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YOUR VOICE

THE DIALOGUE BOX MAGAZINE

Partition Enquiries

SEPTEMBER 2023

IN THIS EDITION:

Echos of Partition

The Destroyed Self in Partition

Texts in Turmoil

Hidden Stories, Silent Selves

How Do I Anticipate?

OPEN  ACCESS

SEPTEMBER 2023
EDITION





Mission Statement & Editorial Process

We take pride in bringing various human rights and current affairs issues to the foray on a regular basis to our readers. The publication is a quarterly magazine which will be a compilation of essays, articles and artworks (including photo-essays and poems) written by practitioners, academics and students worldwide.

This is a thematic magazine and the entries are expected to critically reflect upon the individual themes concerned. This magazine will provide a platform to all ignited minds waiting to make their voices count through their writings and artwork.

Each entry will undergo a double-blind peer review on the content, style and originality by our experienced editorial team, comprising of academics, journalists, lawyers and students across the world. Contributions which do not meet the acceptable standards will be rejected and decisions of the editorial team will be final.



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Editor's Note



Because he was harmless, the guards let him stand right where he was while they got on with their work. He was quiet all night, but just before sunrise, he screamed. Officials came running from all sides. After fifteen years on his feet, he was lying face down on the ground. India was on one side, behind a barbed wire fence. Pakistan was on the other side, behind another fence. Toba Tek Singh lay in the middle, on a piece of land that had no name.

-Sa'adat Hassan Manto, Toba Tek Singh (Trans. by Richard McGill Murphy)

With this quote, at The Dialogue Box, we welcome our readers to go through an anthology curated, created and researched by various authors from multiple institutions. The quotation also marks the unending nature and discourse of Partition. Much like our previously published issues, the debate of Partition is perceived as important for contemporary discussion. What we seek in our issue for September is an unfortunate continuity that marked not just India but several constituencies around the world.

One has to ponder upon the idea of a displaced population due to arbitrary nation-formation processes. With such sudden displacements, the human psyche goes through layers of trauma that one cannot formulate or comprehend. Hence, disciplines like Trauma Studies, Memory Studies and Literary Studies help us to articulate a sort of metalanguage to discuss the testimonies of millions of people.

Furthermore, a looming question over the theme of the issue might also be temporally motivated. The valid criticism of, “Why do research on Partition, now?” For this, we have an apt description. Regarding the issues of Partition, one has to be chronologically sensitive. This sensitivity, or rather this forcibly generated sensibility, occurs only to remind us about the pastness of the present. The workings of trauma that travel through the majoritarian power blocs to the individual and marginalised survivors of the Partition. These streams of trauma do not just transcend time but also generations—giving rise to the famous concept of “postmemory”.

It explains the modification of ideologies concerning nation-building, national animosity and cultural beliefs of people who are still, to some extent, affected by the event. One cannot begin to discuss these issues without acknowledging the social and power relations that feed upon the event of separation.

These tacit power relations are reflected in literary texts related to the Partition. Thus, it is not a coincidence that our latest issue takes a more literary and cultural stance in understanding the plight of the people. The literary pieces become these screams of traumatic wounds that cry out for their relief. A form of relief that is not possible. Cathy Caruth's idea of trauma, thus, finalises and seals the (un)becoming of the traumatic subject. They are locked in a state where the traumatic event, because of its “belatedness” is stuck on a repeat. Like a horrifying scratched record playing in your mind involuntarily.

Much like any other injuries to the psyche, Partition was also only registered after some time. Under the banners of national freedom and Independence, it was supposed to be forgotten. But when has repression ever stopped the memory that the brain tries to repress? In this light, our latest issue has brought to you an emancipatory look at trauma. A step towards understanding the meanings that lay hidden within the masses who lived through it. A liberatory effort to listen to unheard testimonies.

Bilal Khan

Bilal Khan

Associate Editor, Your Voice Magazine



Echoes of Partition: The Aftermath and Enduring Impacts of the Split at the 38th Parallel



Charutha P

Articles

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Introduction

Seventy-eight years after the division of the Korean Peninsula into North and South, the upheaval has left lasting impressions on its people, both explicitly and implicitly. The Korean Peninsula had been a united territory for centuries under the Joseon dynasty until it fell into the hands of Japan in 1910. In 1945, following the defeat of Japan in World War II, the allied powers agreed to liberate Korea, and divide the Korean peninsula at the 38th parallel of latitude, and place it under the international trusteeship until the Koreans were ready for self-rule.



Image source: *Britannica*

The division was understood as a temporary one until; two occupational zones started organizing their own separate governments, with the pro-Communists formulating a government in the north under the supervision of the Soviet Union and the pro-democrats organizing a government in the south under the guidance of the US. Like any other partition, violence erupted in this one too, leading to a range of struggles and attacks on both sides. Military confrontations shortly after the division intensified to an extent, resulting in the infamous Korean War of the 1950s, further exacerbating the Cold War tensions. Despite the ideological and political differences between the North and South, many Koreans still long for the gradual unification of Korea as a single peaceful state.

Impacts: Partition of the Korean Peninsula

The partition of the Korean Peninsula has swayed and touched many aspects of the lives of Koreans. In addition to immediate impacts such as large-scale migrations, exploitation of women and children by USSR soldiers in the North, massive food scarcity, and widespread impoverishment among the Koreans, certain other prolonged impacts also affected them.

Economic Impacts

Following the partition, over two million Koreans migrated from the North to the South, resulting in adverse imbalances in the structure of the economy.

In 1945, the North had superiority over heavy industries like metals, electric power and chemical industries, while the South had an upper hand over light industries, machinery production, agriculture and commerce.

Lack of reliable data has made the task of assessing the North Korean economy strenuous. The South-Korean-based 'Bank of Korea' has been estimating the gross domestic product (GDP) of North Korea since 1991 with the aim of comparing the production and growth of both the nations. As per the available reports, the per capita GDP of the North and South since the Partition was stagnant until the 1980s. Subsequently, there has been steady growth in South Korean per capita GDP, while the North faced a firm declining trend with sluggish and outdated economic output. The centralized planned economy of the North vis-à-vis the market-oriented economy of the South can be considered the major cause of this visible economic contrast. Today, the South Korean economy has become one of the most advanced and productive economies in the world, promoting industrialization, technology, innovation and export-driven growth. Meanwhile North Korea has become a hyper-militarized state creating nuclear arms race threats to all its historic foes.

Social Impacts

The forced separation of countless families following the division has continued to create a lot of hardships among the people in these regions. Heavily restricted communication and travel between the two nations make reunion aspirations almost impractical. This, in turn, has caused a loss of cultural connections and detachment from their family roots.

Park's Memoir in Order to Live: A North Korean Girl's Journey to Freedom by Yeonmi Park, a North Korean defector, provides us loads of firsthand data regarding the dreary life under the bigoted rulers of North Korea. North Korea imposed strict restrictions on its citizens by suppressing dissent, limiting freedom and subjecting its people to a pervasive propaganda machine that promoted the ruling family and its ideologies.

Cultural Impacts

The partition has brought quite a lot of variations in the cultural aspects of the North and South Koreans with regards to values, beliefs, norms, and language. Though North Korea has continued preserving the traditional Korean culture, its citizens have been heavily controlled by the rulers. Restrictions on the cultural expressions of the North Koreans led to even the denial of their basic right of choice in matters of clothing, cuisines, festivals and religious beliefs. Nevertheless, the South Korean cultural industry flourished swiftly and the fame and glory of K-pop, K-Drama and its fashion and entertainment industries over time have reached their zenith.



A recent World Report released by World Rights Watch disclosed that over 1000 North Koreans fled to the South in 2019. The North Korean rulers retaliated to this by tightening their border control measures, resulting in a reduction in the rate of people fleeing the country. In 2020 and 2021, the numbers were just 229 and 48 respectively. Even after successfully fleeing to the South, the defectors encounter a lot of hardships, including trafficking, violence, and denial of educational and humanitarian assistance. As illegal immigrants, they live with the persistent terror of deportation. Furthermore, several other restrictions were foisted on outside influences by cutting off almost all its communication lines to South Korea in 2020. Deeply ingrained anti-imperialistic and anti-western sentiments and the promotion of loyalty to the ruling family by force and extreme nationalism have also widened the divide between the North and South.

Political Impacts

The masterminds behind the Korean division plan were US policymakers. Though it was a plan of the US to prevent the Soviets from occupying the entire Korean Peninsula, the proposal was accepted by the Soviets without even deliberating with the Koreans. The oblivious Koreans were astounded by the decision to partition the Korean peninsula. The geopolitical aspirations of foreign players like the US, Japan, the USSR and China resulted in the domination and promotion of their ideologies, thus escalating the already existing tensions in the Peninsula. The North emerged as a separate nation under the leadership of Kim Il-sung, adopting a Communist regime and evolving into the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. This dictatorial regime characterized by Single-Party rule has been sustained by three generations of the Kim family with absolute power and dominance using heavy repression and massive suppression of its people.

Whereas Syngman Rhee, a zealous nationalist and pro-capitalist, led Southern Korea and officially named it the Republic of Korea. Though initially the country faced a lot of political instability and military rule, over the years, through various struggles and movements, South Korea has become a nation with a liberal democratic political system and sovereignty over its people. Multi-party rule and provisions for free and fair elections are the major reasons for its political stability.

Post-World War II, the Cold War crisis intensified the ideological divide, leading to three years of the Korean War from 1950 to 1953. An official estimate of the death toll from the war is approximately 3 million, mostly civilians. Unofficial estimates are far higher.

Conclusion

A way forward for ceasing all tensions ongoing to this day on the Korean Peninsula and establishing confidence-building measures could only be made possible by reciprocal and collective talks between the North and South Korean heads of state.

The historic Inter-Korean summit of 2018 was seen as a sign of buoyancy as the leaders of both countries met and had peaceful negotiations over the demilitarized zone.



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, (left) and South Korean President Moon Jae-in walk(right) raised their hands after signing a joint statement. Source: Korea Summit Press Pool/AFP/Getty Images

“The two leaders solemnly declare ... that there will be no more war on the Korean Peninsula and a new era of peace has begun,” the declaration said. Three goals of the summit declared by the then South Korean leader, Moon Jae-in, were:

1. Resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue and establishment of permanent peace.
2. Development of sustainable inter-Korean relations.
3. Realization of a new economic community on the Korean Peninsula.

Five years after the summit, how successful have these goals been? This is still a question worth considering. This would only be possible by limiting the outside forces pulling the strings behind these two nations and by bringing equilibrium between all its major stakeholders. From time immemorial, the Korean Peninsula is under the influence of world powers like China, the USA, and Russia. Conflicting interests among the member states of international organizations and the preeminence of US decision-making have made the roles of these organizations minimal in terms of effectiveness in bringing out a strife-free solution.

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The Destroyed Self in the Partition: Destructive Plasticity in Manto’s *Cold Flesh* and *Open It!*

Bilal Khan

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Introduction

The Partition of India in 1947 was a horrific event usually retold regarding human savagery and brutality. A process that divided the population through national boundaries. The migration after this displaced and dislocated people from their ancestral places. This forced migration disrupted the subcontinent’s individual and collective psyche—literature written before the Partition proves this argument. In Khushwant Singh’s terminology, pre-partition literature discussed a subcontinent that seems like a utopia in the face of post-partition literature (Nisar 9726). The idea of the communal violence that occurred after the Partition is shocking, as communally violent narratives were rare in the pre-partition era (Bhalla 3120). It becomes important to investigate this identity reformation of the subcontinent, where Trauma studies can help envisage this issue.

The shift from this pre-partition utopian era happened after the riots of 1947. These events retold in fiction by writers like Manto are horrifying. One of the most common features of these narratives is the people who populate them. They are ordinary beings who are involved in these tales of brutality. But the idea of a utopian pre-partition era might work as an imagined lacuna in understanding pre-partition India. Shashi Joshi critiqued the concept of this tolerant utopia based on stereotypes that existed in pre-partition literature (148-49). Even Alok Bhalla, who previously claimed a pre-partition utopia, acknowledged the existence of these fragmentary rifts between people (3120-123).

There is a considerable gap between minor incidents and the mass killings after the Partition. The sudden shift can be interpreted and understood through people’s traumatic experiences as a catalyst.



Still, for an event to be traumatic, it needs to fulfil three primary conditions: (1) uncontrollability, (2) perceiving the experience as extremely negative, and (3) suddenness of the event (Carlson and Dalenberg 6-10). Partition fulfils all these conditions. The migration of people in this Partition was forceful and displaced them, taking away their agency. The perception of reoccurring images of horrors in Partition, like arson, rape and mutilation, can hardly be anything but extremely negative. Lastly, the event was highly logocentric and, in an accidental manner, divided the people according to their religious identities.

Identity formation or reformation becomes part of the discourse when an event is described as traumatic. Manto explored these identities in his writings. His writings expose a version of the subcontinent's collective identity that differs from its previous tolerant identity. Manto presents a hopeless world and leaves his story with a sting for the reader who craves an ending that is left unfinished. This ending (or lack of an ending) becomes integral to his writing as he never tries to solve the evils in his texts (Shashi 152; Alter 96). His style can acquire adjectives like cynical, sardonic and Sadean (Mubarki). Hence, Manto's 'self-reflexive' short stories or *afsana* were not interventions in the genre of short story writing but an invention. An invention that cast its 'shadow' on future Partition writers who then followed his path (Saint 58-59).



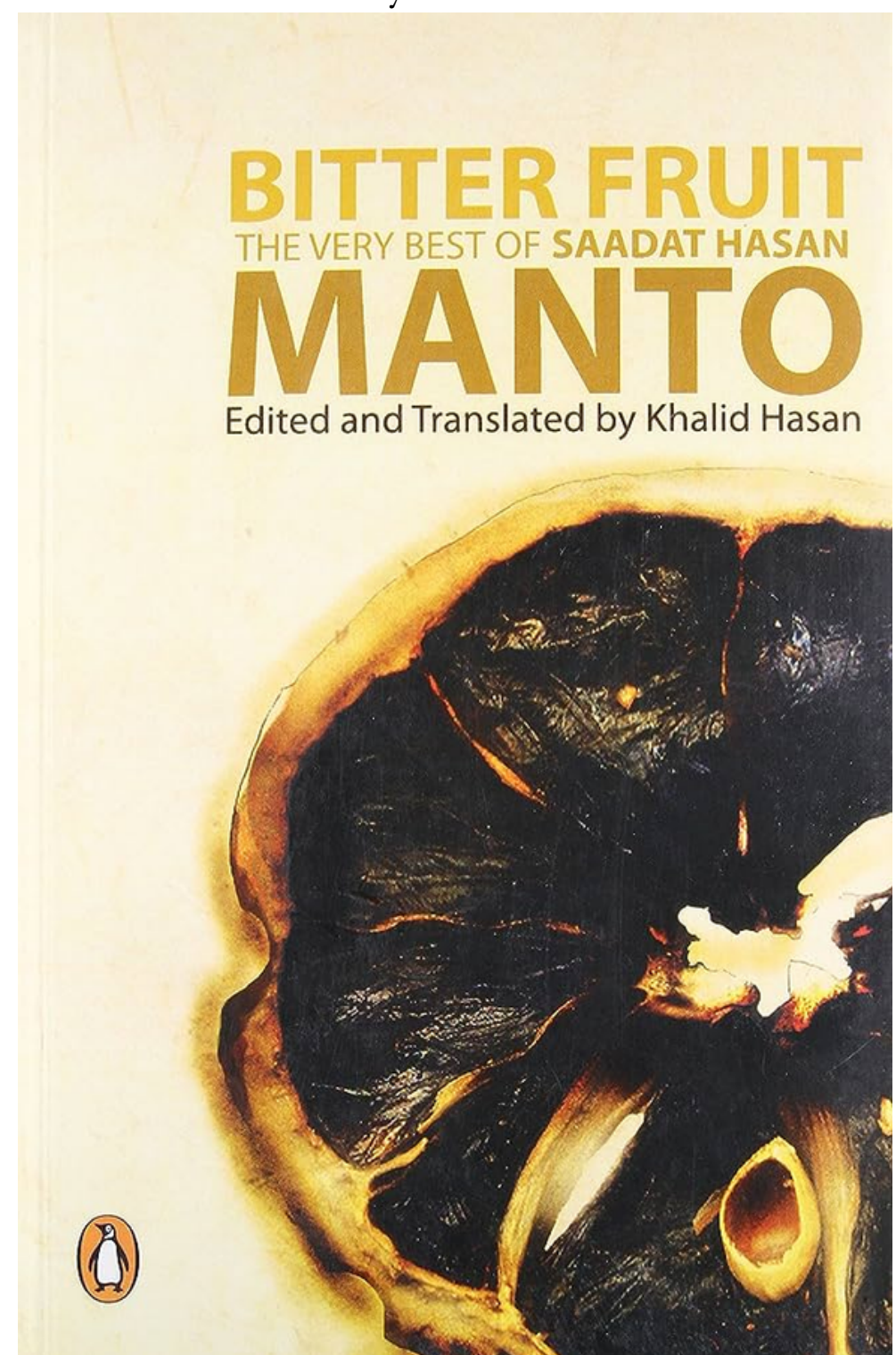
Sa'adat Hasan Manto

Another integral part of Manto's literature is the moralistic call in his stories, presenting a scream for righteousness (Panthi). This humanistic craving of Manto is why he is relevant in today's contemporary society (Inpaper Magazine; Akhtar). But the deliberate silencing of this call is where Manto portrays the strength of his writing and Partition trauma. A force impactful enough to change individuals because of its centrality in identity formation (Berman).

This silencing is evident in his stories "Open It!" and "Cold Flesh", as there is an abrupt death of moral voice. Both stories deal with very severe cases of identity disruption. Bhalla writes the stories absolutely refuse to give any—political, religious, or ethical "solution" to the miseries Manto tells as testimonies as they exist in the absurd space of Partition (3123-124). This complete annihilation of socio-moralistic order is also present in "Open It!". The death of the being within Sakina in "Open It!" becomes the finality (Alter 96).

On comparing Amrita Pritam's *Pinjar* and "Cold Flesh", Tarun K. Saint wrote that Pritam had to expand on the remorse that was felt by Ishar Singh in "Cold Flesh", thereby giving it some ending (59). Manto's iconic conclusion, or the lack of an ending, exists in both stories. There is no resolution.

The paper will elucidate the idea of an identity formed after the subcontinent's Partition. It will theorise that this redefining process is also visible in the collective identity of the subcontinent that is made visible in Manto's short stories. The lens of destructive plasticity would be used to investigate the permanent metamorphosis of the collective and the individual identity of the subcontinent.



Discussion

The Ubiquitous Presence

The plastic nature of Partition and its trauma is made textual through Manto's writing style. The voice of Manto is highly journalistic and narratorial. These narrations, combined with his journalistic view, present Manto as a witness to the horrors he writes about. This writing makes Manto's stories "fictive testimonies" (Saint). This testimonial literature places the reader closer to the violence and the atmosphere he creates. In "Cold Flesh", the narrative starts with some event that has already occurred. The knowledge of Partition and its violent nature is assumed—the quality of Partition to be ubiquitous plays an essential part in the world-building of post-partition literature. The presence of an event that is there without any explanation portrays two disturbing necessities: (1) Partition does not need any mentioning in the text as it is the event that presupposes the setting of the text, and (2) it is always dictating the lives of its characters without their consent or will. These two tropes can be experienced only through engaging with Partition narratives through their plastic nature.



The atmosphere in Manto's stories happens out of loss or lack of agency. Thus, this lack of agency is understood through the fleeting atmosphere, which itself is a "form of flight" (Malabou 11). The impossibility of dealing with Partition can only be exercised in the form of a changed form. A state that takes the shape of an unknown atmosphere that does not resemble the previous surroundings of the characters signifying the severe lack of comprehension and agency. For example, the lack of linguistic markers for the looming presence of Partition, as seen in these lines, "It was past midnight, and the outskirts of town had been plunged into a strange, disquieting stillness" (Manto, "Cold Flesh" par.2).

It is interesting to note the transitive verb "plunged" here. The verb suggests a form of externally forced activity. Ishar Singh and Kulwant Kaur experience the stillness caused by this plunging, told to the reader by Manto. The trauma is moulding an experience understood by everyone present within and outside the text. Here, Partition is starting to become an event capable of plastic forces rather than just a historical event. The presence of trauma (and Partition), thus, adds to the moulding of the characters through spatial factors of the narrative. These spatial factors—like the room in which Kulwant and Ishar are present—seem familiar, but because of the over-looming context of Partition, it becomes mysterious. This is evident in lines like, "Ishar Singh, with his head, bowed, remained standing silently in a corner" (Manto, "Cold Flesh" par.3). Though Manto uses this spatial moulding as a tool to explain Partition's presence, the very existence of this tool is there because of the collective and individualistic change the sub-continent went through after Partition. And this transformation of everyday spatiality, when looked through Malabou's lens, is a "moment of destruction". The identities in "Cold Flesh" have already been through this destructive transformation. It is a kind of destruction that does not result in "post-traumatic growth" but in a drastically altered self that is indifferent to the plastic forces that moulded it.

This presence of Partition is yet again felt in "Open It!" when Manto uses the phrase "special train" for the train to Amritsar (Manto, "Open It!" 74). Even here, Manto makes the same assumption about the epistemological, ontological, and linguistic existence of Partition in the reader's consciousness. What follows this special train is, in a black comedic nature, not special. As Manto writes:

The special train left Amritsar at two in the afternoon, taking eight hours to reach Mughalpura. Quite a few passengers were killed along the way, several received injuries, and some just wandered off to God knows where. ("Open It!" 74)

Like an anchor reading stats and facts from a teleprompter, the narrator reads out the violence that occurred before the story. The ordinariness of violence and death results from the altered self that trauma has forged, seeping deep into the consciousness of people of the now divided state.

This altered self does not exist just as an individual experience as well. The social practices people followed in the pre-partition era were also disrupted after Partition. In this stream of thought, Sukeshi Kamra's, *Ruptured Histories: Literature on the Partition (India, 1947)* pointed out the altered space of a mohalla. The enumeration process caused the disruption that influenced this space during the Partition (113). The method of enumeration in practical life does not hold a troubling existence post-partition as it is an easily occurring experience. The process entails the idea of "countable" identities. People can be subjectivised into Hindus, Muslims, Indians or Pakistanis in the Partition context. At the same time, the mohalla was a space, according to Prakash Tandon, where people lived in biradaris (brotherhoods) that were "loose" and "undefined" (qtd. in Kamra 111). The Partition and its tacit existence rigidly defined these undefined identities, and that too on the accounts of religion. These tightly knit groups transcended the social barriers of caste and religion, but Partition made them visible, and that too in an accidental manner. Partition narratives acknowledged this destructive force of trauma. Mohallas did not just go through a change because of enumeration but ended. They reached their ends because of a force always in the background that separated human connections and laid arbitrary borders between them, again concretising these altered selves.

Hence, the connection between the traumatic self and the traumatised state is apparent. Both transformed into subjects so unknown to their previous forms that the pre-partition narratives of India read as if they were about a utopia. Partition did not just transcend time in forwarding motion but also corrupted the memories that existed before it took place. The idea of "pre-partition" is only possible when there exists a Partition that acts as an "explosion of self". Malabou calls this attribute of trauma as unnatural as "terrorism versus apoptosis" (5). Partition, in these instances, completes its becoming process into an "accident"—an event that creates "new people, others, re-engendered, belonging to a different species" (Malabou 13).

The Partition's forced and accidental quality was a force of terrorism for the collective and the individual identity. Ishar's contact with the cold meat of the girl, Sirajuddin losing his daughter and wife, Sakina's encounter with the volunteers, and the Partition of the subcontinent all mark the instances of violent self and spatial disturbances that were plastic and explosive. The sudden deviancy of these everyday identities into new deviant forms is what explosive plasticity is defined as by Malabou (3).





The Metamorphosis

When it comes to Partition, three kinds of instances make it up: the before, the during and the after of Partition. All these narratives are very different but echo the same trauma throughout. The primary texts of this research belong to the during of Partition genre. Both texts refer to a time that has gone through a violent change in the characters.

Starting with “Cold Flesh”, two Ishar Singhs are perpetually present and simultaneously absent from the text. These two combined present the reader with a glance at the character. From the start of the narrative, Manto mixes the ominous atmosphere that lingers outside the hotel room with that of Ishar (Manto, “Cold Flesh” par.2). Much like the air, Ishar is also still, standing in a corner holding his dagger (kirpan). The reaction of Kulwant also suggests the identity crisis Ishar is going through. She uses bodily gestures to understand Ishar’s state of mind. For example, “She uncrossed her legs, dangled them over the side of the bed and began swinging them to and fro” (Manto, “Cold Flesh” par.3). These markers are there for the reader and Ishar to loosen up a little, yet both are trapped in some uneasy air. After this silence, Manto discusses Kulwant’s features, giving her the superficial characteristics of a stereotypical woman in regions near Punjab. Though it is Manto’s remark on Ishar that is more carefully placed. Ishar is a man that is “suitable” for Kulwant. This suitability connotes a stereotypical masculine character. Yet this conflicts with Ishar’s identity in the present. He is silent, worried and does not respond to his wife/mistress while she waits for him. Ishar’s masculinity, or its loss, is an essential feature of the story and his character. The Ishar, Kulwant is familiar with is only present through interactions where she expects him to be masculine. In contrast, this Ishar, present right now, is discontent with everything around him. The narrative moves forward with some coquetry and affection shared by Kulwant and Ishar, yet there is still something eerie in the air that is acknowledged later in the narrative. Manto’s detailed account of this scene is explicitly sexual and deliberate but not gratuitous. Ishar acts out his masculinity throughout the scene yet fails as Kulwant’s questions breach his act. The rupture in this moment of intimacy becomes the last remark: “What the hell! You are not the man I knew just eight days ago” (Manto, “Cold Flesh” par.17).

Kulwant’s assertion again describes an Ishar absent from the text. The destructive plasticity of a traumatic metamorphosis is very literal here. A character that was something else before the moment of destruction now resembles a self that presents its previous stage only in superficial features like his “hefty body”. Malabou refers to this phenomenon as an anecdotal utterance, “I would never have guessed they would ‘end up like that’” (6). Ishar’s emasculated form is concerning for Kulwant, but Ishar rarely mentions it. This is due to the indifference Ishar has towards his metamorphosis.

He repeats to himself that nothing has happened to him, yet only Kulwant knows something did. Partition moulds Ishar’s self in a perfectly destructive metamorphosis of his older self. His indifference to his emasculation contrasts Ishar with his previous self—he is completely othered.

The story moves forward with remarks of emasculation to a literal portrayal of emasculation when Ishar experiences erectile dysfunction (Manto, “Cold Flesh” par.28). After this event, a form of cathartic burst takes over the text. The unknown event that has affected Ishar to the point of social, mental, and biological castration occurs. Ishar describes this event in fits, and the text is riddled with ellipses. The issue of erectile dysfunction faced by Ishar presents the multiple layers of disturbances caused by the Partition. Ishar tried to rape this unknown, silent and unnamed victim, and in turn, he got castrated (psychosexually). In his book, *The Colours of Violence*, Sudhir Kakar gives an interesting account of such castration-related violence entangled within Partition testimonies. According to Kakar, violence, like the castration of the male victim, is to render your enemy unable to reproduce. Still, on even more profound levels of the psyche, this kind of violence is invented or included in narratives because of the male anxiety about going through castration. Hence, the phenomenon of “doing unto others” occurs (35). But this understanding begs the question of how Ishar is the one who is getting castrated. The answer is found within the text: Ishar’s remorse. Out of two Ishar, the one that existed before the event of metamorphosis castrated the Ishar, that is now suffering from a post-traumatic disorder. The anxiety of being castrated can only be solved by castrating the other, and destructive plasticity other the self from itself—an “ontological refugee” is born (Malabou 24).

Another victim who is literally othered from this discourse of ontological non-existence of the story is the deliberately silenced teenage girl in the narrative. All Manto discloses is the girl’s age, and that she lived with six men who Ishar killed with his dagger (Manto, “Cold Flesh” par.37). The event determined through the dagger is the sexual assault and the killing of the silenced victim. The deliberate silencing of the victim points towards the trope of “speechless horror”, which is common in trauma fiction (Balaev 153). The dagger itself presents a kind of justice in the narrative as Ishar is later killed by it. The overt presence of the dagger throughout the narrative becomes an unfortunate signifier for the reader, almost like an unanswered call to justice for the victim. This act resembles Cathy Caruth’s idea of a crying wound (1-9). The wound continuously wants relief and screams for it, only to be left without any cure or remedy. Ishar’s survivor guilt is left without treatment, yet the silenced victim gets her justice through the death of Ishar’s masculine subjectivity and, at last, the biological end of Ishar. Borrowing from Spinoza’s understanding of this issue, Malabou writes that this is a “partial death resulting from a mysterious metamorphosis of the body and affects” (33).



Although the progressive circles claim to recognize the institutional injustice faced by the transgender community and its historical abandonment by society, a particular degrading reality remains: their absence in statistical data. Considering the pivotal role that statistics play in informing policies an Here, the silenced victim and her metamorphosis are portrayed through her corpse's objectification as a piece of meat, which takes the shape of Ishar himself, as Manto writes, "Kulwant Kaur placed her hand on that of Ishar Singh which had become even colder than ice" (emphasis added) (Manto, "Cold Flesh" par.42). Through the absence of Ishar's previous self, the reader observes the crime.

Moving from "Cold Flesh" to "Open It!" the metamorphosis of the collective is portrayed through multiple silencing and disruptions. Firstly, there is Sirajuddin, who is left alive in an event he cannot begin to comprehend. He is "left" alive because there are clear signs of survivor's guilt in his consciousness. When compared to Ishar, Sirajuddin's plight is explained step-by-step in "Open It!". Around the start of the narrative, Sirajuddin is told to be "numb" (Manto, "Open It!" 74). Malabou has given this numbed self or a flat state much thought. In a complex manner, this numbness is achieved through a disruption in cerebral lesions—an injury caused to the brain is responsible for such traumatic existence. Malabou writes, "An individual's history is cut definitively, breached by the meaningless accident, an accident that is impossible to re-appropriate through either speech or recollection" (28-29).

Sirajuddin also suffers from this numbed state because of a meaningless accident. When he tries to remember the events to find the traces of his daughter, all he can encounter is the killing of his wife (Manto, "Open It!" 74). There seemed to be a lack of emotions, even in remembrance. This self that the reader witnesses is not yet indifferent to his plight. He still remembers his wife's brutal death and worries about his daughter. Events on the train are still fresh in his mind, and only the numbness settles at the start of the narrative. The metamorphosis starts to settle later in the story when Sirajuddin starts a round of questioning that includes questioning everything around him. At the same time, the only constant that remains is Sakina herself. Later in the story, the metamorphosis of Sirajuddin is completed when he is indifferent to Partition, and all he remembers is Sakina.

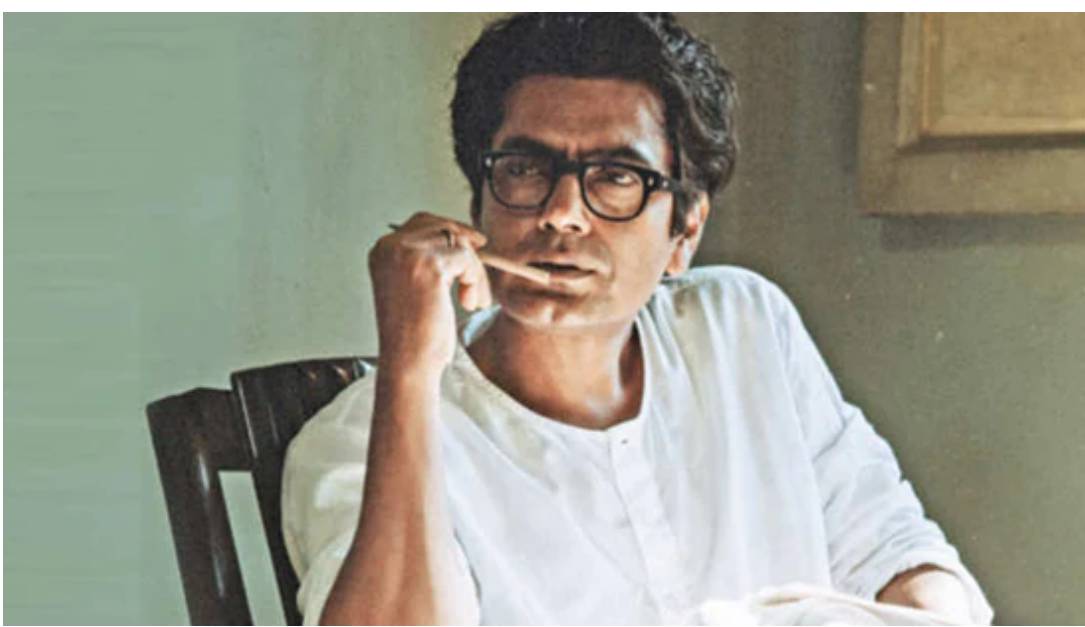
The numbness that Manto burdened Sirajuddin at the beginning of the narrative now seems visible by its mechanical assertion. Sirajuddin asks the volunteer about Sakina, describing her mechanically on an ordinary day, and they would assertively reply to him. The description of Sakina by Sirajuddin is put as "She is fair and exceedingly pretty. She takes after her mother, not me. She is about seventeen, with big eyes and dark hair. She has a beautiful big mole on her right cheek" (Manto, "Open It!" 75). As a subject of Partition, Sakina is left to be described as an inanimate object, mechanically.

There is an automated series of events in which Sirajuddin is stuck until he enters the hospital tent. Sirajuddin's metamorphosis is shown in full completion when Sakina's plight is unknown to him, and he is portrayed as smiling by watching her daughter move. In a moment of black comedy, Manto writes, "Old Sirajuddin screamed with unbounded joy" (Manto, "Open It!"76). The enthusiasm shown by Sirajuddin can be wrongly read as he is joyful as his daughter is at least alive. The reading of this story in this light would absolutely fail due to the ever-presence of plastic forces of trauma surrounding the narrative.

Another metamorphosis that works in "Open It!" is collective. As previously mentioned, the mohalla of pre-partition India was ruptured by Partition, and new social orders took their place. One of these formations was communal loyalty. Since the Indian collective identity was tainted with religious separation and mass communal killings, sticking with your own seemed a safe option. This is where Manto, in a cynical manner, penetrates this newly formed space. As Kamra rightly writes, the reader is "lulled" into believing this was a state of safety when Sakina was found by the Muslim volunteers (122). Forming these communal loyalties is only possible when there has been a kind of destruction in the public harmony of the being. Manto successfully shocked the reader, as he again assumed the reader's stance towards their own and the other. The breaking of social order does not stop at mohallas or the formation of communal loyalties. Sirajuddin also experiences a moment of "happiness" at the end. The traumatic action of Sakina, the complete loss of agency portrayed by her lifeless body, which could have traumatised any being—which did traumatise the doctor—was seen as a triumphant victory for Sirajuddin. There is a disruption in Sirajuddin's understanding of joy and sorrow. Apart from Sirajuddin, Sakina is a site of violent and destructive plasticity. As a woman, the being went through layers of traumatic experiences. Her self is so damaged that when the deictic order of the doctor, "Open It!" was uttered, she understood it as a command to undress. The breaking of pragmatic structures symbolises how deeply the Partition affected its unwilling participants, yet also refers to a complete societal breakdown.

Continuing with Sakina, her actions are entirely mechanical yet not in her possession. This inexplicable phenomenon can be understood through the idea of Scholium given by Spinoza. The concept means that life and death can be defined as an agreement between the body and its motion (Malabou 31). Life is when this agreement between the body and its movement is fulfilled, while death is the autonomous movement of body parts, disrupting the harmony between body and motion (Malabou 31). Sakina's response to the male doctor's command was to undress as the "nature" of the being had changed entirely. In Spinoza's and Malabou's understanding, Sakina has already died. Even Manto placed markers for this reading, "Sakina's body stirred ever so faintly on the stretcher.

With lifeless hands, she slowly undid the knot of her waistband and lowered her shalwar” (emphasis added) (76). Sakina’s silencing is deliberate, but her autonomous actions are incredibly loud. The self is avoided in the case of Sakina; as Malabou writes, “The result of the metamorphosis is precisely a being in flight” (16). Sakina’s reaction is an action of flight but not from something but from fleeing itself. The only way to escape destructive plasticity is to withdraw from the possibility of flight and become a form of fleeing (Malabou 11). Sakina’s actions are but actions of flight. The complete and utter metamorphosis of the being due to destructive plasticity. An existence that resembles Spinoza’s partial death.



Actor Nawazuddin Siddiqui portrayed the character of Manto in his biopic.

Lastly, two less noticed and focused victims are in both texts. Kulwant in “Cold Flesh” and the doctor in “Open It!”. Both identities also function under the forces of destructive trauma. Also, both were witnesses to traumatic experiences. Kulwant was subjected to a trauma testimony, while the doctor encountered Sakina’s trauma in a non-linguistic manner more immediately than Kulwant.

In Malabou’s understanding, metamorphosis is destructive, and no reformation is possible. All that is left to be constructed is a new being or a nation-state in the context of Partition. It is not born from the debris of the destroyed identity of some forgotten utopian India but forms a new being from scratch, a new set of countries moulded by trauma. Even the recurring idea of a pre-partition Utopian India seems to be out of this destructive plasticity itself. Dominick LaCapra also talked about the idea of trauma in great detail and talked about the motif of utopia before the event of trauma. He writes,

Avoidance of this anxiety is one basis for the typical projection of blame for a putative loss onto identifiable others, thereby inviting the generation of scapegoating or sacrificial scenarios. In converting absence into loss, one assumes that there was (or at least could be) some original unity, wholeness, security or identity, which others have ruined, polluted, or contaminated and thus made “us” lose. Therefore, to regain it one must get rid or eliminate those others—or perhaps those sinful other in oneself. (707)

The terms “absence” and “loss” are put into injunction by LaCapra where he argues against the conflation of the two. A conflation of these variables, according to him, would result in a state of melancholia.

This conflation is very much visible in Manto’s writings. But to achieve the putative state or to eliminate the other has the idea to act or be an agent in some form. Manto’s writing is devoid of such agency, and this helplessness entails the traumatic experiences of his characters. LaCapra’s idea that absence creates a fear of nothing—no thing as its object of anxiety can be contested entirely through Malabou’s explanation (707). Malabou’s idea points toward a finality devoid of fear, madness, and sorrow. All these acts to feel become signs of agency; hence, the subject is devoid of that (27). All the subject becomes is indifferent to their survival.

Ultimately what is observed through Malabou’s idea is that the individual and the collective identity of the subcontinent is stuck in a state of melancholia where the equation of “us” and “them” is deeply rooted. These nationalistic and political issues to this day influence the political sphere of both the countries in contemporary times.

Conclusion

The research was conducted to investigate the creation of new destructive personal and collective identities in the case of Partition. The methodologies used by the researcher were destructive plasticity and traumatic absence and loss. The theories were employed in Manto’s “Cold Flesh” and “Open It!” as they belong to the immediate partition genre. The research found that these stories work as trauma testimony on both personal and collective levels. The Partition acts as a ubiquitous presence in these narratives. It is not a timeline-defining event but rather a violent split of the timeline in the history of India. The looming quality of Partition in both short stories presents a reality that is also present in the identities of contemporary India and Pakistan. The characters, the reader and Manto himself feel Partition’s presence without him mentioning it overtly. It is there, and it creates its presence.

After this presence, there is the metamorphosis of social and personal identities. The character of Ishar Singh is the main focus of this analysis. Ishar’s characteristic as a masculine brute went through a metamorphosis in his masculinity. Ishar’s masculinity goes through the process of emasculation. This emasculation is seen as a psychic and biological castration when he experiences erectile dysfunction. Manto has used this metamorphosis very visually in “Open It!”. Sirajuddin’s whole transformation from a confused self to a mechanical self and finally to a self that is unknown, unbothered, and indifferent to social structures around him is displayed in front of the reader. This metamorphosis is multi-layered in Sakina, who has become a subject incapable of fleeing the Partition by becoming a form of fleeing herself. She is so othered by the Partitioned society that she now exists outside pragmatic references.

LaCapra’s theorising is done in the light of agency that Malabou finds utterly absent in the traumatised self. Because the temptation of conflating absence and loss is so much, the only form of relief for Malabou’s destroyed beings becomes this conflation itself. Hence, the researcher concluded by favouring the conflation of loss and absence in Partition and permanent identity creation through destructive plasticity.

Note

1. The researcher has capitalised “Partition” in the paper to identify it as an accident recorded by the subcontinent. Other than that, there have been other partitions, and their connotations differ from the Partitions of India and Pakistan.



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Hidden Histories, Silenced Selves: Reading Women, War, and Silence in Tahmima Anam's *The Good Muslim*

Saundarya

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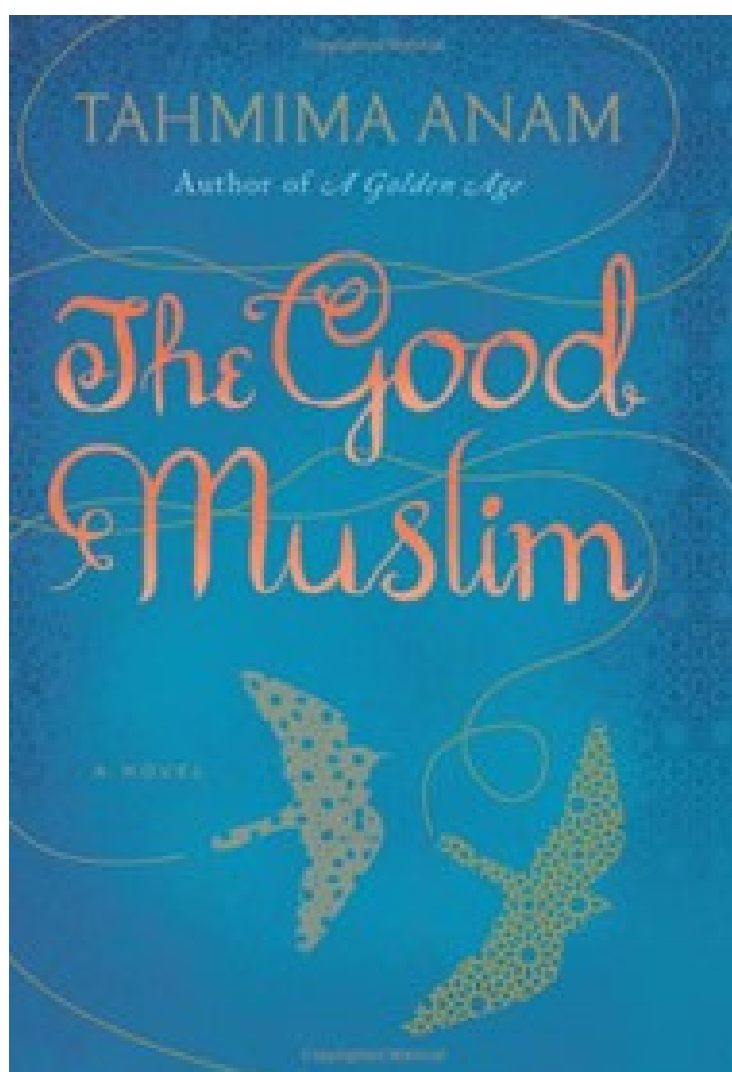
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How do you remember that which does not exist, or whose existence is not even acknowledged. How do you force memory?

- Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence*

The 1947 partition, chalked out a distinct boundary, leading to the formation of two nation states. However, a subsequent delineation manifested itself in the year 1971, giving rise to a distinct geopolitical entity. Bangladesh (formerly East Pakistan) was embroiled in a tumultuous period of armed conflicts in 1971. While the most prominent and recorded one was a civil war between East and West Pakistan based on linguistic and cultural differences and another an international war between India and Pakistan, an atrocious “gender war also broke out against vulnerable women within East Pakistan” (Saikia 3). While the liberation war brought freedom to East Pakistan and led to the formation of a new nation called Bangladesh, it did not, however, liberate the women from the shackles of patriarchal violence. It is the voices of these women that have not been heard, the women in war, who have been systemically silenced by the forces of patriarchy working together in the process of nation building. Yasmin Saikia, in her book *Women, War and the Making of Bangladesh*, points out how the story of the liberation war would have become totally inaccessible, “a holy grail”, had the Bangladeshi women not reported on it (225). The stories recounting the losses suffered by women and children was deliberately erased from the public sphere, so as to avoid the gendered shame forced by the war from tarnishing the nation’s image. This intentional silencing of women, sanctioned by the state, in the aftermath of the war is captured in its subtleties in Tahmima Anam’s *The Good Muslim*, published in 2011, which is the second book of her ‘Bangladesh trilogy’.



The trilogy comprising *A Golden Age*, *The Good Muslim*, and *The Bones of Grace*, builds a story narrated by three generations of women of the Haque family. While the first novel explores Rehana Haque’s motherhood juxtaposed with the idea of nationhood in the looming atmosphere of the 1971 liberation war, it is the second novel that traces the fragments of the self, the body, the identity, and the loud silences engulfing the nation in the aftermath of the war through the lens of Rehana’s daughter Maya. The novel is placed before and after the killing of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, popularly known as *Bangabandhu*. *The Good Muslim* is divided into three parts, each part starting with a reference to the verses of Quran, ‘The Book’, that is mentioned uncountable times in the novel and which also plays a vital role in the relationship between the siblings Maya and Sohail. The text is also divided temporally, one immediately following the years after the liberation (from 1972) and the other thirteen years after the liberation (from 1984), with the time frames juxtaposing each other. The book moves back and forth in these time frames, stitching together the fragments to make a whole. This division provides the readers with a past to excavate the remains from, and ultimately make sense of the developments that occur thirteen years after the war, in the lives of both Sohail and Maya, and of the nation as a whole.

A major part of the novel is set in a backdrop of the post-war state going through a political turmoil with the killing of its two presidents and the government’s inability of putting the war criminals on trial. What Bina D’Costa observes in her work regarding the “growing frustration and resentment among its [Bangladesh’s] citizens about the fabrication of history through textbooks and government sponsored media to serve the need of authoritarian regimes in the post-1975 period” (187), is reflected in Maya’s reaction to the erasure of history that the country undergoes. Historical documentation leaves out the details that does not work in accordance with those who document history. So, in an age of what Kerwin Lee Klein calls a “historiographic crisis”, memory tends to appear as a “therapeutic alternative to historical discourse” (145).

Saikia explores an inner history of the war that remains hidden from the public view. These histories and memories “belong to women who were terrorised, brutally sexualised, and marginalised in the war” (Saikia 4). Many women also played an active role in the war by participating as active soldiers. Maya’s character itself is a depiction of such women who challenge the traditional notion of women as mere victims in war. Saikia suggests the other side of Bangladeshi women, as the ones who desired to kill and be killed for the nation. [1] They have a detailed memory of the places and people during the war. Through these detailed remembrances, they try to cope up with the disruptive changes that came after the war. They try to comprehend the remnants of the war, much akin to Maya and Ammo’s act of eating the leftover cake with “the flourish now gone from the edges, the frosting matted and smudged” after relinquishing their hopes of bringing Sohail back (Anam 166).



The perception of women's bodies as territories is not a novel phenomenon within the patriarchal paradigm of society. Women's bodies are consistently viewed as objects to be conquered and possessed. This subjugation of the body manifests itself in a very brutal and literal manner during times of war. A woman's body becomes the site of ceaseless exploitation, existing not merely as an object of sexual desire at the hands of the perpetrators, but is also perceived as a site of the exploiter's assertion of power. It becomes 'the territory on which men inscribe their political programs' (Mookherji, *Spectral Wound* 3). The notion that the honour of the nation is intertwined with the honour of its women, is accentuated ten folds during times of war. This is also the reason why rape is seen as an "explicitly political act, a ritual of victory, the defilement of honour and territory of the enemy community" (qtd. in Mookherjee, "Gendered Embodiments" 40).

In the fourth chapter titled '1973 March' of Book Two, Sohail receives an invitation from Sheikh Mujib. Here, through the character of Ammo, the novel puts forth a question often brushed aside, a memory pushed to the private spaces and a history hidden. As Ammo questions Maya about the nature of work carried out at the Rehabilitation centre, the novel draws our attention to the other vexing issue of the war violence—the mass rape of women in 1971 and the forceful abortion of the Birangonas carried out in its aftermath. An excerpt from this chapter brings to light the covert abortion drive that was carried out in the aftermath of the war: "Bangabandhu had promised to take care of the women; he had even given them a name – Birangona, heroines — and asked their husbands and fathers to welcome them home, as they would their sons. But the children, he had said he didn't want the children of war" (Anam 142). Bringing Piya into the discourse, Ammo tells Maya, "They forced her. And she's not the only one. Some of the girls don't want to. But they're ashamed, they're told they're carrying the seed of those soldiers" (Anam 141-142). This shame is visibly present in Piya. In the conversation where Sohail asks Piya to marry him and she replies, "If you want, I will be your wife. But I am not a good woman" (Anam 247).

Being complicit in this act of violence on the Birangonas, Maya tries to justify it by telling Ammo that it is better "to erase all traces of what happened to them" in order for them to forget the trauma. After the liberation war, when the nation is formed and undergoing its own political and social crises, and "the country had to become a country", it slips into the act of forgetting. The war heroines who did not wish to be so, had to "Forgive and forget. Absolve and misremember. Erase and move on" (Anam 70). However, during her stay in Rajshahi and her work as a "crusading doctor", Maya desperately tries to rid herself of the guilt of performing those abortions by delivering as many healthy babies as she could and helping women during the time of their pregnancy. It is also worth noting how Maya, who once propounded the idea of forgetting, laments the erasure of history of resistance which is slowly taking place with the changing of street names and transforming of revolutionary places into amusement parks.

In the later part of the novel, after Maya's return to Dhaka, at a time when a political crisis is ongoing in 1985, Maya decides to write about the Razakars or war criminals and bring to light the injustice done to the women by the sole act of forgetting. In this context, Maya's conversation with Aditi highlights the change in Maya's character and a crucial aspect of the act of forgetting and remembering:

'The raped women.'

'You mean the Birangonas?'

'Yes, the Birangonas. But calling them heroines erases what really happened to them. They didn't charge into the battlefield and ask to be given medals. They were just the damage, the war trophies. They deserve for us to remember.'

'What if they don't want to remember?'

In her years of exile Maya had met many raped women. Some wanted abortions, or came to her to get stitched up, or simply to ask if there was a way for her to wash it out of them. Not one of them wanted anyone to find out. Not one of them wanted to file a police report, or tell her husband or her father. Perhaps it was wrong of her to want them to tell. But she could not get the image of Piya out of her mind. Piya squatting on the verandah, the words bubbling at her lips. She and Sohail had conspired against her that night. They had comforted her and told her it was over, that she was safe – but they had not made it possible for her to speak. It was an act of kindness that had led to the end of everything – Maya knew that now. And there was only one way to make it right. (Anam 223)

From the above conversation, the use of the term Birangona also seems to be a problematic one. As Farzana Akhter observes, "The title birangona, intended to bring them honour and respect and help them reintegrate into their communities, turned out to be a mark of dishonour and disgrace" (97). Sheikh Mujib had termed the women (activists, rape survivors, etc.) in the war as birangona (meaning war heroine). Even though the term was introduced to honour the women, it "branded them [the rape survivors] as 'fallen' women and became a marker of banishment" (D'Costa, *Nationbuilding* 13). The term worked as a double-edged sword by reinstating the memory of rape and the stigma attached to it. The women's rehabilitation programmes which Maya worked for, might seem like a positive step at the surface level, however, when we look deeper, these programmes, which Maya also later realises, with respect to Piya and other birangonas, "was not emancipative, but to reintegrate the women into the traditional gender roles they had previously performed as housewives, mothers or daughters, effectively silencing their experiences during the conflict" (D'Costa, "Birangona" 207). The incorporation of such term and the task of forced abortions under the rehabilitation programmes had their focus not on the individual sufferers of violence and abuse but on the image of the nation. The history of this gruesome violence, as Mohsin writes, "has been trapped within a nationalist paradigm, where the nation is privileged and the woman is valorized in the context of the nation, not in her own right as a woman and human being" (120).



Birangona woman training

Silence, too, has a very heavy presence throughout the novel. It manifests itself in varied ways, in the form of choice, force, revenge, as well as resistance. It plays out in the form of resistance and power in the case of Joy's experience as a captive in the war. Silence, in this context, is loaded with power. Joy's refusal to speak or even to cry despite all the physical and mental torture, frustrates his tormentors. Silence was something which he was compelled to acquire. It had started with a pretence which later became a habit. In front of his captors, Joy "pretended he couldn't make any sounds, and soon it became too difficult to utter words at night and forget them in the day, so he gave up speaking altogether" (Anam 192). They tortured him even more because they were afraid of this silence which for them, "might yield something special". For Sohail, silence serves as a medium to establish a form of communication with Maya, but Maya perceives it as a way of Sohail's disconnect. Sohail is afraid to talk, he wants Maya to be quiet, he wants her to hear "the roar in his head". He is afraid to express that his experience of war is not only rooted in heroism but also the unbearable weight of the guilt of killing an innocent man, "A nothing man. A man who had done nothing. Walking home from the war like everyone else" (Anam 284). Maya then chooses silence as a form of protest against Sohail's silence. With Sohail finding his rescue in religion and Maya failing to understand this drastic change in his personality, the last straw between their relationship is drawn through/because of silence as a choice and as a revenge. The final incident of the book-burning where Maya desperately tries to bring him back to his old self by singing revolutionary songs to which Sohail retaliates by burning all his prized books, draws an unbridgeable gap between the siblings, who were once inseparable.

As discerned from the conversation between Aditi and Maya presented above, it becomes evident that silence is forced on Piya by the siblings who 'had not made it possible for her to speak'. Even though Piya too is not so clear with the choice of speaking her, she is not even provided with that comfortable space to articulate her emotions, let alone speak. Nobody is ready to listen because of the assumptions that they understand Piya's trauma or that her past does not matter. The former flawed notion of empathy rises in Maya which is evident through the line: "Maya knew exactly what had happened to Piya. No explanation was necessary" (70). This viewing of trauma in a homogenised manner narrows down the importance of archiving personal stories, thereby snatching the agency of the subjects and rendering them mute. In this context, Nayanika Mookerjee observes that "identifying raped women only through their suffering not only creates a homogeneous understanding of gendered victimhood but also suggests that wartime rape is experienced in the same way by all victims" (Spectral Wound 6).

Piya's attempts at talking about her trauma are silenced by both Sohail and Maya. For Sohail it is denial, forgetting, and moving on. On the aspect of Sohail's silencing of Piya, Saumya Lal writes, "Sohail's intent to have Piya forget her trauma is, then, also laced with his wish to shut out events that trigger his own trauma" (Lal 11). For Maya views it as a homogenous trauma, believing erroneously that she understands her plight. It is only towards the end that Piya becomes incharge of her agency and incorporates it in narrating her trauma. She also takes charge of her own life by choosing not to abort her child.

The women are expected to forget their trauma by aborting the "seeds of their enemy". But how can the mind forget when the body remembers? The violence that is meted out on the bodies of women, results in their subsequent disembodiment. The intensity of these traces of violence that has seeped to the very core is such that even language is incapable of articulating the pain of the wound inflicted on the body and the psyche. The children (war babies) are perceived as a reminder of the trauma of sexual violence but forced abortion further marks the body and the mind with an incomprehensible ache, leading to a dismemberment of the self. Language breaks when it comes to expressing an inexpressible trauma. No language or vocabulary is capable of containing what women suffer(ed) during wars. However, an intentional suppression of the women's voices is unequivocally unjust. The disappearance of Piya from the text, as Madhurima Sen points out in her study, reflects the purposive "erasure of the birangonas' narrative from the highly selective national memory and public arena" (4). The act of erasure of a traumatic history then becomes a complex terrain to navigate, as the women are constantly subjected to abject shame and humiliation. But forcing someone to forget does not necessarily make them forget it; it only silences them by suppressing their trauma rather than helping them process it, which is much more dangerous. Thus, the erasure actually works at a superficial level, with a suppressed yet constant urge to remember, forever escaping the clutches of this forceful act, desperately looking for an outlet, to surface up and to speak.

Even after all these years, the intricate inquiries of whether liberation has delivered the promise of freedom and equality to women in Bangladesh, as well as whether they are acknowledged as equal architects in the nation building process in post-liberated Bangladesh, remains unanswered. The novel poses a lot of questions in the context of women during and after the war, thereby interrogating the entire act of delineating borders, inflicting wounds, violating bodies, partitioning selves, and silencing the narratives within the framework of nation building. Thus, it becomes imperative to locate the complexities within the narratives of the various wars fought and to move beyond narrow documentations and find the traces in individual and collective memory.

Note:

1. Saikia presents the readers with a first-hand account of Laila Ahmed's lived experiences. She writes, "Laila's testimony makes us curious to know what women were capable of doing during the war. We suddenly find we do not know the Bangladeshi women. Our lens was focused on a 'single vision', thus far. We saw them as victims of sexual violence and care givers. We did not encounter Bangladeshi women as aggressive agents, desiring to kill and be killed on behalf of territory and nation."



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About the Author

Saundarya is a Junior Research Fellow, pursuing M.Phil. in English from the University of Delhi. She researches Dalit literature and culture and explores the politics of marginal literature and its representation. She has an M.A. in English from Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi. In her spare time, she experiments with her brush and paints anything and everything.

Texts in Turmoil: The Role of Literature in Understanding Partition

Anu Jakhar

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Around 77 years ago, the partition took place. It resulted in the relocation of 15 million people and the deaths of 2 million due to religious conflict (Shashkevich). It was a time of great distress that caused immense suffering and trauma for the individuals who were involuntarily affected by it. It is regarded as one of the most tragic incidents in the history of the subcontinent. Since the only method for individuals to harm the sensibilities of other religions was to injure their women, women suffered the worst during the partition. They were tortured, sexually assaulted, and dehumanized in the name of religion.

There has been a lot of work done in terms of documenting and writing about this event, whether it be fiction or non-fiction. It is exceedingly difficult to accurately recall a former experience when doing so. Less emphasis is placed on people and more emphasis is placed on delivering the story through facts and data. As a result, it is challenging to portray the incident accurately because one does not want to become bogged down in the specifics and complexity of human emotions.

It starts to focus more on the incident and less on the victims of its effects. The identity crises that people went through, how it was more than just a religious conflict, how neighbours turned against one another in a single night, or what all the women experienced regardless of their religion are not particularly highlighted in historical narratives of division.

Therefore, there was a demand for narratives that went beyond this and spoke more about the anguish and pain of people from their perspective. Prabir Kumar Sarkar's, A Reflection on Partition Literature of Indian Subcontinent in English makes this point. History is a straightforward account of the partition that has been recorded on paper, but literature is a reflection and a representation of the sufferings, miseries, and challenges that the people of the partition tragedy had to deal with (Sarkar 2). As a result, post-partition writing about partition came into existence known as "partition literature".



Around 77 years ago, the partition took place. It resulted in the relocation of 15 million people and the deaths of 2 million due to religious conflict (Shashkevich). It was a time of great distress that caused immense suffering and trauma for the individuals who were involuntarily affected by it. It is regarded as one of the most tragic incidents in the history of the subcontinent. Since the only method for individuals to harm the sensibilities of other religions was to injure their women, women suffered the worst during the partition. They were tortured, sexually assaulted, and dehumanized in the name of religion.

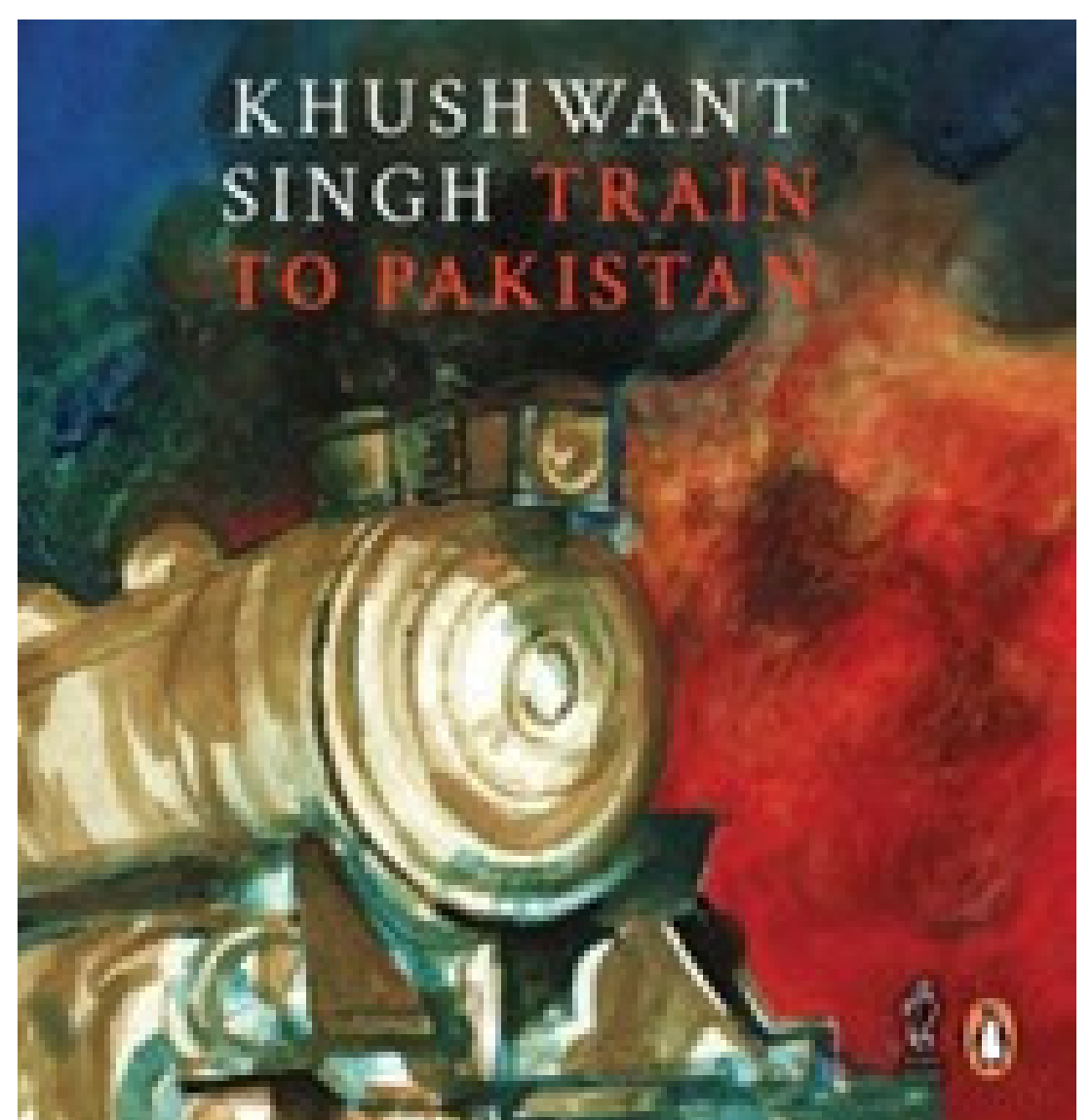
There has been a lot of work done in terms of documenting and writing about this event, whether it be fiction or non-fiction. It is exceedingly difficult to accurately recall a former experience when doing so. Less emphasis is placed on people and more emphasis is placed on delivering the story through facts and data. As a result, it is challenging to portray the incident accurately because one does not want to become bogged down in the specifics and complexity of human emotions. The term “partition literature” includes work that describes and analyses the event from all sides of the border. It consists of both fiction and non-fiction, but its focus is mostly on works of fiction that address the themes of displacement, loss trauma, and violence resulting from the 1947 partition of India. According to Muhammad Umar Memon’s essay, *Partition Literature: A Study of Intizar Husain* the term “Partition Literature” is ambiguous and the shift it brought about had an impact on both the Muslim and Hindu communities in distinct ways (379). For the Muslim population, it represented an opportunity to regain their cultural identity and national identity, while for others, it brought back memories of unrest and sorrow. Partition literature was published in almost all languages spoken in the subcontinent such as Hindi, English, Urdu, Telugu, Bengali, Punjabi, etc. The notion that history is typically state-sponsored and patriotic, and therefore tends to be biased, is another reason why studying the division via literature is crucial (Sarkar 3). Literature, on the other hand, tends to be, people-centred and gives voice to the people who suffered.

Such publications made an effort to go beyond the unifying and flat narrative that the educational institutions in history had taught. It enables the reader to view the tragedy from many angles and viewpoints and illustrates the variety of unique experiences (Mehta). Additionally, it provided the people of both nations with the chance to heal via the memory and history that these authors chose to write about because they could have a recording of a memory that is personal to them. While everyone suffered, some experiences were particular to one country’s population, and being able to record and read those experiences provided one with a feeling of identity. The anguish they might identify as their own and find healing in through literary pieces.

The authors of literature go beyond attributing the division solely to religion. All of their writings contained optimism and hope even at the most trying of times. They discuss how people still had a sense of solidarity and a moral conscience towards other people. They explore deeper into the partition’s social, political, and psychological aspects.

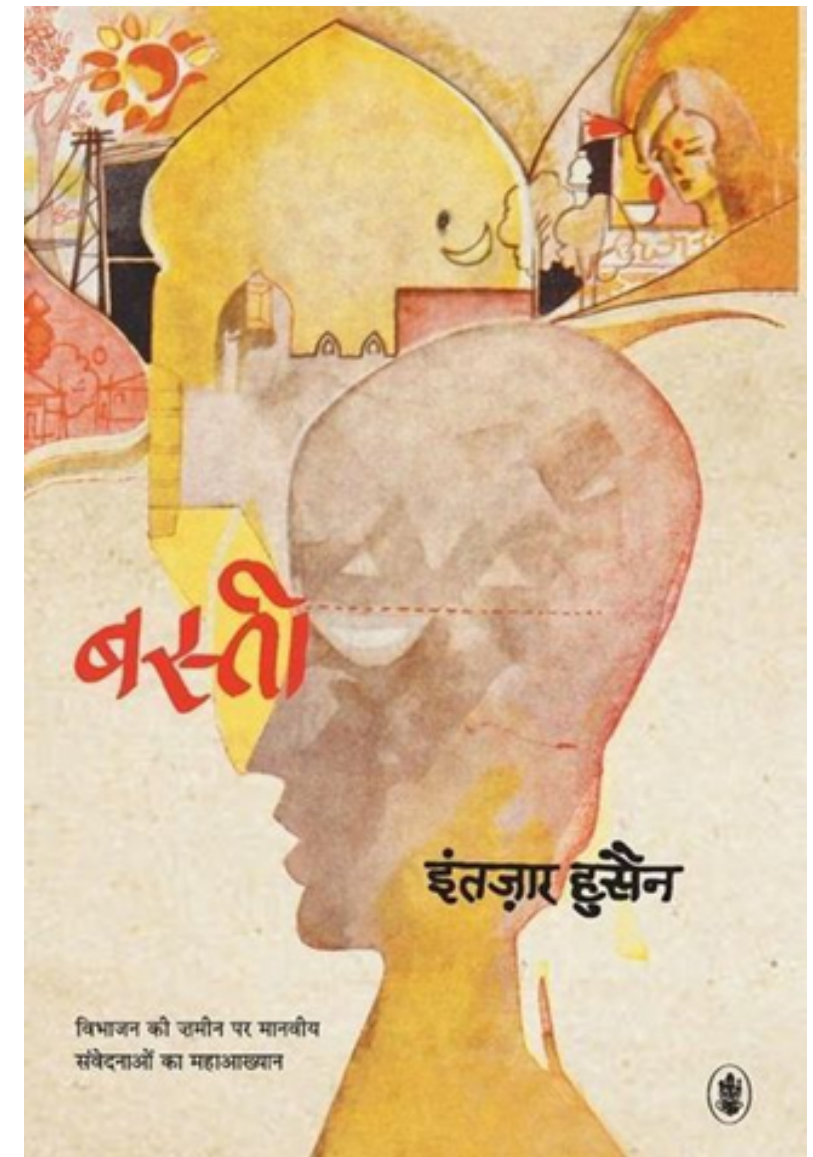
The subject at hand was covered by Sudha Tiwari in her essay *Witnessing Partition Through Literature: Probing Into Bhisham Sahni’s Tamas*, in which she claims that despite the boundaries, the writings of these creative writers are replete with references to Hindu-Muslim unity as well as shared memories of culture, tradition, and years of coexistence. The scholarly material that was produced soon after the partition focused primarily on issues related to the British government’s involvement in the partition, the process as a whole, the significant figures involved, and their ideologies (Tiwari 669). Historiographers’ perspectives on it have changed since then. As Tiwari noted, recent writings by historians including Mushirul Hasan, Urvashi Butalia, Ritu Menon, Kamla Bhasin, Gyanendra Pandey, and Ranbir Samaddar have centred more on the memories of partition and the creative literature that recaptures this harrowing event in the history.

Many authors, including Qurratulain Hyder, Sa’adat Hasan Manto, Bhisham Sahni, Attia Hosain, Khushwant Singh, Krishna Chander, Mohan Rakesh, Rajinder Singh Bedi, Amitav Ghosh, Muhammad Umar Memon, Intizar Husain, Salman Rushdie, Amrita Pritam, K.S. Duggal, and Ismat Chughtai, are well-known for their writing about partition and partition literature. The majority of their work is from the perspective of the people who experienced it; it depicts the same anguish and heartbreak but through their eyes. Though most of the authors of partition literature asserted that they were “impartial” and “non-biased”, what must be kept in mind is that, at some point, partiality became extremely apparent in their writings. Despite their pretences of objectivity, Frances Harrison observes in her piece *Literary Representation: Partition in Indian and Pakistani Novels in English*, that they demonstrate a disassociation from the actual perpetrators of violent actions. The only explanation for this would be that these authors were from the wealthy upper class and were likely the least responsible for the murders and other crimes of the Indian partition (Harrison 97). Further, the study will briefly discuss two of these works to get a better idea about this notion of partition literature and how it has developed in both now neighbouring countries—India and Pakistan.





The novel *Train to Pakistan*, written by Khushwant Singh in 1956, which tells the story of the partition of India in August 1947 from the viewpoint of a fictitious border town named Mano Majra, was welcomed and appreciated by the public. This novel stands out since it doesn't focus on a single character and instead features several protagonists. Khushwant Singh makes an extremely thorough and explicit attempt in *Train to Pakistan* to put the fact of Punjab's partition and the issue of violence on both sides of the border front and centre. In the foreword, Arthur Lall remarks that Singh's characters are very credible and that the novel's inherent traits keep the reader interested (Chopra 166). The short novel's central subject is that both Hindus and Muslims felt guilty after the violence that broke out in response to reports that a division of the nation into 'Hindu' India and 'Muslim' Pakistan had been proposed. Calcutta was the initial epicentre of the riots, which quickly extended over the entire nation. Singh tries to portray the idea that this violence was never one-sided, and both the communities had played an equal role in inciting it. "Muslims said the Hindus had planned and started the killing. According to the Hindus, the Muslims were to blame. The fact is, both sides were killed. Both shot and stabbed and speared and clubbed", writes Singh. On the other hand, things were drastically different in the village of Mano Majra, where everyone lived in harmony, serenity, and camaraderie. Except for a single Hindu family who belonged to Lala Ram Lal, the majority of the village's residents were Sikhs and Muslims. The killing of Ram Lal one day disrupts the village's tranquillity. This served as the communal starting point, which is discussed later in the book. Even while the novel actively strives to be non-biased, there are certain instances of dishonesty and bias. Even if this is fiction, it would have been nice to have the concerns given a lot more thought and sensitivity. In order to present a picture of religious unity between Hindus and Muslims, Singh lies about when the violence began, as Harrison has shown. Singh does not dismiss the violence, however, and does so intentionally. If it weren't for the politicians, Singh claims, the country and its citizens would not have been divided, and only the political leaders had a key role in the country's divide (Harrison 99). Even though it is fiction, it is vital to respect some historical truths to give it a little more realism and credibility. A journalist by profession, Singh allegedly fabricated historical details for an excessively historical novel, according to Harrison. If Singh had not put the village of Mano Majra on the border of India and Pakistan, one may try to believe that the residents there were unaware of the tensions and bloodshed that were raging in both nations as Singh claims in one section of the book that they were. Furthermore, it was near the railway that connected the two nations and regularly witnessed trains full of dead bodies. As Hindu-Muslim riots broke out, Hindus and Sikhs once again formed a unified front, Singh writes in another passage of the book, contradicting himself once more (Harrison 102). A further reason for their cultural compatibility, according to him, is that Sikh and Hindu groups worked together to murder Muslims during the partition riots. It is very evident that Singh, despite having to see the partition on his own, was unable to capture or describe a variety of nuanced feelings and stories.



Cover of Intizar Husain's *Basti*

Next, the famous Pakistani writer Intizar Husain's work *Basti* which was published in 1979 can be considered. Before the novel came out, Husain in an interview said, "A decade ago when I was talking about the experience of migration and the articles, I wrote concerning it, I was in a state of great hope and optimism. It was then my feeling that in the process of partition, we had suddenly, almost by accident, regained a lost, great experience—namely, the experience of migration, hijrat, which has a place all its own in the history of the Muslims and that it will give us a lot. But today after our political ups and downs, I find myself in a different mood. Now I feel that sometimes a great experience comes to be lost to a nation" (Menon 377).

This statement by Husain tells us a lot about how people felt after the partition; what began as a means of regaining control turned out to be nothing but painful. In the end, a shadowy box held the hope that both Pakistan and India had after gaining their independence. Husain thought that the establishment of Pakistan had given the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent a past, or at the very least the desire to document and understand their past, as well as a feeling of purpose and direction, as well as optimism for the future. The events in this story are set in the years leading up to and following the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947. The protagonist of the tale is a child named Zakir, who was nurtured in the quaint village of Rupanagar in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. The central theme of the narrative is how ordinary people attempt to manage life after partition. *Basti* makes an effort to take the reader to various places and times to help them remember the memories of people who lived through the partition. It illustrates both the pre- and post-partition periods as well as how people's experiences varied depending on their social, cultural, and economic starting points. The book does a great job of conveying the sense of displacement, highlighted by the line "Displaced, uprooted, and disconnected from the past, we had become a community of strangers, bound together by nothing but our shared trauma" (qtd. in Kumar).



Exploring their religious identity in the context of the society and the setting they live in is the main challenge the characters encounter. One such instance is described in the novel, where Zakir hesitates and appears uncertain when asked to recite the Kalma in class. Husain writes “I could not bring myself to recite the Kalma, the Islamic declaration of faith. It was as if some invisible force was preventing me from doing so. I felt like a traitor as if I was betraying my religion by affirming it in public” (qtd. in Kumar). The novel was an attempt to recount stories through the spaces they existed in because it is not surprising that memories are strongly tied to the physical area where they were conceived.

By taking a look at the two works, one can see how the literature from the two nations differed greatly and how attempts to maintain its impartiality frequently failed. Even if it was not detrimental both countries’ writers made a concerted effort to regain their identities via it. It’s not necessarily a negative thing, and perhaps that is why partition literature was created. Everyone had the opportunity to tell their own story as they believed it to have happened.

Themes in partition literature have also abruptly changed in recent years, becoming more concerned with documenting and preserving it as the posterity moves farther from the partition and the number of individuals who saw it in person is decreasing. Thus, there is a pressing need for people to write and record as much as they can. As a result of the public’s increased awareness and consciousness of everything they read and consume, one also needs to be more responsible, cautious, and sensitive when composing literature. Since greater responsibility has begun to be placed on the writings now, no historical fiction can be written nowadays without taking care of the historical facts.

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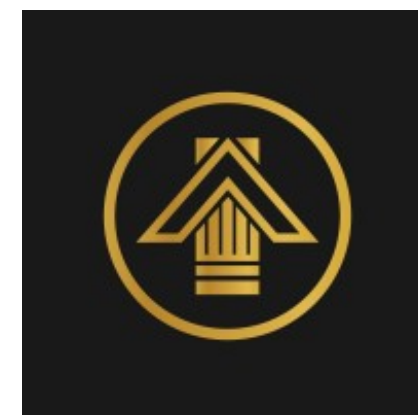
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About the Author

Anu Jhakar is currently in her third year at Lady Shree Ram college, DU, studying history. She usually engages in research regarding subjects like films and art, and exploring them in both historical and social context.

We thank you!!!





Poetry

How Do I Anticipate?

Aadishri Yadav

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In anticipation, I wonder still,
Of loss and pain, the cries that chill,
The bloodshed vast o'er lands they called home,
Now deserted, once a haven to roam.

I shudder at visions of trauma's cruel art,
Narrations of anguish, years torn apart.
Imagine an 8-year-old, amidst the strife,
Where bodies fall, a brutal dance of life.

As a child of the new millennium's grace,
I only know tales that leave a scarred trace,
When humanity faltered, veiled in a masquerade,
And trains became blood-stained, a gruesome cascade.

How can I fathom the old times' grace,
When borders were crossed with a mournful embrace?
The fire of power consumes, without heed,
Both those who hide and those who plant the seed.

Chaos knew no bounds, the mob took the stage,
When faith became treason, a world in outrage,
How do I preserve my fragile life,
In an eternal void of fear and strife?

Some chose death, some lived in pain,
The choices were harsh, the scars remain,
British schemes to divide and rule,
Politicians blinded, ambition their fuel.

The state sought to heal, reunite,
The fractured minds, in the pale moonlight,
But many had accepted their fate, embraced their despair,
In 1947, a world in disrepair.

Blessed are those who never saw,
The horrors of that fateful draw,
And those yet unborn, like me,
Who hear the tales from our elders' plea.

May the new world know no such dread,
May political ambitions be guided instead,
Towards unity, not fear's widespread sway,
May lost souls find eternal peace today.

In memory of those who suffered the divide,
Let unity and love forever reside,
Partition took a piece of every soul,
In our hearts, their stories make us whole.



About the Author

Hello readers, my name is Aadishri Yadav. I am a law student. I am no writer, but when I write it comes from my inquisitive thoughts. I try my best to put in what I truly feel. It's usually a gush of a lot of feelings which desperately want to be expressed. I love finding new facts and books to read. I want to immerse myself in art because there is no solace to humans except art.

Sussex Centre for Human Rights Research

Book Launch: 'Black Iconography and Colonial (Re)production at the International Criminal Court: Independence Char Cha' by Dr Stanley Mwangi Wanjiru

Date: Friday 2nd December 2022

Time: 12-2pm

Venue: Freeman F22 and online

Speaker: Dr Sara Kendall (Reader in International Law, University of Kent)

About the book:

This book explores the reproduction of colonialism at the International Criminal Court (ICC) and examines international criminal law (ICL) vs the black body through an immersive format of art, music, poetry, and architecture and post-colonial/critical race theory lens.

Taking a multi-disciplinary approach, the book interrogates the operationalisation of the Rome Statute to detail a Eurocentric hegemony at the core of ICL. It explores how colonialism and slavery have come to shape ICL, exposing the perpetuation of the colonial, and warns that it has ominous contemporary and future implications for Africa. As currently envisaged and acted out at the ICC, this law is founded on deceptive and colonial ideas of 'what is wrong' in/with the world. The book finds that the contemporary ICL regime is founded on white supremacy that corrupts the law's interaction with the African. The African is but a unit utilised by the global elite to exploit and extract resources. From time to time, these alliances disintegrate with ICL becoming a retaliatory tool of choice. What is at stake is power, not justice. This power has been hierarchical with Eurocentrism at the top throughout modern history. Colonialism is seen not to have ended but to have regerminated through the foundation of the 'independent' African state. The ICC reproduces the colonial by use of European law and, ultimately, the over-representation of the black accused. To conclude, the book provides a liberated African forum that can address conflicts in the content, with a call for the end of the ICC's involvement in Africa. The demand is made for an African court that utilises non-colonising African norms which are uniquely suited to address local conflicts.

Multidisciplinary in nature, this book will be of great interest to students and scholars of international criminal law, criminal justice, human rights law, African studies, global social justice, sociology, anthropology, postcolonial studies, and philosophy.



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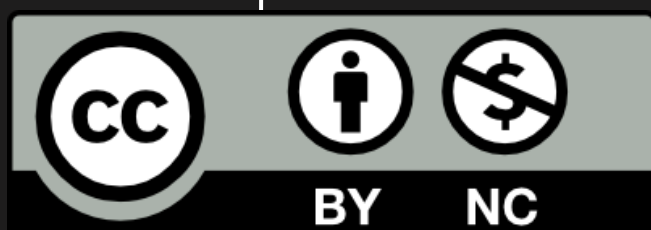
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