign invaders, first Muslim and then Christian, women of the country would also endure. Gandhi repeated that when men descend into bestiality the task of rebuilding and restoring order women falls on women.

This kind of overt glorification of the *natural* feminine endurance upholds and accepts patriarchal definitions of masculinity and femininity that construct men as biologically aggressive, antagonistic, and prone to violence and women as inherently non-violent, virtuous, patient, and nurturing. These ideological and cultural constructions, which are masked as natural, are the basis of exploitation and subjugation of women.

In the patriarchal discourse, motherhood is the most vital bodily and spiritual experience for a woman.The story's treatment of motherhood is ambiguous. There is no celebration of motherhood as tradition would have it. The excruciating pain, bodily changes, and emotional upheavals are conveyed forcefully. It should be noted that women's writing is dictated by the same societal mores that determine women's lives, mind and behavior. Therefore speaking about the body is unacceptable.

The bodily processes peculiar to the female body – menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, are considered purely private matters; their mention in the public space, particularly by a woman, is considered a breach of the norms of feminine modesty.Feminists stress that these are not purely personal issues, and brought them to the public sphere. Writing the body, therefore, is an act of transgression.

Jyoti finally decides to save the child. The sight of the child and the sound of its voice like "the assertion of a right, an appeal to nature" (144) fill her with compassion and she yields to the responsibility of nurturing it The story ends with Jyoti walking towards the camp with her child in her arms, which can be read as the affirmation of motherhood. The scene has a quality of saintly motherhood.In her decision to nurture and nourish the child Alok Bhalla sees an attempt to "safeguard the ongoingness of the earth. He feels that "there is no forgiveness in her decision to nurture life out of damnation but … Such acts go a long way to establish a humane social order" (Bhalla 1994 XXV)**.** However, it could also be seen as Jyoti succumbing to the convention of stability and motherhood. Her conflict is in opposition to the prescribed codes of feminine conduct and the patriarchal definition of woman's proper role. Jyoti's dilemma threatens to disturb the social mores. By preserving the child and conforming to the societal norms the disrupted order is restored. The story questions the patriarchal notions of honor, nation and motherhood. However, the protagonist is unable to liberate herself completely from the stronghold of societal expectations.

Jamila Hashmi's "Exile", written in the stream of consciousness mode, is a poignant psychological exploration of the dislocated self of an abducted woman.

It is narrated in the first person, at once establishing a sense of empathy as well as intimacy between the protagonist and the reader. Bibi, a young Muslim girl, is abducted by Gurpal after the savage murder of her parents. She is forced to live with him as his wife, though it is unclear if they are married. She has three children, two sons and a daughter.

Thousands of women were abducted by the men of the *Other* community during the Partition and forcibly kept at their abductor's homes, with no hope of return. Some of these women were married off to the abductors, forcibly converted, retained as sexual slaves and domestic servants; many of them were sold off and forced into prostitution. Abducting women and keeping them at homes permanently or selling them off render permanent the victory of one's own community and the humiliation of the *Other* community. Impregnating these women would damage the genealogical purity of the rival religions and communities.

Bibi compares herself to Sita who had to stay with Ravana, her abductor, until rescued by Rama. Interestingly, at the beginning of the story Bibi, along with Gurpal and her three children, visits the Dusshera fair. The use of Dusshera fair in the story is significant. Dusshera celebrates the victory of Rama over Ravana and the heroic rescue of Sita. One of the most important rituals associated with the festival is the burning of huge images of Ravana, symbolic of the destruction of evil. Unfortunately, unlike Sita, there is no hope of rescue for Bibi; her exile is permanent. The contrast between the "pure" Sita of the myths, who remains pure even after spending months in her abductor's captivity and the present day Sita who is *polluted,* links her to the historical

continuum of the suffering woman.

The story fluctuates between the past and the present. Bibi is constantly haunted by the memories of her family, especially her brother who left for England but never returned. Her idyllic past is in sharp contrast to her present reality where she has become the *bahu* of Gurpal's mother, the mother of his three children, and an unpaid servant, repeatedly abused by Gurpal's mother. While the past is much more desirable, she is also aware of its irretrievability. The violent rupture of her world has left her heartbroken.

Motherhood is also a dominant theme in the story. The author questions the traditional definition of motherhood as the crowning glory of a woman's existence. Munni's youthful body is violently forced into motherhood. It is not a source of happiness and fulfillment. Rather her motherhood, especially her attachment to her daughter Munni, acts as an entrapment, firmly tying her to her abductor and his home. "Munni stands in my way. She is the great distance that separates me from my own family". (51)

The sharp contrast between her outer and inner self is a significant side of her character. Her status in Gurpal's home has undergone a change over the years. When he first brought her home he told his reluctant mother, "You don't have to put up with the airs of the maidservants anymore. Here I have brought you a bahu. She is your maid. She that will do whatever you tell her to do – grind grain, fetch water, anything you want…"(40). Reference to cattle tied in the courtyard immediately after this scene is striking. It implies that there is after all not much of a difference between a *bahu* and cattle; both are "useful". In fact the story is filled with animal imagery. Bibi unquestioningly fulfills all the household duties of an obedient *bahu.*

In a few years, she manages to please Gurpal's mother with her submissive and docile nature.

It appears as if she is meekly resigned to her fate. Her outer calm is, however, deceptive. Inwardly she does not lack agency and occasionally resists Gurpal's attempts at erasing her individuality. The following dialogue between Gurpal and Bibi demonstrates this. Gurpal says, "Can't you ever forget that incident?" She replies "How could I have explained Gurpal that times never change? That human beings are forever doomed to suffer pain because they can never forget." (48)

Even though she waits every moment for her brother to come and take her back, she knows in her mind that he would never come. In her own words "Who wants a tainted daughter back?" (She wants to go home with all her heart) but when the army truck arrives to recover the abducted women, Bibi hides behind a well. Thus she loses her only chance of escape. She knows her family would never accept her. In India women are conditioned to feel that dishonor is a fate worse than death.

The family is traditionally run by women, especially the mother. She is the chief instrument of socialization of children, the transmitter of values and morality. She prepares her children to internalize the socially and culturally accepted behavior; to fit into the prescribed gender roles. In the collective consciousness of society, she represents the popularly accepted stereotype of the ideal woman. Women are expected to be morally upright, sexually pure, submissive, selfless, and nurturing. It is crucial to understand the extent to which these conceptions are internalized both by men and women. These ideologies form the foundation on which women's self-perception

and self-respect are built. The dignity and honor of the men are directly related to and dependent on the moral propriety and behavior of the women in their family. Purity for a woman is paramount. This ideology is internalized by Munni to such an extent that she sees herself as defiled, impure, who has no place in her family. Therefore, she refuses to return to her *home* and family.

Bibi is also realistic; she realizes that in spite of the injustices and miseries, life continues to flow like a stream and that she has to keep flowing with it. Every woman, raped or abducted during the Partition, had to renegotiate her relationship with an unjust patriarchal order. Her profound awareness of her status in a hierarchical social set up, refusal to forget the past and decision to record her story are acts of resistance, even though she does not bring about radical changes in her life.

Vaidehi's "Krouncha Pakshigalu" (Kannada) is a deeply moving portrayal of the plight of the abducted women. The story is included as part of the study though it has not been translated into English. Vaidehi is a well known Kannada writer. apart from Lalitambika Antarjanam and Balachandran Rajan, very few South Indian writers who have attempted to write Partition. The story provides us with the South Indian perspective of the Partition. In spite of her geographical distance from the Partition, Vaidehi successfully brings out the intense melancholy an abducted woman. By realistically portraying the sufferings of a Partition victim, the author demonstrates that physical distance is no barrier to creative expression.What sets the story apart from other Partition narratives is that it is narrated from the perspectives of three characters; therefore the story employs a story-within-a-story structure. Arundhathi,

a young woman from Karnataka, goes to Delhi after many years of the Partition for higher education and research. On her return she shares the experience of a chance meeting with a woman from her village who had migrated to Delhi long back.

Arundhathi and her friend Anita visit the house of Vishakha Ben, a disciple of Gandhi and a volunteer at the refugee camps for women. At her home she meets the caretaker Lakshmamma, who was they later learn was the wife of Ashnarna Bhatt of their village.

Ashnarna Bhatt runs a small hotel in Delhi. He lives with his young wife Lakshmamma, also from the same village.He returned to his village for good after two years of independence, but without his wife. He tells his sad tale to hi family members and neighbors. During independence, his small hotel was doing well. He had a set of regular customers who loved the food he served. He shares a warm relationship with his customers. He says that he never bothered whether the customers were Hindus or Muslims.As independence drew near, they heard rumours that the country was going to be divided. Newspapers regularly reported incidents of communal violence in different parts of the country. Disturbances started in Delhi as well. However, the locality in which he lived remained unaffected. He remembers how there used to be heated discussions about the Partition between his customers. Till then Partition was only a piece of news. However, his life was about to be changed forever. It was a day like any other; he was busy preparing food. Two of his regular customers approached the hotel. On the day, their temper and body language were different. Without any warning they started plundering the hotel and assaulted him. Then they entered the inner chamber where Lakshmi was churning buttermilk.

The men start dragging her out of the hotel. Even before he could realize what was happening, they had vanished along with his wife. He told his family and the neighbors that he tried very hard to find his wife. He searched the entire city, wandered like a mad man and visited the nearby towns, he even went till Kashi, but there was no trace of his wife. Dejected, he decided to return to his village.

He remarried after a few days. He had four children from his second wife, Annapoorna. He started working as a cook for a living.However, he remained depressed, unable to forget his wife. He suffered from acute stomach pain. No doctor could diagnose his illness.He suffered unbearable pain till the end of his life.His second wife said that he used to sleep on the floor; someone joked that even then had four children. The Villagers sympathized with him called him *Krouncha Pakshi.*

Krouncha Pakshi acts as the central metaphor in the story. Sage Valmiki, to whom the classical Ramayana is attributed, was inspired to compose the epic poem after seeing a Krounch bird, in sight of its mare, killed by a cruel hunter. Valmiki was overcome with compassion for the inconsolable mare. The *Krounch* bird becomes a symbol of the agony of separated lovers.The parallels between Vaidehi's story and the epic continue.Ashnarna Bhatt is a corruption of his real name Lakshmi Narayana Bhatt. Lakshmi Narayana is another name of Lord Vishnu, whose incarnation Rama is supposed to be. According to mythology Sita is the reincarnation of Goddess Lakshmi, Vishnu's consort.Lakshmi Narayana, therefore, stands for the union of Vishnu and Lakshmi, by implication Rama and Sita. Ashnarna Bhatt, a corruption of the original signify the separation of the divine couple, in this context the two main characters of the story.

When Arundhathi informs Lakshmi about Ashnarna Bhatt's frantic search for her with a sense of regret, Lakshmi is surprised. At this point, Lakshmi narrates her story. A few days after her abduction, Lakshmi was recovered by the government agencies and brought back to Delhi. Her husband was among the people who had come to take their women back. When she spotted her husband in the crowd, she was overwhelmed with emotions. The tears that she had held back for so long began to roll down her eyes. She eagerly waited for him to come to her, and take her back. To her utter shock and disillusionment, he turned away and started walking back. She ran after him, implored him to look at her but he did not once look back. She was abandoned by him, just the way Rama had abandoned his wife Sita. Ashnarna Bhatt's acute and unexplained stomach pain is the symbol of guilt that never left him.

To Arundhathi's surprise, her family members understand him and sympathize with him. They justify his desertion of his wife saying it is not easy for a man to accept a tainted wife, irrespective of the circumstances. Arundhathi retorts by pointing out that women unconditionally accept their husbands, even disease ridden ones, after years of abandonment, they say that these two are different matters. The family's justification exposes patriarchal hypocrisy that has different sets of moral standards for men and women.

The story reminds of Sunder Lal's's predicament in 'Lajwanti' in the scene wherehe sees his wife after a long gap. He has formed a particular image of Lajwanti in his mind. He expects her to look sad and emaciated after spending months with her abductor. When she appears before him, he at one notices the changes in her. She has put on weight, her cheeks are brighter and she is looking better than she had ever looked. For Sunder Lal, these changes are hard to accept. Unlike Ashnarna Bhatt

he takes his wife home, though he is never able to revive his relationship with her. Ashnarna Bhatt not only deserts his wife, but also takes away her right to tell her own story. Unlike the man, Vaidehi lets Lakshmi narrate her own story, restoring Lakshmi's sense of selfhood.

Scholars have found extensive evidence that proves that families were reluctant to take abducted women back because they had become *impure*. The unwillingness on the part of the families was so great that leaders like Gandhi and Nehru had to issue repeated appeals to people to persuade them to accept the women. Butalia quotes one such speech by Nehru:

> "I am told that there is unwillingness on the part of their relatives to accept those girls and women back in their homes. This is a most objectionable and wrong attitude to take and any social custom that supports this attitude must be condemned. These girls and women require our tender and loving care and their relatives should be proud to take them back and give them every help". (Butalia 1998 160)

She also points out how pamphlets which used the story of Sita who remained pure despite her time away from her husband were distributed. The purity was much more important in India, among Hindus and Sikhs – perhaps because the Hindu religion places greater emphasis on purity and pollution. Abducted women were more easily accepted in Pakistan perhaps because the practice of widows and divorced women remarrying is common among Muslims. Women's organizations arranged marriages for these women.

In every community victims of rape are stigmatized. Rape is tied with notions of honor and respect. Women are not allowed to live with dignity.In popular films suicide is the only way for the victim; most of the time the victim is made to marry the rapist as nobody else would marry her. The characterization of men is also significant in these stories.Sunder Lal, reclaims his wife but fails to wholeheartedly accept her, and Ashnarna Bhatt rejects her outright. However, the authors do not demonize them; they are not portrayed as inherently evil. Instead they are seen as part of the system that victimizes women.

Children are the most unrepresented category of the victims of the Partition. Neither historical writings, nor fiction, nor cinema has done justice to the children who suffered. Urvashi Butalia acknowledges this lapse;

> "No history of Partition that I have seen so far has had anything to say about children. This is not surprising: as subjects of history children are difficult to deal with. The historian may well ask: how do you recover the experiences of children, as children? As a tool of history, memory is seen to be unreliable at the best of times, with little to offer by way of 'facts'. Childhood memories filtered through the prism of adult experience – these may be acceptable as autobiography, but not necessarily as history." (Butalia 1998 249)

Butalia admits that while conducting her research into the history of children, she realized that official documents say very little about them. Survivors told her about

the thousands of children lost, abducted, and abandoned at the time. Social workers put out advertisements for adoption. As expected most of the people who responded wanted male children, and most of the children left behind were girl children. Most of the social workers felt those families who adopted girl children wanted domestic servants, not daughters; some girls who were adopted, could have been pushed into flesh trade. Many families killed their own children, along with women, fearing they would be a hindrance while escaping; they could be kidnapped and converted. Millions of children whose lives were torn apart; separated from their families, they lived lives of destitution. Children were picked up from refugee camps and orphanages and sold into prostitution and begging.

Children are invisible in historical and political documents. It is a challenge to retrieve their experience. A few writers have addressed the suffering of children; so, literature is a priceless source in this context.

Attia Hosain's "After the Storm" is the story of Bibi, a nine year old girl, who had survived the 'storm'. Although the story is not narrated from Bibi's perspective, it sensitively renders the suffering and the trauma of a child. Bibi works as a domestic help in the house of the narrator, who might be an elderly woman. Even though the narrator is aware of the girl's past, she wants to hear it from her. She says that she has tried to imagine the horror child must have gone through, but failed every time.

Bibi longs for her mother; perhaps she sees her mother in the narrator. That's why she puts her head on her lap and makes flower garlands for her (her mother liked garlands). Bibi was not a pretty child and nobody would have noticed her

if she had not had an extraordinary story. According to the author “she was now a symbol and around her hovered the ghosts of all one feared”. (103)

Occasionally Bibi remembers her past life. Her memory, however, is fragmented and episodic. She vividly remembers the pleasant aspects of her past. For instance, she remembers that after the death of her father she went to live with her aunt and uncle. She has an elder sister who is married and an elder brother.

The author suggests that she may have witnessed horrible scenes of carnage and murder, including that of her aunt Chand Bibi. The police saved and brought her to a refugee camp where there were lots of women and children. In a few days she ran away and was later adopted. But she had forgotten what had happened between her escape and adoption.

The narrator wants to know what happened to her mother. In a very detached manner Bibi replies that she didn’t know as she was with Chand Bibi. She says this as if she is narrating fairy tale. When asked who Chand Bibi was she replies that she was very brave, and they said she had fought until her arm was cut off. But the narrator wants to know where her mother was. To this she says that her mother was at home; she had been told that the house was full of blood. When Chand Bibi was killed, Bibi was taken away by a man.They hid in a sugarcane field for some time. Later he put her on a train. Suddenly she talks about the garland that she had made for the narrator.

The brutality which the child may have witnessed is beyond her comprehension. Therefore she is unable to cope with it. The child’s sense of shock and trauma is so

profound that her mind erased all the unpleasant memories. She has adopted a tone of detachment; as if she is talking about someone else.She has distanced herself from the past. Perhaps this is the only way she can deal with her loss.

The loss of her parents, family and home is tragic. Equally tragic is the merciless way in which her childhood and innocence are snatched from her. Bibi has grown up too fast; her body is worn out because of hard work. She even dressed like older women. She doesn't go to school or play like other children of her age. "There was no telling how many years of childhood, life had robbed her of" (101). The bottle filled with flowers mentioned at the beginning of the story is a striking metaphor for the miserable of the child. "The flowers were awkwardly crowded into the small-necked bottle. Its paper label had not been successfully washed away and had triumphantly survived in its scratched mutilation". (101). The girl, just like the small-necked bottle choking with flowers, had experienced too many thins at such a tender age. The paper label that refuses to go away stands for the memories that have survived in some corner of her mind, which can resurface any time.

This is not the story of Bibi alone, but thousands of children whose lives were wrecked beyond repair and minds were permanently scarred.

Krishna sobti's "Where is my Mother?" is about the effect of Partition on the mind of a child. It also explores the relationship between the girl and a bloodthirsty man.

Bahaddur Younus Khan of the Baluch regiment has been on a killing spree for the last four days. He has killed people ruthlessly, witnessed innocent men, women and children being killed on the streets, and villages being burnt. He justifies his

actions by saying that he had fought for the birth of a new country and it is his duty to sacrifice his life for his nation. He sees every non-Muslim as a *Kafir* and wants to purge his sacred land of every Kafir. He thinks that he is establishing a new Mughal empire, the land of the Muslims.

One of the main arguments propounded by the Muslim League and other parties in order to exhort the Muslims to demand a separate nation was that before the arrival of the British the Mughals had established an Islamic empire in India. After the departure of the British, they are the natural inheritors of independent India. This would be impossible in a Hindu majority India. It was told that they would be enslaved by the majority. Therefore it is in their interest to fight for a separate nation where they could re-establish the glorious Mughal Empire. In the popular discourse of these organizations, the Mughal Empire had become the symbol of the lost glory of the Muslims. And many believed that it was their sacred duty to shed blood for the Holy Land;

> "Freedom can't be won without bloodshed, revolutionary wars can't be fought without bloodshed and… and his small and lovely country had been born out of such a revolutionary struggle!" (135)

The entire city is plunged in an orgy of bloodshed and hatred. This is how the author describes the aftermath of violence;

> "Death had passed on both sides of the road. Charred and mutilated bodies lay in piles near fields of wheat. Cries of " Allah-ho-Akbar" and "Har Har Mahadev" could be heard at a

distance. “Catch him, catch him”… “Kill him, kill him”…..

“No, no, please, no”…. Yunus Khan heard all of them.” (136)

While driving his truck, he spots a wounded little girl lying unconscious on the road. He gets down and picks her up. Her face and hair are covered with blood. He is overcome with compassion for the girl. She reminds him of his younger sister Nooran who had died at the age of eleven. He wonders why he feels such tenderness for this Kafir girl, when he hadn’t felt a thing while killing others. He leaves the child at the hospital and returns to his duty. In the meanwhile, Lahore is burning. Streets are lined with dead bodies; soldiers have joined the mobs in killing and looting. Amidst all this uproar, Yunus Khan is calm and composed.

When he sees the girl recovering, he is filled with joy. When he tries to touch her, she screams with fear. She is in a state of delirium and shouting “camp, camp, we have reached the camp. Run… faster”. She continues “run, run … soldiers” (138). The doctor explains to Yunus Khan that the girl is afraid of him because she is a Kafir. For the first time he understood the full implication of the term. After a few days at the hospital, the girl recovers. Yunus wants to take her home and look after her like his own sister. The girl refuses to go with him as she is afraid he would kill her. He feels ashamed of himself “Yunus Khan was forced to lower his eyes. He no longer felt like a brave, powerful and ruthless soldier. He felt miserable, helpless …. Weak” (139). The girl inwardly feels that the Baluch would kill her, the way her brother was killed; she remembers that his head was chopped off. Yunus Khan’s efforts to comfort her are futile.She keeps shouting “You are a Muslim…You will kill me.” (139). She keeps calling for her mother.

The story vividly portrays the immense psychological damage the child goes through as a result of mindless violence. It is clear that the girl may have seen terrible violence inflicted upon the members of her family, including the pitiless beheading of her brother. In all probability, as the story is set in Lahore, the perpetrators would have been Muslims. In the little girl's mind, Yunus Khan represents uncontrolled bestiality, so she is terrified of him. In spite of his affection and care, the image fixed in her mind refuses to go. The girl's innocence brings about a change in him, he recovers his lost humanity; but he is unable to produce any change in her. Because of the deplorable action of a few, an entire community is demonized in her eyes. She may never be able to trust a Muslim ever again, thus carrying the animosity to the next generation.

Both the children long for their mother. While Bibi finds a mother figure in the narrator, the other girl is left motherless. Both the stories show how Partition destroyed the lives of children by depriving them of the warmth and protective care of parents and families. The physical and psychological damage that the Partition afflicted on children is deep and irrevocable.

The stories of violence by women express the hidden pain and anguish of women who suffered horrific violence during the Partition. Each woman who was subjected to violence face a repressive system of double oppression. First Patriarchy victimizes them and then imposes the overarching burden of silence. They are made to feel deeply ashamed of their own bodies. In all the stories women are acutely conscious of their *defilement.* They are forced to make difficult choices. In a male dominated system, women are left with few alternatives. In spite of this, women find ways of resisting the demands made on them; demand to forget, forgive, and accept their

fate. Munni by retaining the memory of her abduction; Jyoti by questioning the notion of motherhood, and Lakshmi by making a fresh start, defy the norms society sets for them.

Women, Displacement and the Partition

The chapter discusses the stories that communicate the experience of forced displacement. The chapter addresses the issues of home, belonging and roots in relation to the Partition refugees. It also makes an effort to look at the ways in which women confronted the challenges of dislocation and rehabilitation.

> "One of the most unexpected and tragic consequences of the political decision to divide the Indian subcontinent was that millions of people were forced to leave their homes, their *bastis,* their *watan*, and undertake a difficult and sorrowful journey, often against their desires and better instincts, to cities and villages whose names had rarely ever before drifted across the boundaries of their affective realms".
>
> (Bhalla 2006 4)

The Partition of India set off one of the largest, most rapid and bloodiest mass migrations in world history. Nearly14.5 million people had migrated to India and the newly created Pakistan within four years of the partition. The migration took place mainly across the Western border between India and Pakistan and the Eastern border between India and East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). Although both the territories had massive Hindu, Muslim and Sikh populations, migratory flows across the Western border were almost three times larger than the Eastern border. In Pakistani Punjab

20.92% of the total population left while by 1951, 25.5% of its population was from across the border. In Indian Punjab 29.78% of the population migrated and by 1951 16.02% of its population was migrant. In comparison West Bengal saw only 6.3% leave who were replaced by migrants who comprised of 8.47% of the population. On the Bangladeshi side 6.5% of the people left and 1.66% were migrant by 1951.

The massive movement of people radically reduced the number of religious minorities on both sides. In the Hindu majority districts of the Indian Punjab, the percentage of Muslims fell from 30% in 1931 to 1.75% by 1951. In the districts that went to Pakistan the percentage of Hindus and Sikhs fell from 21.7% in 1931 to 0.16% in 1951. In both the countries put together nearly 3.7 million people were reported missing. (Bharadwaj 39-49)

The meticulously collected figures and statistics, however, fail to convey the immense trauma and pain of the people who were unexpectedly and violently displaced and relocated in alien places and communities; the misery of leaving home, family, friends, property and long cherished emotional ties was compounded by the fear of an uncertain future. As Urvashi Butalia in "An Archive with Difference: Partition Letters" rightly says, "There is no real record of the number of families separated, fields of crops left to rot, the homes destroyed, nor the perilous journeys people made as they fled to their new homelands." (2003 208)

The physically exhausting and emotionally strenuous long journey across the border was often accompanied by violence and slaughter. Thousands of people travelled on foot or on bullock carts, buses and trains aware of the danger lying in

wait at every step. Only a few privileged ones could travel by air without the threat of violent attacks.

Vikhar Ahamed Sayeed in his enlightening essay "The Muhajirs in the Promised Land" identifies two heart wrenching images that symbolize the intense pain of displacement in collective memory. The first of these is the long winding columns of poor, desolate and undernourished people (popularly known as the *Caravans)*, with the typical paraphernalia of rural life such as cattle, bullock carts, ploughs and others stretching across vast planes. The second is that of trains densely packed with despondent people; the men cling on to every possible space and hold available and the train itself is invisible under the mass of humanity. (1)

The question that has puzzled historians, scholars and common people alike is why did people who had inhabited the places for generations and who had developed strong sense of belonging suddenly decided to leave their homes and migrate to unknown places. The explanation that is unanimously put forth in official and community discourse is the fear of violence by the *Other* and the inherent antagonism between the Hindus and the Muslims. Most of the refugees were forced to leave their homes for fear of their lives and threat to the chastity of their women from the leering *Other* men. It must be stressed that violence against women was one of the most indisputable factor that drove people to leave their homes. The need to protect the women from the *Other* men became the most decisive factor that led to migration.

However, there are other compelling factors - social, economic and psychological – that caused the mass exodus of people from both the regions.

If we study the demographics of pre-colonial India, we observe that Muslims were not the numerical majority at any given time in history; at the time of independence, they were about one third of the total population. Despite that India had been ruled by Muslim rulers for centuries before the British. With the decline of the Mughal Empire and the ascendency of the British, the considerably dominant Muslim aristocracy lost its former glory. The Muslim elite, especially the Zamindars and the rulers of the princely states, had assumed themselves the nobility and the ruling class of the country. In fact, this was the main reason for the initial animosity between the Muslims and the British. The relations between the Muslim upper classes and the British improved in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. However, with the exit of the British in the offing, the Indian Muslim elite grew anxious about their future. Neither could they hope for colonial political patronage, nor the revival of their eminence in an independent India in which Hindus were in a majority. This led to a psychological crisis within the Muslim community. This was also the time when the demand for a separate state for the Indian Muslims was gaining momentum in the political circles. People were enticed by the dream of a new country exclusively for Muslims where they could regain their lost position, free from the fear of Hindu dominance.

Attia Hosain remarkably depicts this conflict in her novel *Sunlight on a Broken Column.* The novel, set in Lucknow, deals with the disintegration of a Muslim *Taluqdar* family in the years preceding the Partition. Though at the core of the novel is the changing personal fortunes of a family caught between the forces of tradition and modernity, the lives of the characters are interminably linked with the

socio-political milieu of the time. It brings alive the socio-political turmoil of the 1930's and 40's and maps the changes brought about by external political forces in the lives of people. The Muslim dilemma is represented by two characters, Saleem and Kemal, who are brothers. When Saleem returns from England, he becomes an ardent follower of the Muslim League under the influence of Raza Ali and Nadira, who are committed Leaguers.

Salem believes that the Congress, which would eventually take over the reins of power, is a party of the Hindus in spite of the presence of eminent leaders like Maulana Azad. He says;

> "…. The Congress has a strong anti-Muslim element against which the Muslims must organize. The danger is great because it is hidden, like an iceberg. When it was just a question of fighting the British the progressive forces were uppermost; but now that power is to be acquired, now the submerged reactionary elements will surface.Muslim must unite against them." (233)

Saleem, on the other hand, represents those Muslims who were committed to the idea of a united India.He says, "I see future in the past. I was born here, and generations of my ancestors before me.I am content to die here and be buried with them." (288)

Despite her nationalistic leaning, Attia Hosain presents a balanced, non-judgmental view of the split in the Muslim community. Saleem and Nadira represent those Muslims for whom loyalty to one's faith was more important than loyalty to the land

of one's birth; they saw in Pakistan a realization of their hopes and aspirations. On the other hand, Kemal represents those who were loyal to their land.

Migration was also triggered by economic factors. The Muslim *Zamindars* who lived off rents without participating in the cultivation of land would be severely affected if *Zamindari* system were abolished in independent India. In its 1937 election manifesto, the Congress had clearly hinted at Land reforms that would favor the smaller peasantry. The League manifesto, however, was opposed to any kind of expropriation of private property. So a number of landlords decided to migrate to Pakistan to protect their economic interests (Mishra 142). Industry and civil services were dominated by the educated Hindus. Evacuation of Hindus on a large scale from the new Muslim state would create previously unavailable opportunity for jobs and quick promotions; in the absence of Hindu competition, the small section of educated Muslims hoped for a bright future in the new country.

There was growing anxiety among the educated Muslims, especially in the cities, about political, economic and cultural subjugation in Hindu majority India. Their discontent and demand for their rights found a voice in the Muslim League. The propaganda carried out by the League as well as communalized politics of the right wing Hindu organizations intensified this anxiety further. Mushirul Hasan says that in the 1930's the Aligarh Muslim University had become the hotbed of League politics. The students were so taken up by the League philosophy that they actively participated in the election campaign in 1937 on behalf of the League. The idea of Pakistan, therefore, attracted the educated youth, intellectuals and sections of the middle class. (1995 18-26)

The divisive politics of the British, and the political ambitions of Hindu and Muslim leaders poisoned minds and destroyed the secular fabric of the country deve loped over the years by the combined efforts of both the communities. The psy chological vulnerability of the people was exploited by the leaders for their political gain.

Right wing Hindu politics also escalated tensions between the communities. Hindu revivalists took maximum advantage of communal disturbances that took place throughout the 1930's and 40's (Bihar, UP, Berar, Naukhali etc.).The Hindu religious reconversion movements *Shuddhi* and the *Sangathan* were resurrected, which had been started by the Arya Samaj.These were followed by parallel Muslim mobilization movements such as *Tabligh* and *Tanzeem*. The Hindu Mahasabha swiftly grew in numbers and local influence. The introduction of Hindi as the national language, singing of *Bande Mataram* in schools and Gandhi's Education scheme "Vardha" were seen by Muslims as attempts to impose Hindu culture.

Kanchanmoy Majumdar describes the communally charged atmosphere at the time in these words:

> "A Hindu Muslim fracas in a remote village, the appointment and transfer of a minor government employee, the attitude of a petty policeman in a township, the maintenance of a denominational primary school – all these were drummed up into issues involving the very *izzat* , of either the Muslim or the Hindu community itself. National leaders made much of these small local incidents to reap political harvests.." (190)

Mumtaz Shirin's novel *The Heart Divided* portrays the turbulent period between 1930 and 1942; it was the time when politics seeped into the daily lives of people widening the divide between the two communities. The protagonist Zohra, an educated girl from an aristocratic Muslim family, was strongly influenced by the Nationalist Movement. A firm believer in the notion of United India, she is completely disillusioned with the growing influence of separatism among the educated and upper class Muslims. Because of her nationalist leanings, she is shunned by her Muslim friends and Hindu and Sikh girls in her college *take her up*. In fact, she becomes the cause of rivalry and quarrel between her friends. In such vicious atmosphere, she feels emotionally isolated and helpless. In a conversation with an old friend Ahamed she says;

> "It's come into everything, just everything the hatred and the division…. Oh Ahamed, you can't imagine what it's like seeing my own family! … There was a time when we had so many Hindu friends. In fact when we first came out of *purdah*, there were more non-Muslims … And now … why are we meeting them less … less and less..." (418)

The conversation demonstrates that the Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims were not historically hostile groups. Although there were differences and occasional skirmishes, they had lived as neighbors and friends for ages. The relations were strained by communal politics, so much so that there was a breakdown of dialogue between the communities that resulted in the Partition and relocation of the minority communities in both the countries.

As mentioned in the previous chapters, in the last two decades, there has been a historiographical swing in the scholarly approach to the Partition. Attempts have been and are being made to recover the subaltern experiences mainly through oral testimony, interviews, letters and fiction. However, even the subaltern account tends to become the history of men, in which the voices of women are marginalized. Urvashi Butalia, for instance, tells that it was very difficult to speak to women of the survivor communities; even when women survivors agreed to speak, women were reluctant to share their experiences and express their views and in most cases men frequently interceded on their behalf, again depriving them of their voice. (1998 125-143)

Even in the vast body of feminist scholarship, the focus is usually on sexual violence of women. However, there are other aspects of women's experience which need to be explored to arrive at a holistic understanding. One of the areas that need consideration is the experience of the refugee women. Except scholars such Urvashi Butalia, Jasodhara Bagchi, Subhoranjan Dasgupta, Joya chatterjee, Gargi Chakravarthy and Nilanjana Chatterjee, there have been very few writings on the dislocation of women. Even those studies that deal with the refugee experience are centered on women who moved to India. The Pakistani experience remains an unchartered territory. Driven out of their homes and forced to settle in alien places, these women faced extreme difficulties such as violence, poverty, loss of family, deprivation and the challenge to rebuild their lives in a new country, often amidst unwelcoming native population.

In the face of such gap in scholarship, partition fiction can play a crucial part.

There are many novels and short stories that articulate the distressful experience of displacement from women's point of view.

"The New Regime" by Krishna Sobti expresses the anguish of the people displaced by the Partition through the consciousness of the protagonist Shahni. It laments not just personal loss but the disintegration of human values and culture of shared living. The story is set in an unnamed village in Gujarat, a part of West Punjab (now in Pakistan) during the Partition. The story is autobiographical and the character Shahni is based on her maternal grandmother. Most of the incidents narrated in the story actually took place. Her grandmother refused to leave her home in spite of news of the killings of Hindus and Sikhs in the neighboring villages. A few other Hindu villagers also stayed on as they felt secure because of her presence. Once she left, the other villagers followed her. (Bhalla 2006 138)

In the story, Shahni is the mistress of the palatial *Haveli* and the widow of Shahji, who was the wealthiest and well respected man of the village. She owns large tracts of fertile fields studded with numerous wells that yield "gold year after year" (148)

Shahni who had years ago entered the *haveli* as a bride and spent her entire life as its proud mistress is forced to leave it as the country is partitioned. Her village is now part of the newly created Pakistan, in which she has no place anymore. The Muslim tenant farmers, who had tilled her land for many years, cannot wait to usurp the land. Perhaps Shahni is an easy target because of the absence of a male protector. Traditionally a woman without male protection is viewed as weak and helpless, therefore can be easily intimidated. Shera, whom Shahni had brought up like a son,

is planning her murder along with his companions, so that he can loot the gold and silver jewellery. Arson, loot and killing have already begun in the neighbouring villages; in fact as Shera is accompanying Shahni to the haveli the neighbouring village is set on fire. Shera himself had participated in the inhuman rioting; he had killed thirty to forty people with his own hands.

Shahni is extremely distraught at the thought of leaving her village and *haveli*. The *haveli* is an integral part of her existence; she is immensely attached to it. After her husband's death and the migration of her son, the *haveli* is her only source of contentment. She turns nostalgic and remembers the glorious days of the Shah family. The following lines bring out her sense of loneliness, dejection, and helplessness:

> "She was old, frail and alone. There was nobody to look after her. She just lay there listlessly. The afternoon came and went. The *haveli* was desolate and quiet. Shahni just couldn't get up. She felt as if she was losing control over the place. Shahji was the rightful owner of the house… But no, her possessive instincts had not slackened. Nor her attachment to what belonged to her husband". (150)

Her reminiscences are disturbed by the arrival of the truck that is to take her across the border, to a refugee camp. The entire village has gathered at the *haveli* to bid farewell to their beloved Shahni. The villagers are not hostile towards her; in fact they are bogged down by sense of guilt because of their inability to protect her. Her family friend and police inspector Daud Khan had come to escort her.

When he asks her to carry some cash as there are hard times ahead, she sarcastically replies,

"Daud Khan, will I ever live to see better times?" (151)

She leaves behind all the cash, jewellery and the valuables for the villagers to plunder.

She is overpowered by grief as she is stepping out of the house. Despite this, she is determined to leave her home and village in a graceful and dignified manner, as befitting the mistress of the magnificent *haveli.* Sobti mentions;

> "The migration was so overpowering that personal emotions, grief and losses were lost in the collective tragedy. Anyone, rich or poor, young or old, who found himself alive, forgetting pride and pain, was collecting himself to face the overpowering reality of living." (Jain 2007 29)

In spite of the grave injustice done to her, there is no hatred or anger in her. As the truck moves, she takes one last look at her *haveli,* "Her ties with the place snapped. Its soil was going to deny her sustenance" (153). At the refugee camp the same night she muses over her changed situation,"So the Raj has been overthrown! But will the currency also change? But how? That I have left behind." (153)

The changed currency is a metaphor for the new political scenario that has put an end to years of shared existence and religious tolerance. Partition changed fortunes overnight; Shahni who was the richest woman in the entire village suddenly turned a refugee in her own land.

While the story presents the picture of communal harmony in day to day living (represented by the huge gathering at her house and the Muslim policeman), it also suggests the cracks in society that existed in the pre-partition days. Although the tenant farmers have enormous respect for Shahni, there is also deep resentment. It has already been pointed out that long repressed class differences found convenient outlet during the Partition. Tenants ousted landowners so that they could not only grab their land, but also to get rid of huge debts they owed the landlords; sometimes this anger turned violent. It is evident that Shahji lent money at exorbitant interest which would have drained the farmers of the little they earned. It is not religious hatred, but class antagonism that turned Shera against Shahni,

> "It (Partition) was destined to happen. But why not? Shahji had filled up his coffers by extracting interest from one and all. It was said that he weighed bags filled with gold. The very idea angered Shera." (149)

Shera is torn between an overwhelming urge to kill Shahni and his fondness for her. In the end humanity prevails and he drops the idea of killing her.

The story is valuable not only because it brings out the anguish and suffering of those people who found themselves on the wrong side of the border, but also gives us a picture of the society in those days.

"Roots" by Ismat Chugtai recreates the collective past when the two communities lived in harmony and remarkably records the impact partition had on civilizational ties. Narrated in the first person by the protagonist *Amma*'s young daughter,

the story is set in Marwar during the time of the Partition. Though Marwar is quite distant from the Western border, it did not remain untouched by the communal disturbances that were spreading rapidly across North India. The story revolves around *Amma*, the aged matriarch of a large joint Muslim family who refuses to leave her ancestral land in the wake of communal violence and danger to her life.

When the story opens India has just become independent. But the joy of independence is totally eclipsed by the division of the country. The atmosphere of the town is very tense; many Muslim families have left, while a few others have gone into hiding. A few families who have stayed are living in the shadow of fear. They are so panicked that they remain indoors and keep their doors padlocked at all times. The continuous influx of Hindu refugees from Pakistani Punjab who were forcibly evacuated has worsened the situation. There have been two riots in the neighbourhood already, and a third can erupt anytime.

The story presents a contrast between the ominous present with the cheerful past when there was friendship, neighbourliness and amity. The lives of the Muslims and the Hindus were so interwined, that it was difficult to distinguish one from the other. They were bound by common language, culture and heritage. In fact when an officer asks the minorities to leave the city the Thakurs retorted,

"Look the people are so intermingled that for combing Muslims out you needstaff which involves wasteful expense. However if you want to buy a plot of land for the refugees, that can be arranged. Only animals live in the forest and they can be driven away any moment." (280)

Dr. Roopchand was a close friend of her father and their family doctor. The friendship extended to the next two generations as well. Their relations were so intimate that despite the strict custom of Purdah practiced in her family, *Amma* shared a warm relationship with the doctor. Whenever she fell sick, the doctor was promptly summoned. He would tease her by saying "Well, why make excuses? If you want to see me, just send word and I'll be here. You need not fake illness!" (282)

When *Amma*'s husband was paralyzed, Roopchand spent sleepless nights taking care of him. After his death, he became a father figure and a great source of strength to the children of the family. From getting the children's school fees waived to getting one of them admitted to a college, he fulfilled the father's role earnestly. Even the smallest decision in the family was not taken without consulting him.

There were members who were affiliated to the Congress, The Muslim League, The Hindu Mahasabha and Communist Party in both the families. In fact there were fierce political debates between members of the different parties. However the ideological and political differences did not affect personal relationships in the least. Gradually, ideologies hardened which caused a rift between the two families. The narrator remarks that on the eve of the Partition, support for the League and the Mahasabha turned stronger and more vocal even within the two families.Therefore the Partition not only tore communities, neighbours and friends apart, but even members of the same family.

In *Sunlight on a Broken Column* ideological and political beliefs cause rupture in the relationship between Hamid and his son Saleem. Hamid believes in the unity of Hindus and Muslims;

> "…always found it was possible for Hindus and Muslims to work together on a political level and live together in personal friendship." (234)

Saleem on the other has different views:

> "The majority of Hindus have not forgotten or forgiven the Muslims for having ruled over them for hundreds of years. Now they can democratically take revenge." (234)

Divided loyalty among members of the family and same social circle, in fact, is a recurring theme in Partition fiction.

In the present, the families have drifted apart; in the past where there was comradeship and togetherness, today there is a worrying silence. However, the incident that brings the smoldering tensions to the surface is when Chhabban Mian (a member of Amma's family) inscribes "Pakistan Zindabad" on the school wall. Roopchand's children retaliate by writing "Akhand Hindustan". Arguments and counter arguments soon turn into a full-fledged fight. Earlier when children returned home after getting into a fight, their mothers would give them a sound thrashing and send them to Roopchand's home for treatment. After this incident, however, the children are given a hero's welcome by their mothers. The mothers' response leaves the narrator totally shocked. That day when Chabban returned home, everyone speaks about his heroic deed as if he has returned from a battlefield. After this, the familial relations between the two households get worse.

On the day of independence the tricolor is unfurled over Roopchand's house and the League's flag over *Amma's*. Amidst all this chaos, only Amma remains silent; in fact she stops speaking after the flag hoisting. Amma's life is governed by certain values and codes of behavior. She values relationships over everything else. It does not matter to her whether her neighbours are Hindus or Muslims. Therefore the sudden snapping of bonds is too unbearable for her. She simply cannot understand the logic of Pakistan.

"What is this strange bird called 'our land'? Tell me where's that land? This is the place where one was born, one grew up in body and mind. If this cannot be one's own land then how can the place where one simply goes and settles down for a couple of days be one's own? And who knows whether one won't be driven out from there as well and be told – Go and inhabit a new land'?" (285)

When the communal and political conditions in the city turn dangerous, *Amma's* children decide to leave. The other family members pack their belongings in haste. *Amma* silently observes the falling apart of her home. "Right before our eyes the well-equipped house slowly turned into misshapen bundles and boxes" (284). Only when someone tries to pack Amma's trunk, does she break her silence. "Don't touch my trunk", Amma at last broke her silence. Everyone was stunned." (284)

In spite of the best efforts of her children to persuade her, she refuses to leave. She grew weary and more desolate with each passing hour. However, she remained firm in her resolve to stay back,"…Amma stayed steadfast in her position like a banyan tree that stands upright in storms and blizzards." (286)

However, when she sees her children leaving, with no prospect of return, she is devastated. "…Amma stood on the desolate courtyard. Her heart sank and she got scared like a small child as though ghosts would pounce on her from all sides." (286)

Left alone, she wanders in the now desolate house that once brimmed with familial bliss and contentment like a mad woman. Every corner is a repository of memories of a life time spent in the house.

> "As she turned to the room in front her heart came to her mouth. It was here that the *ghunghat* was lifted from the moon-like face of the young and timorous bride who had surrendered her life to her husband. In the room on the other side her eldest daughter was born whose remembrance pierced through her heart like lightning.... In fact all her children had their umbilical cords buried there". (286)

The reference to umbilical cord in this context is notable. It represents strong ties not only between the mother and her children, but also between *Amma* and her country. While Amma risks her life to preserve this tie, her children have no such compulsions. The youngster fail to understand *Amma's* and call her senile. They abandon not only the country of their birth, but also their own mother. *Amma* suffers a profound sense of betrayal.

Amma's reaction is similar to *Bebe's* in Jogindar Paul's short story "The Thirst of Rivers". *Bebe* is forced to leave her husband's ancestral *haveli* and shift to India. Even though she is physically away, mentally she is still rooted in the *haveli*. *Bebe* carries the bunch of keys of the old *haveli* and keeps it with her all the time. The keys,

now useless in the new house, nevertheless symbolize love for her home , responsibility and authority given to her by her family. She desperately tries to open the locks of the new home with her old keys, but fails. Till the end, she is never able to come to terms with reality.

Later Roopchand's wife brings her a tray of food, thereby re-establishing ruptured relationship. There is no conversation between the two women; there is no need for words. *Amma* is very anxious about the safety of her children. She is extremely disturbed by nightmarish images of her children being slaughtered. When there is violent knocking on her door, she is sure it's the angel of death who has come to claim her. But, to her surprise, it is her children who have returned home. They are brought home by their old friend Roopchand. *Amma* is overcome with tears of happiness. The story ends on a note of hope and affirmation. The author is able to convey that only mutual trust and friendship can defeat the forces of communalism and hatred.

Thus as M.Asaduddin, in "Fiction as History: Partition Stories" comments;

> "Roots… is an evocative story where the shared bond between the Muslim and the Hindu families endures, even though there was a temporary rupture". (318)

The story is important not only because it invokes the shared past and reasserts the value of religious harmony, but also because it gives fascinating insights. It also provides a counterpoint to the stereotypes of the Muslim community that were in circulation at the time. The supporters of the two nation theory and popular history have projected the Muslims as a homogenous community with common goals and

aspirations. Such portrayal ignores not just the complex nature of a diverse group but also the differences in terms of region, language, and culture.

> "Aren't you coming with us?" Bare Bhai asked sharply.
>
> "No. Do you think I'll go to die among those Sindhis. God's curse on them! They wander about in flowing *burqas* and *pyjamas*."
>
> "Why doesn't she go to the younger son in Dhaka?"
>
> "Aye, why should she go to Dhaka? Those head-hunting Bengalis knead rice in their hands and then slurp it down" – taunted *Mumani Bi*, the mother-in-law of *Sanjhle Bhai.*
>
> "Then go and stay with Farida at Rawalpindi", *Khala* suggested.
>
> "*Tobah*! May *Allah* save us from the Punjabis. They speak like the denizens of hell." (284)

The dialogue not only reflects a complete lack of understanding and familiarity between Muslims living in different regions, but also shows that there were deep-seated prejudices as well.

The story also exposes the myth of Pakistan as the Promised Land for the Muslims, a paradise on earth where the faithful followers of Islam would be free to practice their religion without the threat of Hindu domination; an ideal Islamic state built on the basis of equality and justice where every Muslim could prosper. However, for many, Pakistan proved to be a false utopia. Just like the Muslims of Marwar who

were tempted to migrate by the rumors that four *seers* of rice cost only one rupee and a cubit-long *naan* cost a quarter. The narrator sarcastically says;

> "They (the people who had migrated to Pakistan) were returning as they realized that to buy four *seers* of wheat they needed one rupee and though a cubit-long *naan* cost a quarter, it still had to be paid for. And those rupees and coins were neither sold nor did they grow in fields." (280)

This reminds us of Badiuzzaman's short story "The Last Wish" in which Kamal decides to migrate to Pakistan against the wishes of his father. Kamal was a staunch believer in the idea of a separate country for Muslims. When he migrates, he feels emotionally and culturally alienated in the new country. When he visits India, he tells his young cousin Khwaja at the Gaya railway station;

> "One pines to drink tea from an earthen cup in Karachi! One can't get such delicately flavored tea there….. May I tell you Khwaja, migrating to Pakistan was a grave error. If I had only paid heed to Abba's advice! I am neither here nor there. Sometimes I think that a united India would have been to everybody's advantage." (140)

His last wish is to be buried next to his ancestors, which is never going to be fulfilled. These are his final words just before he dies lonely and dejected;

> "Take me to *Amma*. I don't want to die in the desert of Karachi. Bury me across the river Falgu. In the graveyard where *Abba* and *Bare Abba* lie buried." (145)

Chugtai raises certain gender issues as well. Confined to the four walls of their home, women in Amma's family have no opinions of their own. They simply support the ideological positions of their men. Women are not the decision makers. All the major decisions are taken by men, women are expected to adhere. The only matters they discuss among themselves are haldi, dhaniya and fashion. Interestingly, it is only *Amma* among all the women who has the agency, albeit limited, to decide her own fate perhaps because of her age or as she is a widow (the ultimate controller of her life is dead).

The story also draws our attention to the value society, irrespective to religion, attaches to a woman's fertility. A woman's worth depends upon her ability to give birth to children, especially male children, so that the continuity of the family and community is ensured. Amma is very proud of her "sacred womb" (287) that brought ten children into the world. She is revered by other women as auspicious because of her fertility. Younger women used to reverentially touch her lap so that they would not remain barren.

Both "The New Regime" and "Roots" unfold the predicament of old age in the context of the Partition. The old people, who have spent most of their lives in one place, are deeply attached to their homes and country. They also prized emotional bonds forged with their neighbors above religious considerations. For them, "home" is where they were born, and their ancestors were born, not some unfamiliar land with which they have to emotional connect. Therefore, they find it difficult to cope with the new situation. Partition narratives are filled with distressed old people who are forced to discard the land of their birth and those who stayed

back, forsaken by the younger members of the family.

The youngsters, on the other hand, faced the pressures of supporting families and rebuilding lives in new spaces; they are also more aware of the political situation and alert to the danger of staying back. In fact, generation gap is a major theme in Partition fiction. A careful reading of Partition fiction reveals that while the older generation valued neighborly associations, the youngsters were more bigoted and sectarian in outlook. Both Shahni and *Amma* undergo the trauma and pain of desertion by their children.

Another neglected area in the realm of Partition discourse is the experience of the people in East Bengal. Monmoyee Basu says, "….nothing much has been written 50 years after independence on the woes of Bengal except a few articles here and there ….though a sustained effort has been made by both historians and social scientists to focus on the tragedy of Punjab…. Although Bengal too fell prey to the terrible communal mayhem on several occasions… The exodus of those millions of hapless people from their motherland, their trials and tribulations have perhaps, have very few parallels in the history of civilization." (144)

Jasodhara Bagchi and Subhoranjan Dasgupta in the introduction to their seminal work "Trauma and Truimph: Gender and Partition in Eastern India" call the massive transfer of population in East Bengal "Coerced Migration", defined by Charles Tilly as that which "entails obligatory departure, forced severing of most or all ties at the origin". (1)

Though migration is a universal phenomenon, each migration is region specific.

Bagchi and Dasgupta identify four fundamental differences between the Partition of Punjab and the Partition of Bengal. While the Partition of Punjab was a onetime event, migration from East Bengal (Bangladesh) continues. Even though Bengal was witness to terrible riots, the Partition of Punjab was much more bloody and destructive. The history and politics of Punjab have been more or less constant and definitive, whereas the historical and political reality of Bengal is much more complex (elaborated later in the chapter). The border and political division between India and Pakistan is much more rigid and secured compared to the region where India and Bangladesh meet which is more composite in nature due to economic and cultural reasons. (2-3)

Disturbances in Bengal began long before 1947. After the World War II Calcutta had become the centre of war profiteering and black marketing. Burma, the greatest exporter of rice to India, stopped supply suddenly, creating severs shortage of food. Bengal was hit by a disastrous cyclone in 1942. In the famine of 1943 one and a half to two million people died of starvation. As a consequence there were fear, anxiety and frustration in the air. The immediate reason, however, for the mass departure of the Hindus from East Pakistan was the threat of sexual violence against their women. (Chattopadhyay 301)

Neelanjana Chatterjee makes the following observation in “The East Bengal Refugees, A Lesson Learnt in Survival”;

> “The chastity of the married and unmarried Hindu women seemed to symbolize most potently, the honor, exclusivity and continuity of the community – and to represent its site of transgression. Violence

> against Hindu women featured widely in the minority's complaints of ill-treatment in Pakistan and a topic of concern in West Bengal – the sexual possession of Hindu women by Muslim men being made to stand for Muslim domination, 'miscegenation', the loss and humiliation of the male Hindu self." (77)

Uditi Sen points out in "Spinster, Prostitute or Pioneer? Images of Refugee Women in Post-Partition Calcutta" that what was at stake was not a concern for the personal safety of women, rather;

> "…. the displaced Hindu woman of East Pakistan was represented in an overwhelmingly male discourse as the embodiment of the cultural sanctity and honor of the Bhadralok community of East Bengal, which had to be protected at any cost. The threat of violence on women amounted to the threat of imminent annihilation of a specific socio-cultural identity of the community and was reason enough for migration". (4)

Land in East Bengal was mostly owned by Hindus. Muslims peasants, who were less educated, worked on the land. These landlords could exchange their land with the landlords of West Bengal. The Muslim peasants, overburdened by poverty and debt, were offered the *Promised Land* where they could enjoy the fruits of their labor.

Once Partition became a reality, the minorities found lives very difficult. There was very little scope for livelihood and economic advancement. Moreover, there were constant threats and intimidations from the majority.

India's tenuous relation with Pakistan was another important factor.

Unlike Punjab, rehabilitation of refugees from East Pakistan was very difficult. There was hardly any evacuated Muslim property that could be given to the Hindu refugees, as very few Muslims left West Bengal. (Statistics given in the beginning of the chapter) The Indian Central government took a long time to accept that the refugees were here to stay. Many scholars including Bagchi and Dasgupta, Uditi Sen, and Anasua Basu Raychaudhury have observed that Government policy was towards the East Pakistani refugees was discriminatory.

When Partition refugees arrived at camps set up for them by the newly formed governments or found refuge in schools, railway platforms, temples, mosques, old forts, and pavements they realized, to their utter dismay, that leaders, some of whom had urged them to leave their homes, had no vision of a future, nor any feasible social and economic program to ensure a better life for them.

Punjabi refugees, according to the government, needed permanent rehabilitation while the refugee problem in Bengal was temporary. Government took several measures to distance itself itself from the responsibility of rehabilitation. It was declared that the able bodied males, along with their families, would receive no aid. Only those who migrated between 01st June 1947 and 25th June1948 were considered refugees eligible for aid. Only victims of violence personally directed at them were called refugees. (Chatterjee 2003 75-91)

People with property could exchange their property with refugees who went to East Bengal. Government employees had the option of exchanging jobs.

It was the poor who were severely affected by the Partition.

Umm-e-Ummara's "More Sinned Against Than Sinning" describes the plight of an emigrant Bihari Muslim family in East Pakistan. Although the members of the family wholeheartedly embrace the Bengali language and culture, and participate in the struggle for liberation from West Pakistan, they are not accepted by the native population.

The story is narrated in the first person by Munni, the daughter of the family. The narrative has two strands – the first half is told by Munni as a child, whereas the second half is related by the grown up girl, through the consciousness of an adult. The prosperous family lives in Patna in a splendid house surrounded by huge gardens. Munni's father works in East Bengal (which went to Pakistan) and visits the family occasionally. The household, children's education and fields are managed single handedly by her mother. The mother is a dominant presence in the family; even her father respects her decisions and turns to her for advice.

As Partition becomes inevitable, the father decides to take the family to East Pakistan to safeguard the children's future. The decision completely shatters Munni's mother. She cannot imagine a life away from her home, country and people.

> "….Amma lost her nerve and her intelligence failed her. She paced up and down the house like a disturbed spirit, repeatedly felt each door and wall of the *haveli*; caressed each brick as if she was touching something which she loved dearly." (102)

Her husband tries to convince her:

> "We can no longer do anything here. These children are our treasure. Even if you want to stay here, they have no future here. These fields will not yield anything more for you. This earth no longer belongs to us, we are aliens in this country." (102)

Communal violence in Bihar in the pre-partition days forced thousands of Bihari Muslims to move to East Pakistan. But there is no hint in the story that the family left because of the fear of violence. Instead, Munni's father may have believed, as they have become a minority community in India, that his children's future is no longer safe. He may have felt that a country based on Islamic ideals and freedom for the Muslims would be in the children's interest. Moreover, he already has an established career in East Pakistan.

Munni says that it was the only time when her mother failed to have her way. Her father's decision was final. The innocent girl is puzzled; she does not understand why they have become strangers in their own country. She is disturbed by too many questions, questions which trouble all the people who are victims of the Partition.

"I couldn't understand why *Baba* thought that his own home was a place of exile….I wondered how a world which was so familiar had suddenly become a world of strangers… How had the place where Baba lived, and which we had never seen, become our country?" (103)

When Pakistan was created in 1947 it consisted of two blocks – West and East

Pakistan –separated by over a thousand miles of India territory. The two blocks were separated not only by geography but also by language, culture, climate and customs. The Bihari Muslims who migrated were speakers of Urdu. Among them, only a small percentage belonged to the middle class. Most of them were daily wage earners, labourers, petty businessmen and clerks. The refugees soon realized that there new homeland is quite different from the country of their birth. The Biharis were resented by the locals as they were conflated with Urdu speaking elites and non-Bengalis.

Munni's family finally migrates to East Pakistan. Initially, Munni is reluctant to learn the language and ways of the new country; she clings on to the past. However, her elder brother thinks it is not only natural but also their duty to let go of the past and assimilate. For instance, she receives her first culture shock when she learns that *harshringar*, her favourite flower, is called *shaoli* in this place, he explains,

> "You will have to accept that *harshringar* is known as *shaoli* here, because you have chosen to live and die in this land. *Harshringar* was a part of your past. It is called *shaoli* in your present place. It is here that you have to build a bright future. Therefore, Munni bitiya, my advice to you is that you forget your past and begin to give greater importance to your future." (106)

Her brother leaves no effort to turn into a complete Bengali. Paradoxically, his wife Pakhi who is a native thinks it is her wifely duty to learn the language and customs of her husband's family. She quickly learns Urdu and thoroughly enjoys her trip to Patna and Allahabad. Perhaps this shows that the hold of patriarchal

expectation that a woman shed her old identity and adopts that of her husband is stronger than that of the nation in the case of women.

One of the most interesting aspects of the story is Munni's prejudice and dislike for her sister-in-law, when there is no indication in the story that she has done anything to hurt her.

> "Yes, the women of Bengal knew how to weave magic circles." (110)

For Munni, Pakhi represents their new country. She believes that the change in her brother (adapting completely to the culture of the new country) is a result of his wife's influence. Moreover, her children have no trace of their Bihari heritage; they are being brought up like Bengali children which Munni resents.

Subsequently, Munni develops a strong liking for her new country; she even learns Bengali. However, she is disappointed when her brother decides to live in a village called Phoolbari, against the wishes of their parents. Munni's father is concerned because the medium of instruction in Phoolbari is Bangla. To this her brother replies,

> "So what, Baba? If we have to live here we must become a part of this very soil." (111)

His father is still skeptical,

"But my experience has taught me that even if we take root in this soil, we will always be regarded as transplants." (111)

The line demonstrates that despite their best efforts to absorb into the Bengali

society they are still seen as strangers by the local people and that there is no hope that they will ever be accepted.

Munni joins her younger brother at Dhaka University after completing her graduation. Her brother is a respected member of the university and active in various student movements and demonstrations. He is frequently imprisoned for these activities. Nevertheless, Munni is very proud of her brother. It is the time her faith in humanity is restored and she is filled with hope and new vigor:

> "I was sure that the basic faith people had in life itself, and the trust that guided their relations with each other, would root out the tree of hatred once and for all. I was certain that….. the differences between natives and outsiders would vanish." (113)

Her world is again turned upside down, when her mother dies. She dies longing for her sons, who were not with her during her last moments:

> "…. Her only regret was that both her sons had been swallowed up by Bengal. One had been so charmed by its magic that he had forgotten that he was someone's son. The other was so determined to disentangle its knotted problems that he spent six months a year in jail." (114)

At her mother's funeral, she is shocked to see the transformation in her elderbrother. He is dressed like a Bengali gentleman. His Urdu was once so chaste that his teachers were proud of him. Now he makes elementary mistakes while speaking Urdu. His Bengali, however, has become perfect.

Munni visits Phoolbari for a few days. At Phoolbari, she sees that her brother is leading a happy and peaceful life with his family. However, because of the changing political circumstances, distance between people was widening. Her younger brother, who dedicated his life for the liberation of the country, feels isolated. The people, who once appreciated and respected him, have begun to drift away as he is an *outsider*.

When riots break out in the country, her brother's home in the village is burnt down killing several of his children. Her brother and Pakhi are devastated. Ironically it is Munni's elder brother who enthusiastically and unconditionally adopted the new homeland; it was he who had complete faith that total integration into the Bengali society would make him acceptable. All his hopes are shattered in a most tragic way. In a few days, forlorn and crestfallen, her father also dies. The ruin of Munni's family is complete.

The story is set in the turbulent years of post-partition East Pakistan. After its formation in 1947 the Pakistani state failed to consolidate and unify the two diverse Western and Eastern wings. With its capital in Karachi and later Islamabad, the political center of power remained in the West. The industry, military and trade were also concentrated in Western Pakistan. Furthermore, the political and military leadership in the West endorsed non-democratic and theocratic systems of governance that institutionalized the discrimination, manipulation and suppression of the East.

In 1948, the Government declared Urdu as the sole national language of Pakistan. The imposition of Urdu sparked off major protests in the Bengali speaking East Pakistan. The University of Dhaka was the center of mass protests against the

Government. Munni's younger brother is part of the students' movement that resisted the Western hegemony. In 1952, the movement to establish Bengali as the national language turned determined and also violent. Though the State accepted Bengali as the second national language of Pakistan in 1956, the successive governments continued to protect the political and economic interests of West Pakistan. The Language Movement re-established Bangla nationalism and became the forerunner of the liberation war of 1971 and the birth of Bangladesh.

The Language Movement had a direct impact on the Bihari population of East Bengal. As they were native speakers of Urdu, they were identified with the governing Western Pakistani regime. Urdu came to be seen as the language of domination and sub-colonialism. Consequently, the Biharis faced rejection and persecution. Though there is no direct mention of these political events in the story, their disparaging effect on the family can be seen quite clearly; first in the disillusionment of Munni's father who hoped for a bright future for his children; then the alienation felt by her younger brother shunned by his comrades and ultimately, in the killing of the children.

In our collective consciousness, Partition is usually associated with the division of Punjab and Bengal that led to inhuman carnage, mass displacement, unimaginable trauma and suffering. And the three communities that were affected were the Hindus, Muslims, and the Sikhs. Partition historiography and research - conventional, subaltern or feminist - is usually focused on the above mentioned regions and religious groups. However, there were other linguistic and ethnic groups whose lives were irrevocably disrupted by the Partition, who remain invisible in history and public discourse - the Christians, Dalits (though they are subsumed under the large category of Hindus),

Parsis, Jains, and Buddhists. One such ethnic group which has been neglected by and large is the Sindhi Hindus.

The experience of the Sindhi Hindus displaced from their native land is markedly different. While Punjab and Bengal were divided between India and Pakistan, Sindh, because of its geographical location and large Muslim population went entirely to Pakistan. Initially, as the danger of violence compared to Punjab and Bengal was far less in Sindh. Besides, the Sindhi Hindus were a financially strong trading community, who did not feel threatened in a Muslim State.Many Sindhis, therefore, decided to remain in Pakistan. However, with the inflow of refugees driven out of Bihar and United Provinces into Sindh, things changed. Highly alarmed because of the impending crisis, the Hindus had no option but to leave.

They suffered the ordeal and pain of dislocation, but not violence. They moved to new places and re-established themselves. The downside was that people dispersed to make a living, and in the process got scattered all over the world. Even in India, there is no Sindhi state, and there political representation is narrow. Even then they have made immense contribution to the country's economy.

The Punjabi and Bengali migrants, because of their numbers and also because large part of their land was still there with India, could preserve, develop and propagate their culture. The Sindhis, unfortunately, were torn from their very roots permanently. They lost not just their motherland, but also their culture, language, history and tradition.

As said earlier, Sindhis are one of the most unrepresented communities in Partition discourse. Even few writings about the Sindhi experience are about their brilliant

entrepreneurial and capitalist skills, which helped them recreating their lives after being displaced. Such accounts are mainly dominated by men. The Sindhi women are unseen and unheard, with a few exceptions. Therefore it becomes imperative to look at women Sindhi writers to get a better understanding of women's experience and perspectives.

"Khaanwahan" by Kala Prakash depicts the traumatic experience of displacement of a Sindhi Hindu family. When the story begins the family is on its way to Ahmadabad by train. They have left Sindh for good; all their relations have already migrated. In Sindh, they lived in a place called Khaanwahan. The children, unaware of the complex situation, have renamed Ahmadabad, their new home, Khaanwahan.

As the train leaves Sindh, Kali becomes nostalgic. She recalls her Muslim fellow villagers with affection, without the least anger. One of them was the eighty year old Jumman Shaikh; she remembers how he had taken them on his bullock cart from Mehraabpur station to Khaanwahan. Jumman, who had gone to Mehraabpur on some errand the previous night, stayed the night as he knew Kali's family were arriving by the early morning train. The incident demonstrates the culture of harmonious inter-community living in the pre-partition days.

Sindh was a land that absorbed people from different faiths and regions. The Sindhi culture is an amalgam of the elements of Hinduism, Sufism and Islam. The people, though different in terms of religion, shared a common culture, and language. Many Sindhi Hindus worshipped Guru Nanak and visited the shrines of the Sufi saints. To the Sindhi Muslims *Jhule Lal* is the Muslim *Pir* Shahbaz Qalander

immortalized in the Sufi song *Damadam Mast Qalander* which bears testimony to the composite culture of Sindh.

During the nineteenth century, the Arya Samaj made inroads into Sindh followed by the Muslim League a few years later that brought about adverse changes. The opening up of Karachi to the Haj traffic in 1912 flooded the city with pilgrims on their way to Mecca, bringing in a pan-Islamic ethos. The Arya Samaj launched its revivalist programs such as the *Shuddhi,* a re-conversion ceremony. This led to confrontation, controversy and sometimes riots. The economic disparity between the rich Hindus and the poor Muslim peasants was exploited by the Muslim leaders to arouse communal discord. The reasons for the family's migration are not specified in the story. A combination of all the above factors and the insecurity caused by the incursion of refugees might have left them with no other alternative.

The story brings out the contrast between the prosperity of the Sindhi Hindus in the past and their destitution and disenfranchisement in the present. The Sindhi Hindus were an educated, prestigious and affluent community. The Partition dragged down many families economically, and rendered some impoverished. Sometimes people had to leave with only what they had on their person. The story alludes to the prosperity of the family in Sindh. The children remember that their relative Sadori, though poor, offered them butter and *lassi* whenever they visited them. In Sindh their grandfather used to live in the large *dharamshala* as its caretaker. The children of the village were fond of him as he used to give them one paisa each. The children wonder if he is happy in this small place.

At the Ahmadabad railway station they are received by their cousin Harbhajan. They were taken to his house in Kubernagar. The children notice that, unlike their previous home, there is no courtyard in this house.

The women of the family are busy with their daily chores. There was nothing unusual in women of the family working together. However Kali notes that things are not as they used to be. Earlier there was a smile on *chachi's* face while working and Harbhajan's wife used to hum. Today, chachi is not smiling; neither was Harbhajan's wife humming. The splendor of Khaanwahan has vanished.

When Kali's younger brother was asked to share a plate of food with his brother, he demands a new plate. The child unable to distinguish between the real Khaanwahan and the new place, demands a new plate. He remembers that at their home, utensils were stored in a trunk, but there is no such trunk here. There are no more plates in the house. That evening when they visit Sadori's house they are served tea and *papads,* not butter and *lassi.* The next morning Harish asks his sister to take him to the garden where they used to pick flowers to make *gulkhand*. He refuses to believe that there is no such garden here. Irritated at his adamancy, and the changed circumstances of the family, his mother slaps him hard and says:

> "Silly, this is not Khaanwahan, this is Ahmadabad, you understand? Ahmadabad." (52)

Her words not only break the child's illusions, but also forcefully reinforce the harsh reality of their lives.Khaanwahan, in the story, acts as a powerful metaphor; it stands for affluence, tranquility, happiness and a lost way of life.

The children renaming their new city Khaanwahan represents a strong desire to recreate the familiar world lost to them forever. However, the end of the story also implies the impossibility of retrieving the lost home. The urge to create a replica of their lost motherland was so great that serious efforts were made in the late 1940's to create a new homeland for the displaced Sindhi Hindus named *Gandhidam.* The Kutch region was identified as the area geographically and culturally suited for the project.

Much of the movement of people during the Partition was collective. As people arrived and settled in new places, they tried to re-erect the community in the new towns and cities. People often requested the Government to rehabilitate them with their own people. It must be remembered that during the Partition, families separated, some were killed and some left behind. For people broken by indescribable misery, the community could be a great source of security and emotional sustenance. The need to be together is reflected in the family's migration to the same city. (Butalia 2003 224-225)

"Bhoori" by Sundri Uttamchandani is about the indomitable spirit and resilience of the Sindhi women in the face of trying circumstances and a celebration of their invaluable contribution to rebuilding lives in alien territories and often among hostile people.

Bhoori's family is among thousands who fled from their homeland and settled in Bombay at the time of the Partition. Commercial ties between Bombay and Sindh region had a long history, but they grew stronger in the 1860's with Sindh becoming part of the Bombay Presidency. Sindhi traders were active all over the Indian Ocean, for which Bombay was a major trade center. Consequently, after the Partition,

a large number of Sindhi Hindus migrated to Bombay. There were other reasons for that attracted the Sindhi refugees to Bombay. The sea was the safest way to come to Bombay from Karachi. Bombay also suited the business temperament of the Sindhis. Some of them had relatives and friends in Bombay. (117)

Bhoori goes from house to house selling *papads* for a living. On the day when the event of the story takes place, she is accompanied by her son. She accidentally meets her childhood friend Nenu, who is also a Sindhi migrant, when she enters his house to sell *papads*. Bhoori and Nenu were neighbours in Hyderabad, a prominent city in Sindh. Nenu at first confuses her with her sister Rukki. Nenu is both surprised and happy to see her after a long time. After the initial elation of seeing an old friend subsided, he notices the changes that have come over in Bhoori's appearance. She has changed beyond recognition. He tells his wife Sushila that once Bhoori was the most beautiful girl in Hyderabad, which arouses her jealousy.

> "…. You don't look the same, the luster of Hyderabad days is no more…" (14)

She replies:

> "I had three babies, obviously that took energy and time. How can one look the same always? Also, I go around in the scorching heat…" (15)

She informs him that when they were in Baroda, her husband owned a small cloth shop. In Bombay he rolls *bidis*. His earnings are meager, so she sells *papads*

to support the family. The husband and wife don't earn much, but enough to live comfortably. Her son has returned home after two days, which he spent at the railway station doing menial labor.

When Sushila compares the filthy appearance of her son with that of her own well dressed and neat child, Bhoori's answers:

> "Behen, why wouldn't they look spotless? Were I sitting pretty at home all day, I would have also fawned and fussed over them. I just about manage a hasty meal in the morning, and leave for the papad rounds. Despite that I drop the girls off at the school." (17)

Bhoori's reply reflects her daily struggle and exhaustion, to provide for the family.

That night there is an argument between Nenu and Sushila, as Sushila suspects that her husband was in love with Bhoori. He explains to her that his heart breaks when he sees poverty gnawing at her tender beauty.

If partition was an intensely painful and disorienting experience for women, it also opened up previously unavailable opportunities for them. Women had to work out of homes to support their families. As a result, their visibility in public spaces, traditionally the domain of men, considerably increased. The rigid taboos controlling women's lives, restricting them to the home, suddenly dissolved. This also gave them access to the man's world of politics, education and commerce. Though these developments brought about radical changes in women's lives, they cannot be seen as signs of autonomy. Rachel Weber's observation about the Bengali refugee women can be applied to women from other communities as well:

> "Refugee women did not move into public life, but rather the domestic realm expanded to include their participation in political, community and economic affairs." (76)

A woman working outside the home was seen as undesirable, but necessary. The working woman in the community's consciousness became a sign the disintegration of the social order. Even in families where women were the primary providers, they were denied the authority as well as care traditionally given to the male breadwinners. Their primary roles remained those of daughters, wives and mothers. Uditi Sen says:

> "In fact, caught between the pressures of entering the job market and the social and familial norms where the burden of a woman's domestic duties remained unchanged, she was forced to accept a 'double-day' workload." (12)

Sindhi society looked down on a working woman as one whose husband had failed to provide for her; Partition changed all this. Although working women were not liberated from the rigid patriarchal domination, they certainly paved way for the future generation of women to attain emancipation. That is why Bhoori, despite poverty, takes the education of her daughters seriously.

In the last few years, commendable efforts on the part of social scientists, scholars and feminists have produced path breaking body of writings on the experience of the ordinary women who became victims of the Partition. A serious study of the substantial body of scholarly work on women, including feminist, would reveal that

most of these works take up the cause of the *proper* women; women who could be located within the family – mothers, wives, and daughters. But there are women who do not fit into these categories, who live at the fringes of society. These are the courtesans, oppressed, manipulated and ostracized by the very society that created them in the first place. How did Partition affect their lives?

In the absence of sustained effort to recover their voices, we have to turn to literature for answers. Very few writers have represented the sex worker in Partiton literature. Suraiya Qasim's "Where did She Belong?" highlights the experience of displacement of Munni, the most popular girl in Hira Mandi and the chief source of income for Ma, the brothel keeper.

Munni's parents and religion are unknown. She is constantly plagued by questions about her birth, parents and home. In her world people are not bothered about religion; the only things that matter are youth and beauty. Though Munni does not like her profession, she has no choice. According to Ma, Munni has to do what she does because she eats during the day what she earns at night. To the brothel keeper and the men who frequent this place and society at large Munni is no more than a thing that can be bought and sold. The author offers a scathing critique of ruthless exploitation and objectification of women like Munni, who are robbed of not just their individuality, but also their right to live with dignity.

"With her Venus-like face, round breasts, slim waist, she was acknowledged, not only in Hira Mandi, but throughout the city of Lahore, as a girl to be possessed. And possessing her was not difficult – anyone could possess her. She lived to be possessed

– of course, at a price. Her body was for sale." (109)

Munni is the most privileged among all the girls at Ma's home. Every customer wants her, so she is allowed to rest during the day. However, in the privacy of the room she is at the total mercy of the men, some of whom treated her in the cruelest manner. Munni is also pragmatic, keenly aware of the reality of her situation. The following lines underlie the uncertainty and insecurity that are part of Munni's life, from which there is no way out:

> "And Munni could not afford to lose customers. No woman in this profession could. Plainly it was a question of making hay while the sun shone; and youth somehow did not seem to last even as long as the sunshine did. If the sun went down in the evening, it arose the next morning. But once youth sank into old age, it never rose again." (111)

Munni is also conscious of the bleak future that awaited her. "Munni Bai knew that a time knew that a time was bound to come when the night would yield nothing to see her through the day." (111)

When Partition was announced, Ma's rivals spread a rumor that she was a Hindu. Fearing for their safety, Ma leaves the city with the girls. Ironically, religion was immaterial in their house. In fact they are true practitioners of secularism:

> "On Diwali, as you know, we burn diyas and worship Goddess Lakshmi with greater piety and gusto than most Hindus. And throughout the month of Ramzan, all the inmates of this house observe the fast.So what difference does it make whether a Hindu or a Muslim?" (110)

But they are driven away in the name of religion. Munni does not understand this. She asks:

> "Ma, the Muslims asked for Pakistan and they got it. The Hindus wanted to see the backs of Muslims and they got Hindustan and are happy. We asked for nothing. Why, then, have we had to suffer so much?" (116)

They live temporarily at a refugee camp at Delhi. Soon Ma finds a house for them in one of the red light areas of Delhi. Here people accept them wholeheartedly into the "community". The experience of Munni is at odds with the experiences of the refugees who felt unwelcome and unwanted by the natives. Munni feels no difference between Delhi and Lahore. Coincidentally, the previous occupant of their house moved to Hira Mandi.

In no time Munni's fame spread and men began to throng her house. But Ma announced that only the richest of men could have access to Delhi. At this attitude of Ma, some women commented that there are no rich men left in Delhi:

> "So many Hindus and Muslims have perished in the holocaust and so much property has been destroyed that I doubt if there is any rich man around." (117)

The same night Munni is visited by a Raja and a Nawab. Munni wonders if Rajahs and Nawabs a alive and rich enough to spend so much on a few hours of pleasure. She wonders, "Who lost and who died in the Partition?" (117)

Therefore Partition made no difference to the Rajahs and Nawabs; they remained as rich

and powerful as before and utterly insensitive to the sufferings of millions around them.

And Partition also made no difference to the lives of women like Munni. The two countries which promised equality and dignity to its citizens have chartered no programs or schemes to change the lives of Munni and her companions. In fact, they do not figure anywhere in the national discourse. Whatever country they may inhabit, they would always stay at the periphery, unacknowledged and marginalized.

Thus all the stories analyzed in the chapter brings out various aspects of the refugee experience, particularly of women – trauma, displacement, rootlesness, also strength, dignity and resilience. Another fact that emerges is that women's sense of rootedness and belonging is much stronger than men. This view is also endorsed by Alok Bhalla in *Partition Dialogues*:

> "….in Partition fiction narratives it is the women who protest against leaving their homes in search of a different way of living in an alien land. Refusing to link their fate to the search for an impossible home somewhere else, they voice their opposition to migration, and assert their devotion to the ordinary and daily rhythms of life which make up their material, emotional and religious habitat." (55)

Sukrita Paul Kumar supports the veiw. she says, "(Women's) psychological makeup is rooted in the traditional cultural pattern… she always defines herself in the context of relations." (232)

That is why Amma of “Roots”, Shahni of “The Regime has Changed”, and Munni’s Mother in “More Sinned Against than Sinning” resist being uprooted from their homes. But when faced with the challenge of reconstructing lives from scratch in altered circumstances, and negotiating the patriarchal demands, they display extraordinary courage and spirit like Bhoori. The Partition stories prove that ordinary people who migrated were not driven by religious zeal, nor were they keen on the vision of the *Holy Land*. They were more concerned with their daily struggles than religious purity. Despite their non-involvement in the complex political maneuvers of the Partiton, they had to undergo the trauma of displacement.

Women, Identity and the Partition

The question of identity – political, religious, national and gender - cannot be separated from any discussion of the Partition, for it was a period when old identities were demolished, remolded, and new identities were constructed. People realized that the country of birth is no longer theirs; the transition from citizens to refugees happened overnight. The sudden change of identity was intensely painful and disorienting. Its literary representations are discussed in Chapter III. The chapter makes an effort to investigate the constitution and reconstitution of women's identities by the multiple patriarchies of family, community, and nation to serve their agendas; it also examines how women negotiated the combined hegemony and identity politics of families, communities and the nations.

Identity is neither singular nor fixed. Human beings, irrespective of time and space, have multiple identities. Depending on the circumstances one identity becomes more important than the others; when the situation changes, the important identity until then is pushed to the background, and another identity takes its place. India has always been a multicultural, multi-religious and multi-linguistic country. The tolerant nature of the Indian civilization has accommodated people of diverse religions, cultures and ethnicities. India not only embraced them but also gave them immense scope and freedom to settle and flourish, which gave birth to a rich and vibrant composite culture. Except occasional confrontations, these varied identities have co-existed peacefully for centuries.

In the rapidly changing political scene of the later part of the nineteenth and early twentieth century the country witnessed unwholesome crystallization of religious identities. The most visible expression of this was the demand for a separate nation for the Indian Muslims, after the British exit. The most pertinent basis of this demand was the undeniable differences between the two peoples, not only religious, but also in terms of culture, language, customs, ideologies and aspirations. The identity on the eve of the Partition that surpassed all others was religious. In his address to the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan on 07th March 1949, Liaquat Ali Khan, the first Prime Minister of Pakistan rationalized the creation of the country on religious grounds:

> "Pakistan was founded because the Muslims of the subcontinent wanted to build up their lives in accordance with the teachings and traditions of Islam, because they wanted to demonstrate to the world that Islam provides a panacea to the many diseases which have crept into the life of humanity today." (Hasan1993 53)

The tone of absolute certainty that the speech displays not only gives the creation of Pakistan a color of naturalness and inevitability, but also a strong assertion of the right to speak on behalf of all the Indian Muslims. It does not take into account the considerable opposition to Pakistan from several Muslim quarters (The *Khudai Khidmatgars* in the NWFP, leaders like Maulana Azad for e.g.,) and the millions of Muslims who stayed in India.

The crusaders of a new nation for the Muslims projected the Hindus and the

Muslims as two conflicting nationalities incapable of being blended into one nation. They were not just divergent religions, but two distinct social orders, different civilizations, separate 'nations' based on ideas and world views that are mutually incompatible. Therefore the Muslims should unite to secure separate territories, homeland and State. The educated Muslims should fight, under the able leadership of the League, to liberate their brothers from the chains of Hindu despotism. (Hasan 1993 160) The Hindu Right Wing Organizations echoed the same sentiments. The Muslim as constructed as the conqueror of the generation of Hindus. The Muslim neither brought material nor spiritual progress to India; he has only emasculated, defeated and looted the Hindus (Sarkar 184). Only the establishment of a new Hindu Rashtra by crushing the Muslim enemy can restore the Hindu pride and manhood.

The reasons for the swiftness with which these farfetched ideas gripped the imagination of the people and turned Pakistan into a reality is beyond the scope of this thesis, therefore they have not been discussed. The sweeping claims about the separateness of the Muslims are not just historically inaccurate but also undermine a shared history of harmonious inter-community relations. But the society did come under the influence of these ideas resulting in the polarization of the two communities, and rupturing of the age-old intermingled life.

Jeelani Bano's story "The Criminal" demonstrates how the schisms between communities resulted in the degeneration of morals; it also forewarns us about the dangers of religion becoming the sole criterion of identity. The story is set in an unnamed riot-torn city in post-partition India. Nissar is a scientist who works in

a government lab. He enjoys his work and has friends who belong to different faiths. He never bothered about the religion of his friends. However, things are different now; he is conscious of his Muslim identity every passing moment. The city is in the midst of a communal riot. When people look at him with suspicion, he feels guilty as if he were responsible for the unprecedented turn of events. The violent fracture of the secular fabric of the society has an almost hysteric effect on him; the following lines express his heightened sense of identity and the accompanying fear:

> "These days he is too scared to speak. He feels people will discern who he is by the very words he utters. He has also developed this strong feeling that people are frightened of him and want to steer clear of him." (127)

He is completely seized by terror; he is afraid to leave home. He also fears for the safety of his family, especially his daughter Maryam. His wife Amina has no such fears; in fact he feels that she is more worried about *dal* than her husband.

There was a time when he believed in the innate goodness of human beings. If people remain the same, he used to say, the environment could not be polluted. Now he is not sure anymore. An invisible barrier has crept up between old friends. Venkatesh, his friend of many years, tells him that they can't share lunch anymore as his doctor has advised him not to eat meat. Nissar knows it is only an excuse. "Nissar bent his head as if one more crime was added to his already existing charge sheet." (129)

Nissar says that people working in his office are highly educated, the best minds in the world. They are too civilized to talk of the riots openly. Ironically these

so called intellectuals have distanced their friend only because of his religion. Even Dr. Reddy, a staunch Marxist, who makes fun of his colleagues' religious beliefs, has turned away from Nissar. Every year he invites Nissar for Diwali celebrations at his home. This year, however, he "forgot" to invite him. There is an uneasy silence between people. Distances have grown so wide that people have started hiding their faces behind files to avoid each other.

Even Nigar, their female colleague and the object of desire of all the men, has no effect on the changed atmosphere of the office. Every evening these days curfew is imposed. Nissar observes that Venkatesh has suddenly started donning a *Tilak.* The *Tilak,* that asserts his religious identity, is a guarantee of safety during the riots. Nissar drops him home in his car everyday; but this day he declines his offer of a lift. Nissar feels that something has changed; everybody looks at him with suspicion. The sense of bewilderment at the ruin of friendship experienced by Nissar is similar to Lenny's puzzlement in Bapsi Sidhwa's "The Ice –Candy Man.":

> "It is sudden. One day everybody is themselves – and the next day they are Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian. People shrink, dwindling into symbols….Ayah – she is also a token. A Hindu carried away by a renewed devotional fervor she expends a small fortune in joss-sticks, flowers, sweets on the Gods and Goddesses in the temple." (93)

Even the beautiful Ayah, like Nigar, whom men of all the religions are attracted to, cannot unite them anymore. Hindu children who used to play in the lawn of his house suddenly stop coming. Once when he is waiting for the bus at a bus stop

he notices that two *burqa* clad women feel terrified of him. A *maulvi,* waiting nearby, stands between him and the women like a shield. Here too Nissar feels like a criminal. He is so shocked and disturbed that he wanders the street like a madman.

After a week Venkatesh visits him at his house; he looks tired and unwell. He admits, "… All the time I feel sort of scared. You will laugh at me but you know … you … you also frighten me" (134). Nissar also confesses, "I feel everyone looks at me with suspicion." (134)

In the course of the conversation both of them learn that the doctor has prescribed the same medicine for both of them implying the oneness of human beings under the superficial religious differences. In the end, both lower their heads ashamed of human frailties and prejudices. The walls are finally broken, and friendship is resumed. The story emphasizes the strength of friendship that has the ability to keep communities together even during the chaos of communal violence, mutual suspicion and hatred.

Literary narratives on the Partition, in fact, have posed a serious challenge to political and communal rhetoric that impose a rigid religious identity on ordinary men and women, by undermining all other identities.

The uneducated mother of Habib Bhai in *Chako Ki Wapsi* understands that God cannot be confined to boundaries. When her son first informs her about his decision to migrate to Dhaka where he can pray with the men of his own faith without the presence of the 'Other', she asks:

"Is the God present here different from the one over there?" (9)

The mother's simple-minded logic effectively brings out the absurdity of the notion

of a 'sacred space' free from the polluting influence of the 'Other'.

The entire campaign for a separate nation made elaborate use of religious symbols and icons to reinforce the idea of 'Islam in Danger'. The intention was to project the image of a besieged community struggling to survive in a hostile terrain. The martyrdom of Imam Husain, the grandson of prophet Mohammed in 680 AD, was extensively cited to draw parallels between the endangered position of Islam in the past and the condition of Muslims in present-day India. And the *Hijrat* of Prophet Mohammed from Mecca because of persecution to Medina was also invoked to give legitimacy to the demand for the creation of Pakistan.

The dramatic religious-based campaign is elaborately portrayed in Rahi Masoom Reza's *The Feuding Families of Gangauli* The students of the Aligarh Muslim University descend upon Gangauli, a small village in Eastern UP to educate the unsophisticated Muslim villagers about the dangers of a Hindu dominated India.

> "You must all be aware that at the present time, throughout the country, the Muslims are engaged in a life and death struggle for existence.… We live in a country where our position is no more than equivalent to salt in *dal*. Once the protective shadow of the British is removed, these Hindus will devour us. That is the reason that Indian Muslims require a place where they will be able to live in honor." (241)

For the villagers there is no conflict between their religious and national identities. The two identities can co-exist peacefully. That's why Tannu, one of the inhabitants

of Gangauli, who angers an Aligarh student for saying that he is more sentimentally attached to his village than the holy city of Mecca, says:

> "Gangauli is my village. Mecca is not my city. This is my home and the Ka'aba is Allah *Miyan's.* If God loves His home then won't he be able to understand that we too can love our home as much as He loves His?" (245)

Many characters in Partition fiction, including *Amma* of "Roots", choose fidelity towards country over loyalty towards religion. The veracity of the argument that religious affiliation alone binds a community together and can form the basis of a nation proved wrong with the breaking away of East Bengal from West Pakistan and the creation of Bangladesh in 1971. In this context Partha Chatterjee's statement is relevant: "The only link between East and West Pakistan was religion. In terms of culture, language and temperament they were poles apart." (2002 63)

Post-Partition East Pakistan saw the emergence of a new identity based on the Bengali language and culture. The new *Bangla* consiousness overthrew the religious identity, fragmenting the Muslims again along linguistic lines. Umm-e-Ummara's "More Sinned against than Sinning" describes the trials and tribulations of a Bihari Muslim family whose members migrate to East Bengal to take their place in the 'promised land'; they discover that they have no place in the new country as they speak a different language. The reward they get for making every effort to integrate is that their house is set on fire killing innocent children. Ironically both the victims and perpetrators belong to the same religion. The story, therefore,

questions the power of religion to fuse together people divided by vastly divergent cultures and languages. It echoes Maulana Azad's views on the creation of a separated country for the Muslims:

> "It is one of the greatest frauds on the people to suggest that religious affinity can unite areas that are geographically, economivally, linguistically and culturally different." (Hasan 1993 53)

The consequences of the imposition of religious identities on ordinary people were different for men and women. If men experienced severe trauma, violence, and displacement, women became victims of sexual violation, abduction, desertion, stigma, forced separation from children, suspension of civil rights and the challenge of restarting of lives without the support of families and communities. Thousands of women were unwittingly drawn into the mire of identity politics.

The politics of separation, though resisted by people, had a pernicious effect on the lives of the common masses. The manifestation of this could be seen in the communal frenzy that engulfed the whole of north India and Bengal. At the time of the Partition when the country was besieged by communalism, religion became the primary marker of a woman's identity rendering her extremely vulnerable to brutal violence. The body of the woman became the territory on which the men of the warring communities fought their battles. The woman's 'body' was literal as well as figurative; figurative as it symbolizes the *izzat,* the honor of the religion she belongs to. Therefore the defilement of the woman's body amounts to the defilement of the religion.

In this sense we can say that woman's body becomes the identity of the religion itself.

There is a misogynist north Indian proverb, "beeran ki kai jaat" which roughly translates to "What caste (religion or nationality for that matter) can a woman have? A woman belongs to someone else, to 'his' caste, 'his' nation, and 'his' nation. Yet during the Partition the exact opposite happened. For a moment they came to stand for nothing else (Pandey 165).

Ramanand Sagar's story "Pimps" deals with the reintegration of women into family and society after their abduction and defilement by the "Other". Nirmala lives in a village on the banks of river Ravi. During the Partition, her village is raided by a mob of Muslim men who abduct the women. They were kept as captives for more than a month in their own homes, as all the mn, including her husband have fled. As the village becomes part of India, the women are taken to the other side of the river which now belongs to Pakistan. Every day she sees her son playing on the other side of the river and longs for him. The river has now become a national boundary, extremely dangerous to cross.

When the agony of separation becomes too much to bear, Nirmala decides to swim to her village. She jumps into the river, putting her life at risk. With great difficulty she manages to reach her village. She forgets her exhaustion at the thought of reuniting with her family. All her hopes are dashed in an instant when her husband asks, "Why have you come here, now?" (197)

In spite of all her pleas she is not accepted by her husband and his family, as she is soiled. In fact they have told everyone that she is dead. Her return would ruin the honor of the family. There is one consolation, her father-in-law says:

> "We have taken full revenge. We have carried many more of their women than they had ours…. It's a matter of pride to keep them in our homes... we have got two of them here" (198).

Thus women's bodies became the instruments of men's revenge.

Women's religious identity acquired centrality not just during the Partition, it happens in all wars and upheavals. Thousands of years of civilizational history bear ample witness to this. Since the onset of the Indian National Movement, however, women came under the hegemony of a new identity; the Mother Nation, the symbols of the nation. The identification of the woman's body with the nation during the National Movement has a specific context; it must be understood in the events and ideologies that were bringing about significant changes in the socio-political climate of the subcontinent in the nineteenth century.

The nineteenth century was a momentous period in the history of India, especially the Bengal. It is marked by great social and political upheavals - colonial rule, Social Reform Movement, the rise of nationalism, and Cultural Revivalism. The relationship between these forces was seldom smooth and reconciliatory; these elements frequently contested with each other for dominance.

The Permanent Settlement and the initial colonial policy of non-interference in the *Zamindar*-peasant relationship consolidated the authority traditionally enjoyed by the upper caste/class *Zamindars*. The new English-educated middle-class understood the advantages of an alliance with the British Government. The educated Bengali men found jobs in the British administrative system as clerks, officials, tax

collectors, and teachers, which not only brought wealth, but also status and acceptance in the British society. It was during this period that the Bengali liberal intelligentsia initiated the Social Reform Movement which called for self-criticism and changes within the upper caste Hindu society. Certain of their economic and social powers, the *Zamindars* were initially sympathetic, even supportive, of the Social Reform Movement.

A series of social and political events, however, was going to alter this equation. The traditional power of the *Bhadralok* was based on prescriptive rituals, practices, uneven caste and gender relations. Peasant Movements, proselytizing activities of the Christian Missionaries, the Liberal Reform Movement, land reforms in favour of the landless labourers, and mass education threatened the established social order which guaranteed the domination of the *Bhadralok* over women, the Hindu lower castes, the Non-Hindu peasants, and laborers. The newspapers, journals, colonial discourse and literature fiercely debated issues such as Sati, child marriage, polygamy, widow remarriage, and untouchability. This undesirable intervention in the domestic affairs signaled the collapse of the social institutions sustained for hundreds of years.

The *Bengali Babu*, in colonial writings, was portrayed as effeminate, cowardly, passive, immature and childish. In the political arena, legislations such as the Illbert Bill ,which prohibited the Indian judges from trying British offenders further weakened the sense of security enjoyed by the upper class Bengali men. These developments caused deep anxiety and a growing sense of emasculation in the male psyche.

Towards the end of the century, as a consequence, “the Bengali Bhadralok,

firmly turned away from liberal reformism to Hindu Revivalism" (Sarkar 11). It was perceived as the only way of confronting the colonizer and also safeguarding the traditional structures of power. What emerged out of this was a strong nationalist consciousness that fiercely defended every aspect of Indian culture.

In *Nation and its Fragments*, Partha Chatterjee explains the relationship between the women and the Indian Nationalism. He points out that the 'women's question' that dominated the Social Reform Movement, particularly in Bengal, suddenly disappeared from the Nationalist agenda by the end of the century. The reason, he says, is:

> "… nationalism's success in situating the "woman's question" in an inner domain of sovereignty, far removed from the arena of political contest with the colonial state. The inner domain of national culture was constituted in the light of the discovery of "tradition" ". (117)

The colonial discourse projected the Indian culture as degenerate and barbaric mainly on the basis of the subordination of Indian women. Therefore the Indian woman was transformed into the sign of the innately primitive nature of Indian culture and religious doctrine. This provides ample justification for the necessity of the colonial rule to "civilize" the uncivilized native population.

The Bengali Bhadralok had reaped huge benefits because of its association with the British. Therefore complete disassociation with the colonial masters was not a choice. The Nationalists, continues Chatterjee, found a unique strategy to resolve the issue. It divides cultural into two distinct parts – the material and the spiritual.

The Western technology and education could be learnt and adopted in the public domain, whereas the sacredness of the Indian culture could be maintained in the private sphere, that is, within homes. It was argued that the inner sphere was more important as it constitutes our identity. hence it must be protected from corruption. The Indians might be technologically inferior, but spiritually they are far more superior to the West. As the 'inner realm' is the women's sphere, inner/outer dichotomy had great implications for women.

It should be noted that female education was receiving, albeit slowly, acceptance within the middle classes. One of the results of this was that, despite the best efforts of the Nationalists and communities, the home increasingly came under the Western influence. Both Chatterjee and Sarkar have drawn attention to the increasing anxiety about the Westernized Bengali woman expressed in popular culture of the time.

Home was the site for asserting the spiritual superiority of the Indian culture; therefore women must take on the responsibility of protecting the sanctity of the culture. In spite of increased mobility and education, the women must not shed their feminine virtues. Hence the image of the 'new' woman was constructed – educated, thrift, orderly, responsible at the same time traditional, submissive, modest, sacrificing, religious, self-effacing and benevolent. The woman now stood for the nation.

The home/world dichotomy no doubt paved way for female education, but it also came with severe constrictions. For instance, it made no changes in the intensely patriarchal nature of the home. The essential difference between the roles of men

and women in terms of the outer/inner spheres and removal of men from the realm of spirituality preserved the male privileges by freeing them from the responsibility of safeguarding the culture. A new identity was now created for women. The new woman, who now represented the nation, was indisputably upper caste Hindu. She was now contrasted with not only the modern Western woman, but also the illiterate and unrefined lower caste woman, which further deepened caste hierarchies.

Lalithambika Antarjanam's "The Mother of Dhirendu Mazumdar" , is a moving account of the far reaching consequences of the Partition as well as the new identity formations on the lives of women. The story is narrated through Shanthi Mazumdar, the wife of a Bengali landlord, and the mother of revolutionary freedom fighters. It opens when Shanthi is ninety years old, lonely and dejected, in a country which she does not identify with. She declares that she is the mother of not only her children, but an entire generation of freedom fighters, highlighting her empathy for all the patriotic nationalists. In fact, throughout the story, she addresses the reader as "my children". In her dismal condition, her memory of the past is her only solace.

She came into the house as a nine-year-old bride. In those days women of her family never stepped out of the house, nor could they meet any other men except their husbands and sons. The inner/outer dichotomy reinforced in the face of the threat of the Western influence, controls women's lives in Shanti's household. The barriers – both physical and psychological – rigorously prevent any intrusion from the public world. She recalls how during the flood, when the entire village took refuge in the temple, the women of the Mazumdar family sat trembling on the roof

of their home. Even when one of the women was in labour, the head of the household refused to call a doctor. Shanti did not step out of the house till she was fifty. The design of a typical upper caste house is itself gendered; it embodies the rigid distinction between the inner and outer spaces. The *Andarmahal* or separate women's quarters comprised of the kitchen and an inner courtyard. Sometimes the *Andarmahal* even had its own bathing ponds. The women's quarter was designed to be physically separate from the Kacherighar or office or from the bahir (outside, men's living space). The women were conditioned never to cross the invisible but powerful line. (Weber 70)

Shanthi's husband worked for the British Government; He was not only a member of a prominent *Zamindar* family that had the title "Rao Bahadur", but also a judge and a member of an advisory committee of the British government. Shanthi was not allowed to meet her husband's British friends when they visited. Even though men associate with the British in the outer world, home (women) should be protected from the Western onslaught. It was crucial on the part of the revivalists to convey that love, and willful self-surrender on the part of women were the basis of the traditional Hindu marriage. The home was a site of love, nurture, and protection. This idealized notion of home and marriage is questioned in the story. The home, here, is the location of oppression and rigid patriarchal control.

Shanthi's husband wanted his eldest son Dhirendu to become an ICS officer. He said, "Rao Bahadur is just a title. But the ICS will bring with it money and power" (200). The line underlines the mutually beneficial relations between the *Bhadralok* and the British. However, Dhirendu was a revolutionary freedom fighter.

Once, secretly, he brought home an ascetic woman and begged his mother to give her shelter for a few days. Shanthi offered her refuge without her husband's knowledge. After a few days Dhirendu revealed to her that the ascetic woman was, in reality, a man, none other than the great revolutionary Surya Sen. Surya Sen was one of the most important leaders of the revolutionary freedom fighters. He was the architect of the Chittagong conspiracy. He showered praises upon Shanthi and called her mother Annapoorna - the Hindu Goddess symbolized as a giver of food. She was deeply influenced by the concept of the Mother Nation. When the ascetic was captured by the police and executed, Shanthi solemnly said that the day she met this man, a new woman in her – *Banglamatha*- was born.

When her husband learnt that his son was a revolutionary, he severed all ties with him. Shanthi was torn between her love for her son and loyalty for her husband. She continued to give money to her son, and provided shelter to a number of revolutionaries, without the knowledge of her husband, thus defying the patriarchal norm of absolute obedience towards the husband. When she heard of her son's death, she shrieked hysterically and sings Vande Matharam. After that all her sons sacrificed their lives for the nation. Her contact with her son's revolutionary friends exposed her to nationalist ideals, and imbibed in her a sense of immense patriotism. She took part in various nationalist movements; she also disagrees with the Gandhian policy of non-violence. "Bapuji, courage is not a crime. By killing and dying for their motherland, these Bengali youth had become immortal" (203). Despite the private-public split in the restricted domain, Shanthi, the protagonist, with great political

awareness and participation in the struggle for freedom, transcends barriers; thus rendering fluid the boundaries aimed at back grounding of the woman in a predominately patriarchal system.

She is heartbroken when the country is divided in the name of religion. She laments:

> "With whose consent did you cut off Bengal's head? With whose permission did you separate us? Here no one is a Hindu, no one is a Muslim. We are all Bengalis. We are one. If the head and the body are separated, then like rahu and ketu* they will play a very destructive game. Both the sun and the moon will come under total eclipse. Mark my words!" (203)

Her warning comes true in a short time. She remembers when India was partitioned in 1947, they were advised to migrate to India. Propelled by a strong sense of belonging she chooses to remain in East Pakistan on her own volition. Her family continued to serve the new country. When her youngest daughter married a Muslim, she wholeheartedly supported her; in fact, they all lived together under the same roof. She remembers how Mujibur Rahman, the first Prime Minister of Bangladesh, called her the symbol of the liberation of Bengal:

> "Shantidevi, you are the symbol of Bengal! You are our mother!" (204)

During the liberation war, Shanti's granddaughter Nazeema is mercilessly

killed by the soldiers (soldiers' nationality is not clear) Shanti found that the new country has no place for her, as she is a Hindu. She is forced to move to India. In India she is a refugee, an outsider. Shanti undergoes a severe psychological crisis because of these dual identities – "outsider" in Bangladesh which she considers her own and "refugee" in India. The reward for serving her country all her life is that now she has no country to call her own. Subtle anger and deep sense of betrayal run through the story. Plagued by acute identity crisis and a heightened feeling of betrayal, Shanthi, is a moral wreck

Even though the story is written in the backdrop of the Partition, the central theme is the concept of "nation as women". Among the plethora of images of women, in the nineteenth century, none was as commanding and iconic as the figure of the Motherland, the *Bharatmata*. The most popular and widely circulated image was that of the Mother Nation - restrained by the chains of foreign rule, deeply distressed, and extolling the sacred duty of her sons to liberate her. In fact, throughout the National Movement, the image of the Motherland in chains was employed to inspire men to take part in the Movement.

However, foisting the nationalist identity of the Mother Nation is not necessarily empowering for women. Though it opens up ways for women to participate in the freedom struggle, it also reiterates the culturally acceptable feminine role and behavior and puts pressure on them to "…. articulate their gender interests solely within the terms of reference set by nationalist discourse." (Silva 23)

The image of the Nation as a female body or mother earth functions in either

of two ways. It is either a "pure" maternal, spiritual, inviolable and intact body or bruised, ravaged, raped and ravaged by the invaders. Both these images are reliant on the male actors, who either violate or deify or rescue them.When the body is deployed as the metaphor for the nation, its materiality is erased. Women's morality and sexuality become the concerns of the nations, legitimizing practices of repression and control. (Silva 24)

Nationalism neatly demarcates masculine and feminine roles within the nation. The masculine roles, reserved for the male members of the nation are those of the soldier, leader, representative of the state, official orator and faithful citizen. Therefore the shell-shocked soldier, the revolutionary, the pacifist have no place in the nationalist discourse. Likewise women are allotted the culturally accepted roles of the mother, sister, and daughters. Among them, the most important role is that of the mother whose patriotic duty it is to give birth to valiant sons and offer them to the nation, not just to guarantee the continuity of the nation, but also the ensure the safety of other mothers and daughters of the nation. Such representations subject women to serious pressure of adopting the feminine virtues of patience, sacrifice, and purity in their day-to-day behavior.

In "The Mother of Dhirendu Mazumdar", despite Shanti's immense patriotism and desire to serve the nation, the only role available to her is that of a mother. This is what Dhirendu and the nation expects from her:"Mother, do you know that in olden times, the mothers in Greece used to sacrifice their eldest sons to the Goddess of war. Dying for one's motherland is salvation. Isn't my mother a Goddess? Dedicate your eldest son to the motherland. You still have eight more children." (202)

The Sanyasin (ascetic) turning out to be a man reinforces the limited role assigned to women by nationalism. Interestingly, the story presents two contradictory images of the Mother Nation, implying that the image of the mother nation was not uniform throughout the country. Surya Sen says that until meeting Shanti, the embodiment of Annapoorna, he worshipped his motherland in the form of Mother Kali:

> "…. Swords drawn! Hundred hands! Chakras in a hundred hands! The bold smeared head of the enemy! Intestines for garlands…" (200)

This image of the furious, violent Goddess is the opposite of the popular image of the gentle and benevolent *Bharatmata*. Perhaps it underlines the ideological differences of the revolutionary freedom fighters who believed in violent means to achieve liberation with the Nationalists whose principal was non-violence. Also because the image of Kali is, with its unbridled fury, is at odds with the carefully constructed figure of the *Bharatmata*, a personification of the most desirable feminine ideals, which holds the least threat to the established social order.

Shanti, in a fit of patriotic fervor, assumes the identity of the *Banglamata*, reflecting the parallel Bengali nationalist consciousness rooted in the Bengali culture and language, which culminated in the formation of Bangladesh.

Although Antarjanam initiates a confrontational dialogue with patriarchy by challenging the rigid gender norms that determined women's lives, we also see an unquestioning acceptance of nation as mother/ mother as nation. In fact there is overt celebration of the Mother Nation in the story that has little scope for women.

Her participation in the revolutionary activities later was result of the economic decline of her family and her husband's death. It can be argued that thousands of women have been at the forefront of the Indian National Movement; in fact, the huge success of the Swadeshi Movement, a landmark in the Indian history, was because of large scale participation of women. However, women's participation in the freedom struggle was allowed as long as the strict segregation of the inner and outer spheres was upheld; in other words as long as women's traditional roles and gender hierarchies remained intact.

The engendering of the nation is also the thematic concern in Sundri Uttamchandani's Bhoori (discussed in chapter III), which is about the Sindhi experience of the Partition. Bhoori stands for the lost Sindhi nation. She may have lost her sheen because of poverty and the grind of everyday life, but not her self-respect and dignity. For the uprooted Sindhi community, the nation is not a physical space; rather their idea of the nation is theoretical. Unlike the Punjabi and Bengali migrants, the Sindhis did not have a corresponding state in India to call their own. Sindhis were not welcomed in India, though they were Hindus. The violence in Sindh was less compared to Punjab and Bengal, so they did not receive the kind of sympathy that other refugees did. Moreover, their language, customs and dress were noticeably different from the rest of the Hindus which augmented their sense of alienation. The harrowing experience of displacement was compounded by reduced economic status.

In his novel *Jalavatni*, Mohan Kalpana depicts the miserable condition of the Sindhi refugees in the wake of official apathy. In response to a refugee's plea for shelter this is what an official says:

> "….. You are a refugee, you can spend night under a tree, or near a railway track, or in a park. When you ran away from Sindh, did you ask Jinnah where should you go?" He continues "Right now you are neither in India nor Pakistan. You are a refugee. A refugee! You do not have a home either here or there, you people are like washermen's dogs – neither free nor pets. (Kothari 165)

For the deterritorialised and disenfranchised Sindhis, the body of the woman substituted the lost nation. Bhoori represents Sindh, withered still beautiful; irretrievable, but treasured in the hearts of the Sindhis. She represents "… gentle, stoic acceptance that characterizes the community of Sindhi Hindus. Victims of the time, they adopted with grace and fortitude, suppressing their negative thoughts and feelings, and putting their energy into getting on with their lives as best as they could." (Agarwal 14)

Nenu sees in the worn face of Bhoori "a new beauty." (20) He says:

> "…She does not consider herself inferior to anybody…. She does not owe allegiance to anybody. She works hard and earns her keep. Although she has aged before her time, she is not bothered…. How fearlessly Bhoori walks the city all alone. Her self-respect guards her wherever she goes. She has emerged a strong person…. one who relies on hard work, not destiny." (20-21)

Bhoori becomes an emblem of the self-esteem of the Sindhi community which

quickly came to terms with the changed situation and established itself. But the story again falls into the same trap. Bhoori's entry into the public domain does not change her position inside the home. It over glorifies the 'woman as nation' to emphasize the Sindhi spirit of survival without questioning the gender norms that mask abuse and oppression of women in the name of sacrifice and honor.

At the time of the Partition another group of women became victims of the feminization of the nation; those were the thousands of women abducted by the 'Other' men and later 'reclaimed' by the State. During the flight of people from one country to another during the Partition, a very large number of women were abducted by the men of the "Other" communities, sometimes women were handed over in exchange of safe transit. Around 75,000 women were abducted during the Partition on both sides of the border. The official estimate of the number of the abducted women was placed at 50,000 Muslim women in India and 33,000 non-Muslim women in Pakistan. (Menon1998 49)

In both the countries pressure built up to recover *their* abducted women illegally and illegitimately held in the Other country. The recovery of the abducted women was the topic of stern debates in the Indian Parliament. Leaders gave voice to their concern and sense of outrage at this "moral depravity" and "shameful chapter" (68).Again the great epic Ramayana was invoked to rouse emotions. Ritu Menon and Kamala Bhasin *Borders and Boundaries* quote the speech of an MP to drive home the point:

"As descendents of Ram we have to bring back every Sita that is alive." (1998 68).

The following letter to Evan Jenkins by Nehru underlines the importance of the issue in the national consciousness:

> "…You will realize that nothing adds to popular passions more than stories of abduction of women, so long as these women are not rescued, trouble will simmer and might blaze out". (Menon 1998 68)

Therefore the governments of India and Pakistan entered into an agreement to bring back abducted women. on 06th December 1947 an Inter-Dominion Conference was held in Lahore at which the two countries agreed upon the measures to be undertaken for the recovery of women. Between December 1947 and July 1948 the number of women recovered in both countries was 9,362 in India and 5,510 in Pakistan. (Menon 2004 49) The number of the recovered women was dismal when compared to the numbers abducted. The States felt that it was necessary to take sterner steps. Therefore, an agreement was reached between India and Pakistan on 11th November 1948 that set out the terms of recovery in each dominion.

Until December 1949 the number of recoveries in both the countries was around 18,000, 12,000 in India and 6,000 in Pakistan. In the Parliament, grave dissatisfaction was expressed at the discouraging numbers and the slow rate of recovery from Pakistan. The 1947 agreement in India expired on 31st December 1949. Gopalaswamy Iyengar, Minister in charge, moved a Bill in Parliament on 15th December, called the Abducted Persons' Bill.

The clauses of the Bill were very significant for three reasons, according to Menon. First, the Act was one of the first pieces of legislation attempted by the independent Indian government, preceding even the constitution. Second the kind

of immunity from legal action and unlimited powers it offered the police officers involved in the recovery operation. Third, the bill viewed the abducted persons as members of families and religious groups, not as citizens of a free nation. (Menon 2004 50)

The Act defined an abducted person as a male child under the age of sixteen a female of whatever age, who had been separated from his/her family and found to be living with or under the control of an individual or a family, in the case of a female it includes her children. It empowered any police officer, not below the rank of an Assistant Sub-Inspector, on mere suspicion of the presence of an abducted person, to enter without warrant, search and take into custody the person who in his opinion is abducted. If a dispute arises on whether the person is abducted or not, the matter would be referred to a tribunal constituted by the Central Government for this purpose. The decision of the tribunal would be final. The detention of the abducted person in the camp until he/she is handed over to the relatives could not be called into questioned in any court. And no legal proceedings could be initiated against the Central Government, the Provincial Government and the officials involved. (Menon 2004 50)

The extreme nature of the bill underlines the Indian Government's overwhelming anxiety to reclaim women, sometimes several years after their abduction. The reason lies in the inextricable link between the honor of the nation and the bodies of the women. In fact, social workers involved in the work admit extreme pressure from India to recover women.

In India the recovery of the abducted women became imperative for several reasons. After the deeply emasculating experience of colonial rule and the failure to

prevent the division of the country, reclaiming women was important to consolidate its position as the Government that not only fulfills its responsibility towards people but also protects its citizens.

The anxiety could be traced back to the socio-political changes that were affecting the subcontinent, especially Bengal and Punjab through the nineteenth century. The Arya Samaj and other right wing Hindu organizations played a pivotal role in the formation of the Hindu consciousness since the mid-nineteenth century. One of their main concerns was the degeneration of the Hindu Dharma because of the Christian and Muslim intrusion. Conversions took place to Islam and Christianity in spite of propaganda and reconversion drives. This apprehension heightened with the creation of Pakistan, which was seen as the loss of one part of the *Hindu Rashtra* to the creation of an Islamic country. The recovery programs that were directed at the Hindu converts to Islam and Christianity now found a new focus, the abducted Hindu women. As the recovery of territory became impossible, women's return now became symbolic of the affirmation of the Hindu manhood. Moreover, restoring women to their legitimate families would ensure that a generation of new born children was not lost to Hinduism.

The repatriation of women, even if it was forcible, was simple enough; it was the question of the children that complicated matters. Menon argues that the key to understanding this anxiety lies in the importance given to legitimate membership – of a family, a community, and ultimately, a nation. And for legitimate membership, the boundaries of all the above categories must be inviolable. As woman's body is the source of continuity, but also potential site of racial or ethnic impurity, her appropriation and control become vital on the part of communities.

That is why the "wrong unions" resulting from abduction were neither acceptable nor legal. The children born of these *wrong unions* were illegitimate, socially and legally. Therefore these fake families had to be dismantled and the women restored to their rightful families so that their sexuality could be regulated.

The attempts to recover them were resisted by women in both the countries. There were many reasons for the refusal to return. The economic condition of many women had improved considerably. They did not want to go back to a life of poverty. After their marriage, they were converted to another religion. The fathers of their children belonged to the 'Other' religion. The children would find no acceptance within the families if they return. Their biggest the fear was rejection by families. In many instances the new families and sometimes the relief workers pressurized them to leave their children behind. However, their resistance was by the State, through legislation. The rights and desires of the women were subordinated and their rights as citizens were sacrificed to protect the honor of the community and the nation.

The government's construction of abducted women's identity was problematic. "It was a construction that identified her first and foremost, as the member of a religious community, and then invested her with the responsibility for upholding community honor; next it denied her autonomy whatever by resolutely defining her as the victim of an act of transgression which violated that most critical site of patriarchal control – her sexuality." (Menon 1998 103)

They continue "The writ of habeas corpus was denied; their marriages were considered illegal and their children illegitimate. They could be pulled out of their

homes on the strength of a policeman's opinion that they were abducted; they could be transported out of the country without their consent; confined in camps against their wishes; have virtually no possibility of any kind of appeal." (Menon 1998 105)

The State showed no such anxiety about the thousands of women widowed during the Partition; for there was no ambiguity regarding their citizenship. As their husbands were dead, the State could take the role of the protector. The State undertook several measures to facilitate the widows' economic independence.

The identity constructed by the State also determined, to an extent, the relationship between the India and Pakistan. In the Post-Partition period the Indian and the Pakistani State tried to legitimize and consolidate their authority. For this purpose old identities were discarded and new identities constituted. Both India and Pakistan were defining themselves in opposition to the other. India projected itself as democratic, secular, and socialist, while Pakistan was defined as Islamic, feudal and anti-modern. In the national discourse, Pakistan itself became the abductor. The foundation of the new relationship between the countries was "difference". In *India and South Asia: A Short History,* David Ludden describes the postcolonial situation in the subcontinent thus: "National boundaries became natural geographical features in the socialization of citizens. The shape of the national map itself became an icon" (3). The new borders separating the nations became rigid, sacrosanct, and inviolable. In this context, women came to be viewed as the metaphors of national boundaries, to be protected from *penetration* from the other. Women as repositories of national honor had to be guarded. Interestingly, in many national representations,

violation of boundaries is expressed in terms of sexual violation. Protection of boundaries, therefore, became a sign of manhood.

Pakistan also constructed itself against India. The identity constructed for Pakistani woman was "sensitive yet strong; nurturing yet firm; liberated yet within limits". Men were asked to accept women in the name of liberal humanism as well as Muslim humanism. Women's sexuality was seen as vulnerable, in need of preservation. In a patriarchal value system, women's sexuality is acceptable only in two forms – preserved in the bodies of the virgins and active through marriage. There is no space for women as desiring subjects in patriarchy; they are expected to be available to husbands at all times. The State defined the women's relationship with the "Other" men in only two ways – abduction and violation. Women, by refusing to return to their rightful country undermine the very premise on which the two States defined themselves – difference. Therefore women's willingness to remain with the abductor was seen as rejection of the State.

Though India portrayed itself as democratic and secular, it was mindful of the undemocratic demands of communities. The State went to extraordinary lengths to fulfill those demands. For instance, the State went against its own doctrine of non-violence and performed large scale abortions at the camps for women.

In India a crucial basis of stratification is religion and caste. The entire system of differentiation stands on endogamy, carefully controlled system of marriages within enclosed groups. Reproduction is one of the ways in which communities organize themselves as *identifiable* communities and maintain their differences with

the other communities. Violation of the marriage codes is regarded as an attack upon *izzat*, itself a masculine concept. A woman marrying a man negotiated by the male kinsmen within the community is an important normative practice. Abduction and inter-religious marriages pose a threat to this intricate web of social structure

Both the nations began as democracies, ensuring equal rights to its citizens irrespective of the differences in terms of religion, ethnicity, language, caste, and other categories. The construction of the concept of citizenship, however, was very ambiguous. G. Aloysius defines citizenship as: "Citizenship is the affirmation of inclusion via membership, in the share in the same (national) power" (4). However, we notice that there is uncertainty when it comes to the women of the nations. Very often, in post-colonial societies, men are the primary recipients of power; women are marginalized in the equal distribution of resources and rights. It is a well known fact that, in spite of their active participation in the anti-colonial struggle, and significant contribution to the process of nation-making, after independence, women were relegated to the background. Their domestic roles were emphasized more than ever. (McLeod 115)

Veena Das is of the opinion that women relate to the nation mainly as sexual beings. There is conflict between the two identities of women – women as free citizens of a democracy, and women as sexual beings. The ambiguity calls into question the nation's democratic and secular claims. In her analysis of Rousseau, writes that women are not oppositional to men. In fact, woman is the obligatory passage through whom man moves along the road of marriage, paternity, and citizenship" (34). His duty is to give legitimate children to the state and in return, the State protects his authority as the head of household. Therefore, nation is the

product of the social/sexual contract between the nation and its men. Only children who are produced within the patriarchal family could be accepted as rightful citizens. Woman's duty as a citizen, therefore, is in her duty towards her husband. When she gives birth to children not her husband's, it is not infidelity, but treason. Women's loyalty to the state is proved by her role as mothers who bear legitimate children.

This ambiguity regarding women as citizens is at the heart of women's resistance to the recovery operation. In Jamila Hashmi's "Exile" Bibi decides to stay with her abductor though she had a chance to escape. The author makes it very clear that Bibi has no feelings for her abductor husband. She decides not to return is mainly her uncertainty regarding her future and also the fear of separation from her children. It must also be noted that Bibi does not explicitly refuse to go back by confronting the occupants of the army truck. Instead, she hides behind a well; this action of hers is loaded with meaning. It implies that her wishes would not be heard; there is every chance that she would be forced to return which would be a *second abduction* after the violence and trauma of the first.

Several abducted women in Partition fiction stay back with their abductors. Amrita Pritam's novella *Pinjar* depicts the plight of Pooro, a young Hindu woman, abducted by Rashida, a Muslim. Pooro manages to escape from her captivator and returns home. To her utter shock and dismay, she is disowned by her family. Pooro deeply internalizes the stigma attached to her body when she is rejected by her parents; so much so that she feels repulsed by her own body and her new born child. She is very disturbed when she witnesses the abductions of other women around her, including her sister-in-law. With the help of now transformed Rashida, she is able to rescue her sister-in-law. At the border, when she has a choice of returning to her family, she decides to stay with Rashida and her children.

Identity crisis is another theme that is part of both the texts. Gurpal and his mother have thrust the false identities of Bahu and wife on Bibi. Although Bibi remains silent, she hates these identities with all her heart. In fact she says, "When someone calls me *Bahu*, I feel as if I am being abused" (40). Pooro also undergoes the pain of erasure of the last shred of her identity, her name, when Rashida forces her to get the Muslim name Hamida tattooed on her arm.

We can interpret Bibi and Pooro's decision as attempts not just to accept their altered situation but also to regain their agency to some extent. After being violently uprooted from their homes and families, by refusing to return, both women resist the forceful appropriation of their bodies and imposition of false identities by the combined forces of family, community and the nation.

Quest for identity crisis is also the theme of "Where does She Belong?" by Suraiya Qasim. Munni did not know her parents. Since childhood she is disturbed by questions about her parents and home. Once when she asked *Ma*, the brothel keeper, about her parents she mercilessly caned her. Between beatings she told that Munni was found lying on a road which was equidistant from a mosque and a temple. Ma could not decide whether she was a Hindu or a Muslim. So she named her Munni, a name used both by the Hindus and the Muslims. Her search for identity is never fulfilled.

Of all the men who visited her, Munni remembers two – Raj Kamal and Jafar Khan. Raj Kamal wanted to drive out all the Muslims from India and Jafar Khan wanted to get rid of all the *Kafirs.* Both the men try to impose their own religious identity on Munni. When Munni once talked about the possibility of being a Muslim

Raj Kamal said "But that's impossible! A beauty like you can only be a Hindu" (113). Jafar Khan had similar views, "I have been making love to you, Munni Bai, because you are a fairy, a *hourie* from *behist* and a *hourie* can only be a Muslim" (114).

At the time of the Partition, when she needed them the most, both men betrayed her. Munni finally realizes that religious differences, which caused the Partition and inhuman violence in the world outside, collapse inside the walls of the brothels. In the brothel all men are the same, just men. She also understands that change of country does not make any difference in her life; the identity of a prostitute would remain unchanged irrespective of the country.

Qurratulain Hyder's "When the Prisoners Were Released,the Times Had Changed" revisits the past to draw our attention to the predicament of those countless freedom fighters who sacrificed their lives for the nation. Sadly these unsung heroes of the freedom struggle were labeled "terrorists" and rendered invisible in history. The story is important also for another reason. Most of the short stories about the Partition are focused on violence, displacement or recreate the harmonious past. Very few of these discuss the brutal colonial rule. The story offers a critique of the exploitative and oppressive nature of colonialism.

The story narrated through the unnamed woman protagonist who belongs to an elite Muslim family. The first part describes the childhood experience of the narrator on the Andaman and Nicobar islands in the 1930's. The second part takes place in Kolkata and other cities. Though the first part is about the impressions of a child, the adult intervention in the narrative voice can be clearly discerned. This part is interspersed with rich historical details and comments, hinting the upper class status of the narrator.

The story opens in 1939, a momentous period in the history of India, when the Congress declined to co-operate with the British to fight the World War II. During that time "India was a vast prison-house" (239). The narrator arrives with her family, a bunch of young British men and women and a group of handcuffed Indian prisoners at Port Blair. On the ship she observes the youngsters merrily drinking and dancing while their country is engaged in a war. The prisoners are brought to the island to serve life sentences. At the time the island was a British Penal Colony. It housed the largest prison in Asia, the Cellular Jail, popularly known as the *Kala Pani*. The political prisoners, especially the extremist freedom fighters, were sent to the island to spend the rest of their lives incarcerated. The location of the island served dual purposes. It cut the prisoners off from the world preventing further political activity; for the Hindus crossing the sea was a taboo. The loss of caste had a demoralizing effect on the inmates. On another part of the island the girl's family lives in luxury. They are given a huge mansion called *Bada Bangla*; they also have a full time cook and sentries to guard the house at all times.

The name, Andaman, is a distortion of the Malay word, Hinduman, Malay for Hanuman. The anglicized version of the name highlights the imperial domination that tends to systematically eliminate native cultures, as a weapon of control. Renaming places was a very effective tool of control as it deprives the natives of their history and heritage as well as imposes the colonizers' culture and identity. Mr. Blair, a cartographer with the East India Company, explored the islands in 1798 and claimed them as a part of the empire. "How could these distant islands, which nobody has even heard of, have offered any resistance, when the rest of the country, from Kabul to Kanyakumari had come under the rule of the *firangis*" (241). The tribal

people of the islands offered stiff resistance to the colonizers with their poisoned arrows and war skills. Unfortunately, only a handful of native tribes are left on the island.

After the mutiny of 1857 many of the rebels were exiled to the Andamans. By 1906 the freedom fighters of East Bengal were deported to the Andamans without trial. It was impossible to escape from here. Yet the prisoners hid gold coins in their mouths in the hope that someday they would be free. However, that day never came. The narrator's use of the word "mutiny" is very interesting in the light of her criticism of oppressive British policies. It was the British historians who used the word to describe the extraordinary events of 1857, to defuse the impact of the uprising and curb further revolutions. The Indian historians call it "The First War of Indian Independence". The narrator's use of the word could be a result of her Western education.

The islands are known for their natural wealth which is exploited by the british Though there were also prisoners who had committed serious crimes, they were well behaved. They were from different religions – Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. They had a dog which belonged to the previous British occupant of the house. Its name was Tippu. Her brother decided to call it Wellesley, after the British Viceroy Lord Wellesley, The naming and renaming of the dog, though appears comical and childish, have deeper connotations. The British official had named the dog after Tippu Sultan, one of the first Indian rulers who fought the British. He was a major obstacle to British ambitions in India till his death in 1799. The British officer calling the dog Tipu could be read as denigration of the Indian ruler. The boy renaming it is not only an act of resistance; it also indicates the ambiguous relationship between the Indian elite and the British

imperialists. On the one hand the children belong to that class of Indians who benefitted from the colonial rule in the form of jobs, English education and upward mobility; on the other, we see a sense of unease because of their subservient status.

One day there is lot of commotion in the prison. The nationalist prisoners were on a hunger strike protesting the ill treatment of the inmates. The next day the girl sees a nationalist prisoner being carried on a stretcher. The next day she learns that Mr. Anderson, the Chief Superintendent of Police, had assaulted Sudhir Kumar Bose, a revolutionary. Though he is being treated, the people whisper that he would not survive.

The girl's father appoints a *maulana* to instruct her, and her education begins on the island. At this point the author introduces an excerpt from Jawaharlal Nehru's "An Autobiography", the part that elucidates his views on the revolutionaries. The mainstream Indian history recognized two main strands in the movement for independence. The Congress movement led by Gandhi and Nehru was based on the principles of non-violence, constitutional reforms and democratic institutions. The parallel movement which is popularly called the Extremist Movement or by the pejorative term "terrorists" was led by Tilak, Bhagat singh, Chandrashekhar Azad, Surya Sen and others. The extremists had no faith in the moderate and milder ways of the Congress; they believed in more militant methods of agitation, even violence. The Congress and the Extremists had sharp ideological differences. Nehru looks at the "terrorist activities" of the Extremists in Bengal as a hindrance to the peaceful protests of the Congress. The Congress workers were paying the price of the non-violent activities of the Extremists, especially after the Chittagong episode.

Surya Sen, one of the most prolific and respected leaders of the revolutionaries, organized a rebellion to tell the world that it is possible to challenge the mighty British army. The plan was to occupy the two British armories of Chittagong and seize ammunition. The plan was executed on 18th April 1930. Surya Sen split his companions into two groups. One of the groups invaded the police armory and the other took over the Auxiliary Force Armory. They were successful in dislocating telephone and telegraph lines. However, they could not locate the arms. The group stood outside the armory, hoisted the national flag, sang *Vande Mataram,* and proclaimed a Provincial Revolutionary Government.

In spite of the initial victory, they could not fight the British troops for long, especially as they could not seize arms. They dispersed to the Chittagong hills and later to nearby villages. Surya Sen was finally arrested on 16th February, 1933. He was tried and hanged on 12th January 1934. The Chittagong rebellion was followed by aggressive repression of anti-colonial activities through the country. Many leaders, both Congress and extremist, were arrested. Among them was Nehru who was imprisoned in the Dehra Dun Goal. (Chandra 241-43)

Unfortunately, the shooting of a Muslim police inspector by a revolutionary led to Hindu-Muslim riots. Though Nehru acknowledges that there is no connection between the shooting of the officer and communalism and he was shot as a British officer not as a Hindu, it still roused communal feelings. He says that murder in the name of religion is too dangerous for any society. Political murder is bad, religious is worse. "…for it (religious murder) deals with things of the other world, and one

cannot even attempt to reason about such matters" (246). The line dividing political and religious murder is thin, so has to be maintained at all times.

Nehru sees the "terrorist" activity as a threat to India's freedom and unity. His words echo the nationalist discourse on the "terrorists." The conventional history of the National Movement, often elitist and state-sponsored, is largely dominated by the Congress led movement. The history of the revolutionaries is summed up in a few pages. It largely ignores the contributions of other nationalists who played a key role in India's liberation. The Subaltern Studies Group has reiterated this time and again. The revolutionaries have disappeared in the annals of history.

They have also been victims of identity politics. The imposition of the identity of "terrorists" with its derogatory undertone has done great damage to their name. It has not only severely undermined the patriotic ardor of these men and women who faced death on a daily basis but also reduced their immense contributions to a few "terroristic activities". The identity removes them from the realm of patriotism by hijacking their identities and reduces them to nothing more than troublemakers.

The story takes a leap of several years; it is 1959 and the now adult narrator is at the World Agricultural Fair. There were pavilions to showcase the culture of each region. Her eyes fell on the familiar image of a mansion on an island, which she realized was Bada Bangla. The caption under the picture read "Andaman and Nicobar Islands". Two girls dressed in Bengali saris stood at the counter displaying handicraft. When she asked them if the handicrafts were made by the inmates of Silver Jail, they informed her that it was shut down a long time ago. New and free

Andamanese live there now, the displaced refugees from East Bengal were settled there after the Partition. The girl's voice had the same touch of sadness that a sales girl in Sri Lanka whom she met had when she told her that she lived in Karachi. Partition has instantly changed the identities of so many people. People who were Bengalis a few years ago have become "new Andamanese". However, change of identities has not healed old wounds, not have they expunged memories. The sadness in the voice of the girls resonates the nostalgia and yearning for the lost home.

The narrator is also filled with nostalgia at the sight of her childhood home. Today it is a government office. Her heart goes out for the two girls and all the people who experienced the Partition.

The scene shifts to November 1961. She is attended a musical program at the Lalit Kala Kendra in Calcutta. As the program has not yet started, she wanders to the portrait gallery. She is intrigued by the series of portraits of young men and women. She began to read the names on the small metal plates under the pictures.

"Satyendernath Bose Hanged

Khudiram Bose Hanged …

Sudhir Kumar Bose Died while on hunger strike"(252)

The people in the pictures were the nationalists jailed in the Andamans. Their entire lives, dedicated to the nation, summed up in a few words, devoid of emotion and appreciation.

She runs into an elderly gentleman who noticed her interest in the pictures.

He is Prabodh Kumar Bose; he and his elder brother were "terrorists". Strangely, he uses this very word to introduce himself and his brother; this goes on to show the extent to which the people have internalized the depreciatory identities forced on them. The fact that there is neither anger nor bitterness in his voice when he uses the term and his unquestioning acceptance demonstrates the persuasive influence of the nationalist discourse.

He tells her that his family is from Zilla Mymen Singh which is now in East Pakistan. His brother died in the Andaman prison and he spent many years in Alipore Jail. He had fought for India at the risk of his life, but when he was freed from prison, he learnt that his village had become part of Pakistan. The country for which he spent years in prison was no longer his. His exile is acute and permanent. The narrator says:

> "… The people who had fought for independence … thought that they had their feet firmly planted on the soil on which they were born… But the earth had slipped from under the feet of the generation to which that sales-girl belonged." (251)

The chattering and carefree businessmen, society ladies, intellectuals and the culture-vultures who are walking about showing least interest in the portraits reflect the utter indifference of the inheritors of freedom towards the men and women who made independence a reality.

The excerpt from Nehru's biography is also significant as it highlights the popular view on the revolutionaries branded as terrorists, sidelining their sacrifices. It contrasts the negative nationalist representations of the revolutionary freedom

fighters with the miserable condition of their lives on the island made worse by police brutality. The island not only cut them off from the world but also rendered their sufferings invisible in people's consciousness.

The socio-cultural upheaval of the nineteenth century and sense of mutual distrust and rivalry on both sides of the border after the Partition had a huge impact on the constitution of national identity, especially its women.But women in these stories are not merely victims. They refuse to submit to the forces of a patriarchal society and nation, rebel against the identities imposed on them.

Conclusion

> "India was killed by the British…by the fanatical Hindus… by the Communist Party of India…India was killed and stabbed in the heart by every Hindu who killed a Muslim, by every Muslim who killed a Hindu, by every Hindu or Muslim who committed …. Arson and rape and murder…"
>
> (Abbas 1995 235-36)

The Partition of the Indian subcontinent was one of the greatest man-made calamities in the history of humanity. At the political level, the Indian cities were dealt by the leaders, "like a pack of cards. Lahore is dealt to Pakistan, Amritsar to India" (Sidhwa 140). At the personal level, it brought unimaginable misery and pain. The decision to divide the country by a handful of men dramatically altered the destinies of millions in unanticipated ways. It sparked off a vicious chain of bestiality in the form of massacres, arson, rape, abduction and caused mass reshufflings of populations. The Partition not only wrecked lives but also the socio-cultural fabric and shared heritage.

Even after than sixty years Partition is not dead. It is just like a dangerous minefield; the slightest of pressures, and it explodes into lives. Whenever there is communal conflict, confrontation at the border, diplomatic entanglesand terrorist activity it rushes back with renewed force. Even an India-Pakistan cricket match is reason enough for its

rematerializing.It is still a huge part of the national consciousness both in India and Pakistan.

The Partition is one of the most well documented historical events in India. A huge corpus of writing on the Partition exists in the form of official history, government documents, agreements, and newspaper reportage. However, the historical and official writings on the Partition are centered on the search of the causes of the Partition and the roles played by the leaders. In the mainstream history, Partition is a political exercise understood in terms of its constitutional history, inter-governmental debates, the agreements and disagreements between eminent leaders, the divide between the Congress and the League. A number of historians, depending on patronage and agendas, place certain leaders on a pedestal while completely vilifying a few others. (Sen 01)

Such writings completely ignore the experiences of the ordinary people who were caught in the crossfire of politics and sectarianism. In the 1990's there was a profound ideological shift in the historiography of the Partition. Attention has shifted, in the last years, from high politicsto individual experiences; the event as experienced by ordinary people. The 'woman question' that had been lying dormant has become the center of debate. Writers, historians, social scientists and scholars have revisited the Partition to retrieve the experiences of ordinary men and women uprooted and devastated by the Partition. History, however, is not just preserved in archives; it is also preserved in memory and fiction. As traditional historical methodology neither has the apparatus nor vocabulary to record the voices of the dispossessed, scholars have turned towards unconventional sources such as oral history, interviews, personal diaries, memoirs, letters and fiction.

The new historiographical approach has produced a body of scholarship that explores the other side of history, with intentstifled for many years. It articulates voice of the voiceless – women, children and the Dalits. However, these new histories too have their flipside. As women are victims of the tradition of silence, even the subaltern histories have the tendency of being hijacked by men. One of the most remarkable achievements of these alternate histories, especially by UrvahiButalia, Ritu Menon, and Kamala Bhasin and others is that they tackle the complex dynamics of silence to uncover women's voices and experiences.

The thesis focuses on literary representations of the Partition, especially short stories, to explore the traumatic effects of the cataclysmic event on the lives and psyche of women. It attempts to examine the distinct ways in which the women authors respond to the Partition. While reading fiction by women one must keep in mind that the female writers work within the patriarchal framework; they too have, like others, imbibed societal values and practices. The patriarchal codes that guard a woman's tongue also control her pen. All women writers, especially those who wrote in the immediate aftermath of the Partition had to negotiate the raw memories, patriarchal codes and the nationalist sentiment. While some women challenge the dominant discourses of patriarchy and nationalism, others conform to the conventional expectations. A few others are ambivalent and guarded in their approach. That is why it becomes imperative to be alert to the unspoken subtleties within the texts. Whatever the ideological position or ambivalence of the author, whether she conforms or transcends; each of these short stories has the potential to launch crucial political debates.

They deal with a range of issues, not always gendered, such as sexual violence, abduction, displacement, rehabilitation, colonialism, nationalism, identity, motherhood, honor and others.

Some of the narratives bring to light the sufferings of the marginalized groups, not just women but ethnic and linguistic minorities such as the Sindhi Hindus; children who are neglected in Partition scholarship; woman at the fringes, the prostitute; and the forgotten freedom fighters languishing in prisons. Another remarkable contribution of these narratives is that they offer fascinating insights into the day to day lives of women, which is excluded in history.

Historical accounts maintain that Indians are basically cultured and peace loving people and Partition violence was an aberration, spontaneous reaction to provocation. In India the official representation of communal violence is diffused with images of crowds going insane as a natural reaction to some provocative action on the part of one group or another. However unless one understands the everyday life of the people within which the acts of collective violence occurs, it would be impossible to see how diffused feelings of anger and hate could be translated into actual acts of killing. In the case of women we must place Partition violence within the larger context of dominant ideologies and everyday practices of oppression.

Descriptions of Partition violence extensively employ the trope of "madness" and "chaos" to explain the horrific violence that followed. However, Partition violence was neither extemporaneous nor arbitrary. It was a consequence of intense communal propaganda carried out by the Hindu and the Muslim Right Wing and several economic

reasons. It was also a culmination of entrenched religious differences and prejudices.

Violence against women does not happen during abnormal times alone; it is an intrinsic part of every society. Gender violence is a product of the intricateweb of values, traditions, customs, rituals, and beliefs that nurture gender inequality. The social institutions such as family, marriage, religion, and culture naturalize and to an extent justify violence against women. Underlying the culture of violence against women is the belief that women are inferior, weak and dependent on men. Therefore they are men's possessions; the posessional rights bestowed on men give them the authority to perpetrate violence.

Gender violence is linked to the notion of honor. Honor and chastity are regarded as the most precious attributes for a woman. Moreover, traditionally women are viewed as the repositories of family, community and national honor. The need to control the sexual behavior of women also stems from the male anxiety about patrilineal continuity. Despoiling of the female body brings dishonor to the family and community. Therefore women's bodies became rival territories during the Partition thathad to be conquered and desecrated to humiliate the "Other" community. As women are the begetters of the next generation, raping the woman is a means of polluting the religious purity of the *Other.* Cultural memory is another compelling factor that drives men to commit acts of violence. Subconscious images of women's violation as a means of revenge in the great epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata are deeply ingrained in collective memory.

Sexual violence is a prominent theme in the female narratives. However,

writing the body is not easy for a woman; women's writing is confined by explicit and implicit social-cultural codes, because of which women writers censor themselves. In a society that circumscribes women's sexuality and agency, writing about forbidden topics such as rape, abduction and sexuality, overcoming notions of shame and modesty, is a challenge. Traditionally different standards of evaluation are applied to male and female writers. What is considered aesthetics and freedom of expression in a man becomes disgraceful and crude in a woman. Several women writers like TaslimaNasreen and Nawal-el-Sadawi have faced persecution for daring to write about the female bodily experience. Writing the body itself, however subdued it might be,is a political act of rebellion.

Partition stories by women do not dwell on the act of violence, unlike certain male texts. They deal with the aftermath, and the victim's consciousness. By privileging female subjectivities in their writings, these writers try to recover the women's self lost in the oppressive labyrinth of tradition and powerful narratives of silence and modesty.

LalitambikaAntarjanam's "A Leaf in the Storm" describes the plight of Jyoti, a victim of brutal rape. At the camp to which she is brought after her rescue, she learns that she is pregnant. The story poignantly captures the inner conflict of Jyoti, who is torn between two conflicting emotions - the desire to keep the child and the overwhelming urge to kill it. For her the child is a symbol of her violation. Jamila Hashmi's "Exile" explores the troubled psyche of Bibi, an abducted woman, who lives with her abductor as his wife.Outwardly she appears reconciled to her fate, but her refusal to forget the past and resistance to the imposition of the identity of *bahu*can be read as silent rebellion.

Both the stories offer an unconventional treatment of motherhood. The patriarchal discourse of motherhood revolves around the notion of "maternal instinct".

Women are conditioned to believe that only motherhood can give them status, respect and acceptability within their families and communities. The centrality of motherhood is so great that its absence is seen as a woman's failure. The expressions associated with childlessness such as "barren" and "infertile" demonstrate this. The "maternal instinct" is a carefully constructed myth. However, its pervasive influence cannot be discounted. Negative responses or rejection of motherhood are seen as unnatural and undesirable.

In both the stories motherhood is not projected as an emotionally fulfilling experience; Antarjanamexplores the pain and horror of childbirth and the mother's hatred for the child in her womb which find no legitimate expression in the face of the immense aura that surrounds motherhood. Jyoti's dilemma is a threat to the social order, a violation of the norms of proper feminine behavior. Her decision to save the child in the end assures the restoration of order. For Bibi motherhood is a trap that firmly binds her to her abductor. The fear of separation from her children is one of the reasons for her decision to stay with her abductor, though she had a chance of escape.

In "KrounchaPakshigalu", Lakshmi who was abducted during the Partition is rejected by her husband as she has become "impure". The story shows howpatriarchy appropriates the voice of the woman, by denying her the right to tell her story.

Women writers also give expression to the trauma of displacement. In the scholarship on the Partition, the focus is too much on the experience of sexual

violence. Other dimensionsof women's experience are also crucial to understand the depth and extent of their suffering and to understand the strategies they evolved to overcome their predicament. Displacement is another issue dealt with by women writers. Krishna Sobti brings out the torment of people who were forced to leave their homes to places they had never heard of. The story "The Regimes has Changed" problematizes the view that Hindu-Muslim rift was the only cause for violence and mass migration. Partition provided an opportunity for personal revenge and gave vent to long suppressed anger and resentment.In Punjab the Hindus were the landowning class and Muslims were peasants. The landlords were also moneylenders who extracted exorbitant interest from the poor peasants. In the story,hidden class grievances come to the fore. The tenants are planning Shahni'smurder not only to steal her jewelery, but also to avenge years of exploitation; most of the villagers are waiting to plunder her house. Religion is not the cause of Shahni's forced migration, rather it is the long standing economic divisions in society

"Roots" is a moving story that depicts psychological and emotional breakdown brought about in Amma by the splitin of age-old social relations.Sobti and Chugtai recreate the past where there were amiable relations between the two communities. Both the stories question the assumption that the Hindus and the Muslims were mutually antagonistic communities who could not exist together in an independent India. In fact, Shahni's and Amma'sidentities are not rooted in religion but with the land of their birth. Partition fiction also tells us that women are more attached to land than men;confined to the homes their entire existence revolves around homes and families. As men are preoccupied with careers, it is women who build social

relationships.That is why they are shattered when forced to leave homes and hearths.

Pakistan was formed on the premise of irreconcilable differences between the Hindus and the Muslims. However, neither Hindus nor Muslims were homogeneous communities. However, the two-nation theory portrayed the Muslims as a monolithic community with common interests and goals. It ignored the class, caste, ethnic, linguistic and cultural differences within the community. Pakistan was the *Promised Land* for the Indian Muslims, a socialist and egalitarian country based on the Islamic law. It guaranteed equality and dignity to all the Muslims. However, people who went there hoping for better lives were soon disillusioned. The Bihari family in " More Sinned Against Than Sinning" that migrates to East Pakistan is rejected by the Bengali speaking native population, as they are "outsiders". The formation of Bangladesh in a few years of the Partition proved that religion alone cannot keep people together who are different in terms of language and culture. Partition stories also demonstrate that most of the people who migrated were not inspired by an Islamic vision, rather they were violently driven away, or they went in search of better economic prospects.

"Bhoori brings out the profound sense of loss and dislocation experienced by the Sindhi Hindus. Unlike Punjab and the Bengal which retained a part in both the countries, Sindh was given in its entirety to Pakistan. For the Sindhis who were forced to migrate, there was no corresponding Sindhi state or region. For the Sindhi Hindus, Partition meant not only permanent loss of homeland, but also loss of culture, language and heritage, apart from economic decline. "Khaanwahan" contrasts the

past where there was affluence and peace with the present which is beset with uncertainty. Khaanwahan is not just physical space, but is a powerful metaphor of prosperity and happiness, that cannot be retrieved.

"Where Does She Belong?" is the quest for identity of Munni, a subaltern among the subaltern. Women like her find no visibility even within subaltern and feminist works on the Partition. The story is a critique of society that exploits women. The Promised Land holds no promise for Munni, Partition does not make any difference to her, her identity irrespective of the country is fixed.

Identities were most volatile during the Partition. India has a rich history of inter-community relations and syncretic culture. However, during the Partition, one identity surpassed all others – religion. It became the prime identity for women; women became the markers of not just religious but also nation identity. The feminization of the nation had been happening since the nineteenth century. It assumed a new significance in the post-partition period, when the State was trying to consolidate its authority and building new identities for its citizens. The body of the woman became a vehicle for the building of a masculine nation. The recovery operations for the abducted women by both the countries expose the symbiotic relationship between nation and male dominated communities. The interests of the nation very often intersect with the interest of patriarchy. It also highlights the State's ambiguity regarding women's citizenship. The Recovery Operation where both the countries worked together to bring back abducted women unconstitutionally suppressed women's citizenship rights in the interest of national honor.Bibi in the story "Exile" hides behind a well when an army

truck arrives to reclaim abducted women. By making a choice not to return to her rightful family and country she resists the hegemony of the alliance of nation and community.

Jeelani Bano captures the insidious effect of mutual suspicion and distrust in "The Criminal." She brilliantly depicts the peril of religion becoming the sole identity during fragile communal atmosphere.

Antarjanam describes the confined lives of the *Bhadralok* women whose lives were dictated by rigid cultural norms. The central theme of the story is the Mother Nation. The powerful image of the gendered nation was not very empowering for women; severely restricted women's lives. While Antarjanamproblematises the concept of motherhood in "The Leaf in the Storm", she unquestionningly accepts the idea of the Mother Nation.

Woman as Nation is explored by Uttamchandani in "Bhoori". In the absence of the nation as a physical entity, the woman's body becomes the nation for the dispossessed Sindhi community. The story shows how, by divesting the values and attributes of the community in the bodies of women, the community constructs its own identity. The resilient and dignified working Sindhi woman becomes the new metaphor for the nation.

Joseph Thomas points out three great ironies of the Partition:

> "The majority of Muslims ended up in India; the demand for Pakistan was mainly from the Muslims from UP, not of Punjab, Sindh or Bengal; when the protagonists of Pakistan migrated there, they found that they were not welcome." (Agarwal 122)

The plight of the refugees is already depicted in Partition fiction. Then if these were the striking realities of Partition, we are forced to ask, "Was it worth it?" There is no simple answer to the question. But an undeniable fact that that emerges after a careful analysis of history and fiction is that Partition indeed benefitted many. The prominent leaders who dominate the pages of official history were not the only players.

Historians like Mushirul Hasan have raised serious doubts about the veracity of the "inevitability" of the Partition on the basis of the Hindu-Muslim feud. He says:

> "(Partition) had more to do with the political and economic anxieties of various social classes than with a profound urge to create an Islamic/Muslim state…. League's demands summed up the fears and aspirations of the newly-emergent professional groups, especially in UP and Bihar, the powerful landed classes in Punjab, Sind and UP, and the industrial magnates of western and Eastern India." (1993 56)

A number of people put their weight behind the Pakistan movement, and later migrated were not moved by a yearning for a pure Islamic State, rather they were driven by material benefits. The *Ulema*, for instance,supported the League to protect their landed interests in Punjab and Sindh, and to preserve their status and power as guardians, protectors and the interpreters of the *Shariat.* The religious leaders exerted pressure over the Muslim voters which played a key role in changing the fortunes of the League.

The Muslim leaders also realized that the Congress, under severe pressure from the Hindu Parties, cannot accommodate their demands. The extreme communalism of the Suhrawardy ministry (1945-6) in Bengal alienated the Hindu industrialists and traders. The Birlas and the Dalmiyas, two influential business magnates, proclaimed that Partition was the only solution end the end the communal deadlock. The Muslim industrialists, less in number and influence, were apprehensive of their prospects in Undivided India after Nehru's declaration of a strong Centre which could curb the autonomy of Muslim majority provinces. This made the Muslim industrialists jump into the Pakistan movement, so that they could establish their stronghold and enjoy undisputed privileges.

In UP, the Hindu landlords openly associated with the Mahasabha and the Congress to protect their traditional hegemony. The Muslim *Zamindars*, therefore, turned to the League. In fact the Muslim landlords formed the largest group in League council. The agrarian program of the Congress which hinted at the redistribution of land in favor of the peasants threatened the *Zamindars*' hereditary privileges. This alarmed the aristocracy which now saw Pakistan as a safe haven. Wild promises were made to the peasants that they would be liberated from the Hindu moneylender and the Hindu *Zamindar*. The communists believed that the Pakistan demand was a nationalist and progressive demand self-determination. (Hasan 53-99)

Most ordinary Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs were indifferent to the politics of the Partition. They were neither committed to a Hindu Rashtra nor Pakistan. They did not understand the intricacies of the Partition plan. In fact, most of them were taken by surprise at the announcement of the Partition.

They became the pawn in the power game of the leaders, the mighty and the elite.

The material benefits and political ambitions of a few resulted in the brutal killing of thousands of innocent men, women and children, large scale rape and abduction. It tore millions of people from their homes and familiar surroundings.

People were driven out of their homes, and were forced to settle in places they had little knowledge of. Their lives were engulfed in a sense of loss, deprivation, disillusionment, rootlessness, grief and helplessness. The worst victims of the power game were the women. Killed, mutilated, raped, abducted, displaced and discarded, they were victims of multiple forms of patriarchy. The families, communities and the nation combined to victimize women to suit their changing agendas. After undergoing unimaginable violence and suffering, they were subjected to the traditional violence of silence. Their voices were suppressed, in the name of family, community and national honor.

It is in the interest of the beneficiaries of the Partition to hide these inconvenient truths behind the powerful rhetoric of Hind-Muslim conflict and the *madness* of the illiterate masses. For a long time, in the absence of rigorous scholarship, fiction was the only medium that articulated the experiences of women. Women writers have not only verbalized the experiences of women whose lives were severely affected by the Partition, but also resisted, questioned and challenged patriarchal hegemony and underlying assumptions about women. They have been successful, in spite of all the constraints, in breaking the carefully built convention of silence, censorship, and constructing an alternate discourse of the Partition.

We have been hearing that it is best to forget the painful past; after all, what is the point of scratching old wounds. But it is important that we remember. We should not forget the Partition, because the people who went to the new nation for Muslims are still Muhajirs, deprived of basic human rights. We have to remember because not all Muslims are equal in the Promised Land. The Sindhi, the Shia and the non-Punjabi Muslims are still second rate citizens in Pakistan. We have to remember because the legacy of Partition continues to affect the lives of millions of Muslims who decided to stay in India; who are expected to prove their loyalty to the country at every step. And it is important that we remember because women are still worst targets of communal and national strife.

In the last few decades, thanks to the efforts of the historians, writers and scholars, the voices of women, disturbing, haunting and subversive, have resurfaced and stirred the conscience of the nation. History needs to be subjected to critical enquiry and scrutiny to understand the Partition in all its dimensions so that lessons could be learnt. Although the new approaches have busted several myths, exposed carefully hidden facts and accommodated the marginalized, there are issues, dimensions and experiences that are unexplored that need to be brought to the forefront, for instance, the experience of the Dalit women, Anglo-Indians and others. There are numerous repressed and unheard voices, buried in the pages of history waiting to be heard.

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Appendix 01

Notes on the Authors

Attia Hosain: She was born in Lucknow in 1913 into a feudal family. She became a broadcaster for the BBC and hosted a popular women's radio program. *Sunlight on a Broken Column* is her most popular novel. Her story "After the Storm" is included in the thesis.

Ismat Chughtai: She is one of the most popular writers in Urdu and a forerunner of the feminist consciousness in Indian fiction. Though many of her Muslim colleagues migrated to Pakistan after the Partition, she decided to stay in India. She published many collections of short stories. The film *Garam Hawa* was based on some of her stories. Her story "Roots" is analyzed in the thesis.

Jamila Hashmi: She was born in Lyallpur, Punjab and later moved to Lahore. Her first novel in Urdu Talash-e-Baharan (In Search of Spring) received the Adamji Literary Prize. She is best known for her novel Atash-e-Rafta (The Fire of the Past). "Exile", one of her stories, is selected for study.

Jeelani Bano: She is a renowned Urdu writer. She received the Andhra Pradesh Sahitya Academy Award in 1960. In 2001 she was honored with the Padma Shri. Her popular works include *Aiwan-i-Ghazal*, *Jugnu aur Sitare*, *Paraya Ghar* among many others. "The Criminal" is written by her.

Kala Prakash: She was born in 1934 in Karachi. She was instrumental in reviving the Sindhi language in India. Her well known works include "Mamta Jun Lahroon" and "Intezar". "Khaanwahan", one of her short stories, is part of the thesis.

Krishna Sobti: She was born in Gujarat, Punjab which is now part of Pakistan. One of the most prolific writers in Hindi, she is the recipient of the Padma Bhushan. Her most notable works are *Mitro Marjani, Daar Se Bichchuri, and Surajmukhi Andhere Ke*. Two stories penned by her "Where is My Mother?" and "The Regime has Changed" are included.

Lalitambika Antarjanam: She was one of the first women to write in Malayalam. Her novel *Agni Sakshi* won the Sahitya Academy Award in 1963. Two of her stories "A Leaf in the Storm" and "The Mother of Dhirendu Majumdar".

Qurratulain Haider: She was an eminent Urdu novelist, short story writer and a journalist. She is best known for her novel *Aag Ka Darya* (River of Fire). After Partition she lived for a while in India, but eventually

returned to India. She is the recipient of the Sahitya Academy and the Jnanpith Awards. She is the author of "When the Prisoners Were Released, the Times had Changed", which is included in the research work.

Suraiya Khasim: She was born in 1945 in Chandigarh. A journalist by profession, she has written a few poems and short stories in Urdu. "Where Did She Belong?" which is discussed in the thesis is written by her.

Sundri Uttamchandani: She was an important writer in Sindhi Language. She was awarded the Sahitya Academy Award for her short story collection *Vichhoro*. She has authored the story "Bhoori".

Umm-e-Ummara: She was born in Bihar, but migrated to East Pakistan after the Partition. After the Bangladesh war she moved to Karachi. A popular writer in Urdu, she is best known *Agahi-ke-afsane*. "More Sinned Against Than Sinning" is authored by her.

Vaidehi: She is one of the most admired writers in the Kannada language. She is the recipient of the Sahitya Academy Award. Her story "Krouncha Pakshigalu" (Krouncha birds) is among the stories analyzed.

Glossary

Amma	Mother
Ammi	Mother
Bahu	Daughter-in-Law
Behist	Paradise
Bhadralok	The Bengali educated upper/caste elite
Chachi	Aunt
Dal	Gravy cooked with lentils and spices
Firangi	Foreigner
Gulkand	A sweet preserve made from rose petals
Ghosha	Traditional Muslim Dress
Haveli	Large Mansion
Hijrat	Exile
Houri	Nymph

Izzat	Honor
Kafir	Infidel
Lassi	a yoghurt based drink
Ma	Mother
Maulvi	Muslim religious teacher
Papad	A thin, crisp disc-shaped food made of spicy dough
Purdah	Veil
Razaakar	Volunteer
Salwar	Lose pyjama
Shuddhi	Purification
Ulema	Scholars of Muslim religious law
Zamindar	Landlord
Zindabad	Long live

FEMALE RESPONSE TO THE PARTITION:

A STUDY OF SELECT PARTITION STORIES BY WOMEN WRITERS

A Thesis Submitted to Kuvempu University for the Award of
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English

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Conclusion

> "India was killed by the British…by the fanatical Hindus… by the Communist Party of India…India was killed and stabbed in the heart by every Hindu who killed a Muslim, by every Muslim who killed a Hindu, by every Hindu or Muslim who committed …. Arson and rape and murder…"
>
> (Abbas 1995 235-36)

The Partition of the Indian subcontinent was one of the greatest man-made calamities in the history of humanity. At the political level, the Indian cities were dealt by the leaders, "like a pack of cards. Lahore is dealt to Pakistan, Amritsar to India" (Sidhwa 140). At the personal level, it brought unimaginable misery and pain. The decision to divide the country by a handful of men dramatically altered the destinies of millions in unanticipated ways. It sparked off a vicious chain of bestiality in the form of massacres, arson, rape, abduction and caused mass reshufflings of populations. The Partition not only wrecked lives but also the socio-cultural fabric and shared heritage.

Even after than sixty years Partition is not dead. It is just like a dangerous minefield; the slightest of pressures, and it explodes into lives. Whenever there is communal conflict, confrontation at the border, diplomatic entanglesand terrorist activity it rushes back with renewed force. Even an India-Pakistan cricket match is reason enough for its

rematerializing.It is still a huge part of the national consciousness both in India and Pakistan.

The Partition is one of the most well documented historical events in India. A huge corpus of writing on the Partition exists in the form of official history, government documents, agreements, and newspaper reportage. However, the historical and official writings on the Partition are centered on the search of the causes of the Partition and the roles played by the leaders. In the mainstream history, Partition is a political exercise understood in terms of its constitutional history, inter-governmental debates, the agreements and disagreements between eminent leaders, the divide between the Congress and the League. A number of historians, depending on patronage and agendas, place certain leaders on a pedestal while completely vilifying a few others. (Sen 01)

Such writings completely ignore the experiences of the ordinary people who were caught in the crossfire of politics and sectarianism. In the 1990's there was a profound ideological shift in the historiography of the Partition. Attention has shifted, in the last years, from high politicsto individual experiences; the event as experienced by ordinary people. The 'woman question' that had been lying dormant has become the center of debate. Writers, historians, social scientists and scholars have revisited the Partition to retrieve the experiences of ordinary men and women uprooted and devastated by the Partition. History, however, is not just preserved in archives; it is also preserved in memory and fiction. As traditional historical methodology neither has the apparatus nor vocabulary to record the voices of the dispossessed, scholars have turned towards unconventional sources such as oral history, interviews, personal diaries, memoirs, letters and fiction.

The new historiographical approach has produced a body of scholarship that explores the other side of history, with intentstifled for many years. It articulates voice of the voiceless – women, children and the Dalits. However, these new histories too have their flipside. As women are victims of the tradition of silence, even the subaltern histories have the tendency of being hijacked by men. One of the most remarkable achievements of these alternate histories, especially by UrvahiButalia, Ritu Menon, and Kamala Bhasin and others is that they tackle the complex dynamics of silence to uncover women's voices and experiences.

The thesis focuses on literary representations of the Partition, especially short stories, to explore the traumatic effects of the cataclysmic event on the lives and psyche of women. It attempts to examine the distinct ways in which the women authors respond to the Partition. While reading fiction by women one must keep in mind that the female writers work within the patriarchal framework; they too have, like others, imbibed societal values and practices. The patriarchal codes that guard a woman's tongue also control her pen. All women writers, especially those who wrote in the immediate aftermath of the Partition had to negotiate the raw memories, patriarchal codes and the nationalist sentiment. While some women challenge the dominant discourses of patriarchy and nationalism, others conform to the conventional expectations. A few others are ambivalent and guarded in their approach. That is why it becomes imperative to be alert to the unspoken subtleties within the texts. Whatever the ideological position or ambivalence of the author, whether she conforms or transcends; each of these short stories has the potential to launch crucial political debates.

They deal with a range of issues, not always gendered, such as sexual violence, abduction, displacement, rehabilitation, colonialism, nationalism, identity, motherhood, honor and others.

Some of the narratives bring to light the sufferings of the marginalized groups, not just women but ethnic and linguistic minorities such as the Sindhi Hindus; children who are neglected in Partition scholarship; woman at the fringes, the prostitute; and the forgotten freedom fighters languishing in prisons. Another remarkable contribution of these narratives is that they offer fascinating insights into the day to day lives of women, which is excluded in history.

Historical accounts maintain that Indians are basically cultured and peace loving people and Partition violence was an aberration, spontaneous reaction to provocation. In India the official representation of communal violence is diffused with images of crowds going insane as a natural reaction to some provocative action on the part of one group or another. However unless one understands the everyday life of the people within which the acts of collective violence occurs, it would be impossible to see how diffused feelings of anger and hate could be translated into actual acts of killing. In the case of women we must place Partition violence within the larger context of dominant ideologies and everyday practices of oppression.

Descriptions of Partition violence extensively employ the trope of "madness" and "chaos" to explain the horrific violence that followed. However, Partition violence was neither extemporaneous nor arbitrary. It was a consequence of intense communal propaganda carried out by the Hindu and the Muslim Right Wing and several economic

reasons. It was also a culmination of entrenched religious differences and prejudices.

Violence against women does not happen during abnormal times alone; it is an intrinsic part of every society. Gender violence is a product of the intricateweb of values, traditions, customs, rituals, and beliefs that nurture gender inequality. The social institutions such as family, marriage, religion, and culture naturalize and to an extent justify violence against women. Underlying the culture of violence against women is the belief that women are inferior, weak and dependent on men. Therefore they are men's possessions; the posessional rights bestowed on men give them the authority to perpetrate violence.

Gender violence is linked to the notion of honor. Honor and chastity are regarded as the most precious attributes for a woman. Moreover, traditionally women are viewed as the repositories of family, community and national honor. The need to control the sexual behavior of women also stems from the male anxiety about patrilineal continuity. Despoiling of the female body brings dishonor to the family and community. Therefore women's bodies became rival territories during the Partition thathad to be conquered and desecrated to humiliate the "Other" community. As women are the begetters of the next generation, raping the woman is a means of polluting the religious purity of the *Other.* Cultural memory is another compelling factor that drives men to commit acts of violence. Subconscious images of women's violation as a means of revenge in the great epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata are deeply ingrained in collective memory.

Sexual violence is a prominent theme in the female narratives. However,

writing the body is not easy for a woman; women's writing is confined by explicit and implicit social-cultural codes, because of which women writers censor themselves. In a society that circumscribes women's sexuality and agency, writing about forbidden topics such as rape, abduction and sexuality, overcoming notions of shame and modesty, is a challenge. Traditionally different standards of evaluation are applied to male and female writers. What is considered aesthetics and freedom of expression in a man becomes disgraceful and crude in a woman. Several women writers like TaslimaNasreen and Nawal-el-Sadawi have faced persecution for daring to write about the female bodily experience. Writing the body itself, however subdued it might be,is a political act of rebellion.

Partition stories by women do not dwell on the act of violence, unlike certain male texts. They deal with the aftermath, and the victim's consciousness. By privileging female subjectivities in their writings, these writers try to recover the women's self lost in the oppressive labyrinth of tradition and powerful narratives of silence and modesty.

LalitambikaAntarjanam's "A Leaf in the Storm" describes the plight of Jyoti, a victim of brutal rape. At the camp to which she is brought after her rescue, she learns that she is pregnant. The story poignantly captures the inner conflict of Jyoti, who is torn between two conflicting emotions - the desire to keep the child and the overwhelming urge to kill it. For her the child is a symbol of her violation. Jamila Hashmi's "Exile" explores the troubled psyche of Bibi, an abducted woman, who lives with her abductor as his wife.Outwardly she appears reconciled to her fate, but her refusal to forget the past and resistance to the imposition of the identity of *bahu*can be read as silent rebellion.

Both the stories offer an unconventional treatment of motherhood. The patriarchal discourse of motherhood revolves around the notion of "maternal instinct".

Women are conditioned to believe that only motherhood can give them status, respect and acceptability within their families and communities. The centrality of motherhood is so great that its absence is seen as a woman's failure. The expressions associated with childlessness such as "barren" and "infertile" demonstrate this. The "maternal instinct" is a carefully constructed myth. However, its pervasive influence cannot be discounted. Negative responses or rejection of motherhood are seen as unnatural and undesirable.

In both the stories motherhood is not projected as an emotionally fulfilling experience; Antarjanamexplores the pain and horror of childbirth and the mother's hatred for the child in her womb which find no legitimate expression in the face of the immense aura that surrounds motherhood. Jyoti's dilemma is a threat to the social order, a violation of the norms of proper feminine behavior. Her decision to save the child in the end assures the restoration of order. For Bibi motherhood is a trap that firmly binds her to her abductor. The fear of separation from her children is one of the reasons for her decision to stay with her abductor, though she had a chance of escape.

In "KrounchaPakshigalu", Lakshmi who was abducted during the Partition is rejected by her husband as she has become "impure". The story shows howpatriarchy appropriates the voice of the woman, by denying her the right to tell her story.

Women writers also give expression to the trauma of displacement. In the scholarship on the Partition, the focus is too much on the experience of sexual

violence. Other dimensionsof women's experience are also crucial to understand the depth and extent of their suffering and to understand the strategies they evolved to overcome their predicament. Displacement is another issue dealt with by women writers. Krishna Sobti brings out the torment of people who were forced to leave their homes to places they had never heard of. The story "The Regimes has Changed" problematizes the view that Hindu-Muslim rift was the only cause for violence and mass migration. Partition provided an opportunity for personal revenge and gave vent to long suppressed anger and resentment.In Punjab the Hindus were the landowning class and Muslims were peasants. The landlords were also moneylenders who extracted exorbitant interest from the poor peasants. In the story,hidden class grievances come to the fore. The tenants are planning Shahni'smurder not only to steal her jewelery, but also to avenge years of exploitation; most of the villagers are waiting to plunder her house. Religion is not the cause of Shahni's forced migration, rather it is the long standing economic divisions in society

"Roots" is a moving story that depicts psychological and emotional breakdown brought about in Amma by the splitin of age-old social relations.Sobti and Chugtai recreate the past where there were amiable relations between the two communities. Both the stories question the assumption that the Hindus and the Muslims were mutually antagonistic communities who could not exist together in an independent India. In fact, Shahni's and Amma'sidentities are not rooted in religion but with the land of their birth. Partition fiction also tells us that women are more attached to land than men;confined to the homes their entire existence revolves around homes and families. As men are preoccupied with careers, it is women who build social

relationships.That is why they are shattered when forced to leave homes and hearths.

Pakistan was formed on the premise of irreconcilable differences between the Hindus and the Muslims. However, neither Hindus nor Muslims were homogeneous communities. However, the two-nation theory portrayed the Muslims as a monolithic community with common interests and goals. It ignored the class, caste, ethnic, linguistic and cultural differences within the community. Pakistan was the *Promised Land* for the Indian Muslims, a socialist and egalitarian country based on the Islamic law. It guaranteed equality and dignity to all the Muslims. However, people who went there hoping for better lives were soon disillusioned. The Bihari family in " More Sinned Against Than Sinning" that migrates to East Pakistan is rejected by the Bengali speaking native population, as they are "outsiders". The formation of Bangladesh in a few years of the Partition proved that religion alone cannot keep people together who are different in terms of language and culture. Partition stories also demonstrate that most of the people who migrated were not inspired by an Islamic vision, rather they were violently driven away, or they went in search of better economic prospects.

"Bhoori brings out the profound sense of loss and dislocation experienced by the Sindhi Hindus. Unlike Punjab and the Bengal which retained a part in both the countries, Sindh was given in its entirety to Pakistan. For the Sindhis who were forced to migrate, there was no corresponding Sindhi state or region. For the Sindhi Hindus, Partition meant not only permanent loss of homeland, but also loss of culture, language and heritage, apart from economic decline. "Khaanwahan" contrasts the

past where there was affluence and peace with the present which is beset with uncertainty. Khaanwahan is not just physical space, but is a powerful metaphor of prosperity and happiness, that cannot be retrieved.

"Where Does She Belong?" is the quest for identity of Munni, a subaltern among the subaltern. Women like her find no visibility even within subaltern and feminist works on the Partition. The story is a critique of society that exploits women. The Promised Land holds no promise for Munni, Partition does not make any difference to her, her identity irrespective of the country is fixed.

Identities were most volatile during the Partition. India has a rich history of inter-community relations and syncretic culture. However, during the Partition, one identity surpassed all others – religion. It became the prime identity for women; women became the markers of not just religious but also nation identity. The feminization of the nation had been happening since the nineteenth century. It assumed a new significance in the post-partition period, when the State was trying to consolidate its authority and building new identities for its citizens. The body of the woman became a vehicle for the building of a masculine nation. The recovery operations for the abducted women by both the countries expose the symbiotic relationship between nation and male dominated communities. The interests of the nation very often intersect with the interest of patriarchy. It also highlights the State's ambiguity regarding women's citizenship. The Recovery Operation where both the countries worked together to bring back abducted women unconstitutionally suppressed women's citizenship rights in the interest of national honor.Bibi in the story "Exile" hides behind a well when an army

truck arrives to reclaim abducted women. By making a choice not to return to her rightful family and country she resists the hegemony of the alliance of nation and community.

Jeelani Bano captures the insidious effect of mutual suspicion and distrust in "The Criminal." She brilliantly depicts the peril of religion becoming the sole identity during fragile communal atmosphere.

Antarjanam describes the confined lives of the *Bhadralok* women whose lives were dictated by rigid cultural norms. The central theme of the story is the Mother Nation. The powerful image of the gendered nation was not very empowering for women; severely restricted women's lives. While Antarjanamproblematises the concept of motherhood in "The Leaf in the Storm", she unquestionningly accepts the idea of the Mother Nation.

Woman as Nation is explored by Uttamchandani in "Bhoori". In the absence of the nation as a physical entity, the woman's body becomes the nation for the dispossessed Sindhi community. The story shows how, by divesting the values and attributes of the community in the bodies of women, the community constructs its own identity. The resilient and dignified working Sindhi woman becomes the new metaphor for the nation.

Joseph Thomas points out three great ironies of the Partition:

> "The majority of Muslims ended up in India; the demand for Pakistan was mainly from the Muslims from UP, not of Punjab, Sindh or Bengal; when the protagonists of Pakistan migrated there, they found that they were not welcome." (Agarwal 122)

The plight of the refugees is already depicted in Partition fiction. Then if these were the striking realities of Partition, we are forced to ask, "Was it worth it?" There is no simple answer to the question. But an undeniable fact that that emerges after a careful analysis of history and fiction is that Partition indeed benefitted many. The prominent leaders who dominate the pages of official history were not the only players.

Historians like Mushirul Hasan have raised serious doubts about the veracity of the "inevitability" of the Partition on the basis of the Hindu-Muslim feud. He says:

> "(Partition) had more to do with the political and economic anxieties of various social classes than with a profound urge to create an Islamic/Muslim state…. League's demands summed up the fears and aspirations of the newly-emergent professional groups, especially in UP and Bihar, the powerful landed classes in Punjab, Sind and UP, and the industrial magnates of western and Eastern India." (1993 56)

A number of people put their weight behind the Pakistan movement, and later migrated were not moved by a yearning for a pure Islamic State, rather they were driven by material benefits. The *Ulema*, for instance,supported the League to protect their landed interests in Punjab and Sindh, and to preserve their status and power as guardians, protectors and the interpreters of the *Shariat.* The religious leaders exerted pressure over the Muslim voters which played a key role in changing the fortunes of the League.

The Muslim leaders also realized that the Congress, under severe pressure from the Hindu Parties, cannot accommodate their demands. The extreme communalism of the Suhrawardy ministry (1945-6) in Bengal alienated the Hindu industrialists and traders. The Birlas and the Dalmiyas, two influential business magnates, proclaimed that Partition was the only solution end the end the communal deadlock. The Muslim industrialists, less in number and influence, were apprehensive of their prospects in Undivided India after Nehru's declaration of a strong Centre which could curb the autonomy of Muslim majority provinces. This made the Muslim industrialists jump into the Pakistan movement, so that they could establish their stronghold and enjoy undisputed privileges.

In UP, the Hindu landlords openly associated with the Mahasabha and the Congress to protect their traditional hegemony. The Muslim *Zamindars*, therefore, turned to the League. In fact the Muslim landlords formed the largest group in League council. The agrarian program of the Congress which hinted at the redistribution of land in favor of the peasants threatened the *Zamindars*' hereditary privileges. This alarmed the aristocracy which now saw Pakistan as a safe haven. Wild promises were made to the peasants that they would be liberated from the Hindu moneylender and the Hindu *Zamindar*. The communists believed that the Pakistan demand was a nationalist and progressive demand self-determination. (Hasan 53-99)

Most ordinary Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs were indifferent to the politics of the Partition. They were neither committed to a Hindu Rashtra nor Pakistan. They did not understand the intricacies of the Partition plan. In fact, most of them were taken by surprise at the announcement of the Partition.

They became the pawn in the power game of the leaders, the mighty and the elite.

The material benefits and political ambitions of a few resulted in the brutal killing of thousands of innocent men, women and children, large scale rape and abduction. It tore millions of people from their homes and familiar surroundings.

People were driven out of their homes, and were forced to settle in places they had little knowledge of. Their lives were engulfed in a sense of loss, deprivation, disillusionment, rootlessness, grief and helplessness. The worst victims of the power game were the women. Killed, mutilated, raped, abducted, displaced and discarded, they were victims of multiple forms of patriarchy. The families, communities and the nation combined to victimize women to suit their changing agendas. After undergoing unimaginable violence and suffering, they were subjected to the traditional violence of silence. Their voices were suppressed, in the name of family, community and national honor.

It is in the interest of the beneficiaries of the Partition to hide these inconvenient truths behind the powerful rhetoric of Hind-Muslim conflict and the *madness* of the illiterate masses. For a long time, in the absence of rigorous scholarship, fiction was the only medium that articulated the experiences of women. Women writers have not only verbalized the experiences of women whose lives were severely affected by the Partition, but also resisted, questioned and challenged patriarchal hegemony and underlying assumptions about women. They have been successful, in spite of all the constraints, in breaking the carefully built convention of silence, censorship, and constructing an alternate discourse of the Partition.

We have been hearing that it is best to forget the painful past; after all, what is the point of scratching old wounds. But it is important that we remember. We should not forget the Partition, because the people who went to the new nation for Muslims are still Muhajirs, deprived of basic human rights. We have to remember because not all Muslims are equal in the Promised Land. The Sindhi, the Shia and the non-Punjabi Muslims are still second rate citizens in Pakistan. We have to remember because the legacy of Partition continues to affect the lives of millions of Muslims who decided to stay in India; who are expected to prove their loyalty to the country at every step. And it is important that we remember because women are still worst targets of communal and national strife.

In the last few decades, thanks to the efforts of the historians, writers and scholars, the voices of women, disturbing, haunting and subversive, have resurfaced and stirred the conscience of the nation. History needs to be subjected to critical enquiry and scrutiny to understand the Partition in all its dimensions so that lessons could be learnt. Although the new approaches have busted several myths, exposed carefully hidden facts and accommodated the marginalized, there are issues, dimensions and experiences that are unexplored that need to be brought to the forefront, for instance, the experience of the Dalit women, Anglo-Indians and others. There are numerous repressed and unheard voices, buried in the pages of history waiting to be heard.