CHAPTER 3

WOMEN: SYMBOLS OF NATIONAL HONOUR AND SUFFERING MASCULINITIES

With the failure of Indian nationalism to curb the communalist forces from partitioning the country, a vicious burst of communal violence was unleashed that engulfed the country. As the mass migration, exchange of populations and subsequent dislocation took place, rivers of blood flowed in the Punjab. However, this bloody transition was elided so too was the sexual violence against women. As the ethnic, sexual violence raged through the newly formed nations of India and Pakistan the failure of a patriarchal nation-state to protect both its male and female citizens from gendered, bodily violence was apparent. A remarkable feature of this violence was the widespread sexual savagery.\(^1\) About 75,000 women\(^2\) are thought to have been abducted and raped by men of different religious communities. As is the case in any ethnic strife, women were singled out for humiliating treatment at the hands of men of the Other community. Apart from being abducted and raped they faced bodily mutilation, forcible conversion and marriage, and death. So widespread and horrific were the atrocities committed on women that Jawaharlal Nehru was forced to admit in an Indian women’s conference in December 1947, the last few months have seen terrible happenings in northern India and women have perhaps been the chief sufferers.\(^3\)

Yet, women’s voices have hardly been heard in the archives. It is only after pioneering historical research was conducted by feminist historiographers like Urvashi Butalia, Veena Das, Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin that a clearer picture has emerged. They have effectively shown that the violence of Partition was a gendered narrative of displacement which led to the realignment of family, community and national identities. They have also studied the violence that women were subjected to by men of their own as well as the other community and within their own families. Partition made women into symbols of national honour as there was a great emphasis on their purity and chastity. In order to understand how women became the symbolic bearers of the nation, it is essential to go back to the pre-history
of Partition and locate it in the discourse of the women’s question in nineteenth century colonial India.

**WOMEN IN THE NATIONALISTS’ IMAGINARY:**

The women’s question in the latter half of the nineteenth century was formulated in a society, where, the process of modernisation was subverted by colonisation, which disrupted the political, economic and cultural reality of India. This change occurred first in Bengal as it was the first foothold of the British. British economic and administrative policies, instituted by Warren Hastings and consolidated by Cornwallis through the Permanent Settlement of 1793, displaced the Hindu and Muslim gentry from their traditional sources of wealth, power and prestige. This was because of the changes introduced in the economic infrastructure through the introduction of land ownership, commercial agriculture and new forms of business. This, accompanied by the transformation of the legal and educational systems, led to the dislocation of the cultural patterns in the country.

Not content with virtually taking the power from the hands of the Indians the colonial masters intervened legislatively in matters of *sati*, child marriage, age of consent, widow remarriage and the issue of the seclusion of women or *purdah*, which they considered barbaric. This barbarity become a matter of colonial shame and was deepened further due to the writings of missionaries and writers like Mill, Duff, Macaulay and Grant who, motivated by their colonial interests, wrote about the physical and moral inferiority of the Indian race. The degraded position of the Indian women came in for special attack and attention by them. The aim of the imperial masters was to establish their higher morality by focusing on the low status of women among the subject population. Simultaneously, it was an issue by which the moral inferiority of the subject population could be demonstrated. This perceived difference coloured the colonial thinking and became a legitimate basis for colonial domination. The colonisers also boasted of a material superiority and higher moral values as they clashed with the culture of the subjugated Indians. Thus, the nineteenth century historiography of the women’s question was situated within the cultural and ideological encounter between England and India.
To counter this domination, nineteenth century nationalists proclaimed their sovereignty in the domain of culture, even through it conceded British superiority in the material sphere. This *cultural reclamation*\(^5\) was given further impetus by the contributions of Europeans to the rediscovery of India’s past glory and heritage in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The perception of the past was influenced by European, more specifically, British perceptions in two separate and contradictory ways. One strand was represented by the Orientalists namely Max Mueller. His reconstruction of the glory of Indian civilization was taken over completely by nineteenth century Indian writers to build a picture of Indian civilization for the whole of India. The other strand was the Utilitarian and Evangelical attack on contemporary Indian society, especially on the visibly low status of women. Influenced by the Orientalists and Utilitarian missionaries, the early nationalist writers went back to the ancient past to find evidence which eulogized women that would enable them to counter these attacks and reconstruct the humiliating image of women in the present.

With the criticism about the deplorable condition of their women increasing, the Hindu intelligentsia was unwilling to accept the attacks on their culture and the low status of their women. History came to occupy a key position as the cultural nationalists began to classify and analyse the past more rigorously to argue the debates of the present and turned to the ancient *shastras* to reinforce their viewpoints. Reformers like Rammohan Roy searched for an alternative to superstitions and ritualised Hinduism in its present degenerate form. This led him to look for those strands in the glorious past, which could bolster his arguments to provide an indigenous alternative to counter Hinduism in its present degenerate form. He found his answers in the form of the *Vedanta*. In scrapping everything except the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*, which were identified as the core of Hindu tradition, he created a precedent for the crucial nineteenth century foregrounding of the *Vedas*. Ultimately, the golden age of Hindu womanhood was also located within this era. *This reconstruction of the past synthetically absorbed much of the present and grafted it on to a golden age where women enjoyed high status in the same proportion as they suffered a degraded one in the contemporary age.*\(^6\) Additionally, in going back to the golden age of the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* the intelligentsia used the Aryan origin theory – the common origin of Europeans and Indians as propounded by Max Mueller – to give the subjugated people a sense of self-esteem and a means by which
all Indians of the upper strata could, in opposition to their rulers, gain a sense of national identity. It also meant that the subject people could at the same time identify with the rulers as people belonging to the same stock.

However, Indians had to concede the material superiority of the colonisers. In this respect, Partha Chatterjee notes that *anticolonial nationalism created its own domain of sovereignty within colonial society well before it began its political battle with the imperial power. It did this by dividing the world of social institutions and practices into two domains – the material and the spiritual.* The material corresponded to the domain of the outside – the *bahir* -- in which the West had proved its superiority and to which the East had succumbed. They were in the fields of science, technology, national forms of economic organization and modern governance. In this, Western superiority had to be acknowledged and accepted. The spiritual was an inner domain bearing the essential marks of cultural identity – the *ghar* – which was inviolate and its distinctness had to be preserved. Tanika Sarkar has convincingly argued that the male Bengali body in particular, and the Hindu body, in general, *was supposedly marked, maimed and completely worn down by colonialism. It was the visible site of surrender and loss, of defeat and alien discipline.* The man was forever making compromises with the material world – the *bahir*– which made him feel unworthy. All this meant that the household became doubly precious and important as the only area where the colonial masters could not impose their will. As a result, the home became the last independent space left to the colonised Hindu. The new nationalist worldview re-imagined the family as a contrast to and a critique of alien rule. This was achieved through the subordination of the Hindu wife at home which off-set the subordination of the colonised Hindu male in the world outside. Since the family was best suited to *replicate colonial arrangements* it was linked to *an enterprise to be administered, an army to be led, a state to be governed.*

If the male body was the visible site of surrender, the woman’s body, by contrast, was still held to be pure and unmarked, loyal and subservient to the discipline of the *shastras* alone, ruled by scriptures, and custom. The difference with the male body proved to be a source of healing, strength and redemption for the community as a whole. The precise source of grace for the Hindu woman was a unique capacity for bearing pain. So was the discipline exercised upon her body by
the iron laws of absolute chastity extending beyond the death of the husband through
an indissoluble, non-consensual form of infant marriage; through austere widowhood;
and through her proven capacity for self-immolation. All these exerted an inexorable
disciplinary regimen on the woman that was her lot from infancy to death. With this in
mind, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, R. C. Dutt and SwamyDayananda laid down rules
for containing and controlling women’s sexuality. In their view only women, by
controlling or sublimating their sexuality, could release both men and women for the
selfless sacrifices for the liberation of the motherland. Thus the recovery of the nation
became contingent on the image of the ideal Hindu woman. The dominant
characterisation of feminity in the new construct of women as a sign for the nation,
drew from all the force of mythological inspiration characteristics of feminity,
namely, the spiritual qualities of self-sacrifice, benevolence, devotion and religiosity.
The various shapes of the woman continuously readapted the ‘eternal’ past to the
needs of the contingent present, the woman’s body signifying, the ultimate and even
the last resort of resistance to imperialism in the nationalist discourse. Thus, in a
twisted way, the inviolate, chaste, pure female body was implicitly linked to political
independence at the level of the state.

Women also had to be both, the proof of the community’s modernity and its
fortress against the denigrating onslaught of that modernity which, if not countered,
would obliterate the Indian’s cultural existence. As part of the modernizing effort
women’s education was encouraged. This education would not only emphasise the
point that she was a nurturer and a care-giver but would also nurture her spiritual and
moral qualities. This reconstructed new woman was different from the street woman
in her dress, demeanour and education. She also differed from the Western woman in
that her education was not aimed at achieving a competitive equality with men in the
sphere of the outside – bahir, and the loss of feminine virtues. An ideal companion to
the Indian Westernised male, the new woman owing to the discipline of her
refinement, remained untainted by the corrupting influences of the material domain,
upholding, thereby, the sanctity of the nation.

Once the essential feminity of women was fixed in terms of certain cultural
visible spiritual qualities, they could go to schools, travel in public conveyances,
watch public entertainment programmes and take up employment outside the home.
But the spiritual sign of her feminity were now clearly marked – in her dress, her
eating habits, her social demeanour, her religiosity. What helped was that the woman was perceived in her twin roles as a goddess and mother which enabled to erase her sexuality in the world outside the home.

In the last decade of the nineteenth century the Hindu home fell away from the nationalist agenda because of the refusal of nationalism to make the women’s question an issue of political negotiation with the colonial state. Another reason was that a new centre of gravity was sought beyond conjugality. This was located in the loving relationship between mother and son, protector and nurturer of her sons and men – a supreme deity known as Mother India. This image of the mother was used in various ways depending on the situation. Revivalists and extremists deployed the image of Mother India as a victim being ravaged by hoards of invaders, as well as a warrior and protector in her avatar as goddess Kali. The nationalists imbued her with higher moral and spiritual qualities in their fight for freedom. However, this gave rise to a new patriarchy during the nationalist struggle for independence. The nationalists conferred upon women the honour of a new social responsibility of participating in the freedom struggle. At the same time, they associated female emancipation with the historical goal of sovereign nationhood. This bound them to a new subordination, which drew its legitimacy from the idiom of the nation.

This was evident when Gandhi drew upon the nineteenth century social reformers’ imaginary of the pure, chaste and virtuous woman and harnessed them in the cause for freedom. They came out of their homes and became nationalists, activists and public figures. He brought them out into the public arena by employing the rhetoric of the Indian woman’s exceptional qualities and purity. He invoked traditional Hindu heroines like Sita and Draupadi as exemplars of moral courage and self sacrifice. Women were, according to this scheme, peculiarly and intuitively suited for the exigencies of Satyagraha and non violent struggle. The qualities of mind required for such enterprises had, on the other hand, to be learnt by men. In essence, Gandhi’s conditions for allowing the women to organize as part of his non-violent movement required them to adhere to the attitude of a feminised, financially dependent, and sexually pure way of living. The control of women’s bodies by restricting their sexuality to a procreative function within marriage was promoted as the ideal for the future of the nation. Thus, a new subject position for women was drawn up and she became the repository of spiritual and moral values. In this process
the intertwining of patriarchal and nationalist interests led to a category of women as good or bad according to their ability to live up to notions of idealized womanhood even in the nationalists’ era.

**THE EMERGENCE OF THE MUSLIM **BHADRAMAHILA:**

This cultural encounter with the West led to the emergence of the *bhadramahila*, the good middle-class Hindu woman, chaste and pure, who was transformed into Mother India. Similarly, nineteenth century Bengal also saw the emergence of the Muslim *bhadramahila*. This was effected against the loss of political and economic power for the Muslim elite. Muslim women’s education, veiling, polygamy, divorce, age of marriage and consent also became topics of intense debate. To counter this colonial shame, the past for the Muslims, like their Hindu counterparts, was reinterpreted and reconstructed to locate a Muslim golden age for women. If the Hindus located cerebral women like Gargi and Maitrei, exemplars of intelligence and courage, the Muslims had their Ayeshas and Fatimas. In the case of Muslims too, the modernizing ideology of their awakening sought to first create the new woman and then legitimise her subjection under a new patriarchy. This modernising process for women was attempted through the re-interpretation of religion, which sought to harmonise the emancipation of women with the spirit of Islam.

These contrary pulls gave unique twists and turns to the progression of the women’s reform movement, dislodging it from linear route. On the one hand, there was an overriding desire to reform, on the other, to uphold tradition. The situation of the Bengal Muslims was even more complex. To the reformers of Muslim Bengal, the women, who were the inhabitants of the *ghar*, also called *andarmahals*, were a source of shame and considered a burden. Therefore, they had to prove themselves doubly – once to the colonial overlord, and again to the more advanced Hindu community. One of the prime objectives of the reformers was to uphold the sanctity of the home for the private sphere provided the only source of empowerment to the man after being displaced from the public sphere by the colonial regime. The home was to become a sanctuary from the breakdown of old values in the face of
modernization and the dehumanising effects of colonisation. Thus, the burden of making the home a haven fell on the woman and could only be accomplished through either a liberal or orthodox programme of education and Islamisation for them. Deoband and Aligarh stepped in to fulfill the reformers’ aims of **perfecting women**. Both, the orthodox ulema and the scholars of the liberal Aligarh school were agreed on one point, that women’s chastity, honour and modesty, *ismat*, was to be maintained and these qualities had to be inculcated to help them in their objectives of making the home a true sanctuary. Educationists like Sir Sayed Ahmed Khan argued that the *purdah* was not sanctioned by Islam and advocated its abolition and that women’s education was meant to cultivate their moral and spiritual values like their Hindu counterparts. The ulema like Maulana Thanawi too made the custom-laden private world resting in women’s hands a central target of reform by communicating correct teaching from the *shari’at* – the all encompassing norms based on the Quran and the received example of the Prophet Mohammed (the *Sunna*). Thanawi and other reformist ulema attempted to bring women into the high standard of Islamic conformity that had been the concern of educated religious men who made the sexual virtue of women a central theme of their discourse.

With education Muslim women too came out of seclusion and participated in the freedom struggle. The *Khilafat Movement* and Gandhi’s simultaneous launch of the first non-violent, non-co-operation movement, acted as a spur in this direction. However, the communalisation of the Muslim women’s political identity started taking place due to the dissatisfaction with the Nehru Report of 1928, which denied the right of Muslims to separate electorates and denied their constituent status at the centre as equal to Hindus. The other factors which worked in this direction were the *Communal Award* of 1932, which granted the Muslims a separate identity, and the Muslim League victory in the 1937 election. Jinnah had the active support of the women, when he passed the Pakistan Resolution in 1940 and by 1942 many Muslim women were completely converted to the Pakistan idea, due to Jinnah’s campaigning. Throughout this phase of their political activism Muslim women, like the Hindu women, maintained their spiritual qualities.

This brief discussion of the women’s question shows that both Hindus and Muslims had similar goals for their women, and that their purity and chastity was of utmost importance in the private as well as the public sphere. In bringing about
societal changes Hindus sought answers from the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* whereas the Muslims did it within the Islamic framework. However, in the nationalist scenario the Muslims could not identify with Bharatmata and all its attendant symbolism especially that of Mother India being ravaged by the Muslim invaders. Though this was a way of mobilising the masses, the Muslims felt that their identity was under threat. Moreover, by raising the status of the Hindu woman to Mother India, the cultural nationalists sent a very clear message that India was a Hindu nation. So much so, that after Partition the patriarchal Hindu nation depicted India as Bharatmata with her arms severed by the Muslim mobs. The Muslims, on the other hand, being bound by Islamic laws and teachings, had no such symbolism to match that of the Hindus even after the creation of Pakistan.

Since women’s chastity and purity was equally important for both Hindus and Muslims, they became repositories of national and community honour. Their bodies became sites of violence, during the Partition holocaust, where different ethnic communities sought to establish their dominance over each other. This emphasis on women’s chastity became the supreme marker of difference from the *Other* community and became the reason for humiliating the enemy and asserting their patriarchal power in the newly created nation-states.

**WOMEN AND THE PARTITION DISCOURSE:**

*Systematic communal outrages on women began in March 1947 in Rawalpindi district.* A number of Sikh villages were attacked and many cases of rape and abduction were reported. In one village some ninety women committed suicide by throwing themselves into a well, while at another thirty two women were put to the sword by their own men when the capture by Muslim attackers was seen to be imminent. At the height of the communal fury in August and September, K.C. Kalsi reported:

*More than half the population (being 6000 men and women and children) were massacred and burnt alive… Hundreds of women saved their honour by jumping into wells or throwing themselves into burning houses … Girls of 8 to 10 years of age were raped in the presence of*
their parents and put to death mercilessly. The breasts of women were cut and they were made to walk all naked in rows of five in the bazaars of Harnoli. About 800 girls were abducted…

The instances given above encapsulate the large scale violence against women during Partition and the types of violence they were subjected to – abduction, rape, suicide, and family violence. However, given the importance women’s chastity held in the nationalists’ imaginary, their experiences were hardly ever spoken about and was covered by a layer of silence. In teasing out the women’s side of the Partition experience Urvashi Butalia notes that in this silence lay the many hidden histories that have always hovered at the edges of those that have been told, the histories that describe the dark side of freedom. Moreover, this wide-spread and horrific abuse of women, became charged with a symbolic meaning. It became the marker of the place that women’s sexuality occupied between and within religious or ethnic communities in a patriarchal society. During the dark days of the Partition women of one community [were] sexually assaulted by the men of the other, in an overt assertion of their identity and a simultaneous humiliation of the Other by “dishonouring” their women. The appropriation of women from the other community was a way to affect the collective honour, religious sentiment and the physical reproduction of that community.

Certain specific features of communal crimes against women were their brutality, their extreme sexual violence and their collective nature. The range of sexual violence women faced were stripping, parading naked; mutilating and disfiguring; tattooing or branding the breasts and genetalia with triumphal slogans; amputating breasts; knifing open the womb, raping, of course killing foetuses. These instances were shocking not only for its savagery, but for what it tells us about women as objects in male constructions of their own honour: that men treat women’s bodies as territory to be conquered, claimed or marked by the assailant besides humiliating her. As a result of rape, the female womb becomes occupied territory and, consequently, she becomes polluted. In the process of rehabilitating women, post-Partition, many were forced to undergo abortions to eliminate the possibility of their bearing the enemy’s children and polluting the biological national source of family. Similar instances abound in all ethnic conflicts the world over and were not confined to the Partition holocaust.
The preoccupation with women’s sexuality led to another form of violence against them, which has not been acknowledged openly except perhaps in fiction: familial violence. Since the belief that a woman’s honour was equated with male and community honour, men killed their own women and encouraged mass suicide which was glorified. This was even more horrific than circumcision or forcible conversion and marriage. Many of them were forced to die at the hands of men in their own families or by their own hands. They were poisoned, strangled or burnt to death; beheaded or drowned. For these women, in the absence of their menfolk, taking their own lives was the only choice available to them as that death was preferable to dishonour. These deaths were not considered a suicide but a willing sacrifice to uphold family honour. Notions of shame and honour were so ingrained and internalised so successfully by men and women that no one protested – not even women. The real fear was of dishonour, conversion and marriage, that is why real, but honourable death over the symbolic death that marriage and conversion entailed seemed not just preferable, but almost prescribed for Hindus and Sikhs. 

Such deaths were not considered suicides but a martyrdom, as these women had offered themselves up for death to uphold family honour, whereas abducted women entered the realm of shame and silence. Such deaths within communities were made to appear heroic and even valorized.

Even Gandhi exalted such suicide, which amounted to murder as deterrence to rape. His endorsement of voluntary suicide was in keeping with the opinion of the majority. However, as the number of abducted women increased, India and Pakistan were forced into taking prompt action in repatriating and recovering these women as it was one of the most urgent problems being faced by them. The Central Recovery Operation was launched in 1948, but from the beginning it ran into trouble as the recovery of abducted women was painfully slow. One problem was that Hindu and Sikh refugees in India believed that far more of their women had been abducted and that the Indian government was more concerned with the return of Muslim women to Pakistan than of non-Muslim women to India. Also sympathizers in villages would warn of the approach of the recovery officials and thereby frustrate their attempts at recovery.

But perhaps the most perplexing problem was the reluctance of the abducted women to be rescued. Many women resisted and protested but they had no choice in
the matter. One reason for their resistance was that they had formed an attachment with their abductors and had got used to their materially better way of living. Another reason was that they were burdened with a sense of shame and guilt at having being raped and passed from hand-to-hand. Moreover, forcible recovery, proved to be a state sponsored re-abduction as women now had children, who were separated from them when they were forced to resettle in their original homes. As forcible recovery became the norm, the women’s acceptance into their families proved to be problematic. Such was the reluctance to accept these women back into their original families that Gandhi had to retract his earlier statement and with Nehru issue appeals to people assuring them that abducted women remained pure.

The purity of the women was of much more importance in India to Hindu and Sikhs perhaps because the Hindu religion places greater emphasis on purity and pollution as feminist historiographers, Urvashi Butalia, Veena Das, Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin have shown. However, Aysha Ghani has made the point that the Pakistani Punjabi communities too deemed values of “purity and pollution on one hand and honour and shame on the other” as integral, that there were also horrific stories of women who committed suicide, or were killed by members of their own family in order to save their izzat; that many abducted women, like their Indian counterparts were not accepted back; that homes for these unwanted women were opened. In India too ashrams for abducted women were opened as their families were unwilling to take them back especially if they had children for they were a constant reminder of their violation. Women were given a hard choice – to keep the children and stay in an ashram or give them up to orphanages and go back to the original family. For pregnant women the state financed mass abortions. More often than not, these ashrams became their permanent homes.

As forcible recovery continued it became apparent that the state was resorting to a covert violence, where women were concerned. In an attempt to resettle and rehabilitate them, it displaced and dislocated them once again. As this issue was being hotly debated in Parliament and the country, it became clear that where women were concerned the debate had entered into an altogether different realm: that of the honour of the nation, and of its men. Partition signified a loss to the newly formed nation of India, which was viewed with a deepening sense of shame and inadequacy for it represented the actual violation of not only women but also of the
body of Mother India: Bharatmata. The abduction and rape of its women therefore represented a violation of their bodies as real – not metaphorical mothers. Motherhood had been defiled, especially when the raped and abducted mother had actually expressed a desire to stay with her abductor. Under such circumstances, the recovery of its women meant the regaining the pure body of the woman, which was crucially essential, for legitimizing the authority of the patriarchal nation-state as well as restoring community and national honour. This violent “resolution” was advocated because national honour was staked on the body of Mother India, and therefore, by extension, on the bodies of all Hindu and Sikh women, mothers and would-be mothers. It also disposed of the troublesome question of women’s sexuality and sexual status – chaste, polluted, and impure – and simultaneously insisted on women’s silence regarding it through the concept of shame and stigma attached to rape and abduction.

It is remarkable that patriarchal interests continued to govern the lives of the women during Partition in a similar manner as it did during the great reform movements of the nineteenth century. At that time the Hindu woman’s body became the site of a struggle that for the first time declared war on the very fundamentals of an alien power knowledge system when the debates on sati, widow remarriage and age of consent raged through the country, and remained at the heart of the struggle as it emphasized the purity and cultural superiority of Indian womanhood. But, in the process of arriving at a consensus, women’s voices were drowned out. Similarly, in 1947 the reconfiguration of relationships between communities took place around the body and being of the abducted women of all three communities. However, patriarchal concerns continued to ride high and the State was not only paternalistic but also acted as a coercive parent, where women were concerned, flouting with impunity, through forcible recovery, their rights and privileges. In short, women’s collectivity lay in their silence as they were not allowed to voice their protest.

**SUFFERING MASCULINITIES:**

So far the discussion has thrown light on how women were constructed as signs and symbols of the nation. Colonial historians have effectively shown how
women’s bodies bore the symbolic burden of signifying culture and tradition, community and nation; that the idealization of a Hindu India was epitomized in a particular Hindu female figure. This idealization of a Hindu India was also in evidence during the Partition. Much scholarship has revolved round the body of the woman who was equated with national honour during that time. The violation of the female body has received a lot of attention but what about male bodies? In an interesting but pertinent departure, KavitaDaiya argues that it is imperative to examine the construction of both masculinity and femininity together in the articulation of cultural and national belonging in public and political discourse.\(^\text{29}\) Partha Chatterjee and Tanika Sarkar have consistently made the point that colonialism made the man effete and was worn out because of a series of deprivations. But how this affected the man has not been studied in depth. Similarly, men too experienced violence during the Partition but questions like what happens to men’s roles, male bodies and conceptions of masculinity remain unanswered. As Daiya asks, *How are male bodies represented, deployed and refashioned in the creation and contestation of postcolonial nationalism?*\(^\text{30}\) She suggests that a look at the narration of violence against men in the postcolonial Indian public sphere reveals that masculinity and men as gendered subjects can also become critical sites for the symbolization of nationality and belonging as they too experienced psychological and sexual violence, albeit in different ways; that even their histories are concealed in a crack covered over by layers of silence.

It is notable that in the literature of the 1947 Partition of India men also become symbolic national icons and that through their sufferings, they become representatives of the violence of both colonialism and elite nationalism, which affected them in considerable ways. *Both* men and women became sites of gendered sexual and psychological violence. These novels, critique nationalism through the representation of intimate violence and displacement experienced by its male and female subjects and makes it visible. The discussion that follows will demonstrate how this is done and, in the process, take up the task of recovering the *hidden histories* of men and women and their everyday experiences thus widening the crack of silence some more.
IZZAT AND FAMILIAL VIOLENCE:

It is now a well known fact that women faced violence by men of their own as well as the other community and within their own families. This aspect of familial violence has been taken up by a writer in the Diaspora, Shauna Singh Baldwin, in her *What the Body Remembers*. She gives in it a compelling account of Partition from the point of view of a Sikh-Canadian writer. Baldwin, in this novel, identifies and addresses gendered violence in a place where it is not normally seen - the home, domestic spaces and private lives. She makes the home the metaphor of the nation where colonialism provided Indian men the rationale for constructing and reconstructing the identity of the Hindu woman as a ‘bhadramahila’, the good middle class, Hindu wife and mother, supporter of her men, whereas Independence, and its dark “other” Partition provided the rationale for making women into symbols of the nation’s honour — here, family and community honour. In order to understand this, this analysis will juxtapose historical research conducted by nineteenth century colonial historians Partha Chatterjee, Tanika Sarkar and Uma Chakravarti, to show how cultural nationalists made the family the repository of spiritual values supposedly superior to that of the West and link it to the findings of feminist historiographers who show how the emphasis on women’s purity and chastity led to violence within families during Partition. This is portrayed through three main characters - Sardarji, Roop and Satya – and the concept of izzat, which leads to mental torture women have to face within their marriage, as well as familial violence. Kusum, Roop’s sister-in-law, faces when she is sacrificed for izzat.

England educated Sardarji returns to India in 1918, a fully qualified engineer from Balliol. He recognizes that the claims of Western civilization were the most powerful in the material sphere; that science, technology, rational forms of economic organization and modern methods of statecraft had given the European countries the strength to subjugate the colonised people and to impose their dominance over the whole world. To overcome this domination, Sardarji learns these superior techniques of organising material life and incorporates them within his own culture. As Sardarji might have explained to his father if he had listened to him, to know your adversary, you enter his mind and see from his eyes. But this modernity, which is alien and which he has to incorporate in his everyday life, comes at a heavy cost. He
is a wealthy landlord, has a vast library and a profound knowledge. He is an engineer in the irrigation department and has ambitions of constructing the Bhakranangal Dam. Yet, his ambition cannot reach fruition for his superior, Timothy Farquharson, stands between him and his desire to be promoted as Chief Engineer of the Punjab, since he is British. This only happens after Partition but with the Western half of the Punjab taken by Pakistan, he considers it a sorry title that does nothing for his loss. Because Farquharson is British, he symbolizes Western superiority and dominance even though he is incapable and incompetent and humiliates Sardarji in a number of ways. On the other hand, Sardarji having passed through the grind of western education, office routine, and forced urbanization ... [is] remade in an attenuated, emasculated form by colonialism. Despite being a wealthy landowner, with all his education and capabilities, he does not get his fair share in the governance of the country. This makes him effete and these series of deprivations in the outer domain – bahiras Partha Chatterjee terms it – is compensated for by his governance in the inner space – ghar. It is the ghar, the inner, spiritual domain that enables him to replicate colonial arrangements and provides a haven for him from the outside world. The home, then, for Sardarji substitutes for the world outside and for all the work and relations there that lies beyond personal comprehension and control. The household consequently, becomes doubly precious and important as the only zone where autonomy and self rule can be preserved. Unlike Victorian middle-class situations the family is not only a refuge after work for Sardarji; it is also his real place of work where he can rule as a benign autocrat. After his return from England, even though he has acquired and maintained the rational aspects of his English education he still retains what he calls his ‘ten percent’, his turban, his faith, the untranslated, untranslatable residue of his being.

Sardarji has taken on the outer domain of Western learning because it is superior and acknowledges its accomplishments. However, according to the cultural nationalists, the ghar was invested with higher inviolate qualities which were the absolute and unconditional chastity of the Hindu / Sikh wife extending beyond the death of the husband. This purity, since it is supposedly a conscious moral choice, becomes at once a sign of difference and of superiority from Western ways, a Hindu claim to power. This is invested in his two wives, Satya and Roop, who embody izzat in two different ways. Since Sardarji still retains his ten percent he marries a second
time as Satya, his first wife of forty-two years, is barren. Sixteen year old Roop is got for the sole purpose of bearing his children. Both his wives fit into the nineteenth century nationalist imaginary of the bhadramahila - good middle class, chaste wives. Sardarji becomes within the home what he can never aspire to be outside it – a ruler, an administrator, a legislator or a chief justice, a general marshalling his troops.\(^35\) In other words, he becomes a coloniser, and Satya and Roop his colony.

Given this introduction into his household arrangements Sardarji is unaware of being unkind to his two wives. Satya, Sardarji’s intellectual helpmate, has been with him during the days of his struggle, and manages his mills, estates and manager Abdul Aziz adroitly, efficiently and capably. When Satya, who is his near equal in intellect, confronts him after his marriage to Roop, she is naturally upset and asks him:

\[\text{‘I still have life to give, why do you throw me away?’}\]

And Sardarji’s roar, \[\text{‘I do not throw you away, I tell you! You will have all izzat, all respect, you will be looked after.’}\]^36

Satya does not want this type of indifferent izzat, which is tied up with duty that Sardarji offers her. But she is not the meek and mild nineteenth century woman who never raises her voice. She is a woman, who has come to the world with eyes wide open, never to lower them before a man. Though Sardarji finds Satya tuned to his needs, he demeanes her by marrying Roop, because of her barrenness. She is regal even in her humiliation. She says:

\[\text{‘I want your love, not your duty... your fidelity, not your generosity. I want, not for you, but for me, for myself, because though I have failed to do what we women are for, I am still here, still your wife, still Satya.’}\]^37

She cannot bring herself to feel sisterly towards Roop and does everything in her power to humiliate, frighten and intimidate her. Nevertheless, she still needs Roop forbearing Sardarji’s children. When they are born, she takes her two children away from her and withholds her love from them.

Eventually, forced by Roop’s father and her brother, Major Jeevan, Sardarji gives the children back to Roop. He takes her with him to Lahore and leaves Satya alone in their ancestral haveli in Rawalpindi. In so doing, he chooses Roop over Satya who feels abandoned. She feels that this is beyond barrenness – this is
indifference especially since Roop is pregnant for the third time. She, independent Satya, is still constricted by patriarchal enclosures when she realizes that, for Sardarji, all the years they spent together meant so little. It also makes the reader aware of a subtle kind of mental torture within families.

She decides to remove herself from his life by committing suicide to solve the problem. She willingly contracts tuberculosis, because, even in her distress she, like a good wife, knows that *no harm must come to Sardarji or his reputation, it is the situation that must be corrected, balance restored, harmony returned.* This gift must be given so he never knows he was given it. She yearns to live with *izzat*, which, for her means love, respect and equality in a marriage. She willfully embraces death and transforms her anger into a gesture of resistance, rather than suffering silently. In death she is united with Sardarji in a transcendental sort of way for he misses her sharp mind. Even Roop feels an affinity with Satya.

If for Satya *izzat* meant the acknowledgement of her intellectual prowess and equality, for Roop it means keeping the family honour intact in both, her natal and marital homes. This lesson is hammered home to her by her father when she leaves Sardarji temporarily and seeks refuge with him. Roop, Sardarji’s second wife, is motherless and has two siblings, Jeevan and Madani. She is tamed and educated in feminine grace mostly by her father, and an array of female relatives in the household: Nani, RevatiBhua and her servant, Gujri. She is further instructed by her aunt, LajoBhua, who imparts to her the rules of acceptable feminine behavior: agreeing with her elders, speaking softly, and never feeling angry: lessons internalized well into adulthood.

Roop is ambitious and does not want to die like her mother without having seen anything beyond the *haveli* and who was always confined within the *purdah*. She believes she has good *kismat* and will marry a rich man. And so it is with elation that she learns she is to become the second wife of a wealthy Sikh landowner, Sardarji. Her father agrees to this marriage to this rich, middle-aged *jagirdar*, for he is deep in debt and owes Sardarji money. She is being married without dowry to replace the infertile emptiness of Satya’s barrenness. When she is expecting her first child, Sardarji asks her to give her first born to her ‘sister’, as women need babies and he has to satisfy her. Inwardly, Roop protests, ‘*But I like babies. I want my own.*’ She waits for Sardarji to give her the opportunity to refuse but he assumes she will want what he
wants. He tells her, ‘*You will feel the joy of sacrifice, the happiness of giving,*’[^40] demonstrating that the patriarch’s word is absolute. Roop, who might have protested against injustice a few months earlier, refrains from doing so now. When her second child, her son, is snatched away from her she realizes too late that she was *married for this, her obligatory altruism,*[^41] that it was not her but her womb that Sardarji required.

Satya continues to harass Roop. One day she sends her a bitter almond in a paan. Fearing that Satya was trying to poison her she seeks shelter with her father in PariDarvaza. After a few days Bachan Singh urges her to go back. RevatiBhua suggests that what Papaji is saying is, ‘*that death should be preferable to dishonor for good-good Sikh girls.*’[^42] Though Bachan Singh denies it Kusum, his daughter-in-law, confirms it when Roop asks her if poison was not a big thing.

> ‘It is a big thing for you – you think you are so important. For Papaji, izzat is bigger.’[^43]

**Izzat.** The essentiality untranslatable quality of respect, dignity, and honour – which is also a special burden and marker of femininity – is a significant concept of Indian women, a concept that invites admiration, when ethics are upheld and elicits horror, when it requires killing. If Roop and Satya, in their individual ways, are forced to uphold family honour and are subjected to a subtle form of family violence which is psychological, it becomes gruesome during the gendered violence of Partition. Feminist historians like Urvashi Butalia, Ritu Menon, KamlaBhasin and Veena Das have shown that women became the symbols of national honour. Women’s bodies became the site on which men enacted violence. Abduction and rape were forms of humiliating the Other community, but familial violence, where women were put to death by the hands of their own men, was hardly spoken about. The scale of this violence was unimaginable but in actual fact no mention was made of this kind of violence by anyone – neither the families nor the state or indeed by historians. What is even more horrifying is that women, who were killed by their own families, or who took their own lives, entered the realm of martyrdom, as violence within communities was valorised. The explanation was that they had offered themselves up for death in order to maintain the family honour.
What the Body Remembers hones in on this zone of silence. Bachan Singh maintains a studied silence about his daughter-in-law, Kusum’s death till Roop questions him about it. He had beheaded her with his kirpan for she was his responsibility. The reasoning was that since women were governed by the ironclad laws of chastity, they did not feel any fear. The real fear was of dishonour. That is why it was better if she were honourably dead.\(^{44}\) The way Bachan Singh describes her reaction, ‘She understood. Always she made no trouble…’\(^{45}\) makes it appear as if she had offered herself up for death. Roop realizes that RevatiBhua was right about her father preferring death to dishonour. She does not endorse the act but, nevertheless, silently condemns the sacrifice. What is more horrific is that Kusum’s dead body is brutally dismembered by the Muslim crowd, her womb ripped out, and her limbs severed at the joints and rearranged to look whole again. Her body is made the tabula on which the Muslims inscribe their message where they imply that they would stamp the Sikh quom out of existence.

Thus her body becomes the receptacle of her community’s history and also becomes the sign and language through which the violent dialogue between men was conducted.\(^{46}\) Later, when Jeevan recounts to Roop how he found Kusum’s dismembered body it becomes a kind of genetic inheritance\(^{47}\) and she realizes that this will be recounted to Jeevan’s sons and their grandchildren repeatedly till these narratives become a cultural heritage wherein the hate and poison will be nurtured. This makes it amply clear that Roop’s determination to remember Kusum’s body remembered\(^{48}\) is nowhere substantiated in terms of a healing process.\(^{49}\)

On the other hand, Bachan Singh speaks of RevatiBhua as though she were dead because she converted to Islam. He forgets that her courage and sacrifice saved him and the boys. Her act is not valorized as conversion was frowned upon. Gujri, their maidservant is left to her fate on the way to Delhi as she cannot walk any further.

However, for a storyline predicated on Partition, the novel does not convey a firm grasp on the nightmarish events of the time. Except for Kusum’s death the narrative does not communicate the horrors of the gendered violence of Partition or the depth of insanity unleashed by the event. There is just a passing reference to a woman whose breasts have been chopped off and of Roop’s childhood friend, Huma, being abducted. At one point Baldwin does try to put Roop in a heroic light, when she saves her Muslim maidservant, Joriman, from being raped and abducted by
Muslim soldiers while on their way to Delhi. But it is not a very convincing scene and Roop abandons her and leaves her to her fate after reaching Delhi. Perhaps the horror of Partition not being fully conveyed may stem, to an extent, from the need to retrieve lost community-based memories in diasporic communities which may at times lead to an erasure of shared memories of guilt and responsibility.\(^{50}\)

As for Sardarji, he has the entire responsibility of the irrigation department on his shoulders after his enforced relocation to Delhi. He has to record and classify water disputes that have arisen after the Radcliffe Line has demarcated boundaries. It is an onerous job that is a fall-out of Partition. He also has to see to the welfare of refugees who mill around his bungalow and witnesses his brother-in-law, Sardar Kushal Singh, lose his mind. All this has left its mark on this once wealthy jagirdar, owner of mills and vast tracts of land, who was once self-assured and independent. He is now a shell of a man plagued by nightmares, unsure, in need of direction. He shuts out Roop completely and does not talk about his experiences of his journey from Lahore to Delhi.

This is a telling commentary on how men bottle up their feelings and, in the process, become psychologically unmanned. In the end, it is Roop, the good Sikh wife, who proves to be his source of salvation for she manages to give him his self-esteem and self-respect back. She, like Satya, gives this gift to him without his knowing he was given it. She confesses about her deafness to him which she has hidden all these years from him. Her weakness gives Sardarji strength. Energised, and with a purpose in life, he goes about finding a doctor for Roop and is now ready to take on all the responsibilities with a renewed zeal. Though Roop cannot fit into the image of Mother India or become a sign of the nation she becomes his source of redemption as is expected of all good Sikh and Hindu middle-class wives. Sardarji, who was worn down by colonialism is now worn down by the horrors of Partition and it is a woman, who bestows the male body with a redemptive, healing strength.

**THE ABDUCTED WOMAN:**

While Shauna Singh Baldwin’s *What the Body Remembers* deals with familial violence, of death at the hands of one’s own kinsmen, Bapsi Sidhwa’s *Ice-Candy-Man*
deals with the abduction, rape and brutalization of women by members of the Other community during Partition.

*Ice-Candy-Man* explores the theme of abduction through the eyes of an eight year old Parsi girl, Lenny Sethi, who is polio stricken. Lenny, the narrator, is from an upper middle-class household in Lahore whose *account offers a double elite and minoritised perspective of how Partition transformed everyday life in decolonizing India.* As a result, *Ice-Candy-Man* becomes a powerful reconstruct of the traumatic events that destroyed the pace of life, generated hatred and *cracked* the country. This is done through the trope of memory of an adult narrator Lenny, reflecting on her community’s privileged status in relation to individuals like her ayah, Shanta. Her memories are not only a commentary on the historical events and struggles taking place in undivided India but also makes readers aware of the gendered patriarchal differences at home and outside. From the outset Lenny becomes aware of how differently she was treated from her brother by her family and community. She is represented as internalising a sense of inferiority because she is a girl. Similarly, in witnessing her parents’ interaction with each other she notices the dominance of her father in all matters including finances, favour and family harmony. She remembers how her mother negotiated her needs with her father in resolving domestic matters. She does it in a manner which is highly individualised, degrading and demeaning in the interest of maintaining her patriarchal patronage and this contributes to the perpetuation of elite patriarchal practices.

But the most important function Lenny’s memories serve is to examine *how Lenny, as a privileged minority in postcolonial Pakistan, may share some responsibility for the failure of the state and community to protect and accommodate the interests of individuals like Ayah.* Her narrative figures her growing awareness of the links between the power relations she experiences as a girl growing up in a patriarchal minority community and the pressures Ayah negotiates as a female Hindu servant living in colonial India and postcolonial Pakistan. This is possible because of the relatively unsupervised, undisciplined and affectionate relationship between Ayah and Lenny which allows them an intimacy that is not circumscribed by patriarchal, racial and class conventions.

In the opening lines of the novel Lenny states: *My world is compressed,* and this is why Ayah exerts a fascination over Lenny. The unregulated time...
between them takes her out of her compressed world and she sees how Ayah subverts the codes of chastity and conjugality. Ayah with her chocolate chemistry\textsuperscript{54} attracts every one and the covetous glances Ayah draws educate Lenny. In the park Ayah is surrounded by her group of multi-religious and multi-cultural admirers, of whom Masseur and Ice-candy-man are the main contenders for her favours. From this group of admirers that surround Ayah, Lenny’s sexual education begins and she learns the meaning and purpose of things...[and] discover[s] that heaven has a dark fragrance.\textsuperscript{55} She also begins to detect the subtle exchange of signals and some of the complex rites by which Ayah’s admirers co-exist.\textsuperscript{56} Once Ayah has made up her mind with whom she will spend her time with the other men slip away.

These encounters show Ayah’s sexual power between her and the men surrounding her. They also reveal that the lower class women were not governed by the iron laws of chastity and had greater freedom than their middle-class, upper caste women. Ayah is able to consort with her admirers by depending upon Lenny’s indulgence and silence brought by candy. Thus, Ayah’s servant body makes her available to the surrounding men over whom she exerts some semblance of power in coquetry. In short, Ayah, luscious and attractive and her male admirers exuding lustful love, becomes a source of knowledge about sexuality for Lenny. She acquires her knowledge of the chaotic realities of the historical situation from her unique positioning. Being more in the company of adults, particularly of the servants, than a normal child, she imbibes adult views from two divergent groups: the Parsi community and the servants.

When Partition finally breaks out Lenny notices the drastic change in Ice-candy-man. He, who had wooed and pursued Ayah relentlessly, ends up abducting her. As fires break out in Lahore, Lenny and Ayah watch Shalmi burn and a frenzied mob tear apart a baniya from the roof-top of Ice-candy-man’s tenement, she is introduced to communal violence and Lenny wonders:

\textbf{How long does Lahore burn? Weeks? Months?... the fire could not have burned for months and months...But in my memory it is branded over an inordinate length of time: memory demands poetic licence.}\textsuperscript{57}

She becomes aware of the deepening troubles and tensions as she notes that Lahore is in the vicious grip of communal frenzy. Ice-candy-man reports of a
trainload of dead Muslims from Gurdaspur while waiting for his relatives who were also massacred in the same train. He tells them, ‘there are no young women among the dead! Only two gunny-bags full of women’s breasts!’ Here the narrative introduces the reader to the gendered sexual violence against women. Among the range of bodily violence women experienced, Shidhwa has chosen to report the amputation of breasts for it at once desexualizes a woman and negates her as a wife and mother; no longer a nurturer. She remains a permanently inauspicious figure almost as undesirable as a barren woman.

It is as though the rival community desired to destroy the enemy by eliminating the means of reproduction and nurturing.

Ice-candy-man decides to avenge this dishonour for the desecration of women meant the desecration of his manhood. This also gives him a motive for abducting Ayah. With this the stage is set for Ayah’s abduction. Soon, the cosmopolitan community of friendship that articulated different religious backgrounds around Ayah begins to fall apart. One day, Ayah’s lover, Masseur, is murdered. His body is found with his head severed in a gunny sack on the sheet. Ice-candy-man has acquired an unpleasant swagger and a strange way of looking at Hari-the-gardener and Moti-the-sweeper.

As Partition draws near, the violence in Lahore escalates and the crowd converges at the Sethi’s home. All the members of the household, except Ayah, who is Hindu, gather before the mob. During this tense moment, Lenny’s silence and understanding are taken for granted. Someone from the mob asks, ‘Where are the Hindus?’ Imam Din, the cook, replies that there are none. Someone else wants to know where Hari-the-gardener is. They are disappointed when they learn that he has converted and is now known as Himat Ali. One of the men wants to be absolutely certain that he is a proper Muslim and asks him to undo his shalwar. However this is not necessary for both Imam Din and the barber, who vouch for the fact that he is circumcised. Robbed of their fun they make him recite the Kalma, the Muslim article of faith. He does so and injects into the Arabic verse the cadence and intonation of Hindu chants, thus, signifying that even though he has converted he cannot let go of his cultural past as easily. Hari’s conversion probably constitutes the humiliating symbolic emasculation of Hindu men for the mob, as well as legitimizes his presence in the new nation-state, Pakistan.* This scene also touches upon violence enacted on male bodies, which finds little reference in literature,
memoirs and verbal accounts. This is another facet of violence which is covered with layers of silence. Castration, voluntary and forced conversion of men and women, and forcing people to eat beef or pork, were other forms of bodily violence resorted to on either side of the border. In the present context, to strip, in order to examine whether men were circumcised or uncircumcised, was seen to be the ultimate, foolproof test of their religious identity; whether they were Muslim or Hindu/Sikh. In this instance, Hari passes the test. Once it is ascertained that he has truly become a Muslim they allow him to continue living in the newly formed Pakistan.

Having ascertained Hari/Himat Ali’s Muslimness the mob then asks, ‘Where’s the Hindu woman? The ayah!’ Imam Din lies under oath, ‘Allah-ki-kasam, she’s gone.’ This is an oath which no Muslim will take lightly but he does so to protect Ayah. At this moment Ice-candy-man approaches Lenny. His reassuring presence and easy familiarity makes her tell the truth as she has been taught to. She immediately realizes that she has betrayed Ayah, which leads to far reaching consequences. The mob swarms through the Sethi home and drag Ayah out:

… They drag her by the arms stretched taut, and her bare feet – that want to move backwards – are forced forward instead. Her lips are drawn away from her teeth, and the resisting curve of her throat opens her mouth like the dead child’s screamless mouth. Her violet sari slips off her shoulder and her breasts strain at her sari-blouse stretching the cloth so that the white stitching at the seams show. A sleeve tears under her arm.

… The last thing I noticed was Ayah, her mouth slack and piteously gaping, her disheveled hair flying into her kidnappers’ faces, staring at us as if she wanted to leave behind her wide-open and terrified eyes.

Lenny’s narration describes Ayah’s abduction as a visual spectacle in which trust is betrayed. It does not however, talk about her feelings or her pain or give her voice.

More importantly, this account shows that by communalising Ayah’s identity and marking her as Hindu, Ice-candy-man can fulfill his sexual desire for her for she preferred Masseur to him. Such instances of known people raping and abducting women have been known to occur in ethnic strife. Writing of the 1971 Bangladesh
War, Yasmin Saikia also made a similar point. In her paper entitled *Lost in Violence* women reported that it was not only Pakistani soldiers, who raped Bengali women but also Bengali and Bihari politicians. Strangers, even neighbours, friends and family members preyed on them during the war. Lenny too is aware of Ice-candy-man’s desire for Ayah and is aware of him stalking Ayah and Masseur. As a spurned lover, Ice-candy-man, has taken advantage of the anomic of the times and, quite possibly, was responsible for Masseur’s murder and engineers Ayah’s abduction. He takes her to the *Kotha* and, in a twisted form of love; he turns her into a prostitute. Feminist historiographers have pointed out that sexual assault was a way of humiliating and dishonouring the *Other*. In this case, Ayah does not appear to be *Othered* for it is more about Ice-candy-man’s use of communal narratives to fulfill his desire for her. Another point to be noted is that Sidhwa consistently refuses to represent Ayah as a symbol of the nation. This literary moment, then, does not give any easy explanation of sexual violence, nor does it fit into the slots delineated by Urvashi Butalia, Ritu Menon, Kamla Bhasin and Veena Das.

Another area which proves problematic revolves around Ayah’s recovery. This too questions and interrogates what feminist historiographers maintain about the Central Recovery Operation. As discussed earlier, women resisted recovery because of notions of shame and honour that revolved around rape and abduction. Moreover, because of a definite rejection by their families, they were unwilling to go back to their original families. In certain cases they had had children by their abductors and were reluctant to leave them behind. Free choice was not given to these women and the State, in becoming a coercive parent, encouraged their re-abduction. However, Ayah refuses to forget her abduction and rejects Ice-candy-man’s offer of love and marriage and begs Lenny’s godmother to send her back to her relatives in Amritsar. Ayah knows that her abduction and rape might mark her as impure, polluted, and dishonoured for her family and others in India; that it would lead to her social death. In choosing to go to India, Ayah *insists on being other to both social spaces of kinship: nation and patriarchal community*. She troubles and rejects both discourses of suicide and nationalism by insisting on being *Other* to both nations – India and Pakistan.

When Lenny goes with her godmother to meet Ayah, far from forcing her to migrate to India as was mandated by the State Recovery Operations, Godmother, with
an uncharacteristic hesitancy, asks her to make her peace with Ice-candy-man and stay on with him. Seeing Ayah’s determination she arranges for her recovery. Though Godmother’s hesitancy could be interpreted as an example of Parsi ambivalence, the fact cannot be denied that Ayah would find it difficult to be accepted by her family in India. Despite her resolve to leave at the first opportunity the change in her is unmistakable. When Ayah raises her eyes to Lenny she wonders:

Where have the radiance and the animation gone? Can the soul be extracted from its living body? Her vacant eyes are bigger than ever: wide-opened with what they’ve seen and felt … Colder than the ice that lurks behind the hazel in Ice-candy-man’s beguiling eyes.  

Ayah’s vacant, wide-opened eyes signify her detachment and suspicion, as her body has been marked by her experiences. What further experiences she will have in India remain untold in the story, nor does it resolve the traumas associated with the treatment of abducted women. However, I argue, that Ayah’s replacement, Hamida’s experience, as an abducted woman after recovery recounts the traumas she would have faced. The only difference is that it is now with a Muslim woman in Pakistan.

Earlier a point was made that the purity of women was of greater importance in India than in Pakistan. Kamlaben Patel, a social worker closely associated with the Recovery Operation in India also felt the same when she stated, ‘a Hindu woman felt that she had been made impure, had become sullied was no longer pativrata. A Muslim woman did not feel like this. It was not in her blood, it is in our blood.’  

This view happens to be contrary to the ground realities that existed in Pakistan. What the fate of abducted women was is explored through Hamida. Hamida, who has just been released from a Recovery Camp considers herself to be a fate-smitten, fallen woman, ‘Khut-putli, puppets, in the hands of fate.’  

Lenny questions this assessment of abducted women and recalls, ‘I’ve seen Ayah carried away – and it had less to do with fate than the will of men.’  

When she questions Godmother about these fallen women she explains, ‘Some folk feel that way – they can’t stand their women being touched by other men.’  

Lenny is outraged and finds it monstrously unfair but also noted that her godmother’s tone was accepting. Aysha Ghani’s research about abducted women during Partition throws light of this issue and gives a Pakistani perspective. She delineates how issues of purity and pollution were centered round the abducted woman’s body in Pakistan; that the bodies of abducted women were also imbued with
meaning: as embodiments of memory, they served as reminders of many valences of loss. As the number of recovered women increased, there was either extreme elation or outright rejection. In order to rehabilitate them, Pakistani officials and politicians encouraged the reintegrations of abducted women by characterising the abductions as un-Islamic and their restoration an Islamic duty. This very clearly shows that many women were not accepted back by their original families, who were put in camps.

Hamida too has been an inmate of such a camp. Lenny naively assumes that it is a jail as there is a lock, the size of a grapefruit, shutting the women out from all social contact. Indirectly, the Recovered Women’s Camp is seen to be a place where women turn into outsiders because of the anxiety surrounding their sexual contamination. Lenny’s observations, critiques the state’s and the community’s attempts to justify their actions in trying to contain the women’s ambiguous position. It makes visible the way patriarchal nationalist interests produce the identities of abducted women as polluted even in Pakistan. Hamida’s suffering, like that of the other women, is due to their abduction and their ostracism by the state and society after they are recovered.

Lenny’s memories then, is a powerful indictment of the failure of the people and the newly formed Pakistan to safeguard the interests of the minorities. Hari / Himat Ali can only continue to stay if he changes his religious affiliation, which is ascertained by making him strip. Though Sidhwa does not talk about how this affected him psychologically, it is nevertheless a humiliating experience. Through Ayah and Hamida, Sidhwa sensitively narrates abduction and shows how patriarchal interests are perpetuated. Lenny’s off-centre view critiques these practices and interrogates the abduction and treatment of recovered women, though in no way are they elevated as signs and symbols of national honour.

A MATTER OF VIRILITY AND IMPOTENCE:

Khushwant Singh’s Train to Pakistan, does not go into detail about the gender-based violence, widespread during Partition as it is not the novel’s main concern. There are only passing references of violence enacted on female bodies but a closer reading of the novel shows that violence was enacted on male bodies too, albeit in
different ways. Taking my cue from KavitaDaiya, this analysis will show how violence was inflicted on both men and women, with an emphasis on violence done to male bodies.

Early in the novel, Hukum Chand the magistrate and the police sub inspector talk about the communal conflagration coursing through the country. Train loads of dead are being *gifted* to the two newly formed nations on either side of the border. As a retaliatory gesture the Sikhs attack a Muslim refugee train and send it across the border filled with over a thousand corpses as a gift to Pakistan. In this context the sub inspector remarks:

“They say that is the only way to stop killings on the other side. Man for man, woman for woman, child for child. But we Hindus are not like that. We cannot really play this stabbing game. When it comes to an open fight, we can be a match for any people. I believe our R.S.S. boys beat up Muslim gangs in all the cities. The Sikhs are not doing their share. They have lost their manliness...”

Later on in the conversation the sub inspector says:

“... Did your honour hear what the Muslim mobs did to Hindu and Sikh refugees in the market places at Sheikhupura and Gujranwala? Pakistan police and the army took part in the killings. Not a soul was left alive. Women killed their own children and jumped into wells that filled to the brim with corpses.”

And Hukum Chand’s rejoinder:

“... I know it all. Our Hindu women are like that: so pure that they would rather commit suicide than let a stranger touch them...”

This conversation brings two points to the fore. One is that a slur is cast on the Sikhs’ *manliness* which is counter- balanced by Jugga’s bravery later in the novel. This point will be discussed shortly. Secondly, it reveals the stereotypical rhetoric about maintaining women’s sexual purity and lauding their suicide which would otherwise lead to their social death. In so doing, Kushwant Singh spouts the stereotypical views about the Hindu/Sikh woman who prefers and desires honourable death over dishonour because she is a victim of sexual violence.
Towards the close of the novel during Hukum Chand’s cynical ruminations about independence he recalls an incident about Mansa Ram and his newly wedded bride Sundari, who was gang raped on the way to Gujranwala:

... Sikhs were just hacked to death. The clean shaven were stripped. Those that were circumcised were forgiven. Those that were not were circumcised. Not just the foreskin: the whole thing was cut off. She who had not really had a good look at Mansa Ram was shown her husband completely naked. They held him by the arms and legs and one man cut off his penis and gave it to her. The mob made love to her...  

This scene uncovers the different types of violence men and women were subjected to: male castration for Mansa Ram and gang rape for Sundari. It is clear that for Hukum Chand the patriarchal nation-state failed to protect both its male and female citizens from sexual violence. Another point to be noted is that, while violence against women has received much attention, violence against men has neither been discussed nor recorded in any written document of the time. This means that there is a silence on the part of both men and women in order to preserve male as well as female honour.

The concept of male honour gives the reader an ideal starting point to discuss how Khushwant Singh deals with the violation of male honour in *Train to Pakistan*. This can best be understood through Singh’s handling of Iqbal and Juggat Singh in the novel. Before we go further it is pertinent to point out to an interesting interpretation Ralph J. Crane has to give about the novel. Drawing upon the stereotypical images the British had slotted Indians into; he contends that the novel promotes the image of the Sikhs as the dominant community in the text. He argues that the Sikhs are shifted into the position of power vacated by the colonisers. This is a position which Khushwant Singh clearly presents as bound up with virility: a position which Jugga occupies. The Hindus, on the other hand, are unequivocally located in a subaltern or female position, as they had consistently been perceived by the British. The Hindu moneylender is not manly for he hides behind women’s sarees. Though Bhai Meet Singh refers to Hukum Chand as a *nār admi* - a real virile man – he is nevertheless presented as impotent. Instead of acting decisively, he evades responsibility by releasing Jugga and Iqbal, who are both Sikhs, from prison in the hope that one of them would be able to prevent the impending train massacre, which he is powerless to
prevent. Though his strategy works, it emphasizes the fact that he hides behind others. Crane’s categorisation while taking on communal overtones introduces two characteristics associated with men: virility and impotence. However, his analysis does not explain how we are to read the violence done to male bodies in the novel and how it impacts virility. If Jugga is the true naradmi; the virile man, what are we to make of the other Sikh character, Iqbal and the treatment meted out to him?

Iqbal has been sent by the People’s Party to spread the message of communism in Mano Majra. He is falsely arrested by the police for the murder of Lala Ram Lal, the village money lender. Since he is a communist, he professes to have no religion, and allows people to read him as Hindu, Muslim or Sikh due to the cross-communal nature of his name. *He could be a Muslim – Iqbal Mohammed. He could be Hindu, Iqbal Chand, or a Sikh, Iqbal Singh.* He does not correct any one or disabuse them of their false assumptions. He is a social worker, clean shaven and circumcised. Under normal circumstances, this would not have been very significant but in the communally charged atmosphere of 1947, it proves to be very dangerous. Unable to discern Iqbal’s ethnic allegiance from his name the sub inspector orders a strip search. As the cross questioning continues, with him standing naked and handcuffed in front of the inspector, Iqbal’s confidence evaporates. He is unable to demand his rights - so complete is humiliation. Because he is circumcised, the sub inspector refuses to believe that he was sent by the People’s Party of India and imputes he is a member of the Muslim League.

What must be noted is that, besides humiliating a man, stripping was commonly employed to ascertain a man’s proper ethnic identity before killing, castrating or converting him through circumcision. This scene in which Iqbal is made to strip is reminiscent of Hari being made to strip in *Ice-Candy-Man*. Whereas, Hari has passed the ultimate foolproof test of being a Muslim, Iqbal’s ethnic identity like his name, continues to remain ambiguous and in doubt. Since he is in the hands of the police he is spared a lynching as the sub inspector tells him later in the novel after his release as Iqbal Singh, social worker, that this is the only test the mob has for a man without long hair or a beard.

If in *Ice-Candy-Man*, Hari’s conversion and somatic change enables him to continue living in Pakistan, in *Train to Pakistan*, Iqbal’s circumcision is deployed differently to further Hukum Chand’s ends. Initially, under Hukum Chand’s orders,
the authorities read Iqbal as a Muslim when attempting to implicate him in Lala Ram Lal’s murder in order to encourage a Muslim exodus before the real storm of communal violence breaks. Later, when manipulating his release, in an attempt to prevent the rail sabotage Hukum Chand conveniently reinterprets Iqbal as a Sikh.

In another context, Haseena, a girl prostitute knows she is spared because of her profession as all communities, Hindu and Muslim, come to hear her sing. She goes on to tell Hukum Chand the story of how a group of Hijras, hermaphrodites, in Chundunnugger were spared by a bloodthirsty Hindu and Sikh mob by displaying their lack of any bodily communal markers. As such, they could be Muslim, Hindu or Sikh; male or female. Iqbal, after his release, realizes that the body is the ultimate signifier of both gender and communal affiliation. As he muses later on:

... Where on earth except in India would a man’s life depend on whether or not his foreskin had been removed? It would be laughable if it were not tragic...

Somatic markers are not a matter of choice, it shows your religious affiliations, a means of humiliating a man and later, an excuse for putting him to death.

Though Iqbal is a pawn in Hukum Chand’s machinations, he, like a politician wants to be imprisoned, make headlines, and even meet a glorious end. However, his imprisonment turns out to be farcical. Similarly, his desire to die and gain glory is not achieved simply because he has voluntarily circumcised himself. He decides not to face the mob when asked by Bhai Meet Singh to stop the train massacre, and as Hukum Chand expects him to do. In an alcoholic daze, he pictures himself falling under a volley of blows and rifle shots with dignity. However, this would not get him name, fame or glory in the ranks of the party for eventually he would be considered a Muslim, since he is circumcised.

Here Kushwant Singh effectively shows that Iqbal, in voluntarily circumcising himself, is neutered like the hijras in Haseena’s account. He is emasculated, and as a Sikh, has lost his manliness confirming the police sub inspector’s remark to Hukum Chand earlier, ‘the Sikhs are not doing their share. They have lost their manliness.’ He is ineffective and can only survive in these troubled times because he has police protection and Bhai Meet Singh’s unconditional endorsement of his being a Sikh. After his release from prison Iqbal realizes that it was the company of Jugga and the
Iqbal, in *Train to Pakistan*, occupies an ambivalent space and is simply tolerated. Though his circumcision does not prove to be the ultimate fool proof test of his Sikhhood, Kushwant Singh tries to convey that the newly formed nation-state, India, would tolerate such people only if their affiliations are *not* with Pakistan but would nevertheless view them with suspicion. Moreover, like Hukum Chand he too hides behind others and is as impotent as the District Magistrate. Here, through Iqbal, Singh reiterates his view that the *sense of belonging to the Sikh community requires both the belief in the teachings of the AdiGranth and the observance of the Khalsa tradition initiated by Guru Gobind Singh; and that there is no such thing as a clean-shaven Sikh – he is simply a Hindu believing in Sikhism.* By this definition, Iqbal too, in a sense, becomes a Hindu since he does not have the necessary hirsute Sikh markers. Again, by *voluntarily* divesting himself of his hair, he, like Hukum Chand, becomes cowardly and impotent and has inculcated the qualities of a Hindu. This upholds Crane’s argument that Hindus were unmanly and not fit to rule the country. It is left to another Sikh, a true *Khalsa*, Juggabudmash, who passes the test of virility in the novel by preventing the train massacre

Jugga, the hyper-masculine village rogue, goes around like a stud bull and boasts of his conquests with women. He is always in and out of prison for some misdemeanour or the other. He has a liaison with the Muslim weaver’s daughter, Nooran, who is also the *mullah* of the village. Early in the novel there is an attempt to emasculate him when Malli and his gang throw a packet of glass bangles into his courtyard:

“*O Juggia,*” he called in a falsetto voice, “*Juggia!*” he winked at his companions. “*Wear these bangles, Juggia. Wear these bangles and put henna on your palms.*”

“*Or give them to the weaver’s daughter. One of the gunmen yelled.*”

Here Jugga’s authority is challenged on two fronts. Firstly, Malli and his gang have dared to rob and murder in his village. Secondly, his masculinity is challenged by
throwing bangles into his house showing that he is effeminate and castrated. Nevertheless, Jugga does have a real fear of castration. This is apparent when the police threaten him with torture because he refuses to divulge Malli’s name. Under threat of damage to his testicles, which can be read as a threat of emasculation and castration, he implicates Malli.

Nevertheless, Jugga has proved his manliness in more ways than one. In his relationship with Nooran he has an obvious power over her and can subdue her with force if need be. Unknown to him, Nooran is pregnant with his child thus proving his potency. This is in contrast to Hukum Chand, who cannot consummate his affair with Haseena because he has qualms about her age. She is almost his daughter’s age had she been alive. This shows that the District Commissioner is impotent in more ways than one, whereas Jugga leaves no one in doubt about his manliness. This is evidenced in his act of supreme sacrifice when he cuts the rope that would have derailed the train carrying the Mano Majra Muslims to Pakistan. This, virile, common criminal is a man of action, who has ensured the safety of the Muslims not the government bureaucrat, Hukum Chand, who is seen as the government by the uneducated villagers. However, if Jugga’s lower class criminality is redeemed by his heroic true love, it is done only through the dematerialization of his body. It is on his crushed, rural, masculine body that the triumph of secularism – figured as inter-ethnic love – is inscribed.86 Even Jugga, the true heroic figure, cannot escape violence, in this case, death. If Kushwant Singh has heroicised Jugga, it is because of his virility, whereas Hukum Chand and Iqbal, because of their impotence and inability to act, are not accorded this status.

Jugga’s valiant death also makes the point that, at this stage, neither the country nor the novelist can envision an inter-communal marriage or an alliance. It is for this reason that both, Haseena and Nooran, are banished to Pakistan. The troublesome problem of Nooran’s unborn, illegitimate child is taken care of by her departure to Pakistan, so that the country can stave off the threat to ethnic impurity in the secular nation. Both Jugga and Hukum Chand suffer psychologically too. Through an analysis of the violence Jugga, Hukum Chand and Iqbal experience it becomes amply clear that violence inscribed on male bodies takes on different forms and can be both physical and psychological.
MASCULINITY IN CRISIS:

Based on his personal experiences of the Partition, Chaman Nahal’s Azadi, chronicles the exodus of Hindus from Sialkot to Delhi. One of the concerns of the novel is the gendered, sexual violence women faced while on the move in kafilas or foot convoys. The other, embedded in the narrative, is the anxiety about masculinity which is undergoing a crisis. These two concerns will be discussed simultaneously for they cannot be separated from each other.

Colonial discourse had depicted the Hindu incapable of any authority, moral or otherwise, other than being ruled. Here the stereotypical image of the cowardly Hindu is overturned in Nahal’s portrayal of the Hindu District Commissioner, Pran Nath Chaddha, and his adroit handling of the communal riots. Shortly after Mountbatten’s historic announcement of the creation of Pakistan and consequent Partition the Muslims take out a celebratory procession and want to enter Trunk Bazaar, a Hindu mohalla, where Lala Kanshi Ram and his family stay. As Inspector Inayat-Ullah Khan orders his Sikh constables to batter the entrance gates that bar the procession’s entry, the Deputy Commissioner and the Superintendent of Police, Asghar Ahmad Siddique arrive on the scene. Both of them were trained in England, were neutral and made a good team. Together, they diffuse the crisis in Trunk Bazaar and other localities. What is pertinent here is that Nahal depicts Chaddha as a brave man who, undaunted by the milling crown thirsting for blood, faces them boldly. When he allows the procession to proceed through Trunk Bazaar, Nahal vividly describes what happens:

Like a masterful conductor of a musical performance, the Deputy Commissioner did not move when the gate was thrown open. There was a ripple of excitement in the procession, but so dominant was the personality of the Deputy Commissioner, the murmur died down the instant he turned his head and looked at the procession. For several minutes he did not say a word, as though daring them to march forward if they would. So confident did he seem, so firmly rooted in some inner conviction, that not a man in the procession moved a step.
Unfortunately, the theme of the brave Hindu is not worked out. Chaddha is killed in one of the riots forcing one to the conclusion that Hindus like him are exceptions and a strong, virile Hindu male’s existence is difficult in the newly created Pakistan.

But if the image of the cowardly Hindu is overturned in Chaddha’s case it comes back with a vengeance to haunt Arun, Lala Kanshi Ram’s son. Soon after the announcement of Partition and Pran Nath Chaddha’s death Arun goes to meet his Muslim sweetheart Nur, whom he helps to marry. However, Partition puts an end to all those dreams and Nur taunts him with:

“Oh, go and die somewhere. You’re a Hindu, after all – a Hindu. Too timid!”

Though said in anger and not really meant, the barb about Hindu timidity remains, reviving the stereotypical image of the Hindu. This is intended to emasculate Arun which, in a way it does, for he is powerless to fight against the tide of events. Even Chaman Nahal cannot envision an India, where inter-ethnic love and romance can flourish.

In the refugee camp in Sialkot, Lala Kanshi Ram gets news of his daughter Madhu’s death. Arun is devastated and feels that the antidote to Madhu lies in Chandni, the charwoman’s daughter who shares the same tent with the family. He has realised the inevitability of being forever separated from Nur, and wants comfort, forgetfulness and continuity. Their love affair continues along predictable lines, and despite her being uneducated and a servant woman’s daughter, Arun proposes to her and makes his mother agree to their marriage once they reach India.

When they reach Narowal, Arun goes to see the parade of naked, abducted Hindu women. With this Nahal introduces the gendered aspects of Partition violence. He briefly touches upon what happens to abducted women without offering any insights into their predicament for his main aim is to show the bestiality of the parade. When Arun witnesses the parade he finds it the most unwholesome gathering [he] had ever seen. Nahal comments on the crowd gathered there. The men are unclean and vulgar and there is an:
...indecorous thickness in the air and the whole atmosphere was smeared with smut, as if a brush of some grisly substance had been run over the men, the buildings, and the bazaar...

Nahal effectively conveys Arun’s horror and disgust when he describes the coarseness of the men, the expectation of the crowd and, in particular, and the look of extreme sensuality on the faces of the men, which unified them and soldered them into a single mass. The parade of naked women is described in graphic detail; even the number of women is given:

...There were forty women, marching two abreast. Their ages varied from sixteen to thirty, although, to add to the grotesqueness of the display, there were two women, marching right at the end of the column, who must have been over sixty. They were all stark naked. Their heads were completely shaven; so were their armpits. So were their pubic regions. Shorn of their body hair and clothes, they looked like baby girls, or like the bald embryos one sees preserved in methylated spirit. The women walked awkwardly, looking only at the ground. They were all crying, though their eyes shed no tears. Their faces were formed into grimaces and they were sobbing. Their arms were free, but so badly had they been used, so wholly their spirits crushed, their morale shattered, none of them made any attempt to cover themselves with their hands...

The last line shows how completely demoralized these women were but no attempt at a psychological analysis is made. What Nahal does convey effectively is the bestiality of and unwholesomeness of the scene as obscenities are hurled at them and a shower of spittle is sprayed on them. What adds to the obscenity is that many men in the front rows lift their lungis to display their genitals to the women. All the men’s eyes are riveted on the pubic regions of the women and the moment they passed ahead their eyes settle on their bruised buttocks. The only saving grace is the acknowledgement of the evil being enacted by an old hakim, who prays in Punjabi, ‘Rabbul-Alamin, forgive these cruel men. And oh, my Allah, oh my Rabbah, protect these women.’ The bearded Muslim weeping for Hindu women makes no sense to Arun and makes his task of despising the Muslims even more difficult for him.
What should be noted is that even though it is a procession of Hindu women, Hindu men like Arun and Suraj Prakash along with other men in the camp go to watch it. Suraj even admits that he had enjoyed it. Here, the discourse is not only about humiliating the Other community and treating women’s bodies as territory to be conquered, as claimed by feminist historiographers, but also about men enjoying a spectacle regardless of their religious affiliations. As a balancing act, a similar scene is inserted with Muslim women in Amritsar in the novel.

Arun, who again witnesses this scene, wonders if any Sikh wept and prayed for those women like the hakim did. Though Nahal does not go into detail about the scene, he acknowledges the wrongs being done to the Muslims in India and admits that both Hindus and Muslims were equally guilty in perpetrating the gendered sexual violence. However, he does not deal in any great length about what happens on the Indian side of the border. Nevertheless, the scene has a spectatorial quality about it much like the scene of Ayah’s abduction in Ice-Candy-Man. What remains imprinted on the mind is the hakim’s humanity and helplessness in the face of depravity, much like the Sethi household mutely and helplessly watching Ayah being carried away by the mob. To Arun’s credit, he does not enjoy the scene at all and wants to throw up. This scene has affected him so much that when Chandini asks him to consummate their love, he cannot do so. This is because the nude specters dance before his eyes, which makes him feel dead inside. Here, the parade of naked women has made Arun temporarily impotent. Nahal, through this scene, shows how the horror of violence on women affected men. Unfortunately, he does not develop this theme nor does he give fresh psychological insights into Arun’s behavior or suggest a resolution. Instead, he goes on to deal with an attack on their camp in which Chandini is abducted and Sunanda raped.

Chandini is abducted during the attack on the camp in Narowal. Here, the details of the abduction are not given—it is reported. LalaKanshi Ram informs Arun about it and tells him how Padmini, her mother, had offered herself to the assailants if they spared her daughter. She also ‘thinks she was dishonoured, while she lay unconscious.’ This incident with Padmini makes visible the fact that women’s sexual purity was extremely important, that is why Padmini offers herself to the abductors so that her daughter would not face ostracism. Secondly, it shows that she is unwilling to confront the truth about her own rape that is why she uses the ambiguous word
think and is unconscious throughout her assault. Padmini has retreated into silence, a silence which Nahal has lifted the curtain from for a brief while but over which he downs the shutter soon after.

Nahal also touches briefly upon the fate of those women, who were discovered. These soiled and dishonoured girls were led away silently by their families for they were not happy with the reunion. This attitude is in keeping with what feminist historiographers have to say about women finding acceptance into their families impossible after they were recovered. Their stories are not developed and Nahal just hints at a social death for them.

Again, when Padmini opts to stay back in Amritsar in the hope of being reunited with Chandini, questions like – would Padmini disown her? Would Chandini like to be recovered? Would she want to recognize her mother if they meet face-to-face – are not dealt with at all.

In all this, how has Chandini’s abduction impacted Arun? What is the rhetoric that surrounds her abduction? Nahal initiates a discussion about her possible recovery. LalaKanshi Ram voices the patriarchal concerns of the day regarding issues women’s purity and pollution when he asks, ‘And who would now take her as a wife, even if she did come back?’ When Arun pipes up and says that he would do so; that they shouldn’t be disowned for something that was no fault of theirs, his father again voices a harsh truth, ‘You’ve yet to live in the world to know that the world is like.’ Arun accepts the inevitability of the situation for Chandini’s recovery was a remote possibility, therefore, making an issue of her was pointless. In the process, he is wounded psychologically and dies inwardly and takes no interest in the movement of the convoy after it leaves Narowal. After LalaKanshi Ram and his family build life anew in Delhi, Arun continues to pine for her. He wonders how much of her was recovered and had come back; whether she would accept him as she would definitely be affected by her experience. He is still willing to take her as his wife but Chandini’s acceptance into the family is left unresolved and Nahal does not develop this aspect of the story, which would test Arun’s resolve and conviction.

The other woman who affects Arun deeply is SunandaBala, Bibi Amar Vati’s daughter-in-law and Suraj Prakash’s wife. She is the incarnation of beauty and could be a metaphor for Mother India, violated by Partition. Arun hero worships her and
has erotic dreams about this figure of idealized womanhood. When the entire 
mohalla leaves for the refugee camp, everyone is struck by her regal fortitude and dignity. Sunanda also exudes a latent sexuality. The camp commandant, Captain Rahmat-Ullah Khan, desires her and engineers an attack on Lala Kanshi Ram’s camp. In the confusion he drags Sunanda away to a barn where Arun witnesses her rape. Nahal expends a lot of energy in giving details of the rape so unlike Chandini’s abduction, which was discussed in a few sentences. The whole scene moves slowly and the sound of Sunanda’s weeping is heard. In cinematographic fashion the interior of the barn is described with its doors and farm implements till he spots them:

... It was only then he saw Sunanda or what must be Sunanda. She was lying on the ground on an improvised bed of hay, in the far corner. Her head was away from Arun and he saw her legs. Between her legs and of top of her was lying a man... 

In frenzy Arun kills Rahmat-Ullah Khan with a sharp wooden spike. However, the rape is not sensitively portrayed and is voyeuristic in quality. Even the idea of Mother India being violated, is not effectively conveyed. Though Arun is powerless to prevent the rape, he does manage to avenge it by killing Captain Rahmat-Ullah Khan. By galvanising himself into action, he manages to keep his manhood intact. This is something he was powerless to do in Chandini’s case. In a way, by killing Rahmat-Ullah Khan he manages to avenge the nation’s manhood. As for Sunanda and Chandini, they become the tabula on which men conduct their violent dialogue.

However, the cost is great. Sunanda and Arun enter into a tacit understanding and the rape is never mentioned at all. This saves Sunanda from ostracism and a social death. But it has its costs. Her face acquires a tragic mould and she withdraws from the world with dignity. She has lost her husband and has been defiled. She joins the ranks of those women who have to resort to silence in order to exist and does not even have the luxury of discussing her violation with Arun.

But life’s rhythms go on and Sunanda starts sewing in order to support herself and the children. As the sewing machine whirrs on, Arun, in the adjoining room finds he has lost contact with her as well as his parents. Sunanda, as the suffering mother, emblematic of the nation, no longer suffice[s] as [an] adequate source of personal
solace / redemption. In fact, none of the women Arun comes in contact with, have the ability to redeem him due to force of circumstances. All this has left its mark on him and he suffers psychologically. However, this has not been adequately and effectively worked on as he is reduced to a narcissistic regard of his wounds. There is no sense here of masculinity undergoing a crisis.

As for Sunanda and Chandini, the idea of woman as nation, has not been adequately worked through. Sunanda shows that there is life after rape only if she maintains a silence about her violation. Moreover, no motives are analysed which would complicate and interrogate the patriarchal discourse of the day as is the case in Ice-Candy-Man, nor does it offer any alternatives or give a healing touch.

THE DISCOURSE RE-GENDERED:

This discussion shows that these writers deal with the gendered violence of Partition from different angles and that the discourse remains incomplete without including violence done to male bodies. It also highlights the inability of the patriarchal states of India and Pakistan to protect their citizens from bodily sexual and psychological harm. How are the disparate elements in these novels woven together to make it a harmonious whole?

Violence against women will be taken up first. Shauna Singh Baldwin sensitively portrays familial violence leading to Kusum’s martyrdom, with Roop’s condemnatory tone suffusing the narrative. However, she expends a lot of energy on dealing with Satya’s and Roop’s rivalries and hostilities. Nevertheless, she lays the foundation for explaining the concept of izzat. On the other hand, Bapsi Sidhwa, from a Pakistani angle, deals with abduction, which is again sensitively done. Whereas Baldwin does not question or interrogate the patriarchal discourse or offer alternatives, Sidhwa shows that there are no easy explanations for sexual violence; that it is very often friends and relatives, who make use of communal discourses to satisfy their desires. Thus, she displaces the popular notion that women were not only the direct targets of violence, but also the means through which damage was inflicted upon other targets – namely men, families, communities and nations. Ayah’s eyes post abduction, convey that she has died inwardly and that her experience has marked
her for life. Unlike what feminist historiographers have to say about forcible recovery, Ayah voluntarily opts to go to India, making herself Other to both nations, India and Pakistan.

Sidhwa gives a Pakistani perspective of violence enacted on a Hindu woman in Pakistan. But what about abducted Muslim women who were recovered? Feminist historiographers Urvashi Butalia, Veena Das, Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin have given the Indian side of the story. Recognising and realizing how incomplete and one-sided the picture was without the Pakistani and Bangladeshi experience, Ritu Menon attempted a collaborative oral history of women during Partition from a combined perspective - Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi - but had to abort the endeavour due to the political climate in these two countries which was beyond her control. Through Hameeda Sidhwa bridges the gap and shows how recovered women were treated, how women were considered sexually contaminated and how they too had to lament their fate. This fictional encounter exposes the silences as well as gives the Pakistani side of the story.

Though Khushwant Singh’s main concern is not violence against women, in snippets he voices the opinion of the times about upholding women’s sexual purity and honour. Azadi too deals with violence against women but not analytically. Chaman Nahal has merely strung all the episodes of violence against women together when Lala Kanshi Ram, his son Arun and the other refugees are on the move in their convoy. The parade of naked women and Sunanda’s rape are meant to shock but do not raise pertinent questions about violence done to women or interrogate the official discourse. Chandini’s abduction is merely reported unlike the spectatorial quality of the parade of naked women and Sunanda’s rape. Though Nahal touches upon her possible rejection by friends and family, he does not develop the theme at all. Similarly, Nahal’s portrayal of Sunanda as a figure of idealised womanhood and Mother India is not effectively worked upon as is the case with all women characters in this novel. This lacuna in the narrative arises because Nahal is a man and he views things differently. Nevertheless, both the men and women novelists write about an aspect of Partition violence that has been officially elided by the States of India and Pakistan. It also brings to the fore that in any communal conflagration, women become the targets of violence, even today in the country and throughout the world.
While abducted women’s experiences and memories of 1947 have been intensively investigated, the intimate violence done to men’s bodies has not received much attention and requires investigation. It is now acknowledged that there has been little historical work done on this aspect of Partition violence. Hari Mohan Puri, in his account candidly admits seeing men being killed depending on whether they were circumcised or not and whether their aggressors were Hindu or Muslim (Appendix 10). Similarly, violence against men, hinted at in oral accounts, has also been elided and Partition Literature has stepped in to fill the gaps.

With Baldwin and Sidhwa male sexual violence is not their main concern. Sardarji in What the Body Remembers is affected psychologically and needs Roop to make him strong and whole again. Sidhwa highlights Hari’s conversion to show that only after his conversion and after passing the test of circumcision that he is allowed to stay on in the newly created state of Pakistan. For Khushwant Singh, male honour is tied up with virility and impotence. In choosing to circumcise himself voluntarily Singh conveys that Iqbal is as impotent as Hukum Chand, who hides behind others. Both of them are figuratively emasculated. The humiliating treatment Iqbal receives at the hands of the police to ascertain his religion is also detailed, dealing with another facet of male violation. True male honour is tied up with virility and eventual death as Jugga’s crushed body declares. Even Khushwant Singh, with all his humanistic leanings cannot envision inter-ethnic love between Jugga and Nooran at this stage.

Nahal’s protagonist, Arun, too suffers physically and psychologically. Love between him and Nur is not allowed to flourish and Nur’s taunts emasculate him figuratively. But after watching the parade of naked women, he is literally emasculated as he cannot consummate his love. Chandini’s abduction and Sunanda’s rape has affected him psychologically. However, Nahal does not engage with any of these aspects in detail, nor does he develop the theme of the brave Hindu in the person of Pran Nath Chaddha.

Though there is much to be desired in the portrayal of male sexual and psychological violence in the novels, the fact remains that these novelists have brought the hidden histories of men to the fore. At this point, it would be appropriate to add that both men and women experienced bodily and psychological violence, and that these writers show that the loss of dignity and self respect was not exclusively
experienced by women alone. Their fictional encounters engage with the silences of the men too as their everyday lives are explored.

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in the National Movement’, and Shipra Chatterjee, ‘The Communalisation of Female Political Identity.’ These writers’ papers / essays that have a bearing on this section appear in this book.

16. Barbara Daly Metcalf, (1992): *Perfecting Women: Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanawi’s Bihishti Zewar: A Partial Translation with Commentary*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press. This term is borrowed from the title of this book. What must be kept in mind is that whether they were educators like Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, or writers like Nazira Ahmad Dehlavi, Altaf Husain Hali, or ulema like Maulana Thanavi the goal was to give them a basic education so that they could be good wives and mothers, run the household with thrift and efficiency, exercise moral leadership and be virtuous, thus reinforcing the idea that the ideal woman should remain in her own home secluded from all but family and selected female friends.


23. Ibid., p 43.


30. Ibid., p 41.


37. Ibid., p 347.

38. Ibid., p 361.
39. Ibid., p 199.
40. Ibid., p 200.
41. Ibid., p 258.
42. Ibid., p 308.
43. Ibid., pp 311 - 312.
44. Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, (1998): Borders and Boundaries: Women in India’s Partition, New Delhi: Kali for Women, pp 32-60. They discuss in detail the permissible violence against women during Partition and how, in order to preserve the women’s purity, they faced familial violence which was valorised as a “sacrifice”.

54. Ibid., p 18.

55. Ibid., p 19.

56. Ibid., p 19.

57. Ibid., p 139.

58. Ibid., p 149.


61. Ibid., p 181.


64. Ibid., p 182.

65. Ibid., pp 183-184.


71. Ibid., p 214.

72. Ibid., p 215.


78. Ralph J. Crane, (2008): ‘Inscribing a Sikh India: An Alternative Reading of Khushwant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan*’, in *Alternative Indias: Writing, Nation and Communalism*, Peter Morey and Alex Tickell (eds.), New Delhi: Overseas Press India Private Limited, pp 181-195. See these pages for a detailed account of how Sikhs are shifted into the position of power and the Hindus into a subordinate one.


99. Ritu Menon, (2008): ‘The Dynamics of Division’, in *Divided Countries, Separated Cities: The Modern Legacy of Partition*, Ghislaine Glasson Deschaumes and Rada Ivekovic (eds.), New Delhi: Oxford University Press, pp 115-128. Read these pages to see how one-sided the Indian perspective is yet, ironically, it is the only one available as the collaborative attempt in Pakistan and Bangladesh failed.