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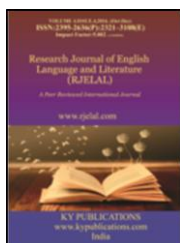
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TRAUMA AND TRIUMPH: FREEDOM AN IDIOM OF LOSS IN EASTERN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Trauma and Triumph: Gender and Partition in Eastern India by Jasodhara Bagchi and Subhoranjan- Dasgupta is an eye opening book dealing with the scourge of partition. The editors have drawn upon interviews with women who were uprooted in the fateful year of 1947. The work is a fine collection of diaries, memoirs and creative literature. The book is a nonfictional text and a fine revelation of history of displacement, rape and loss of women. The paper explicitly discusses the trauma of partition in 1947 in Eastern India. The lack of overt public discourse meant that people outside Bengal believed that impact of partition was limited in the east. The sufferings, the loss of life, livelihoods were very real but of a different nature from the fast moving horror of Punjab. In the East it seemed like an oozing wound. It brings out effectively the price being paid in terms of loss of homes, property and dignity by women. The paper probes deep into enormity of a situation which is both a historical and political reality and brings out its deeper consequences on female psyche.

Keywords: National Divide, Violence of Partition, East Indian Crisis, Women's loss, Patriarchy, Horror of Rape, Mass Murder, Displacement, Refugees, Identity Crisis.

The fateful year of 1947 marked the divisive moment when Pakistan in the North-West and Pakistan in the Far-East which later became Bangladesh were separated from India. It was a botched up surgical operation. A cold war broke out between Muslims on one side, Hindus and Sikhs on the other. Women were abducted, raped and forced into wedlock against their will. Over ten million were uprooted from their homelands. In a couple of months, a million were sloughed in cold blood. A deep sense of remorse set in on both sides when ill temper and hatred abated. Families were divided and close friends parted forever.

The book hints at some of the signposts in an attempt to open the deep scar on the mind and the body of Sonar Bangla, the youthful golden Bengal, the honey tongued mother whose sons

weep if there is a flicker of sadness on her face. An ever unfolding story of the abduction of this young mother from which there was no recovery. Its pull was one of being uprooted, loss of honour and dignity. Families huddled together on Sealdah Station platform and the streets of Calcutta. In the backdrop of events like sikh riots of 1984, riots in Bhagalpur, war of liberation of Bangladesh, the work weaves the painful narrative of abduction of women, rape, mass murder, and their lives as refugees.

Rabindranath Tagore describes Bengal as indivisible. Its soil, water, earth, fruit seems one and the event of partition of Bengal in 1905 turns futile. The country showed resistance in the form of swadeshi and boycott movements. Bengal was effectively represented as a feminine form- the

avenging and the affectionate reassuring mother. However the ghost of the later holocaust of the second partition of Bengal laid in the former. The representation of Bengal as three eyed mother goddess made cultural nationalism a strongly divisive force in the long run.

The rift between Hindus and Muslims drew them apart. The warning went in vain. The great killing of 1946 and the Noakhali riots ended on 15 August 1947, but the land was divided. The women became a symbol of family honour and chastity. This paved the way to glorification of Sati and other practices like Jauhar. The anti-colonial resistance turned the women of the subcontinent into potential victims of communal conflicts. The anxiety was shared by both Hindus and Muslims. Therefore, sexual purity of the women becomes a kind of moral regulation.

It reveals the sheer hypocrisy of the patriarchal foundation of the society. A woman's body turns out to be a pawn even in the process of nation building. This harping on abducted women as a central core of nation building is a pointer to the nation community nexus. In this context, Bagchi refers to Jyotirmoyee Devi's *Epar Ganga Opar Ganga (1968)*, a rare example of partition novel written by a female Bengali writer. It focuses upon violence and possibly the rape of a Hindu girl in East Bengal and her subsequent marginalization by her own community.

The defilement of communal honour through the violation of female sexuality is a thesis that resonates through the entire process of our nation building. The physical trauma of a young adolescent girl Sutara in post-partition secular India is presented in the novel. Her sexuality remains the centre of concern in the novel. The heroine grows to be a teacher of history in the capital city of India. The novel opens in one of her history classes as she teaches the class. Her lesson revolves around the weak and the fragile who don't find a room in the pages of history books.

As she pauses, her story becomes history. In a flashback readers get transported to a night in 1946. A sudden blaze of communal frenzy destroys the peace of a village in East Bengal. There is a complete havoc in a Hindu household. The father

disappears, mother jumps into the pond to save her honour. The young girl Sutara is molested and loses her consciousness. She is nursed back to health by her muslim neighbours. People are too embarrassed to answer her questions. But they know that her trials will not end with the assault on her body. Her trauma is yet to begin.

Tamijuddin, Sutara's father's friend whose family takes care of Sutara faces threat from her own community. As he confronts them the reply to him is an eye opener- "when were women not dragged and pulled out? Read their Puranas- didn't Ravan abduct Sita? And what about Draupadi"(16)? As Sutara's brother who is living in Calcutta gets to hear about her, his response is lukewarm. So she is escorted back to riot torn Calcutta of 1946-47.

Having been touched by a Muslim is never openly mentioned as the reason for the discrimination against her, but from the beginning she is treated as an untouchable outside the fold of caste and community. Her exclusion is most rigidly enforced as far as entry to the kitchen and drinking water are concerned. On one occasion she overhears the mistress of the house saying:

Six months in a Muslim household...what caste purity could such a girl be left with! All right, you have brought her here, but at least let her remain in a corner like hadis and bagdis. Instead, you have let her enter into all the household activities. Who knows what she has eaten and done in the past few months! What are we left with!
(40)

Sutara is sent off to a hostel run by Christian missionaries where she meets girls in similar ambiguous situations. Once again she was engulfed by fear. Everything was unfamiliar, the teachers were European. Most of the girls were orphans, their parents lost in the famine and others were victims of Partition. These young girls had forgotten which tradition they belonged to. In a much acclaimed book by Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments (1992)*, 'community' and 'women' are presented as two fragments of the nation.

At the moment of the birth of two nation-states in the place of one colonial state, the bodies

of numberless women are brought under the control of their respective communities to complete the grand act of vivisection. There are hordes of women who like Sutara witnessed (from the margins of the community) the incomprehensible birth of two nation-states. Contrary to what the rhetoric might suggest, the author's anger is not the righteous anger of the patriarch protesting against our women being violated by them. It is rather directed against the dual control exercised by patriarchy.

Thus, riot victims like Sutara are hit twice by patriarchy. First by the male of one community who establishes his own identity by exercising his territoriality over her body. Second by her own community which invokes compulsions of ritual purity to exclude her from the ritually pure domains of hearth, marriage and drinking water. Her anger is focused on this reduplicated aggression- the first as physical assault on a woman's body and sexuality; the second, a prolonged and unbearable panoptic gaze by the community over her body and mind.

It is against this ideology of the 'purity' of the community that the protagonist of Jyotirmoyee Devi's novel has transgressed. No histrionics or heroism attends the act for she has been robbed of her agency. Had it not been for education, Sutara would have been washed away like so much flotsam. One need not wonder that in the formative years of gender ideology, women's education was seen as a threat to female sexuality.

The marginalization by the community persists. Sutara is particularly unwanted at weddings and is considered an obstruction to the marriage prospects of future generations. As a single girl she is free to take a job in Delhi where she meets victims of the Punjab partition. It is not difficult for her to comprehend the game. It is bodies like hers that have to be expunged in order that the community may nestle and breed in the bosom of the nation-state.

The Bengali fiction- short stories in particular, abound in stories of Partition and Hindu-Muslim riots as well. In *Jaiba (The Biological)* by Narendranath Mitra, a Hindu woman is raped just before Partition. She is not allowed to abort and her scientifically minded husband uses the baby to study

the impact of environment during conception on the formation of the child's personality. The bourgeois freedom that the woman is supposed to enjoy in the newly liberated India turns into a nightmare for her. She is raped, restored and then made an object of a scientific experiment.

There was no official programme of recovery of the abducted women in the Bengal Partition. In a recent interview, Phulrenu Guha said that she did not agree with Mridula Sarabhai, though she was a close friend of hers that women should be exchanged. She said that if a woman had made a new home for herself she should not be uprooted yet again. The absence of state run surveillance turned the monstrous displacement of Partition into a physical and psychological holocaust.

The massive influx and exodus of people belonging to the same linguistic group signalled a displacement at a scale that was unimaginable. This is the kind of displacement that happens during war and the systematic carnage that follows ethnic violence. As Ashoka Gupta, the well-known social worker and Gandhian activist, said in a panel discussion organized by the School of Women Studies that they were appalled to see this terrible displacement. The loss of lives and property happened due to cool, calculated agreement between leaders at the top who remained virtually unscathed by this unprecedented violence.

The early years of independence were scarred by this upheaval. From about 1949 Calcutta started swarming with refugees. They first occupied the railway platforms of Sealdah and then formed refugee colonies that dotted the outskirts of the city. The indignity of their existence was summed up in the word 'refugee' designated as 'marginal men' by Prafulla- Chakraborty who was a militant leader of the refugees.

A play that ran to full houses in Calcutta and was subsequently made into a film called *The New Jews* by Salil Sen point to the supportless, dangling condition of the thousands of Bengalis rendered homeless. Women's protest against this wanton uprooting is recorded in a memorable shot in Nema Ghosh's film *Chhinnomool*, showing a group of Hindu peasants leaving East Bengal. An old

woman of the community does not see the point of leaving the ancestral home.

The refugee population transformed Calcutta from a city of arm-chair 'babus' devoted to genteel culture into a militant, angry, leftist city. The middle class women were uprooted from the shelter of their village homes and came out to work. As Rachel Weber discovered through her interviews that not all women were happy about this freedom thrust upon them. Ritwik- Ghatak, the filmmaker of the Bengal Partition, has epitomized the new refugee women in the resettled colonies on the outskirts of Calcutta in the epic figure of Nita, the heroine of *Meghe Dhaka Tara (The Star Veiled by Clouds)*.

The nonfictional masterpiece edited by Bagchi and Dasgupta brings before the readers a similar ubiquitous dilemma as stated in one of the chapters based on *Kanta Tare Prajapati (Butterfly on barbed wire)* by Selina Hossain:

Her body crumpled up, not touched now even by the icy cold, ghostly silence in the cell. Ila lies motionless on the floor. The weals on her back burning, blood still drips near her forehead ... she doesn't try to reach out and touch it. Feet aching and heavy, a strange sound in her breast, she is unable to close her eyes (55).

As she closes her eyes, the innocent face of Harek floats before her eyes. In the post partition riots, the man is beaten mercilessly to death. Ila is being interrogated about the murderers by the sub inspector- "If you don't confess all about the murders now, you'll be stripped" (60). She is naked now. Her clothes have been forcibly taken away. She is imprisoned in a tiny cell. Clothes are only an outer covering. She ponders how does this matter if clothes are taken away. Harek has given her something as big as this earth:

Her head hums with pain ... Ramen would stroke her forehead gently when she had a headache. If she suffered too much, her mother-in-law would mix hair oil with a little water and massage it into her scalp. You have to take care of yourself ... and your body (65).

As she recalls the past and then hopelessly her present, it breaks her illusion. There was never any time to take care of body. It seems as if her body is suffering wounds of a thousand vulture-talons. There were countless palms all around the twelve villages. Hundreds of vultures would roost on the crowns of those palms, their wings outspread, soaking up the sunshine. She had never thought that their talons would be so poisonous that they would burn her to ashes from head to toe in an instant.

There were many women like Ila and Sutara who being broken and shattered were trying to rehabilitate their bruised bodies. In the partitioned Bengal, several refugee colonies were formed especially in South Calcutta. Many were trying to recreate a home. However, the relationship between spatial form and social process becomes evident when we discuss the difference between the concepts of house and home. Whereas a house is the physical structure of residence, home represents particular social relations both inside and outside the physical structure. Such relations which link residents to other families, to communities and to the state.

The concept of home conjures up images of family, warmth, security, emotion and stability. Bengalis are by tradition deeply attached to their homes. This is where women make their entrance as it is most commonly women who are responsible for forging a relationship between the physical and social aspects of the built environment. They are responsible for making a house into a home and imbuing it with love, warmth and the smells of home cooking.

Women's domain, sphere and place have traditionally been inside the home. They have across epochs and cultures been associated with a private world juxtaposed with a public world of men. Both spaces carry with them certain social and economic connotations- the enshrinement of the ethics of care, morality and selflessness which supposedly exists in the domestic realm compared to the world of men where self-interest and profit reign supreme. The private/public, inside/outside, nature/culture dichotomies and the pervasive influence of these

dualisms is the subject of many early feminist tracts (Lamphere 1974; Rosaldo 1974).

However, as feminist academics begin to examine the subject nature of women, they are questioning the usefulness of such restrictive dichotomies used so frequently to determine women's place in relation to men's. These dichotomies are neither fixed nor watertight. The positioning of a male public world and a female private world as opposites is not reflective of the permeability and interdependency which exists between the home and the world. They do not reflect the particularities of culture or of historical moment.

During times of political and social upheaval, the division between public and private spaces becomes radically altered. The private life becomes the subject of national discourse and the home takes on a new significance as a site of political activity. The reorganization of space becomes especially important when discussing the displacement which occurs when people leave or are forced to flee their homelands. The act of migration involves more than just a change in physical environment. It involves a rupturing of bonds to a place and to a place based identity. (Buttimer and Seamon 1980)

Recreating the home puts increased pressure on the domestic sphere. The boundaries between public and private shift back and forth to accommodate this reorganization of space. In examining the resettlement of the East Pakistani refugees in the colonies of south Calcutta, one finds new definitions of what constitutes public and private space and in the process, a redefinition of gender.

The creation of refugee colonies involved a reorganization of space as well as an alteration of the emotional affiliations with the home. With this reorganization of space came a refiguring of gender and women's relationship to public and private spaces. As nations and communities reconstruct themselves, there is bound to be a change in the way women are perceived, signified and deployed to serve new purposes and agendas. During this period, the new agenda was the reconstruction of the home and of the homeland.

In East Pakistan, houses were located in more rural, less densely populated areas. They were designed for huge joint families, sometimes housing up to 80 people. After they moved to Calcutta, they found that their space had shrunk and that their families had neither the property nor the finances to build a separate home. Most could not afford to build more than one room during the first decade of occupation. In this sense, one of the physical barriers between public and private disappeared after the move to West Bengal.

Women shared their space with men, sleeping in the same room as their in-laws and brothers-in-law. They complained about the lack of privacy and of the permeability of the flimsy, split bamboo walls. Many became seriously ill as wind, rain and cold seeped through the exterior of their hutments. However, their exposure to the world of men brought them into contact with new ideas, with the business and political issues the men discussed. It brought about a politicization and a growing awareness of the communal problems faced by the refugees living in the colonies.

Partition and refugees were therefore, intertwined. Hindus in their millions fled from West Punjab to India. An equivalent number of Muslims left East Punjab and north India for Pakistan i.e. 4.7 millions each way. The tremendous sufferings, the loss of life, and the brutalities to which they were exposed defy description. An interchange of population took place in a matter of a few weeks. A two way migration on either side of a magnitude hitherto unknown in history took place.

The upheaval was formidable and grim. So final and inevitable it was that it had to receive the urgent attention of the Central government. The displaced persons presented an immediate problem. Their rehabilitation could not be delayed. Immediate policies had to be formulated and implemented. However, in the truncated province of West Bengal there was at first a deceptive calm. It was not till December 1949 that it became obvious that an influx of refugees from East Pakistan had started. They came through a great ordeal.

Some were murdered on the way. Women were raped and many were mutilated or wounded. Terror stricken they arrived half dead, weary and

needed psychological treatment. Their arrival in West Bengal and Assam had its repercussions. Many Muslims started leaving for East Pakistan. But with Jawaharlal Nehru as Prime Minister and Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy as chief minister in West Bengal, the secular character of the state was maintained and due protection was given to the minority.

On the Indian side of the border, the situation was quickly brought under control. As a result the number of Muslims who ultimately left West Bengal was negligible. The exodus was a one-way affair. The Hindus from East Pakistan continued to seek refuge in West Bengal and Assam in ever increasing number because the Pakistani government could not reassure them. The figures of the exodus from both sides bear testimony to the difference of approach in the two countries. By the end of 1956, 3.33 million refugees had come into West Bengal, Assam, and Tripura.

During the first few years following the creation of Pakistan there was considerable reluctance on the part of the Central government to acknowledge that the displaced persons from East Pakistan were here to stay. The situation continued to deteriorate but the Central government seemed unable to recognize this. The unwillingness to accept the facts and the reluctance of the Central government to rehabilitate the refugees in the east is one of the major reasons why even today the refugee problem in eastern India has not been solved.

Bengal enjoyed open borders for a long period of time. It was not until 1953 that passports were introduced and only after the 1965 Indo-Pakistan war were visas required. Rail and air communication also stopped after the 1965 war and only very restrictive overland communication was maintained. People across the border both for trading as well as other social reasons persistently defied these restrictions.

The Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971 and the consequent mass exodus of people fleeing from persecution interrogated the same borderlines and boundaries. Despite all this porousness, illegal trade or smuggling has been a primary concern for successive national governments. Such border incidents or skirmishes between border forces have

also captured front page news. This phenomenon reached its peak in contemporary times when thousands of economic migrants, Hindus as well as Muslims have crossed frontiers in search of better means of livelihood.

But as far as Partition is concerned, there has been a further silencing of the processes at work apparent in the writing about the Partition of the two Bengals. Although fiction and autobiographical writings have dominated the Partition discourse on both sides, the voices of Hindu migrants from East Bengal have been more prominent than Muslim migrants from West Bengal. The reason for this is of course an open question which awaits further research.

One of the important distinctions between the two migrant groups has been created by the political conditions in the country to which they migrated. For Hindus, the experience of dispossession and nostalgia for their homes has been very pronounced and glorified in their writings. For many Muslims of a particular generation the journey to Pakistan was like a journey to a promised land. But this image later became tarnished as Pakistan entered its most repressive stage under the Ayub regime, the brunt of which was borne by the people of East Bengal.

In the oppressive atmosphere of a martial law regime whose favorite occupation was 'India-bashing', it was understandably difficult to write. It was quite impossible to be nostalgic about one's homeland in India. There is therefore, a reticence even now among Bengali Muslims to talk of their 'desh' (ancestral home) publicly. In recording family histories, however, one succeeded to a certain extent in overcoming this barrier. The nostalgic memories of childhood, growing up, family ties and accompanying emotions find a space where one can talk about them freely without the direct intervention of nationalist politics.

There is yet another phenomenon which distinguishes East Bengali Hindu reminiscences of Partition from those promoted by the Muslim migration from West Bengal. This is the Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971. Memories of 1947 or Partition have often been superseded by memories of 1971, or movements which led to war of 1971

because in the quest for a Bengali identity many Bengali Muslims had to rethink their positions. Thus, when memories of Partition are revived, they are either blocked or colored by memories of the year of 1971.

Many Muslims came to the east from West Bengal and Bihar in the hope of finding their promised land. Many progressive cultural activists and professionals came from Calcutta with the ambition of constructing a new nation that would give shape and color to their dreams. But for most this dream was short-lived. The unexpected outcome was repression of Bengali identity and the imposition of a new cultural identity of Pakistan. The imposition of martial law generated spontaneous resistance from the people. It was in the form of Language movement of 1952 or Anti-Ayub demonstrations of 1969.

These events culminated in the Liberation War of 1971 for an independent Bangladesh. In the nationalist writing of history these events appear in a linear scheme. But the personal histories of those involved in or affected by these movements were far from linear. These events foreshadowed the contradictions of identity which individuals had to confront in their personal lives. They contested the different notions of nationhood in the political arena- one based on Bengali language and other on Islam. This is why even in present day Bangladesh, narratives of the Liberation War are still a site for contestation between rival nationalisms- Bengali and Bangladeshi.

Dominant historiographical trends construe the 1947 partition of the subcontinent as a product of the colonial state as well as a landmark in the progressive march towards achieving modern nationhood. In subsequent years this nationhood came to determine questions of citizenship and social exchange and to define personal identities for the people occupying the newly defined territories of India and Pakistan.

A major critique of this view has come from the subaltern school which maintains that there exist groups like peasants, women and others whose voices have remained silent or marginalized and who may possess a notion of community different from even in opposition to that of the nationalist

project. The focus should be on family histories using the subaltern perspective both as a point of departure as well as a springboard. Such a viewpoint explores the problematic of looking at the social history of people who though disempowered by developments beyond their control have at the same time struggled hard to retain an element of control in their effort to adapt to the new situation.

Family histories provide a conceptual tool through which such processes could be better understood. To focus on the family as an important intermediary site is to see how memories of individuals and generations are constructed and negotiated. This also reveals how personal identities of gender, class or nation are formed, conformed to or contested and confronted. The author has studied the case histories of two families- one a Muslim family from Barasat, West Bengal and the other a Hindu family from Barisal, East Bengal. In the latter case it is author's own family. However he is not the prime narrator here but his aunt who was a witness to Partition. In both cases the interviewees are men and women who crossed the border in 1947 or afterwards as a result of the fallout of Partition.

The structures of both families are of course different. While the family from Barasat was land centred and hence patrilineal and location-specific. The family from Banaripara was not dependent on land, it capitalized on education and the service sector. But many of the marriage alliances which took place were with the landed gentry. These alliances were used for resource pooling within the family. A general trend emerged where the inclination was to move towards the urban centres like Dhaka or Calcutta.

This was prompted by the need for white collar jobs. The gravitation towards the metropolis was not always through patrilineal ties but often by using connections through marriage. All this was a pre partition syndrome. When Partition occurred, each member of the family took his own decision. Calcutta was a mega city and metropolis of British India and hence the focal point of migration.

Urban migration had increased in the 1940s, especially during and after the famine of 1943. Dhaka and Mymen singh in the eastern parts

too had their attractions. The Muslim family from Barasat though land centred also lived in the vicinity of Calcutta. This determined their mindset when the option to move came up. Both concerns of property and living in the vicinity of Calcutta with educational and employment opportunities for their children became important considerations.

The pre-partition migration like any other urban migratory trend used family connections and contacts. This led to establishment of a chain which enabled other members of the family to follow. But during Partition this chain was stretched to its limits and often broke down. At this precise juncture migrants became refugees. Too many people were coming in at short notice and family resources were often inadequate to bear the burden. Many fictive kinships and extra family alliances too were made at this point.

Just as communal identities were negotiated within the family, notions of nationhood too were constructed and deconstructed therein. In Minhaj's family, the instruction of Pakistan as a homeland for Muslims was quite a popular idea. It was earnestly believed in by his eldest uncle, S. Ali. In 1947 S. Ali opted for Pakistan because he believed that Pakistan was the homeland for all the Muslims of the subcontinent.

Minhaj remembered that he had grown up in an atmosphere where the politics of the Muslim League held sway. S. Ali asked his nephew Momtaj, then a schoolboy in his teens to accompany him to the 'promised land'. But following their arrival in East Pakistan, the political atmosphere in the country gradually started heating up. There were demands of autonomy for East Bengal. Campuses were hot beds of politics.

Minhaj was involved in student politics. After his arrival he was asked by friends to join the New Student's Federation- the branch of the Muslim League which had supported the Ayub's regime. But in 1969, he was won over by the Bangladesh Chhatro Union, the student's wing of the Communist Party which had a fairly strong base at Jessore. In 1969 anti-Ayub demonstrations were held in the eastern wing of Pakistan. It left little doubt in anyone's mind including Minhaj's family back in

Barasat that the concept of Pakistan as the homeland of Muslims was foredoomed to failure.

In the case of author's family, his father seemed to retain a non-nationalist vision. He cherished a concept of the homeland, a sense of rootedness in his birth land and a commitment to stand by democratic ideals. He met his death at the hands of the Pakistan Army in 1971 when he was accused of possessing an identity which he had always resisted, that is, of being a Hindu. His professed identity of a humanist was not to be found anywhere in the vocabulary of Yahya Khan's barbaric regime.

The other members of family-grandmother, uncle and aunts were haunted by sheer sense of insecurity. The trauma of 1950 riots remained and their vision was still tainted by it. For them, Muslims in the abstract were still 'the other'. Like many Hindu families in West Bengal, they used the categories of Bengali and Hindus as synonymous. Thus, Muslims were excluded from their sense of nationhood. Partition was therefore an undeclared civil war. The religion based division of the country anticipated many of the questions that trouble us now across the subcontinent.

Partition posed the question of belonging in a way that polarized choice and allegiance. The destructive legacies and nightmarish memories of partition, its afterlife still guide our public policy and inhabit our progress from a colonial state to post-colonial democracy. The partition and its tragic aftermath inspired many creative minds in India and outside as well to create literary and cinematic descriptions of this event. While some writings depict the massacre, others concentrate on problems faced by refugees on both sides of the border. Partition occupies a significant place in the cultural and historical discourse of our country. It functions as a touchstone of our culture and polity. Therefore, attempts are being made to reconstruct and interpret this historical experience. Jasodhara Bagchi and Subhoranjan Dasgupta's work is one such significant step in this direction.

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