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ABDUCTION, RECOVERY AND REJECTION: PLIGHT OF WOMEN DURING PARTITION

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Abstract

The cataclysmic Partition of Indian Subcontinent into two nations--India and Pakistan—in 1947 targeted women who became victims of the most unimaginable torment including abduction, rape, mutilation, prostitution, slavery, forced religious conversion, and unwanted marriage. Reducing them to the status of homeless refugees, extremists ruthlessly abused their bodies associating them with the honor of family, community, and nation. Males, primarily from the “other” religious community, viciously exploited women--the most vulnerable targets of violence--who silently suffered under lifelong trauma. Indeed, their own people, who also happened to kill them occasionally, compelled the women to commit suicide. Despite provisions made by governments on both sides of the border to recover and rehabilitate the missing women, they continued suffering because of the tainted tag of abduction they carried with them. This paper analyzes Partition stories such as M. Mufti’s “The Dughills,” Q. U. Shahab’s “Ya Khuda,” L. Antharjanam’s “A Leaf in the Storm,” S. Qasim’s “Where Did She Belong?” R.S. Bedi’s “Lajwanti,” H.V. Savithramma’s “Nirashrite,” R. Sagar’s “Pimps,” and Ramlal’s “A Visitor from Pakistan” and argues that women suffered not only because of abduction and rape but also by the callous and unjust reactions and rejection of their relatives, who falsely reasoned that their soiled bodies implied dishonor and defeat of the family, community, and nation of the victimized group.

Keywords: Partition, Abduction, Rape, Dishonor, Recovery, Community, Acceptance, Trauma

The catastrophic Partition of Indian Subcontinent into two nations--India and Pakistan—in 1947 uprooted millions from their native land and dispersed them in unfamiliar spaces across the border. The displaced mass lost their home, property, relationship, and identity owing to large scale violence perpetrated by humans turned monsters who specifically targeted women young and old. Victims of the male raiders, women became the objects of the most unimaginable torment

including abduction, rape, mutilation, amputation, prostitution, slavery, and forced marriage. In addition to sexual abuse, the ruthless rioters also reduced them to the status of homeless refugees. Associating them with the (dis)honor of family,

community, and nation,¹ males from the “other” religions viciously violated their bodies while women—as the most vulnerable targets of violence—silently endured the traumatic torture. Apart from witnessing the murder of their children and husbands, these women also faced death at the hands of their “enemies” and even their own people² who additionally forced or influenced them to commit suicide for the preservation of honor. Partition stories such as M. Mufti’s “The Dughills,” Q. U. Shahab’s “Ya Khuda,” L. Antharjanam’s “A Leaf in the Storm,” S. Qasim’s “Where Did She Belong?” R.S. Bedi’s “Lajwanti,” H.V. Savithramma’s “Nirashrite,” R. Sagar’s “Pimps,” and Ramlal’s “A Visitor from Pakistan” incorporate some of the tragic experiences of abducted women: their dispossession, dislocation, defilement, disapproval, denial, distress, and death. Closer examination of their predicament, as depicted in the selected fictional works, reveals that women suffered not only because of abduction and rape but also by the rejection of their relatives who argued that since their violated bodies signified disgrace and defeat of the family, community, and nation, they did not deserve acceptance by the family.

This paper analyzes the texts above through insights derived from significant works such as Gyanendra Pandey’s *Remembering Partition* (2001), Urvashi Butalia’s *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* (2000), Ritu Menon and

Kamla Bhasin’s *Borders & Boundaries: Women in India’s Partition* (1998), and G.D. Khosla’s *Stern Reckoning: A Survey of the Events Leading Up to and Following the Partition of India* (1949). These historical and theoretical writings deal with thousands of abducted³ and abused women whom the cataclysmic Partition threw into “a malicious whirlpool of misery.”⁴ Tragically uprooted from their homeland, the unfortunate beings were treated barbarously by males from the combatant community who kidnapped and kept many of them as their servants or mistresses,⁵ forced several others to flesh trade, and compelled still others to convert into alien religion and marry their rapists.

In their book *Borders & Boundaries*, Menon and Bhasin note that by the close of 1949, “the official estimate of the number of abducted women was placed at 50, 000 Muslim women in India and 33, 0000 Hindu and Sikh women in Pakistan.”⁶ They were mostly “molested and raped, passed on from man to man, bartered and sold like cheap chattel,”⁷ and forced to lead inexplicably anguished life as prostitutes. A bitter reality of the day was that women and girls became miserable victims of “sexual savagery”⁸ irrespective of geographical location. Ruffians lifted them anytime from anywhere—India or Pakistan—play inhumanly with their bodies and leave them anywhere to die, if not

¹ Urvashi Butalia, in *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India*, maintains that Partition “provided the rationale for making women into symbols of the nation’s honour” (152). Hereafter, *Other Side of Silence*.

² Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, in *Borders & Boundaries: Women in India’s Partition*, state that women had been “forced to die—at the hands of men in their own families, or by their own hands” (45). Hereafter, *Borders & Boundaries*.

³ Menon and Bhasin, in *Borders & Boundaries*, note that as per Recovery and Restoration Act of 1949, an “abducted person,” among other things, means “a female of whatever age” who, having been separated from her family, “is found to be living with or under the control of any other individual or family” (71).

⁴ Debasri Basu, “Women, Violence, Displacement: Delineating the Abduction Motif in South Asian Partition Stories,” 120. Hereafter, “Women, Violence, Displacement.”

⁵ Faisal Fareed and Alam Shah, in “Gendered Violence and the Horrors of Partition: The Price Paid by Women,” remark that men from the other community forced the abducted women “to become domestic servants and sex slaves” (<https://thewire.in>).

⁶ Menon and Bhasin, *Borders & Boundaries*, 70. Butalia, in *Other Side of Silence* also informs that “nearly 75,000-1,00000 women” had been abducted at Partition (197).

⁷ G. D. Khosla, *Stern Reckoning: A Survey of the Events Leading Up to and Following the Partition of India*, 230. Hereafter, *Stern Reckoning*.

⁸ Butalia, *Other Side of Silence*, 3.

already killed.⁹ Consequently, scores of them went “missing” attracting the attention of concerned relatives and responsible citizens who reported the situation to the government as well as sought its help to trace them. In response to the request, both countries agreed to launch a mission to “recover as many women, as speedily as possible, from each country to restore them to their families.”¹⁰ So, the Indian government passed a Recovery and Restoration Bill/Act, making a provision to authorize a qualified officer “to receive and hold the person in custody and either restore such person to his or her relatives or convey such person out of India.”¹¹ In about seven years (from 1947-1952), the project was successful to recover “about 30,000 women”¹² through police personnel and social workers.

Though “almost always instigated by men,”¹³ communal strife triggered horrendous acts of violence directed mainly against the women of the opposing religion. Consequently, males of the other community¹⁴ ensnared them in sinister environment of inhuman deeds that severely affected women’s physical, emotional, and psychological being. Making abduction and rape as their “principal mode of assertion of power,”¹⁵ men deeply wounded and hurt women. The mode turned women as “the only people who had suffered a double dislocation as a result of Partition”¹⁶--first from their original home, and next from the current resident. Along with the physical abuse of their

bodies, women had to bear in silence the pain of humiliation—wrongful accusation of committing “dishonorable” act, disapproval of their return by their neighbors and relatives, and denial to accept back in the household.¹⁷ Subsequently, many of them rebuffed the idea to return to their people under the aegis of the government’s Recovery operation, discarding the opportunity of family reunion largely because of the onus associated with it.

Since the abducted women experienced less excitement of acceptance than they feared degradation and debasement by their relations, and since the very act of recovery disrupted their daily life by dislodging them again, they kept themselves away from government’s project to trace and return them to their home or family.¹⁸ Some of them even explained the unwelcome recovery operation as “the real abduction”¹⁹ because it entailed a violent act of uprooting them another time from their familiar place to transplant elsewhere against their wishes. Therefore, the abducted women, on their own volition, often abandoned their natal place, resigned to their fate, and started living a normal life outside family circle, knowing almost with certainty that the recovery mission would neither help them re-gain their home nor grant them anything valuable. Those who went to ashrams, or specially constructed homes,²⁰ or refugee camps, or brothels--especially with small children and unwanted

⁹ Jason Francisco, in “In the Heat of Fratricide: The Literature of India’s Partition Burning Freshly,” rightly remarks that “the experiences of each community distinctly mirror one another” (250). Hereafter, “In the Heat of Fratricide.”

¹⁰ Menon and Bhasin, *Borders & Boundaries*, 67.

¹¹ Menon and Bhasin, *Borders & Boundaries*, 72.

¹² M. Asaduddin, in “Fiction as History: Partition Stories,” breaks down the number of women as “12, 000 Muslim and 18, 000 non-Muslim” (327). Hereafter, “Fiction as History.”

¹³ Butalia, “Community, State and Gender,” 34.

¹⁴ Butalia, in *Other Side of Silence*, observes that nearly “75,000 women were raped, kidnapped, abducted, forcibly impregnated by men of the ‘other’ religion” (34-35).

¹⁵ Bodh Prakash, *Writing Partition: Aesthetics and Ideology in Hindi and Urdu Literature*, 109.

¹⁶ Butalia, *Other Side of Silence*, 129. Hereafter, *Writing Partition*.

¹⁷ Asaduddin, in “Fiction as History,” states that since many families did not accept back the recovered women, they were placed in camps, or in “ashrams and brothels,” where they led miserable life (326).

¹⁸ Khosla, in *Stern Reckoning*, maintains that innocent girls, and “young married women, sometimes with infants in their arms, were forcibly taken away to distant places, . . . concealed and denied access to their relations,” making it impossible for the concerned individuals and government agencies to trace and recover them later (230).

¹⁹ Menon and Bhasin, *Borders & Boundaries*, 105.

²⁰ See *Borders and Boundaries* (pp. 12-13), or/and *Other Side of Silence* (p. 220).

pregnancy--experienced hellish life²¹ and yet they chose to remain outside the safety of their familial space.

As members of the perceived "enemy" religious groups, abducted women's bodies (more than others) served as sites for males to satisfy their lust as well as to avenge their counterparts. By stripping their women "just as bananas are peeled,"²²and raping, sometimes, in front of the males, they humiliated their counterparts. Since female bodies also functioned as "vehicles for the honor—and dishonour,"²³ males on both sides of the conflicting groups felt victorious after assaulting women of the rival group. The selected texts here furnish examples of women's inconceivable suffering including those of the rescued, recovered, or restored ones.

"The Dunghills" by Mumtaz Mufti²⁴ brings out the "essential hideousness"²⁵ of women's debasement by telling the story of Sarwari, a Muslim girl who becomes a subject of sexual abuse "even after being rescued."²⁶ Successful temporarily to save herself from the attack of rioters by running madly and hiding in "a pit full of dung," Sarwari falls prey to the lewdness of a chain of men including sweeper Kala, who endlessly suck her body like leeches from dunghills (Mufti 204). Excessive male-torment forces the disgusted protagonist to flee from her Indian village of Madhopur, hoping for a better future "in her own Pakistan" (205-206).

However, misfortune follows Sarwari even after she crosses the border because whoever she

meets in Pakistan rapes or betrays her. Those she finds sympathetic and helpful initially also turn out to be selfish and exploitative later. For instance, an old soldier who has "taken her under his wing," makes sexual advances to her and an old woman in the refugee camp who showers motherly love on her and whom she calls *amma* (mother) deceitfully makes her a professional prostitute (Mufti 205). To her friend Gehna, she describes her life here as "a daily torture" (201), and the *amma* as "an old and seasoned" leech (206). Often, she sees this *amma* as a witch and expresses the desire to run away from her "leechlike soft voice" (201). The strong bodied "respectable neighbor with a beard" whose help she seeks to run away from the brothel emerges as her prospective client (208). Because of their lechery, these people remind her of creepy reptiles "the same leech. . . the same little snakes and the stench of dung" as in her native village (Mufti 205). Life-long exploitation makes her wonder hopelessly if there is "no one around who could rescue her from the dung's stench?" (206).

As sordid "act of groping by multiple men"²⁷ turns Sarwari's body "still and motionless like a stone" (Mufti 208), she dwells dazed till the end of her life at a place pervaded by "deathlike silence" and hounded relentlessly by the fear of a deceitful formidable neighbor (204). Frequent betrayal plunges Sarwari to dunghills over and over transforming her body into a site of "breeding

²¹ D. Basu, in "Women, Violence, Displacement," rightly comments that living away from "familial environment, these hapless victims of a staggering political cataclysm were left to the wolves and had to fend for themselves" (120).

²² Menon and Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries*, 41.

²³ Butalia, *Other Side of Silence*, 207.

²⁴ Born at Batala in Punjab, Mumtaz Mufti (1905-1995) worked for All India Radio and Bombay film industry for some time before migrating in 1947 to Pakistan where he held important government positions. He wrote essays, travelogues, plays, novels, and an autobiography. His first book *Jhuki Jhuki Ankhain*, published in Lahore, turned Mumtaz

Hussain (his earlier name) to Mumtaz Mufti. His literary works include collection of stories such as *Anarkali*, *Chop*, *Gahma Gahmi*, and *Ismaraiyaan*, and two autobiographies--*Ali Pur Ka Aili* and *Alakh Nagri*. His last book *Talaash (Quest)* resounds with the true spirit of Quranic teachings while his ideas undergo transformation from Liberalism to Sufism.

²⁵ D. Basu, "Women, Violence, Displacement," (114).

²⁶ D. Basu, "Restored, or Doubly Displaced? Women and the Recovery Commission in India's Partition Narratives," (cafedissensus.com). Hereafter, "Restored, or Doubly Displaced?"

D. Basu, "Women, Violence, Displacement," 115.²⁷

mistrust for the 'other,'²⁸ the "other" mostly being the males in both nations. Because of the experiences of "wave after wave of pain and revulsion" that rise from "every pore of her body" (207), Sarwari behaves in a bizarre way. As she sees no sight of rescue from the clutches of the old villain and the repeated sexual assaults of heartless people around, she laughs "like a mad person" (209). To her friend Gehna, she describes her life as "a daily torture" (201). Deeply hurt by deception and multiple rapes, Sarwari exemplifies a woman who bears "physical and psychological scars"²⁹ of abduction.

In his story "Ya Khuda" ("O God"), Qudrat Ullah Shahab³⁰ also tells an agonizing tale of women after dreadful communal conflict and the resultant "hell let loose by their menfolk."³¹ Divided into three parts, the text deals with the destroyed world of Dilshad, the protagonist, who suffers not only at the hands of the Hindus in India but also among her own people in Pakistan, shattering forever her "hopes of a better life in a Muslim nation."³² She must almost always live a sad and friendless life of a destitute, landing finally in prostitution.

In the first section of the story, Dilshad, the only daughter of Mullah Ali Bakhsh becomes a sexual victim of Sikh rowdies such as Amrik Singh, Tarlok Singh and Gyani Darbar Singh who have recently cleansed her village Chamkor of all Muslims. After killing the Mullah, they keep Dilshad in a deserted village mosque and use her youthful body as a space for carnal sport to "ease the tension in their veins" (Shahab 272). She goes through excruciating pain when the drunken and sexually exasperated Sikhs mercilessly plunder her youth for revenge against her community (272). Sexual exploitation, separation from home and family, and the death of

her father make Dilshad like an asteroid "wandering alone in the endless expanse of the universe. . . worried, scared and lost" (272-273). Forlorn Dilshad undergoes traumatic experience of abduction and a series of rapacious rapes. Besides Amrik Singh and his friends, she also bears the onslaught on her body from a chain of males such as Inspector Labbhu Ram, Head Constable, Daryodhan Singh, and the jawans or the "muscular and healthy soldiers" of Major Preetam Singh (Shahab 276).

Apart from the protagonist, the text also gives examples of other women captured and harassed by predatory men. At Ambala Refugee Camp, Dilshad meets several women and "beautiful but subdued" girls who have lost their purity, dignity, virtue, and glow (275). Leaving their horrible past in India, they migrate to Pakistan expecting a much better future. On the journey with these women, Dilshad thinks that her family, her community, her lover Rahim Khan, and a comfortable life of dignity await her in the newly carved nation. As she optimistically moves west, she gives birth to a female baby in the train.

The second part of "Ya Khuda" shows a disappointed Dilshad at Lahore station where she experiences extreme apathy of Pakistani people such as an unnamed sturdy man, a sweeper woman, and two "good looking and well dressed" young men, Anwar and Rashid who turn away from her without rendering any help. Her experience at the platform blows away penniless Dilshad's belief that "all the land in the West" was her home full of helpful brothers (Shahab 280). Far from treating her as their sister, the handsome boys look at her as "merely an item of sexual pleasure."³³ They view the baby in Dilshad's lap--a product of "the mass scale

²⁸ Sukrita Paul Kumar, "Cementing the Fissure: Urdu Literature from Across the Border," 85.

²⁹ Aparna Basu, "Uprooted Women: Partition of Punjab 1947," 284.

³⁰ Qudrat Ullah Shahab (1917-1986) was born in Gilgit and attended college and university in Jammu and Lahore respectively. He served as Pakistan's Ambassador to the Netherlands as Federal Education Secretary and as Secretary to three successive Presidents of Pakistan. His

literary works include a novelette, *Ya Khuda* (1948), three collections of short stories, *Nafsaney* (1950), *Man Ji* (1968) and *Surkh Feeta* and an autobiography, *Shahaab Namah*.

³¹ Cowasjee & Duggal, Introduction to *Orphans of the Storm*, xix.

³² Prakash, *Writing Partition*, 144.

³³ Cowasjee and Duggal, Introduction to *Orphans of the Storm*, xx.

rape"³⁴-- as an obstacle for sexual game and move on leaving her with her fate. Her dream of joining "a vast brotherhood" once she crosses the border of India smashes when she encounters these selfish Pakistanis who either care only about her money or wonder "whether her body could still give pleasure" (283).

Dilshad's disenchantment increases when at the Mohajir (refugee) camp, she meets a storekeeper humming Iqbal's poem "The Complaint to God," and lying indifferently on a heap of woolen blankets, beddings, sweaters, and shawls while people (e. g., a little girl, an old man, and a woman) die of cold and rain. She witnesses the pathetic death of the woman in her bare body the text describes as "the worst insult" to the entire achievement of mankind (Shahab 289). The severe weather also creates tremendous difficulties for Dilshad, her baby, Mahmood, and his sister, Zubeida. Pakistan disillusiones her further when dishonest people trap her and Zubeida to trickily make them sex victims in Lahore. On the pretext of meeting with her lover Rahim Khan, a self-declared social worker, Mustafa Khan Simabi takes Dilshad to his own bungalow and rapes; the twelve-year-old Zubeida is also abused sexually by being driven to an unfamiliar place on an excuse to meet her grandfather. Moral degradation and sexual abuse in contemporary Lahore, the modern-day Medina, makes the narrator sarcastically comment (at the close of this section) that every day "a new Rahim Khan [comes] into being for Dilshad" and "a new grandfather for Zubeida" (Shahab 293).

The harrowing tale of women's exploitation continues in the third part of "Ya Khuda" in which a police inspector admonishes his constable for not bringing to him a blind fruit selling girl. This section

also offers a conversation between two men who earn money by supplying beautiful refugee girls to the brothels in Karachi.³⁵ For instance, a pimp Chela Ram announces to his friend Khushi Mohammad with pride and pleasure that he has done the most excellent business of his life by selling "sixteen girls in one season" (Shahab 299). The final section of the tale too reveals a disheartening fact that the uprooted, displaced, helpless, and hopeless Dilshad and Zubeida have become prostitutes to survive. All in all, "Ya Khuda" enumerates a series of misfortune endured by abducted women both amidst their friends and foes.

Likewise, "A Leaf in the Storm" by Lalithambika Antharjanam³⁶ "captures the fate of"³⁷ Jyotirmoyi Devpal (Jyoti), an ill-fated victim of multiple rapes both in India and Pakistan. The story recounts the tragedy of the college-going, free-spirited protagonist who dedicates herself to humanitarian work yearning for her community's "freedom from slavery" of convention, which ironically makes herself a prisoner of communal fanatics (Antharjanam 168).

Trusting the males in society as "my brothers," when Jyoti undertakes upliftment projects for women, Ali (Ayesha's brother) comes in the way (Antharjanam 168). Unlike her bosom friend, Ayesha, Ali, the hard-core adversary of the Hindus, thinks that India will prosper only when the land "is soaked by the blood of these kafirs (unbelievers)" (169). Therefore, with the help of his gang, Ali thwarts the plan of his sister and father, Qasim to send fifteen Hindu women across the border by dragging them out of the cart and soiling their bodies. Jyoti too becomes a prey to these

³⁴ Meenakshi Bharat, *The Ultimate Colony: The Child in Postcolonial Fiction*, 131.

³⁵ Since flesh trade had become a thriving business in the aftermath of Partition, poor and displaced refugee girls and women became commodities for sale and thousands of them ended their lives as prostitutes becoming the hopeless victims of this business.

³⁶ Born in Kerala (1909-1987), Lalithambika Antharjanam wrote several novels, stories, and

essays. In 1977, she received the Sahitya Akademi Award for her novel *Agnisakshi* (Fire being the Witness), which was made into a film in 1997. Her autobiography *Aathmakadhakoru Aamukham* also occupies an important place in Malayalam literature. Known as a writer who helped shape Kerala's feminist literature, Antharjanam was highly influenced by Mahatma Gandhi as a social reformer.

³⁷ Sukrita Paul Kumar, *Narrating Partition*, 102.

Muslim youths' shameless lechery that results in her unsolicited pregnancy.³⁸

As a victim of "inhuman rape and ignorance," self-assertive Jyoti loses her earlier boldness, even contemplates suicide, and asks the lady volunteer at her refugee camp for a gun or dagger or some poison (instead of bread) to kill herself (Antharjanam 164). Also, concerned with the hopeless future of the child in her womb, she requests a doctor for an abortion. Their refusal to comply with her requests compels Jyoti to continue her burdensome life in the crowd and confusion of the camp lying like a leaf in the "storm that rages over the east and the west" of the Subcontinent (Antharjanam 164). Amidst a growing mélange of refugees belonging to different age, sex, costumes, manners, and languages, and in the cacophony of their woeful stories, Jyoti lives as a mere wave in an "ocean of mass movement" (165). Here, at the camp, she meets hard-lucked survivors with "bruised feet, broken limbs, and withered bodies," as well as wailing children and despoiled women who have witnessed sad, fearful, and heartbreaking scenes including the death of their close relatives (163).

Jyoti gives birth to her baby under a tree at the backyard of the refugee camp from where she can hear the "kee...kee" of a young bird and the cries and groans of the children and sick people inside (Antharjanam 170). Quickly discarding the initial instincts to choke the baby to death or to run away leaving it at the camp, she decides a different course of action because she cannot either shush it to eternal silence or cut off the infant her "life's bond" (171). Rather, Jyoti experiences the warmth of the newborn, imagines as if it "is seeking refuge" (170), and feels that someone is urging her not to stifle its

compelling, tender voice because rather than that of an individual, it is the voice of "the whole world" (171). As she "herself acquires a fresh life and sustenance,"³⁹ from the fragile child, Jyoti takes it into her arms, caresses it gently, and moves with "her lifeblood" flowing "like fresh milk" (171). Worried no more about any social stigma, and refusing "to give into rage,"⁴⁰ the lonely, betrayed, and despondent Jyoti decides as a loving mother to bring up the delicate child responsibly.⁴¹ However, as she prepares herself to nurture the fatherless child alone, she is exchanged for a reclaimed woman on the border.

Responding to the widespread issue of abducted women, the governments of India and Pakistan reached an agreement in November 1947 to recover their "sisters and daughters"⁴² and restore them to their families, or home countries. In a sense, they decided that Muslim women in India "would be literally exchanged"⁴³ with their Hindu and Sikh counterparts in Pakistan. Consequently, the two countries, based on the bilateral policy, traced, counted, and returned missing women to the respective nations.⁴⁴ This fact finds expression in "A Leaf in the Storm," where people count abducted women and exchange them just like things: "Fifty bonded girls were to be given away for the fifty 'reclaimed'" ones including Jyoti (Antharjanam 161). Jyoti's unhappiness continues even after her recovery and re-location because instead of granting anything significant, her migration from Pakistan to India makes her feel that she has merely moved "from one prison to another" (161).

³⁸ Asaduddin, in "Fiction as History," remarks that Jyoti continues her miserable life "burdened with an unwanted and forced pregnancy" which she cannot escape (326).

³⁹ Kumar, Narrating Partition, 102.

⁴⁰ Bhalla, Introduction to Short Stories About the Partition of India, I-III, xxxviii.

⁴¹ Because of this optimism of Nirmala, Francisco, in "In the Heat of Fratricide," describes "A Leaf in the Storm" as a "powerfully told story of survival" (248).

⁴² Menon and Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries*, 70; (also Pandey's *Remembering Partition*, 168).

⁴³ Manan Mehra, "Rein'state'ed - The Case of the 'Exchanged' Women at Partition," (www.sabrangindia).

⁴⁴ Pandey, in *Remembering Partition*, gives an estimate that "between November 1948 and June 1949, the number of abducted women recovered in India was four times that in Pakistan" (168).

Similar is the fate of women who straddle on both sides of the border in Suraiya Qasim's⁴⁵ "Where Did She Belong?" The story deals with the question Partition raises about the identity of a poor prostitute, Munni Bai who knows nothing about herself, her parents, her community, her roots, or "her actual country."⁴⁶ The owner of the brothel, whom the girl of unknown parentage calls "Ma," lifts her from a location "equidistant from a mosque and a temple" where she lay crying, calls her Munni Bai, a common name used by both the Hindus and the Muslims, and turns her into a courtesan (Qasim 202).

Ravishingly beautiful Munni Bai, "the youngest and the loveliest" of Ma's wards becomes the favorite of all customers at her bordello in Lahore and thereby her chief source of income (Qasim 202). As Ma celebrates Hindu and Muslim festivals without any discrimination, initially, identity does not become an issue to seventeen-year-old Munni Bai, who plays the role of a Muslim for her Muslim lovers and a Hindu for the Hindus. At this time, her "religion and nationality are governed by her owners;"⁴⁷ for instance, each of her special customers —Raj Kamal, a Hindu and Jafar Khan, a Muslim—claims her as a member of his community reasoning that such a charming soul with beguiling beauty cannot belong to the other religion. If Raj declares, "a beauty like you can only be a Hindu" (Qasim 206), Jafar, the Pathan asserts that angelic Munni Bai "a *houri* (fairy) can only be a Muslim" (207). Both speak the same language, make love, and talk hate, and invite Munni Bai's "disgust and revulsion" as they divulge to hatred immediately "after making love to her" (Qasim 205). Either of them "foist a religious identity"⁴⁸ to win her on his side and to possess her proving himself more powerful than the other. Therefore, despite occasional subjection to physical pain by some

callous customers, Munni Bai continues with her profession without any concerns regarding individual or national identity.

However, things change around the time of Partition, when men—even the ones who greatly admired her captivating beauty earlier--betray her. While the deadly riots reduce Munni Bai to the status of a refugee, contrary to their promise to help and support her, neither Raj nor Jafar visits her at any camp, either in India or in Pakistan. They fail Munni Bai at her greatest hour of need. When human compassion is clouded by hatred and suspicion, and humanity itself is tested, people like her suffer deeply despite the win-win situation for the Hindus or the Muslims. The author writes: "Then began those memorable months of disgrace by the end of which the Hindus had won, the Muslims had won, but humanity had lost" (Qasim 208).

Although catastrophic event of Partition goads Munni Bai and others as migrants to India from the other side of the border, unfortunately they must continue their life of shame even in the new setting. It is true that mistreatment of her body for long has enabled her to endure severe pain, yet she is deeply hurt in the soul like thousands of other dislocated women. Reminiscent of the exchange program of women in Antharjanam's "A Leaf in the Grass," this text also makes provision for swapping of female spaces. Accordingly, Ma occupies a house on G. B. Road, Delhi, recently vacated by Sahna, a Muslim prostitute who moves to Hira Mandi, Lahore. Ma starts here a new brothel where Munni Bai works to satisfy the sexual thirst of rich Rajas and Nawabs, who spend lavishly on her. Ironically,⁴⁹ just as in Lahore, affluent Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslim clients patronize her also in Delhi, implying that that the tragedy of Partition has not much affected the upper class.

⁴⁵ A journalist by profession Suraiya Qasim (b.1945-) has written a few short stories and poems in Urdu. Her poem "Singing Silence" had been included in *Lyrical Voices: An International Poetry Anthology* (1979). A free-lance writer from Chandigarh, India, she has worked for Hong Kong based *Asiaweek*, too.

⁴⁶ Asaduddin, "Fiction as History," 327.

⁴⁷ Jasbir Jain, "Daughters of Mother India in Search of a Nation: Women's Narratives about the Nation," 1655.

⁴⁸ Prakash, *Writing Partition*, 109.

⁴⁹ Sukeshi Kamra, in "Ruptured Histories: Literature on the Partition," describes this fact as "the final irony" of Partition (117).

Absence of meaningful change in her situation, despite her relocation⁵⁰ in her own land, in comparison to the stylish life of the wealthy and powerful, makes Munni Bai wonder: "Who lost and who died in the partition?" (Qasim 211). Although she cannot discern the winners and losers, readers can tell that the rich easily win because they possess enormous property to use freely wherever they are whereas people on the margin like Munni Bai fall into the category of the losing class. Torn off their native soil, they belong nowhere. They have lost everything--their past, home, land, property, family, friends, identity, and dignity. The new nation has neither been able to address their concerns nor provide them anything substantial.⁵¹ Munni Bai has learnt very well to endure in silence her torture and trauma--which has almost become her second nature--yet she experiences immense loss and pain caused by the colossal human tragedy of South Asian Partition.

Also dealing with the woes of women, Rajinder Singh Bedi's⁵² "Lajwanti," recounts the tragic tale of Lajo, whom her husband Babu Sunderlal keeps at a deferential distance after her retrieval from the hands of Pakistani Muslims. Sunderlal's darling Lajo (endearing name) before the Partition, becomes "the defiled Lajwanti (touch-me-not) after she has lived through the gruesome experience of abduction."⁵³ Despite her rehabilitation, luckless Lajo is unable to lead an ordinary life because her husband complicates her

character by deifying her as a Devi (goddess) instead of treating her as his lovely wife.

Traumatized Lajwanti, "a victim of historical circumstance,"⁵⁴ desires that Sunderlal should embrace her as his brave wife who has survived liminal human brutality. She expects him to understand her--to "read the signs of pain and humiliation in her face," and see her tears and hear her sobs (Bedi 79). However, Sunderlal fails to do so because he does not look at her as his beloved "Lajo," but elevates her to the stature of a goddess, thereby denying her the existential status of a being made of flesh and blood with human feelings and emotions. As a dishonored wife, Lajwanti no more retains her earlier individuality or disposition to lead a normal family life despite her strong yearning to do so. Because she has lost her dear old self of lovely "Lajo," her identity swings between a fragile "Lajwanti" and a reverential "Devi."

Because Sunderlal feels deeply about the abducted and reclaimed women, he engages zealously in their rehabilitation work. Unlike many others, he does not wish them to commit suicide by taking poison or jumping into wells⁵⁵ for the preservation of their virtue, honor, and chastity. Also, he urges people to be kind to the "mothers and sisters today" who have fallen victims to "the brutality and the rapacity of the rioters" (71). Refusing to view the "recovered women" (Bedi 72), as cowards,⁵⁶ Sunderlal implores the society to

⁵⁰ Miriam Cooke and Roshni Rustomji-Kerns, in *Blood into Ink: South Asian and Middle Eastern Women Write War*, aver that Partition violence renders Munni "doubly homeless" (117).

⁵¹ Pandey, in *Remembering Partition*, alludes to Ayesha Jalal to express the opinion that the creation of Pakistan failed to satisfy the interest of Muslim mass, and thus, it could not cater the very needs of the people who created it (51).

⁵² Rajinder Singh Bedi (1920-1984), a highly respected Urdu writer, won the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1970 for his novel, *Ek Chadar Maili Si* (translated into English as *I Take This Woman*). Bedi worked in Hindi cinema as a film director, screenwriter and dialogue writer and produced several film-scripts and short stories. *Ek Chadar Maili Si* was made into a film in Pakistan, and

later in India. In 2006, Neena Gupta made a telefilm out of his story "Lajwanti," too.

⁵³ Kumar, *Narrating Partition*, 77.

⁵⁴ Bhalla, Introduction to *Short Stories About the Partition of India*, I-III, xl.

⁵⁵ Pandey, in *Remembering Partition*, writes about the atrocious case of the collective suicide of about ninety Sikh women who drowned themselves in a well in Thoa Khalsa, in Rawalpindi district, Punjab to escape abduction, rape, and religious conversion, or to preserve the honor of their community (85).

⁵⁶ Menon and Bhasin, in *Borders and Boundaries*, note the information provided by Munni in Jammu about Aunt Veeran from Muzaffarabad who refused to die by taking poison, that she was

accept them warmly because he genuinely believes that rejecting these “innocent Sitas” would be as wrong and cruel as the banishment of mythological mother Sita, who had been deceitfully abducted by Ravana (75).

Based on his principle, Sunderlal welcomes his wife to his home unlike many hypocrites who contrary to their passionate advocacy for rehabilitation, refuse to take them back reasoning that they have been despoiled.⁵⁷ However, despite his open-hearted, respectful treatment of Lajwanti, Sunderlal fails to own her as his beloved wife. He neither shows any inclination to listen to her agonizing tale of capture and torture, nor gives her any chance to explain “all that she had suffered so that she could feel clean again” (Bedi 81). Apart from divesting her of mortal attributes, the “excessive kindness” Sunderlal showers on Lajwanti becomes a cause for her added apprehension (82). Their relationship lacks “any human touch of intimacy,”⁵⁸ as the deification both alienates and silences Lajwanti with her sorrow “locked up in her breast” (82).

In addition to Lajo’s plight, “Lajwanti” also refers to moments when other women are bartered like goods as in Antharjanam’s “A Leaf in the Grass” and Qasim’s “Where Did She Belong?” At one point, the narrator says: “At the Wagah border, Pakistan returned sixteen of our women in exchange for sixteen of theirs (Bedi 77). Additionally, Bedi’s text validates the concept in Qasim’s story that a woman’s body serves as “a highly contested site in any patriarchal society.”⁵⁹ Besides, the story also provides instances in which cold blooded people

“trade in flesh, in living and suffering human beings” (just as in Shahab’s “Ya Khuda”) and buy and sell⁶⁰ girls and women “like cows in a cattle fair” (Bedi 78). Despite the tragic account of other women, the story focuses on Lajo, an example of the barbarity of Partition and poignantly presents an account of her trauma especially after the acquisition of new persona and the drama of (un)acceptance by Sunderlal.

H. V. Savithramma’s⁶¹ “Refugee,” also about the agony of women during devastating Partition, resembles Bedi’s “Lajwanti” in so far as the protagonist’s wishes to accept his abducted wife, Tulasi is concerned. After she goes missing, Chandra, the medical practitioner in Rawalpindi, thinks much like Sunderlal: “If I find Tulasi now, I’ll gladly welcome her home and install her again in the shrine of my heart” (Savithramma 323). Pangs of separation from her for long induces him to accept his wife if she comes back alive from Pakistan. As Chandra wants to get rid of his haunting past, he expresses his willingness to take anything if only the traumatizing memory of Tulasi “got away with him” (Savithramma 319). Shocked profoundly by his wife’s kidnap, he feels “even the sight of her death” would be better than the anguish he lives in (319).

Wishing to recover himself from trauma, Chandra listens to the sermons of Gandhi who convinces him to accept and welcome refugee women with “love and faith” rather than reject them as outcastes (Savithramma 323). As the recovered women have not chosen the life of immorality or dishonor, Gandhi expresses the opinion that to snub them as impure “is a matter of great shame,” and

“made to feel ashamed of her ‘cowardice,’ her lack of courage in embracing her death” (54).

⁵⁷ Asaduddin, in “Fiction as History,” rightly states that abducted women “were not just victims of violence and rape by ‘enemies,’ but were also made to suffer in their own homes and at the hand of their own people. Thousands of women were rejected by their husbands and families and had no option but to live out their lives in ashrams and brothels” (326).

⁵⁸ Nishi Upadyaya, “Fair Treatment to the Fair Sex,” 52.

⁵⁹ Prakash, *Writing Partition*, 110.

⁶⁰ Butalia, in *Other Side of Silence*, observes that girls and women were bought and “actually sold in the bazar” (34-35).

⁶¹ Born in Bengaluru, H. V. Savithramma (1913-1995) has published several novelettes, a major collection of short stories and a novel entitled *Site-Rama-Ravana and Vimukthi*. Her short story collections include *Nirashsrithe*, *Marumaduve*, and *Sarida Beralu*. A translator of Rabindranath Tagore’s *Naukhaghata* and *Gora*, this well-known Kannada writer has received prestigious literary prizes such as Indo-Soviet award and the Karnataka Sahitya Academy award.

that they must be accorded “respect and honor.”⁶² Chandra develops a soft corner for the poor, displaced women,⁶³ impressed by the “proximity of the Mahatma,” which confers on him inexplicable peace. Hoping that his service “would somehow benefit Tulasi,” he provides them with medical assistance (322). Also, in memory of his beloved daughter, Radha, whose death makes him cry “like a little boy,” he renders loving help to several orphans (321). Chandra’s aggrieved heart lightens as he extends helping hands toward the victimized people while he feels relieved when he shares his grief with Tulasi’s father, Srinivasa Rao, and mother, Saraswathamma who cries constantly thinking of her daughter.

As he is prompted by noble thoughts, Chandra initially contemplates warm reception of Tulasi; however, he declines to take her back to his life (like Sunderlal) when he learns about the child she has begotten during abduction. He fails to obey the Mahatma’s words to accept gifts “with humility and faith” without judging anybody (Savithamma 324). Although Tulasi’s father accepts her with the newborn child, Chandra dares not bring them to his home because the child’s presence would constantly remind him of his wife’s “dishonour” (Savithamma 325). Since Tulasi insists he should “take [them] both” if he wants her back, Chandra abandons her condemning to a life of loneliness and hardship (325). This way, Partition riot “tears up the fabric”⁶⁴ of Tulasi’s family life, which she loses forever. Long span of suffering “burn[s] away her gentleness,” leaving with her “the hardness of a stone in the face

of this hard world” (325). Her tragic life, along with that of her “crying” mother, is once again a reminder, how women were “at the receiving end”⁶⁵ of Partition violence.

In the same vein, Ramanada Sagar’s⁶⁶ “Pimps” depicts the predicament of an abducted young mother, Nirmala, who represents “women, wives, mothers, caught in the tangles of a messy, egoistic Partition; women left divided, homeless.”⁶⁷ While the text deals with defilement of women by men of the other community, it focuses on the painful experience of Nirmala, the protagonist, who having rescued herself becomes the victim of her husband’s betrayal. Told from the perspective of Hindu Nirmala, the narrative recounts how after becoming a captive like several women of her village, she serves the riotous Muslim mob as a slave in her own house before she is taken across the river Ravi. Although brave Nirmala escapes the captors and returns home “through her own initiative,”⁶⁸ her husband and father-in-law refuse her entry on the pretense that her character has been tarnished.

When Nirmala comes back proudly from the enemy camp with her son Prem in her arms, she receives no appreciation for her courage. Ignoring the risk she has taken to flee from her captors, and to save Prem from being washed by the waters of the Ravi, the debased males turn blind eyes to her daring deeds. The house exudes “deathlike silence,” while the men exhibit slow and cold response to her arrival, suggesting that they have already disowned⁶⁹ Nirmala for her “impurity” resulting

⁶² Menon and Bhasin, quote Gandhi in *Borders & Boundaries* (99).

⁶³ Menon and Bhasin, in *Borders & Boundaries*, also refer to Nehru who censors the unwillingness of relatives to accept the abducted girls and women, and his public appeal to bestow on them their “tender and loving care” (99).

⁶⁴ Butalia, *Other Side of Silence*, 284.

⁶⁵ Butalia, “Community, State and Gender,” 34.

⁶⁶ Ramanand Sagar (1917-2005), an active member of the Progressive Writers’ Association, was a recipient of a gold medal in Sanskrit and Persian from the University of Punjab. He worked as an editor of the popular newspaper *Daily Milap*, and published stories, poems, and plays. He wrote

the screenplay of a popular Hindi film *Barsaat* before becoming a producer and director of several films. Best known for his television serials such as *Ramayana*, *Krishna*, and *Luv-Kush*, Sagar was awarded the Padma Shri in 2000. He was deeply influenced by the Partition of 1947.

⁶⁷ Rakhshanda Jalil, “Urdu Stories, in Translation: Read Short Fiction by Renu Behl, Ramanand Sagar and Krishan Chandar,” (www.firstpost.com).

⁶⁸ Basu, “Restored, or Doubly Displaced?” (cafedissensus.com).

⁶⁹ Mushirul Hasan, in *India Partitioned: The Other Face of Freedom*, observes that in the story the

from her forcible capture (Sagar 197). The despicable father-in-law ludicrously chants “Ram, Ram” as if to invoke the Lord to purify him from her “polluting touch” (197).

Having already considered Nirmala a soiled individual, unfit to be accepted back, the males in the family exhort her to speak low⁷⁰ so that no one wakes up or notices her because like multitudes of other parents, they dared not disclose the fact of her abduction.⁷¹ Since forcibly carried and befouled women and girls committed suicide by hanging themselves or jumping into rivers or wells (as in the case of Thoa Khalsa in March 1947) to save their family honor, her father-in-law thought Nirmala would do the same. However, her action contrary to his expectation leads him to assume that his daughter-in-law has gone mad. A conservative, pseudo-Hindu pundit, he hints at the rejection of Nirmala (literally, the pure one) in the manner of Lord Rama’s banishment of the chaste mother, Sita. Like the father, his ignoble son too believes that since Nirmala has lost her virtue, she must be abandoned so that her presence does not taint the family name or contaminate the environment.

Since warring communities treated women’s bodies as territories⁷² or locations to secure firm foothold against the “enemy,” they engaged in a kind of contest to possess and despoil women to defeat or put the other community to shame. Therefore, if the males from one religion attacked the females from the other to desecrate them, the men from the victim side would then counterattack the women from the former group as acts of

retaliation⁷³ which could sometime continue in an endless chain of blood and brutality. Such retaliatory gesture finds space in Sagar’s “Pimps” as when the contemptible father-in-law tries to console Nirmala by telling her not to feel sad as the Hindus have taken “full revenge” on the Muslims by abducting “many more of their women” (Sagar 198). The old man pompously and shamelessly declares the presence in his house of two such women who could be used as items of entertainment, or sexual pleasure.

The father-in-law’s announcement also illustrates how men considered women as objects for revenge or treated them as tokens of victory and defeat associated with the prestige of family or community through which the victimizers could demean the group of the victims. They forced women to make great sacrifices—including that of life—specially to satisfy the male ego of their community. Accordingly, the male relations of Nirmala expect her to appease their egoistic sense of honor by committing suicide which she refuses to oblige. She considers it shameful to surrender herself to fulfill the unjust demand of her mean father-in-law and weakling husband, who provides “pusillanimous response”⁷⁴ to aggressive Muslim snatchers by fleeing the field “like a coward” instead of fighting for her protection (Sagar 198).

Therefore, labelling both her husband and father-in-law as pimps and procurers, Nirmala decides to forsake the home to escape their trap. However, she has “no safe haven” to go to, because as partners in brutality,⁷⁵ both Indian and Pakistani

author shows “how women are always at the receiving end—first they suffer at the hands of the aggressors and then at the hands of the members of their own community where they do not find acceptance or succour” (192).

⁷⁰ See Butalia’s *Other Side of Silence* for “familial silence” regarding abduction (283-284).

⁷¹ Menon and Bhasin, in *Borders and Boundaries*, observe that myriads of parents “could not say openly that their daughters had been abducted” (77).

⁷² Menon and Bhasin, in *Borders and Boundaries*, note that a woman body was considered a “territory to be conquered” (43).

⁷³ Ravikant and Saint, in Introduction to *Translating Partition*, observe that “terrible incidents of attacks, counterattacks, retaliation, and “further atrocities in the name of revenge” made life awfully difficult for people (xiii).

⁷⁴ Basu, “Women, Violence, Displacement,” 116.

⁷⁵ Menon and Bhasin, in “Recovery, Rupture, Resistance: Indian State and Abduction of Women during Partition,” explain that men belonging to their own community posed as much threat to women as those from the opponent groups (WS-2).

men “dance around the naked body of women” everywhere, ripping apart the “thin veneer of decency” (Sagar 199). Nirmala believes that many patches of Indian land are stained “with the blood of women who were raped by both India and Pakistan in tandem” because she thinks that males from the countries share the common logic of exploiting women to satisfy their libidinal instincts (199).

Like innumerable besmirched women, Nirmala becomes a social reject and suffers in the hands of the enemies as well as her own people. Since hostile circumstances reduce her to the status of a being who has lost her house, her husband, her son, her community, her country, and her identity, Nirmala tries unsuccessfully to kill herself by drowning in the Ravi. However, the river compels her to continue her painful existence rather than accept her suicide attempt. Her family also sentences Nirmala to permanent torment as if she must bear criminal punishment for her innocence in place of the real culprit who has ruined her life even though it is she who has been “robbed of her chastity” (Sagar 199).

Historical texts have pointed out that if families often deserted abducted women after their recovery as in the case of Nirmala, many victimized women themselves declined to re-unite with their relatives to avoid ignominy. The reason some newly married young women forwarded was that, by going back to their old homes, they did not want to ruin the marriage they themselves arranged or performed out of their “own free will.”⁷⁶ Accordingly, they stood strongly against recovery and return for the fear of double shame of abduction

as well as the immorality associated with multiple marriages.

“A Visitor from Pakistan” by Ramlal ⁷⁷ presents such a case of failed recovery⁷⁸ in relation to its protagonist Saraswati who refuses to go back to her former husband. The author creates a bizarre situation⁷⁹ in which both husband and wife presume each other to be dead in the “carnage of Partition.”⁸⁰ Before starting to live as the wife of her benefactor, Sunderdas, the protagonist searches and waits for her former husband Baldev for months without success. After she begets two children from the second husband, the first one suddenly appears⁸¹ on the scene, putting her in a difficult situation.

When Saraswati encounters Baldev, she blushes with shame, and sheds tears turning “pale and sorrowful” (Ramlal 214). The dilemma intensifies further by his enquiry about her decision: “Saraswati, give me an answer. . . I want an answer from you and only you” (220). Resisting his proposal to return to Baldev, she opts to live with her new husband, Sunderdas, who has not only risked his life for her during adversity but also helped her parents re-settle in India (219). As stunned as Saraswati is at the appearance of Baldev, the parents too are puzzled to see him alive. Similar is the situation of Baldev who dares not dictate his legally wedded wife to join him back to Pakistan.

Saraswati cannot accompany Baldev because after a long harrowing experience, she has just relocated and re-settled with the man who has protected her all along. At the juncture when she is leading quite a happy conjugal life, Baldev comes rushing from the other side of the border to claim her. His re-appearance puts Saraswati’s mind into a

⁷⁶ Menon and Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries*, 77.

⁷⁷ Born in Miyaan Vaali in undivided Punjab (now in Pakistan), Ramlal (1923-) is an important Urdu writer who has published about fourteen collection of short stories, six novels and several radio plays. Writers such as Krishan Chander, S. H. Manto, and Prem Chand influenced his initial writing style. As he worked in railways, many of his stories revolve around rail travel.

⁷⁸ Bhalla, in Introduction to *Short Stories About the Partition of India*, includes “A Visitor from Pakistan” in the group of “stories of lamentation

and consolation” that “mourn for those who were killed and still urge forgiveness” (xxxvii).

⁷⁹ Menon and Bhasin, in *Borders and Boundaries*, state that such acts of resistance against “forcible return” (though mostly concerning young girls) by unwilling women created awkward situations for the people around (73).

⁸⁰ Asaduddin, “Fiction as History,” 326.

⁸¹ During Partition, relatives often separated from each other in strange and critical situations, and suddenly appeared before their people years after they had been presumed to be dead.

conflict unable to decide if she should leave Sunderdas and go back to Baldev. That is, Saraswati is trapped between her first husband whom she presumed dead and her present husband who has looked after her and shared her family's trials and tribulations through the mayhem of Partition.

Saraswati's mother further adds to her tension by suggesting her to commit suicide presuming that the second marriage would ruin her life by bringing infamy: "Her reputation lies in mud.... She has two husbands now" (Ramlal 215). Reasoning absurdly, the mother concludes that Saraswati, who had been able to escape from Pakistan with her dignity intact, has now fallen to disgrace by marrying twice. To avoid the shameful degradation and save her prestige, the mother asks: "Why don't you kill yourself, Saraswati?" (215). She thinks that "death is the only solution left" to wipe off the marks of her daughter's dishonor (215).

If not for a man who comes with a government order⁸² asking the former husband to quit the country, Saraswati would be left strained and crying without any relief. However, thanks to the savior, the tragedy of the protagonist as well as the text ends with Baldev's "announcement of intended return to Pakistan"⁸³ without his wife. Unable to win back Saraswati, he leaves India after a short stay in the land just as "a visitor from Pakistan" (Ramlal 220). Despite his "infinite love" for his rightful wife, the "beautiful woman with intoxicating eyes," he returns to his country empty handed, condemned to lead a lonely life of mental agitation just as his wife lived earlier (Ramlal 214). Saraswati's abduction and return, the re-appearance of Baldev, and the mother's harsh words, deeply hurt

Saraswati, who still refuses to join her first husband assuming that to relocate once again by betraying Sunderlal would really be painful.⁸⁴

At the time of Partition, thousands of girls and women shied away from joining their former husbands or parents after their marriage, or re-marriage in alien places. They settled well with their newly wed husbands leading quite normal life. When their relatives or recovery officers tried to approach them, they offered strong resistance by either hiding, or by simply rejecting the proposal to return to the earlier homes. Several abducted and raped women "did not want to face the family because of shame and sheer embarrassment they felt."⁸⁵ In case of young girls, the protest sometimes would be so "powerful and searing"⁸⁶ that they would outrightly warn families and government officials to drop the idea of taking them back. Aware of the fate of many recovered women who "found it difficult to gain acceptance back in their original families and communities,"⁸⁷ they showed willingness to be killed rather than leave their present husbands arguing that to re-marry would be immoral and dangerous.

Because of the persistent distress—pain and shame even after their recovery from foreign lands and unfamiliar hands—several women committed suicide, lost mental balance, or turned alcoholics.⁸⁸ Undoubtedly, some of them persevered and engaged successfully in re-construction of their life with or without the help of their former friends and close relatives. Even those who could re-settle in earlier homes, moved out of them to "join the work force"⁸⁹ to supplement their family income. Others distanced themselves from their home and relations

⁸² Menon and Bhasin, in *Borders and Boundaries*, explain that Recovery and Restoration Bill of abducted persons had a provision that authorized a qualified government officer "to receive and hold the person in custody and either restore such person to his or her relatives or convey such person out of India" (72).

⁸³ Kamra, "Ruptured Histories: Literature on the Partition," 121.

⁸⁴ Pandey, in *Remembering Partition*, maintains that abducted women showed reluctance "to risk everything once again" (182).

⁸⁵ Pippa Virdee, "Remembering Partition: Women, Oral Histories and the Partition of 1947," 55.

⁸⁶ Menon and Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries*, 97.

⁸⁷ Pandey, *Remembering Partition*, 182.

⁸⁸ Sudha Tiwari, in "Memories of Partition: Revisiting Saadat Hasan Manto," writes about the "futility of the exercise of rehabilitation" because of women's loss of mental balance, alcoholism and mass suicide after their recovery and disgrace in family (55).

⁸⁹ Menon and Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries*, 205.

under the compulsion to earn their daily bread, carrying eternally the burden of shame and guilt of their disrepute.

To summarize, the stories examined in this paper illustrate the agony of scores of abducted females on both side of the Radcliffe Line⁹⁰ during the division of the South Asian Subcontinent. Suffering of Hindu and Sikh women in Pakistan mirrored the bitter experiences of their Muslim counterparts in India and vice versa. Despite their peaceful nature, demeanor, and manner, as men hurt women severely, old, and young female bodies went through acute physical hardship and embarrassment in their endeavor to uphold the name and fame of their family, community, and country. Most of them lost their home and property, friends and family, identity and nationality, and experienced excessive poverty, loneliness, fear, anxiety, and helplessness, which considerably dampened their spirit. Unable to endure the insufferable predicament, many of the women killed themselves whereas some others could overcome the agonizing burden of life with patience, re-build themselves and re-shape their world. Notwithstanding the successful reconstruction of their new life by some of the rape survivors, most of the women lived the rest of their traumatized days as social rejects with their bowed heads and wounded hearts carrying additionally the stigma of disgrace and defeat of their family and community.

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⁹⁰ Radcliffe Line refers to the imaginary line drawn hastily by British cartographer, Cyril Radcliffe to

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