



Fragmented Lives: Analyzing Genocidal Trauma and the Plight of Abducted Women during the Partition in Select Indian and Pakistani Short Fiction

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Abstract— At the threshold of commemorating seventy-seven years of Indian independence, the shadows of cataclysmic incident of Partition and its aftermath cannot be obliterated. The political upheaval at the midnight is historicized with demographics analysing the root cause of the division and creation of two states and accounts glorifying the independence movement catering to the purpose of nationalistic fervour but the heart wrenching accounts of human suffering recorded in literary works by the writers writing from the opposite sides of the great divide narrate the unsayable experiences of the millions of people who were once living in a harmonious ambience in the undivided India. The holocaust of partition portrayed more sensitively in the literary works coming from the affected nations leaves an impact on the people. Annals of history are stained with the ghastly violence, rape, abduction and genocide arising from the split of Indian subcontinent. This man-made calamity disproportionately affected women. They were kidnapped, sexually assaulted, humiliated in public, and had their genitalia cut off. In addition, their families murdered them in the sake of honour, and many of them were compelled to kill themselves to preserve their honour. The bleak memories associated with partition reflected in diverse narratives demonstrate the horrible reality. This paper aims to investigate the catastrophic effect of partition on women through the thematic analysis of the short stories written by Indian authors Rajinder Singh Bedi and Krishna Chander and Pakistani authors Saadat Hasan Manto and Jameela Hashmi



Keywords— Abduction, Genocide, Partition, Trauma, Violence

INTRODUCTION

The tragedies of partition would not have been complete had they not been accompanied, as every conflict since the dawn of history, by an outpouring of sexual savagery. Nearly all of the atrocities cursing the unhappy province were embellished by their orgy of rape. Tens of thousands of girls and women were seized from refugee columns, from crowded trains, from isolated villages, in the most widescale kidnapping of modern times. (Lapierre and Collins, 392))

The crucial incident of partition of Indian subcontinent still reverberates in the consciousness of its survivors. It was a political step taken by the British government

before handing over autonomy on our nation. Eminent modern poet WH Auden in his poem "Partition" criticizes this act as an unjust as the person sent by the British Government was Cyril Radcliff who was alien to Indian subcontinent and secondly the cartography that he had to deal with was also inaccurate. A barrister by Profession Radcliff was assigned to split the nation or fate of millions on the basis of cultural differences within seven days and thus division of India further led to communal riots, massacres, loot and a major exodus of the century. As Urvashi Butalia mentions, "Unable to follow the natural divisions, Radcliff was forced to draw what are called

‘complex boundaries’ which ran through villages, deserts, shrines—and people’s lives” (Butalia, 1998, 85)

Yasmin Khan in her book *The Great Partition* (2017) recounts the early disturbances that went unnoticed by the common natives who were largely landless peasants or crops sharers till finally Cyril Radcliff was summoned to partition the country and after two hundred years of imperialism, British left India but before that they divided it into two nations. Before anyone could decipher where he has to go or decode anything, unimaginable violence escalated and ended into ethnic cleansing. Eminent writer Ismat Chughtai sums up :

It wasn't only that the country was split into two—bodies and minds were also divided. Moral beliefs were tossed aside and humanity was in shreds. Government officers and clerks with their chairs, pens and inkpots, were distributed like the spoils of war.... Those whose bodies were whole had hearts that were splintered. Families were torn apart. One brother was allotted to Hindustan, the other to Pakistan; the mother was in Hindustan, her offspring were in Pakistan; the husband was in Hindustan, his wife was in Pakistan. The bonds of relationship were in tatters, and in the end many souls remained behind in Hindustan while their bodies started off for Pakistan. (Qtd in Hasan, 25)

Urvashi Butalia ponders over the survival of those who were uprooted and dislocated due to this political decision. That was not merely a line drawn on map of India, but also a terrible decision that was to affect the fate of millions.

These aspects of Partition –how families were divided, how friendships endured across borders , how people coped up with trauma how they rebuilt their lives, what resources both physical and mental they drew upon how their experience of dislocation and trauma shaped their lives and indeed the cities and towns and villages they settled in ---find little reflection in written history. (Butalia, 9)

Urvashi Butalia reflects on the human perspectives that remained far from the recorded history. Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin (1998) in *Borders and Boundaries* observe the shattering memories of people. Partition as a political history is handed over from one generation to another but its social, psychological ramifications are never enquired. The political history has eclipsed the social history as Menon and Bhasin states:

The futility and tragedy of demarcating boundaries, and the impossibility of dividing homes and hearts are the theme of story after

story, as is the terrible violence that accompanied forced migration. (Menon & Bhasin, 1998)

Partition Literature beyond statistical records imbibes the unrecorded pain of this disintegrated nation. Sukrita Paul Kumar rightly observes that the subject of the demand for Partition has been studied in great detail by historians. the causes of Partition and the individuals in charge for it, the circumstances surrounding it, the British viewpoint, etc. However, the imaginative writer has been reenacting violence related to the Partition on a regular basis, which has been experienced by people of different ages. distinct classes. disparities between the sexes and races, in terms of both their physical and psychological makeup. (Kumar, xi). Apart from the political historiography, it highlights the nuances of human suffering as far as victimization of women is concerned Arunima Dey rightly observes that women are presumed as the outsiders of public and politics, consequently they are excluded from the history because history is the manifestation of politics (Dey 106)

One of the main themes of the early historical accounts of Partition was the compulsive quest to find its origins. Partition was described in these histories as purely political, and for the nationalists who had dreamt about the freedom it was “the unfortunate outcome of sectarian and separatist politics,” and “a tragic accompaniment to the exhilaration and promise of a freedom fought for with courage and valour” (Menon and Bhasin 1998, 3) It was construed in light of its constitutional context, intergovernmental negotiations, or conversations among the political elite. As a result, the experiences of regular people on both sides of the recently drawn borders were ignored. As a result, a significant shift was undertaken in an effort to recover the perspective of the subaltern, with a focus on reclaiming the lived experiences through oral history interviews. Partition affected millions of people, and it instantly turned them all into refugees. However, Udit Sen (2018) adamantly contends that even the histories of ordinary people eventually give rise to socioeconomic and political histories of ordinary people, where millions of people encountered and lived through the Partition, becoming refugees overnight.

Women were the worst victims of this carnage. They were physically mentally and emotionally exploited. Their bodies were mutilated. Women’s bodies were abducted, stripped naked, raped, mutilated (their breasts cut off), carved with religious symbols and murdered to be sent in train wagons to the “other” side of the border. Millions of women were abducted and forced into marriages. During partition approximately seventy five thousand women were abducted and violated by the rival groups Miranda Alison (2007) aptly analyses the sexual violence against women during conflict as she states:

During times of conflict multiple binary constructions are formed; not only in 'masculine' contrasted with 'feminine' within a group and 'us' contrasted to them between groups .but 'our women' are contrasted to 'their women' and our men to 'their men'. 'Our women' are chaste , honourable and to be protected by 'our men,' their women' are unchaste and depraved.(Alison,2007, 77)

Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin have worked extensively on women victims of partition as historical records fail to provide the true picture of the violence inflicted upon the women as they note :

We began to discern some specific features of "communal" crimes against women...stripping; parading naked; mutilating and disfiguring; tattooing or branding the breasts and genitalia with triumphal slogans; amputating breasts; knifing open the womb; raping, of course; killing foetuses- is shocking not only for its savagery, but for what it tells us about women as objects in male constructions of their own honour. (Menon &Bhasin,1998,43)

Partition has left a scar on the consciousness of the victims. It is a trauma that haunts the survivors Trauma as *Oxford Dictionary* defines it is a disordered psychic or behavioural state resulting from severe mental or emotional stress or physical injury. The father of psychology, Sigmund Freud along with Dr Bruner(1895) analysed the behaviour of women suffering from hysteria in *Studies on Hysteria* states that trauma is not the wound of the body that could be healed sooner or later but it is an event...not locatable in simple, violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in a way that its very unassimilated nature-the way it was precisely not known in the first instance-returns to haunt the survivor later on.(Freud.4). He said that that any overpowering event unacceptable to consciousness temporarily forgotten but keeps on returning in the form of repetitive behaviour of the patient. Cathy Caruth in her Trauma theory mentions: Trauma keeps on haunting the survivor and later she espouses Freud that only through literature such terrible experiences can be narrated.

As far as partition literature is concerned, apart from novels, short stories revolving around the ghastly incident of partition move the soul depicting the experiences of people from either side. Communal violence eradicated human values. It drew a line not only on map but also on the hearts of people who once had cordial relationship. As Sudha Tiwari argues:

a body of literature was thus born that gave voice to the traumatic realities of partition, the disillusionment and the psychological trauma. These writers not only reject religion as the cause of the separation; they also highlight the composite culture of united India and invoke the symbols of unity and humanism observed by the masses even during times of such horrific violence.(Tiwari 2013)

Writers from both the countries have projected the macabre reality in their short stories.They addressed the plight of women and expressed worries for their dislocation, healing, and rehabilitation, citing both personal and governmental accountability in guaranteeing their safety and welfare.

Rajinder Singh Bedi is considered one of the major writers of Progressive Writers Movement. He is known for his disturbing tales of partition. He was also a recipient of Sahitya Akademi award for his novel *Ek Chadar Maili si*. Like many contemporary authors of his time writing in Indian languages and in English, Bedi was influenced by the Progressive Writers' Movement, its social realism, anti-imperialist stance and its criticism of religious, political and social life in India. Rajinder Singh Bedi's short story 'Lajwanti' was written in Urdu in 1951 around the recovery and rehabilitation of abducted women. Lajwanti a docile wife of social activist Sundar Lal is abducted during the communal riots. Sundar Lal devastated with loss dedicates himself to the rehabilitation programme to recover the women. Sundar Lal's repentance after missing of his wife makes him accept the fact and propels him to stand for the cause of rehabilitation. Rajinder Singh Bedi blends facts with fiction with the govt endeavour for the recovery of women. The inclusion of Malika Sarabhai's attempt to recover the women refers to the government's action for the recovery of abducted or missing women. It was Mridula Sarabhai who had campaigned for this recovery operation. She had prepared a fourteen page note to Nehru outlining the necessity of recovering abducted women (Butalia,,1998, 143)

Taking the women of another community and establishing one community's identity over the other was referred to as "abduction." It was believed that forced marriage and conversion was a response to abduction and a response against family honour, religion, and community honour. Abduction as a gendered violence weaves manifold implications where women are ethicized, raced and then relegated to the status of an object of desire and subject for a psychoanalysis. (Abbas,9182) Though humanitarian and philanthropic in intent, Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin contend that the government of India's recovery operation

was specifically carried out in India to help it come to terms with its own disintegration and to perform its obligation to its people as Malika Sarabhai asserted that recovery was “an effort to remove from the lives of thousands of innocent women the misery that is their lot today, and to restore them to their legitimate environment where they can spend the rest of their lives with izzat” (honour). (quoted in Menon and Bhasin ,pp91) The willingness to welcome the kidnapped women emerged as a further issue with the recovery programme.

Sunder Lal the secretary of the “Rehabilitation of Hearts Committee” initiated by the inhabitants of the locality Mulla Shakoor, to ensure the dignity of women abducted during the partition . Sunder Lal’s dedication is also due to his personal loss as his wife Lajwanti is also abducted during the communal riots. The people singing the song mention Lajwanti that literally means a plant touch me not but Sunder Lal is swayed in dejection recalling his wife . Lajwanti as he recalls was fragile as Touch me not plant and he like other dominating husbands would ill- treat her. She would tolerate everything He got irritated with everything she did and thrashed her at every pretext he could find. But she took everything in her stride, enduring the beatings since “all men beat their wives”(Bedi 69). But he made up his mind that if he ever got another chance, he would rehabilitate her in his heart and set an example to the people of Mulla Shakoor.

Rajinder Singh Bedi has projected the strong hold of patriarchy that as bell hooks refers is a disease affecting both the sexes. Sunder Lal opposes the Narain Bawa’s justification quoting Ramayana as according to him Rama’s abandonment of Sita was an episode of injustice as Sita was chaste . It was Ravana who had kidnapped Sita so why should Sita be abandoned ?

Lajwanti witnesses the extreme objectification of women during the process of exchange at Wagah Border.

A large crowd gathered, and heated words were exchanged. Then one of their volunteers pointed at Lajo Bhabhi and said, ‘Is this one old? Look at her... Look... Have you returned any woman who is as beautiful as she is?’ Lajo Bhabhi stood there trying to hide her tattoo marks from the curious gaze of people. The argument got more heated. Both sides threatened to take back their ‘goods.’

The word goods itself indicates the commodification of women. People reduced women to the commodity to be exchanged and exhibited as the man who removed the dupatta of Lajo presented her to others. As Bhasin mentions that large numbers of women were forced into death to avoid sexual violence against them, to preserve

chastity and protect individual, family and community “honour”. The means used to accomplish this end varied; when women themselves took their lives, they would either jump into the nearest well or set themselves ablaze, singly, or in groups that could be made up either of all the women in the family; the younger women ; or women and children. Bedi in his short story Lajwanti realistically painted the patriarchal attitude of the society that denied any independent identity to women as :

There were some amongst these abducted women whose husbands, parents, brothers, and sisters refused to recognize them. “Why didn’t they die? Why didn’t they take poison to preserve their virtue and honour? Why didn’t they jump into a well? Cowards, clinging to life! Thousands of women in the past killed themselves to save their chastity!...” Little did these people understand the courage of the women, the awesome strength with which they had faced death and chosen to go on living in such a world—a world in which even their husbands refused to acknowledge them.(Lajwanti)

Sunder Lal’s acceptance of Lajwanti sets an example for others but as far as Lajo is concerned, she finds it difficult to retrieve her old self. She wants to tell everything she has gone through during her abduction to Sunder Lal but Sunder Lal doesn’t wish to listen to her. After rehabilitation Lajo fails to return to her old self. It seems a disconnected life . Sunder Lal’s reception of Lajwanti as goddess fills her with affection but she is silenced. Lajo couldn’t be the Lajo whom Sunder Lal would often tease and beat her. Lajwanti is rehabilitated but not accepted as Lajo but rather venerated as Devi. This deification of Lajwanti stresses to start a life afresh and not to look back. As Mukerjea observes:

His acceptance of her is also tempered with irony because Lajwanti’s brief absence has altered the dynamics of their marriage, a fact condensed in the switch from his former intimate mode of address ‘Lajo’ to the courteously distant ‘devi’ (goddess). This recasting of her desecrated body into the sacred, inviolable body of a goddess, pushes her beyond human contact, and constitutes a denial of her embodiedness. It amounts ultimately to a rejection of her sexuality. (Lal, Malashri and Sukrita P. Kumar ,5)

Here in Lajwanti both husband and wife face the trauma. Sunder Lal experiences a cultural trauma. There is an ambiguity in his character. Sunder Lal who supported the recovery of the abducted women was himself reluctant to accept the reality as R. K Kaul observes:

"Lajwanti" stands out as a revelation of the treachery in the heart of man. Its protagonist campaigns for the rehabilitation of abducted women but when confronted with his own wife he is embarrassed rather than relieved by her return. (Hashmi et al 306)

Sundar Lal's reluctance to listen to the painful account of Lajwanti is a defence mechanism to survive but as far as Lajwanti is concerned, her inability is to reconcile with her old self. Another aspect of the story is the silence. A silence is sought as a solution but it is strangulating silence on the part of Lajwanti. Freud in collaboration with Joseph Breuer found that hysteria was the result of psychological trauma and this and many other inquiries similar to it led Freud to what he called Psychoanalysis. They understood that it was necessary to talk to the subjects and make a simulation of the trauma that a subject had undergone to heal her and when Lajwanti was to speak and unburden herself, she was obstructed by Sunderlal. Counselling could have eased the pain and would have helped the victims to lead a normal life

Whereas Rajinder Singh Bedi's Lajwanti raises a question of women's belongingness Krishna Chander a progressive writer who is accredited to have written twenty novels and short stories. Krishna Chander's oeuvres known depicting his social realism and romance. Like Manto he too was criticized He in his short story "Tawaif ka Khat" (letter from a Prostitute) has depicted the dislocation of female children who were separated from their family and were forced to prostitution.

Written in an epistolary style, the letter is addressed to Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru, the prime minister of Independent India and Mohd Ali Jinnah the founder of Pakistan. Since both of them are esteemed political personalities, they can never expect the letter from a prostitute who is marginalized in society. Throughout the letter these two political leaders are addressed as respectable and compassionate. An ordinary rank prostitute clarifies her intention of writing this open letter to make these leaders acquaint with the deteriorating predicament of the country. She does not wish to win their attention for her upliftment as she has accepted her fate but ironically, she wishes to draw their attention to the two youngsters Bela and Batool who have been the victim of communal violence. Bela has been transacted by a Muslim procurer while Batool by a Jat procurer. The prostitute's letter unleashes the hideous reality of partition and its aftermath. It was a blot on humanity. The barbarism had no space in these religions then why such brutality was executed. According to the prostitute, Bela who lived in Rawalpindi had witnessed the arson, bloodshed and massacre in front of her innocent eyes. Her father was murdered. Her mother's breasts were

cut off by the Muslims chanting 'Allah ho Akbar' while Batool who lived in Jalandhar had seen the Jat's cruelty. They killed her father and gauged out his eyes. Not only this they molested her sisters. She also points out the incident of fornication. She emphasises the fact that both religions never supported such brutality. Innocence was always worshipped but such ghastly incidents have left these girls in utter trauma. As V. K Menon writes 'The uprooted millions were in a terrible mental state. . . . Not many had the time to plan their evacuation . . . They had been subjected to terrible indignities. They had witnessed their near and dear ones hacked to pieces before their eyes and their houses ransacked, looted and set on fire by their own neighbours' (qtd. in Mukhopadhyay 19). The prostitute buys them and offers them shelter but she doesn't want these girls to become prostitute like her

Bela and Batool are two girls, two communities, two cultures, two cultures, two mosques and temples. These days, Bela and Batool live with a prostitute, who runs her business in a shop close the Chinese barber's on Farris Road. Bela and Batool do not like this trade. I have purchased these two girls; if I want, I could get the work done by them too. But I think that I will not do that which Rawalpindi and Jalandhar have done to them. So far, I have been able to keep them away from the world of Farris Road. Even then, when my customers go to the back room to wash their hands and faces, Bela and Batool's gaze begin to speak to me. I cannot bring to you the heat of their gaze. I cannot also adequately convey their message to you. Why don't you read the ciphers in their gaze yourselves?(Chander, Para 28)

Krishna Chander's story unravels the gender violence and sexual abuse a trauma inflicted on the female children who had seen their family being slaughtered in front of their innocent eyes. These girls Bela and Batool unaware of the changing socio-political divide were targeted for revenge. Whom could they have harmed? Those were buds as the prostitute mentions who had seen autumn before blooming. Prostitute's letter also critiques the decision of this great divide on the basis of religion. She finally pleads these leaders to adopt these girls :

Panditji, what I want is that you make Batool your daughter. Jinnah Sahib, I wish for you to consider Bela your 'daughter of the auspicious stars'. Just for once, extricate them from the clutches of Farris Road, keep them in your homes. Pay heed to the laments of the lakhs of souls, that dirge that resounds all the way from Noakhali to Rawalpindi, from Bharatpur to

Bombay. Is it only in the Government House that it cannot be heard? Will you attend to this voice?(Chander,para 29)

If Indian authors could hold the tattered cloak of secularism through their moving tales the other side of the border too had witnessed the tragedy and its devastating impact on human lives. The history in its multiplicity has been recorded in the works of Pakistani writers as well. Saadat Hasan Manto was a vociferous writer who has captured the apocalyptic incident of Partition in his short stories. Saadat Hasan Manto was distressingly a prophetic writer who captured the senseless and brutal tragedy of Partition in his works. Manto wrote one novel *Black Margin*, five anthologies of radio dramas, twenty collections of short stories, three collections of essays, two collections of sketches, and a number of screenplays for films. He was accused of obscenity six times, and his writings included themes of sex and desire, drunks and prostitutes. He foresaw the emergence of Islamic fundamentalism in Pakistan in his journalism. However, he is most renowned for his stories about the partition. He dipped his pen in the pain of the people who suffered the onslaught of the Partition and wrote about the naked reality they underwent. His short stories speak of the blistering abrasions that the time engraved on the heart and mind of the people. Losing life and property was the common fate of the general masses who were entrapped in the political imbroglio of intermigration (Ghosh,93).

His short story 'Khol Do' unleashes the horrors of this rupture. The genocidal divide has left indelible scars on the psyche of the people. Freud defines Trauma can have the long-lasting impact on the psyche of the victim While Cathy Caruth in her *Unclaimed experiences* states that traumatic experiences are beyond linguistic expression

Saadat Hasan Manto's "Khol do(Open it)" set in the aftermath of this sectarian divide unravels the complexities of human lives affected by this incident. As it was the large exodus. People were uprooted and dislocated in chaos. The story begins with an elderly man Sirajuddin who after regaining his consciousness finds himself in the refugee camp:

His gaze was fixed on the gloomy sky when his eyes happened to stumble upon the sun. The intense sunlight penetrated every sinew of his being, and he regained his senses. Several images ran through his mind. Looting...Fire...Helter-Skelter...The station...Bullets...Night and Sakina.(Fair,2022)

While looking for her he recalls that how he got only her dupatta as she was dragged from the train. When he fails to locate his daughter, he takes the assistance of a group of

young volunteers who assure him that they would locate her. They find Sakina on the highway. They extend their support to her and then they raped her. One day Sirajuddin comes across a corpse in the hospital. Sirajuddin screams to see his daughter back. The doctor orders the windows to be opened. The word open triggers the girl lying on the stretcher and she unties her salwar and lowers it. As Caruth in her theory postulates that Trauma is unclaimed experiences. According to Erikson "...trauma involves a continual reliving of some wounding experience in daydreams and nightmares, flashbacks and hallucinations, and in a compulsive seeking out of similar circumstances". (qtd in Caruth's *Unclaimed Experiences*) Alok Bhalla notes that Manto's stories are fragmentary records of terror and cries of pain, violation and pleas of mercy, vile sexuality and cynical laughter (26-59). He wrote almost obsessively about the events that led to the division of the sub-continent and the terrible suffering it inflicted on innocent people

Jameela Hashmi, a prolific Urdu writer from Pakistan is accredited to have written many short stories and novels as *Aatish e Ruffia* and *Talash e Baharan*. Jameela Hashmi's story extends the Sita trope as used in Lajwanti. Whereas Sundar Lal in Lajwanti questions about Ramrajya and banishment of Sita, here in this short story exile, Jameela Hashmi juxtaposes the prevalent myth by introducing a protagonist who is abducted by Ravana is not rescued. There is a confinement which she finally accepts:

Exile is such a hard thing. But nothing is in anyone's power. Who accepts suffering by choice?(Hashmi, 105-106)

'Exile' by Jameela Hashmi is a story about an abducted woman who after many years finds it difficult to erase the memories from her sub consciousness. There is always a hope to return that is accentuated with the policy of government to return the women back to their native family but her brother whom she had relied upon doesn't set out to look for his sister. When she is located and is asked to return, she hides herself as how would she face her family and another reason was her children. How would she leave her children here in Sangrao. She for all these years couldn't forgive Guralp who in the frenzy had not only dragged her but also killed her father and mutilated her mother.

The unnamed protagonist is an abducted woman who keeps on revisiting her happy past before the gruesome episode of partition. She finds unable to relate herself to the new family. Jameela Hashmi weaves her story on the myth of Sita who was abducted by Ravana but eventually Rama came and rescued Sita but here Sita that means that unnamed protagonist is forced to live with her abductor

Gurpal. She infuses the social narrative with personal narrative of the abducted protagonist. The protagonist who is now received warmly by Bari maa and is other of three children still keeps on losing herself in her past. It becomes a rescue for her since she is unable to erase the dark memories from her mind. Gurpal now changed asks her if she could forget that incident

‘Will you ever be able to forget that incident? Those times were different. It’s changed now’ Gurpal says softly:

How can I convince Gurpal that time is never different and people are condemned to suffer because they can’t forget? In my memory that scene is alive -fire on all sides, country had become independent, it had been divided.’

The protagonist keeps on oscillating between her childhood that assured her love and security and present where she is forced to adapt to the new socio-cultural environment. Delving deep into the past has become her temporary escape from the present where she finds herself still alienated. She ponders on her fate where she had become the unwed bahu of Gurpal, the mother of three children and a domestic servant to be beaten and cursed. Her bari maa who receives her as a domestic servant later on accepts her as Bahu and hails her as goddess Lakshmi was not only like disrobing the narrator from her religious and cultural roots but also denying her any hope and self-identity.

Abducted women suffered from double dislocation, sexual savagery, brutality and slavery. Rajinder Singh Bedi’s Lajwanti stands as an example of women who though recovered but still unable to restart their lives. She can’t retrieve her old self while the lives of the two young girls who were dislocated and sold are unable to forget the trauma as depicted in Krishna Chander’s Prostitute’s letter raise an issue of child sexual abuse during the chaos of communal riots. Those two girls had seen their family members butchered in front of their own eyes. The letter addressed to two leaders of independent nations by none other than a prostitute unravels the human misery at its peak. The innocent girls were pushed into the prostitution in the wake of decolonization and at that time it is the prostitute herself who writes this open letter to the stakeholders to adopt these orphan girls so that they might not see further horrors of the society.

Pakistan was a new nation. People supporting the divide had their own expectations. It was not only the dream of eminent poet and educationist Allama Iqbal but it was the dream of generations of people who wished for a separate Islamic state. As Batool would cheer the formation of a new state (“Prostitute’s letter”), it was conceptualized as

Islamic utopia but the creation of Pakistan resulted in a tragedy at the very onset. As Faiz Ahmad Faiz laments that it was not the dawn that we had waited for (Faiz, “Subh E Azadi”). The chaos of its division affected people from both sides notwithstanding with creed, class, caste, gender, nationality Pakistani writers have penned this catastrophe in their writings. Saadat Hasan Manto through his candid stories has explored the human psyche disturbed by the violence and trauma. The sudden dislocation of people had left them bewildered. They in order to save their lives left their place in chaos. Sirajuddin portrayed by Manto was a baffled father looking madly for his daughter Sakina trusts volunteers and then those so-called saviours of Sakina gang rape her. Sirajuddin screams that finally he found his daughter but the daughter had become a wounded soul. The short story as Manto doesn’t stretch it unnecessarily leaves not only the doctor in cold sweat but also the readers in a state of utter shock.

Jameela Hashmi through her short story narrates the experience of a woman who is unable to reconcile with her present and finds an escape in her past as abduction followed by forced marriage has shattered her completely. She was a Muslim woman living with her family her parents and siblings. Her whole life changed all of a sudden when Gurpal attacks her family, he kills her parents and drags her and then brings her to Sangrao as an unwed bride. Though years pass but she is unable to forget anything. The story also brings out the truth of Recovery mission as many of the kidnapped women didn’t return as they had become mothers and separation from their children was not acceptable to them as the protagonist in Exile hides herself.

CONCLUSION

The narratives presented illuminate the severe impact of Partition and subsequent chaos on women, highlighting themes of dislocation, sexual violence, and enduring trauma. Through the works of Rajinder Singh Bedi, Krishna Chander, Saadat Hasan Manto, and Jameela Hashmi, we witness the multifaceted suffering and resilience of women who bore the brunt of this historic upheaval. These stories do more than recount the past; they challenge us to confront the ongoing consequences of violence and displacement, urging a collective reflection on the human cost of conflict. The profound emotional and psychological scars left on these women serve as poignant reminders of the urgent need for empathy, justice, and sustained efforts towards healing and reconciliation.

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