Chapter III

Violation of Female Sexuality and a Veil of Silence

I am a woman
I want to raise my voice
Because communalism affects me
In every communal riot
My sisters raped
My children are killed
My men are targeted
My world is destroyed
And then
I am left to pick up the pieces
To make a new life...

(Gabriele Dietricheqd in Urvashi Butalia, “Community, State and Gender” p.13)

In the pre and post Partition times, women had to undergo a horrifying experience. Thousands of women were destitute in one-way or another by that holocaust. Forced mass migrations led to an extreme disruption of life at all levels. As a corollary to this upheaval, a good number of women and children were dislocated and uprooted. They were, as has been observed by Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, “forced to reckon with the twin aspects of ‘azadi’—bewildering loss: of place and property...but more significantly, of community, of a network of more or less stable relationships, and of a coherent identity”(02). invariably the marauders were not from outside the area, but from the same village and sometimes their own family members. To escape from abduction, and the accompanying humiliation and mutilation of their bodies, many women took their own lives; the male members of their own family killed hundreds of them. Thousands of others carried packets of poison on their own persons in case they were captured. An
innumerable number committed suicide the moment they were let off by their captors after being sexually used.

The police and the army looked helpless. And this moral depravity went on unchecked in 1946 and 1947. Strangely, this shameful chapter was not given much attention by historians and litterateurs.

Neither the politicians nor the well-meaning citizens foresaw that there would be streams of people and blood flowing from one part of the country to the other. No one had thought that the poor and the innocent would be ambushed and killed in tens of thousands. Even convoys escorted by the army were ambushed. Families were uprooted, children were orphaned, and women were abducted; sometimes they were left as hostages or killed by their own family members. Those women, who were carried away, were forcibly converted. According to Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, “The official estimate of lives lost during Partition is placed at half a million, but the number of those destituted would have been much higher”(03).

The issue of abduction and forcible mass conversions became a hot subject of debate in the Constituent Assembly, but the government found it helpless. The Indian National Congress in its sitting at Meerut on 23-25 November, 1946 viewed the situation very seriously and passed the following resolution:

The Congress views with pain, horror and anxiety the tragedies of Calcutta, East Bengal, Bihar and some parts of Meerut district.... These new developments in communal strife are different from any previous disturbances and have involved murders on a mass scale, and also mass conversions... abduction and violation of women, and forcible marriage.
Women who have been abducted and forcibly married must be restored to their houses; mass conversions have no significance or validity and people must be given every opportunity to return to the life of their choice (Ritu Menon Kamla Bhasin 03-04).

According to the official estimate, the number of Muslim women abducted in India was around 50,000 and in the Pakistan side, the non-Muslim women were about 33,000. However the figure was disputed by both the government agencies and service organisations. The Minister of Transport in Charge of Recovery in India said that these figures were ‘rather wild’, but Mridula Sarabhai, the Chief Social Worker estimated that the number of abducted women in Pakistan was ten times of 1948 official figures of 12,500. Till December 1949, women restored in both the countries were 12000 for India and 6000 for Pakistan. Urvashi Butalia, the researcher says in her book, The Other Sideof Silence that about 75000 women were abducted and raped by men of religions different from their own and indeed sometimes by men of their own religion (03) (emphasis added). The following is the age wise break-up of the victims:

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<tr>
<th>Age-wise</th>
<th>In Pakistan</th>
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<tr>
<td>&gt;12 years</td>
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<td>12&gt;35 Years</td>
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(Source: Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin 04)
It is quite painful to note that both India and Pakistan in their steps to trace abducted women displayed absolutely little concern for their sufferings. Their recovery became a point of honour for the proud young nation-states. As Partho Datta shows, “the surviving women, some of whom had found new homes with their abductors, had to face violence a second time around—this time from the state—as they were forcibly repatriated to countries they did not necessarily want to come back to” (68). It’s found to be rather impossible to present an accurate profile of the abducted women and children during that turbulent time. A peculiar kind of denial is also at work when one community on the other mindlessly unleashed cataclysmic violence and violence was not an undifferentiated phenomenon but “was deeply gendered” (Partho Datta 68).

The circumstances of women’s abduction varied widely. Some were left behind as hostages for the safe journey of their other family members. Others were separated from their family or groups while escaping and were picked up. Still others were initially given protection and transported into the host family. In the Muzzaffarabad district of Azad Kashmir not a single Sikh male was left alone alive, and most of their women and young girls were abducted away. Some changed hands several times or were sold to the highest bidder. Some became second or third wives. And very many were converted and married and lived with some dignity and respect.

The height of the holocaust was between August 1947 and September 1947 and at that time the mob fury knew no bounds. The vast majority of rapes and abductions occurred then. The following is a heart-rending report of K.C. Kalsa, District Liaison Officer, Mianwali, of an attack on the non-Muslim residents of Harnoli, a town in Mianwali district in Rawalpindi:
More than half the population (being 6000 men and women and children) were massacred and burnt alive. Children were snatched away from their mother’s arms and thrown into the burning oil. 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 then put to death mercilessly. The breasts of women were cut and they were made to walk all naked in rows of line in the bazaars of Harnoli. About 800 girls and women were abducted and small kiddies were wandering without a cover in the jungles and were kidnapped by the passers-by. (Andrew J. Major 58)

In this chapter, I have tried to study the trauma that the women and children had to undergo at the biggest-ever communal conflict and the silence that was almost unfailingly imposed on the women after the event. The literary texts that I have had recourse to also show the particular vulnerability of women and children in times of communal holocausts. They will help breaking this silence that has shrouded what men went through at the time of Partition.

In the story, “Lajwanti”, (from Muhammad Umar Memon’s An Epic Unwritten), Rajinder Singh Bedi tries to uncover the gendered nature of Partition, the experiences of a very good woman who was abducted and raped and thrown back as a refugee. The story presents the trauma of Lajwanti who has lost her husband, her feelings of utter helplessness, and the timidity and fragmentation with which she went back to her village. Lajwanti’s experiences on the other side of the Dominion will go some way towards breaking the general silence that shrouded people’s experiences of Partition.
Soon after Partition, rehabilitation committees were set up in every neighbourhood to help the victims, especially to rehabilitate the abducted women. However, the Hindu conservatives opposed to it tooth and nail. But still, the committee functioned well. Sunder Lal was elected its secretary. He worked for the cause more passionately, because his own wife, the slender and agile village woman—Lajwanti—was abducted. Early in the morning, it was customary for the committee members to go round the villages and streets singing the popular Punjabi song:

Touch the leaves of the lajwanti,
They curl and wither away (An Epic 14).

Sunder Lal would walk along in silence thinking about her eagerly. He had many thoughts in his mind as to where would she be, what would she be thinking of him, would she ever come back.

As days went by, his pain had become part of the world’s anguish. He would say to himself,

If I could get another chance, just one more chance, I’d rehabilitate Laju in my heart. I’d show the people that these poor women are hardly to blame for their abduction, their victimisation by lecherous rioters. A society, which is unable to accept and rehabilitate these innocent women, is rotten to the core, fit only to be destroyed. (An Epic 16-17)

Sunder Lal would go about the lanes and by lanes and plead with people to view these women from the human and women’s angle. Not to accept them would result in untold misery and suffering to them. From what we gather, the number of such women was appreciably great. There was no way of ascertaining what happened to them once
they were recovered and returned. By sending them away, Sunderlal thought that people had brought about grief and dislocation to their family life without the least promoting human happiness. He felt that it was the obligation of every responsible and civilized individual...

  to take these women under their roof and give them the same status which any woman, any mother, daughter, sister, or wife enjoyed. He would urge the families never to mention, even to hint at the things the poor women had to suffer, because their hearts were already wounded, already fragile, like the leaves of the touch-me-not plant, ready to coil up at the merest touch. (An Epic 17)

The earnest appeal of Sunder Lal—'rehabilitate them in your hearts'—did not have a 100 percent effect. People received it sometimes with patience, sometimes with terrible irritation. Women who were not very much affected by partition pangs, mumbled protests. They, and even some parents and their kith and kin thought that these abducted women “should have killed themselves. They should have taken poison to save their virtue. Or jumped into a well. Cowards—to cling to life so tenaciously” (An Epic 18).

There were several instances when women took their lives to save their honour and the honour of their community. Untold numbers of women, especially in the Sikh families, killed themselves. In the village Thoa Khalsa in Rawalpindi district, according to Urvashi Butalia, “some 90 women threw themselves into a well in order to preserve the ‘sanctity’ and ‘purity’ of their religion...” (1993: 12).

Apart from large-scale abductions of women and girls, there were reports of taking them off on a planned manner. When disoriented and inadequately protected
women were assembled or on the move, marauders invariably attacked them. For instance, in Jhelum district a good number of women were abducted and distributed among groups of Pathans. In Gujarat district, (where some 4000 women were abducted), they were openly taken from refugee trains. To quote an eye-witness (reported to the Fact Finding Commission established by the Government of India's Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation in 1948):

I saw a long column of Muslim men and women and children proceeding from Kapurthala to Jullunder. The column was guarded by a few military sepoys. It was ten or twelve deep, the women and children walking in the centre, flanked on either side by men. Groups of armed Sikhs stood in the fields on either side of the road. Every now and again one of these groups would make a sudden sally at the column of Muslims, drag out two or three women and run away with them. In the process they would kill or injure who tried to resist them. The military sepoys did not make a serious attempt to beat off these attacks. By the time the column arrived at Jullunder almost all the women and young girls had been kidnapped in this manner. (Andrew J. Major 59)

Battered on all fronts, the abducted victims sometimes were forced to enter into some sort of alliance with persons who were no more than the murderers of their very husbands, their very fathers or their brothers. Later when restored, these women had no courage to face the icy stares of their survivor-relatives. Even their parents and husbands refused to recognise them. One of such women is Suhagwanti or Suhag. Rejected by all, she spots her brother in the crowd and says: “Even you, Bihari, refuse to recognise me! I
took you in my lap and fed you when you were small. Bihari wants to slip away, but he
looks at his parents and freezes who steel their hearts" (An Epic 18).

To the scribes, the faithful, the Hindu religionists, and the community leaders,
Sunder Lal was a simpleton, simply because he didn’t understand the rules and
regulations of the Shastras. Someone yelled in the crowd—‘Long live Sita, the Queen of
Virtue’, and someone else cried—Shri Ramachander ki Jay!’ Eyes welled with bitter
tears, Sunder Lal could not argue with any one of them. How ever he spoke aloud:

Today, Lord Ram has again thrown Sita out of his house, just because she
was compelled to live with Raven for some time. But was she to blame for
it? Wasn’t she a victim of deceit and trickery, like a numberless mothers
and sisters today? Today our Sita has been expelled once again, totally
without fault, our Sita... Lajwanti.... (An Epic 18)

Lalchand, an acquaintance of Sunder Lal at the Wagah Border, one day spotted
Lajwanti and it was reported to Sunder Lal. Sunder Lal’s joy knew no bounds. Lajwanti
was one of the few abducted women exchanged between India and Pakistan. At the
Wagah border, Pakistan handed over sixteen women and received sixteen in exchange.
Sunder Lal bravely fought back the turmoil raging inside him and walked slowly towards
Chauki Kalan, the venue for the delivery of the abducted women.

Sunder Lal looked at Laju. She had draped the upper half of her body in a black
dupatta in the typical Muslim fashion. She didn’t know what he would do. She was
returning after living with another man. She was mortally afraid of her husband. She
stood before her husband, trembling, balanced between hope and fear. His first gaze at
his abducted wife had a disturbing effect on him. Someone in the gathering said, “We’re
not to take back these Muslim leftovers!” (An Epic 26). Lajwanti looked fairer and healthier than before. She had become rather fat with an excess of grief. In fact, her suffering, and “suffering alone, that made her firm flesh loosen and sag from her bones, making her look heavy” (An Epic 26).

Quite joyfully, Sunder Lal took Laju home. He was not a man of words, but a man of action. He was convinced of a new reality and a new purity. It seemed that he had learnt “a new Veda, a new Purana, a new Shastra” (An Epic 27). To him she was no longer Laju, but ‘Devi’. He called her so. She was filled with an unnamable joy. She wanted to share all her sufferings with him and “cry so profusely that the tears would wash away all her ‘sins’” (An Epic 27). Sunder Lal knew that though his wife had been rehabilitated, she had also been ruined. He had neither the eyes to see her tears, nor the ears to hear her painful groans. Like his beloved, he had a very fragile heart. And she had many secrets “remained buried inside her” (An Epic 28). His early morning rounds went on as usual with the refrain:

Touch the leaves of the lajwanti,
They will curl and wither away (An Epic 29)

“Banished” is a heart-breaking story of an abducted young mother who later was banished from her people forever. The Pakistani writer Jamila Hashimi presents the shattered heart of the mother who was unable to erase from her memory how Gurpal was dragging her out of her house; how her Baba’s body was lying outside in the ditch with his gray hair soaked in blood; how a shining spear had gone through her Amma’s chest as she was praying to god for protection. Gurpal, the murderer of her beloved people
dragged the young woman away. In her words, “Drag me so dishonourably in the streets of my birth place, every particle of which I loved with all my heart” (An Epic 100).

Before the holocaust, the young woman had a very happy life with her Baba, Amma, Bhai, and Bhaiyya. She would tease Bhai and Bhaiyya and enjoy the fun. But when the murderer Gurpal dragged her body all the way to Sangram, there was none of her kith and kin to stop it. She had nobody to complain. Being at a marriageable age, she had been dreaming of being taken ceremoniously in a bridal palanquin to the bridal stage.

She had been hoping that one-day or other her Bhai and Bhaiyya would come to Sangram looking for her. On such an occasion, without looking at Gurpal, she would just walk away with Bhaiyya. Munni, her child’s birth however loosened her ties with her dreams. Though she was not able to erase anything from her memory, she took her present as real. However, she hadn’t lost hope altogether. In her, “hopes keep circling the heart like vagrant thoughts” (An Epic 101).

Her dreamland turned into dust. What she met with in Sangram was “decimation, withering, and ruination” (An Epic 102). Gurpal rolled out a carpet of corpses for her. He and his companions painted the roads red with blood. They provided an illumination by burning down city after city.

One question kept on nagging her was—“Why didn’t Bhaiyya and Bhai come to take me away?” (An Epic 103) Her little daughter Munni would ask her, “Ma, you don’t visit Mama even on Diwali. Why doesn’t anyone send us sweets?” (An Epic 103). Only streams of tears were her answer. She cried even on the night of Dasehra.
Many years had passed by. She didn’t know why or for whom she was standing on the doorway. Her heart was quite stubborn. So she couldn’t sever her links with her past. She wondered, “how far do I still have to go?” (An Epic 105).

Undoubtedly the chief sufferers of Partition were the women and children. Systematic communal outrages upon women began in March 1947 in Rawalpindi and West Punjab. Quite a good number of Sikh villages were targeted for attack over a week. Besides sporadic murder, arson and looting, plenty of women were raped and abducted. Upender Nath Ashk’s “Tableland” gives a hint as to how terrible it was to live in those days especially for women. A middle-aged man from Jallandhar narrated to Dina Nath the sad experiences that women had undergone in many places in Pakistan. The latter too had lost everything in Pakistan. He heard from the man stories of incredible cruelty meted out to Hindu and Sikh women and children in Pakistan. The reports brought Dina Nath’s blood to boil, because he heard, “how young girls were raped and robbed of their virginity. How they were stripped and paraded naked. How the breasts of old women were sliced off. How daughters were raped in full view of their parents. How parents were slaughtered before their children” (An Epic 124). The reporter could not continue as grief caught in his throat.

This is not a fictional account. We have enough historical evidences to prove that there is no exaggeration in it. A Punjabi woman confessed her experience of those days to Karuna Chanana, a social activist in the following manner:

When news of the riots and rape and abduction spread, our women said that they were ready to be killed by their men than be left to the ‘rakshasas’ (demons). The ovens (used for baking flattened bread) in the
courtyard were heated. The jewellery and clothes were set to fire in them. Then the women went inside. They would lie down, face downwards, one by one, and Sant Ram and his brother-in-law killed them with a ‘toka’ (chopper).

My mother’s mother jumped in to a well, as did several other women of our family. Other women in my natal village burnt themselves alive. More than a hundred women died like this. (Chanana 27)

The cruelty inflicted on innocent children in the highly wracked upheaval has also been hitherto historiographically marginalized. But this profoundly haunting theme has been the major issue of some narratives like “Parmeshar Singh” by Ahmad Nadim Qasimi. Akhtar a small and smart boy of around five was separated from his mother. She was going to Pakistan on a caravan. A search was made for the boy, but of no avail. His mother, however, comforted herself saying that she’d search for him once the caravan reached Pakistan. Some Sikhs spotted the boy. One youth drew his dagger to kill him. Just then another youth, a Sikh by name Parmeshar Singh pleaded for the innocent boy and saved him from the mouth of hell. When the group had gone, Parmeshar hugged him tightly for the boy looked exactly like his own son Kartar Singh, who had mysteriously disappeared. The boy started crying for his mother. The Sardarji brought the boy to his house much against the wishes of his wife and daughter. The house Kartar Singh currently occupying was formerly occupied by a Muslim. He had been very much upset from the day of his son’s missing. He’d tell his wife, “Abduction of daughters and wives—yes, ‘yaaro’, that’s nothing new. But when did you ever hear of five and six-year-old boys disappearing?” (An Epic 131).
Parmeshar Singh and his wife Amar Kaur had come from Lahore District. Their house was situated near a mosque. At the time of the holocaust, their neighbour Pritam Kaur "had been gang-raped by some young men who later dumped her body on the garbage heap like an old discarded rag" (An Epic 131). The pathetic screams of the woman had never disappeared from Pritam Kaur. She, unlike her husband, was very harsh with the boy, for he happened to be "a Musalla boy" (An Epic 133). Moreover, nobody could substitute her son; she screamed to her husband, "I’ll slash his throat at night and hack him to pieces and throw the pieces out! Why did you have to bring him here? Take him away! Throw him out!" (An Epic 133). But she wouldn’t do it for she was scared of Parmeshar Singh. How ever her hatred for the boy increased day by day though the boy was growing as a Sikh boy. In the mean time, unable to pull on for long and as the boy was adamant to go to his mother; Parmeshar on a moonlit night took him to the border. The boy crossed the border, but a soldier on his thigh shot at Parmeshar. In the distance, "Akhtar was running over to them, his ‘kes’ flowing in the air" (152) for the Sikh forgot to clip Akhtar’s ‘kes’.

The statement—‘All minorities, like an orphaned child, fear the worst, even in their dreams’—is very true, at least at the time of the communal riots. Women by and large felt like “the animal tied to a stake and beaten to death” as Hasan Manzar shows in his “Kanha Devi and Her Family” (An Epic 217).

The Partition not only partitioned the country, but also wrenched hearts. In Syed Mohammad Ashraf’s “Separated from the Flock”, Nawab a U.P. resident before migrating to Pakistan, fell deeply in love with Begum. But he couldn’t marry her. She stayed back and married a drunkard and consumptive. She became a widow shortly. Even
the Superintendent of Police in the story before he had migrated to Pakistan had been in love with a “sublimely beautiful” young woman called Ghazala. Like Nawab’s Begam, Ghazala also was married off to another man. Her husband died many years ago, and Ghazla, “who was as gentle and frolicsome as a dove” (SAP I 21) too died. The castles, the castles of sand built by the young men and women those days were swept away by the flow of the river because “the waters were hostile” (SAP I 20). Identifying himself with the bird that escaped the hunter’s gun, the police officer felt that “the whole universe had been splattered with blood—who knows how many wings had been broken and how many birds were writhing in pain in the lake?” (SAP I 23).

Recent studies have begun to uncover an aspect that historians have paid very little attention to the Partition trauma; its gendered nature, especially the experiences of women of all age groups—not only thousands who were raped and abducted, but also the equally large numbers who were widowed and had to spend much of their lives dependent on the state. Women in those infernal days were treated as a commodity. As always they were the worst sufferers. Mothers and daughters were sexually abused in front of one another, and then their throats casually cut afterwards. Many women who survived were heartlessly ostracized by their own kith and kin. The number who committed suicide out of shame could have populated a small town. Saadat Hasan Manto’s “Cold Meat” deals with such a story. Ishwar Singh cruelly murdered six people in a house and took away a lovely young girl alive for his future enjoyment. He had already a ladylove by name Kulwant Kaur. His intention was to keep the abducted girl in some secret place and to “taste this delicacy also” (SAP I 95). With this intention, he carried her over his shoulder and on the way he laid her down behind some bushes and
raped her. When it was over, he found to his great shock and dismay that she had already been dead.

It is a heart-rending experience to read a poem of Saadat Hasan Manto’s “Compassion”. It shows a helpless father pleading on bended knees before a group of abductors and the callous answer of the latter:

Please don’t kill
My young daughter
Before my eyes...
All right, let’s do as he says...
Strip her
And drag her away...(SAP I 97).

Past histories of the world show that rape has been a prominent and inevitable feature of wars. This horrific abuse of women has been in practice in order to intimidate a conquered people. In civil wars too, women are normally seen as a commodity, a ‘territory’ to be ‘occupied’. In such a context, as has been observed by Andrew J. Major, “revenge can become a powerful motive (or excuse) for abuse of women”(59). At this juncture, it would not be out of place to point out that physical harassment and defilement of women is embedded like a fossil in everyday relationships in our society. As Andrew J. Major shows “power rape—the raping of women in order to demoralize and defeat rival men in a patriarchal society—is particularly common in northern India”(59).

LalithambikaAntharjmanam’s story, “A Leaf in the Storm” narrates the experience of some abducted and sexually abused women. The story takes place in a refugee camp in Western Punjab. Fifty bonded women were handed over for fifty reclaimed ‘women’.
The exchange took place on the border. They were shuttle-cocked “from one prison to another” (SAP I 137). Many were crying loudly. Among them was an old woman—a mother of nine children too. She was alone, because all “her children were killed” (SAP I 138), and the girls in her family were abducted and “her house was gutted” (SAP I 138). In fact, she was watching helplessly “her house burn down to ashes” (SAP I 138).

There was another woman, the wife of an officer in Sindh. Her “cheeks and breasts are swollen” (SAP I 138). Tragedy overtook her, and “she was violated in front of her husband’s body which laid ripped open and scattered” (SAP I 138). She could only see the bloodstained hands of children.

There was another young woman with distinguishing features. She was a Sikh and Jyoti was her name. She didn’t cry like the other women. But her eyes reflected hate and cynicism. She despised the whole world. She was good-looking and noble and from a well-to-do family and was a rape victim. She refused to eat or drink. The camp doctor was coaxing her to drink milk. She was shouting at the doctor, “Look at me! I am damned too…. You want me to live on still, and sow the seed of damnation?” (SAP I 139). She was conceived in consequence of inhuman rape. Only a few people in the camp knew her secret that she was pregnant and unmarried, and had been ‘reclaimed’ by the camp. She suppressed the terrible pain. Life’s traffic is certainly cruel, and “no woman”, as observed by Antharjanam, “can evade the tax levied on her life” (SAP I 144).

Umm-e-Ummara’s “More Sinned Against Than Sinning” highlights the fate of an enthusiastic, honest young man who had “deliberately refused to look at the past and had dreamt only of a bright future”. Unfortunately he came to be a thoroughly disillusioned man, because “the gulf separating people had begun to widen and that evil had begun to
circle and entrap good” (SAP I 117), and as a result, her lovely young wife Pakhi and
their “flower-like children were burnt to death” (SAP I 117).

Yaspal’s “Holy War” presents how communal frenzy had spread devastation and
destruction in the Hindu areas in Lahore when a violent young Muslim, Nazru wantonly
stabbed Moolan Tai, an aged Hindu widow. When the city was under curfew, she ran to a
safe place in the thick of war with a small bundle. Nazru’s religious passion was so
inflamed that he thought the rioting and killing were nothing short of a holy war. So
when he saw Moolan Tai running away, he called her a bitch and “stabbed her with his
knife and snatched away her bundle” (SAP I 203). The poor innocent woman had nothing
but a small stone idol of her god in the bundle.

It should not be assumed that only the antisocial elements alone were abducting of
women. Men from all social classes were involved in abduction and rape; villagers,
peasants, the rich and the poor were also involved in this gruesome act. They considered
it as part and parcel of general looting. Women then were regarded as men’s property.

Kulwant Singh Virk’s “Weeds” is about an abducted Sikh woman who has
stoically started feeling that she has to pull on her days as all the doors have been closed.
It takes place within a village in Pakistan. The narrator, who is a reasonable Pakistani
officer, finds this abducted wife of another man, in a house made of brick and mud, lay
helplessly on a cot. The narrator says, “I couldn’t think of an uglier image of man’s
inhumanity to man. Abducted, raped and humiliated, she lay quietly and still. There was
no one from her caste, community, religion or village with her” (SAP I 207). Obviously,
she had no hope of going back to her own place and rejoining with her kith and kin. No
one could rescue her “from such a big and strong country like Pakistan” (SAP I 207). She
was also seriously ill. She had just one request to make to the officer. It was to rescue her sister-in-law abducted and kept in a near-by village. She added, "She was abducted by the scoundrels when they attacked our village. Their gang was the largest and the cruellest…. Please help me…. Bring her back to me" (SAP I 208). This would perhaps dissipate her alienation.

The most ignoble aspect of the holocaust was the distribution of young women among the members of the police force, the national guards, and the local 'goondas' and the 'badmashes'. When the men folks were wiped out and the houses were burnt down, the fleeing women would be rounded off in an open space and distributed like sweets. Saadat Hasan Manto’s “Open It” is an appalled witness to an age of madness and crime.

Waking up from a nightmarish vision of his wife’s cruel death, the bewildered old man Sirajuddin was searching for his beloved missing daughter Sakina in the makeshift camp at Mughalpura in Pakistan. She was fair and very beautiful. The old man found some eight young volunteers roaming about in their jeep in the camp posing to be good Samaritans. He asked them to help him locate his missing daughter. She had been left behind in India. Throughout that day he had been calling out "Sakina…Sakina". Sakina’s mother had been killed before her father’s very own eyes. Weeping and weeping his eyes dried up. He had “lost the capacity to moan” (SAP II 70). The self-appointed social workers went to Amritsar to rescue Amina and the other helpless women and children. They saw Amina standing on the roadside expecting some help. They identified her on seeing the big mole on her right cheek. They fed her to her heart’s content and helped her in to the truck. Taking her to a shady place, they raped her repeatedly and abandoned her near a railway track. Many days passed by. Sirajuddin had no news about his
daughter. He went on asking the young men whether they had seen his daughter. Some stranger one-day told Sirajuddin that he had seen a young girl laying unconsciously near the railway track. The girl was rushed to the hospital. In the hospital the old man identified his daughter and stood close to her. The doctor asked the father to open the window as the room was very sultry. On hearing male voices, she, like a battered animal, unconsciously "pulled her salwar down" (SAP II 72) and opened her legs. The old man however shouted with joy, for his daughter was alive. But the all-knowing doctor watched in horror and "broke in to a cold sweat" (SAP II 72).

Intizar Husain’s “The City of Sorrow” is a terrifying chronicle of three damned men who had committed beastly crimes at the time of the Partition. They were now wondering whether they were alive or dead. They were all accomplices in the making of a barbarous world and now they were totally lost. The first man narrates his heinous crime to the others. He says that he saw a dark girl with a red 'bindi' on her forehead. And there was a dark young man with her. On knowing that she was his sister, the first man asked him to "strip her naked" (SAP II 85). The girl turned pale and trembled like a willow tree. Not caring a hoot to the young man's pleas, the first man drew his long rapier and threatened him. The young man "reached for his sister's saree" (SAP II 85). The others also committed the same heinous acts of crimes and remained alive. Unfortunate husbands were forced at sword point to strip their wives naked. Those who resisted were stabbed and their bodies “lay drenched in blood” (SAP II 86). The perpetrator of the crime washed his face “in his hot blood” (SAP II 86). Even fathers were forced to strip their daughters naked. The three men “committed all those acts and remained alive” (SAP II 87). They thus spread horror that had "gripped the street" (SAP
I 187), and “darkness had begun to creep over everything” (SAP II 187). The first man after committing such acts of crime went home and knocked at the door. The other members of his family knew about the cruel acts he had committed. His father seemed too stunned to see the son. Already the first man’s daughter had been raped and dishonoured. The old man said to the son, “If you are alive, I must be dead” (SAP II 188). He took a deep breath and died. The second man’s experience was no less gruesome. He too raped a woman with a bindi on her forehead. She was “a very slim woman, but her stomach was big. There was terror in her eyes” (SAP II 89). With such acts of violence, the whole city was left desolate. The second man ran as far as he could. He wanted to escape from there. But “he could not find a way out of the city of ruins” (SAP II 89). Even the neighbouring town looked desolate. In that strange town, “dead bodies lay scattered everywhere. There wasn’t a single living human being in sight” (SAP II 89). Terror-stricken People seemed to be “imprisoned in their own houses” (SAP II 89). They, like the descendents of Israel, had to endure the injustices of their own people. The whole place was turned into a burial ground. As too many graves had been dug already, there wasn’t any place left for fresh burial. In that city of ruins, the corpses of those who had been slaughtered were found everywhere. Shorn of all hopes, the three men “were sitting like stones and staring blankly in to the empty space” (SAP II 97).

Attia Hosain’s “After the Storm” also narrates the cruelty inflicted on a woman whose “arm was cut off” (SAP II 104) and “the house was full of blood” (SAP II 104). The story is told through a small girl who reports: “They said Chand Bibi kept on fighting until her arm was cut off” (SAP II 104). Some Good Samaritan had whisked off the little girl before she was thrown into a burning cauldron. At the time of the riots, “the tainted
wind blew hot from blazing homes and carried the dust of devastated fields, and the
dead...” (SAP II 101). The small child had lost her sister and brother and mother. She
didn’t know what happened to them. Orphaned, she was taken to a refugee camp by the
police.

Suraia Qasim’s “Where Did She Belong?” highlights the problems of a call girl at
the time of the Partition. Munni Bai was a ravishing beauty at the tender age of
seventeen. She was living in a brothel at Hira Mandi in Lahore before the Partition. She
lived to be possessed at a price. Her job was not at all to her liking. She had to oblige to
her Ma’s command, otherwise her matron wouldn’t hesitate to wield the cane lavishly.
Munni neither knew who her parents were, nor how she became a brothel. She later
understood that her parents had left her “half way between a mosque and a temple” (II
SAP II 110). Finding her there as a small girl, the matron didn’t know whether she was a
Hindu or a Muslim. Now as she was quite attractive, “she was the first choice of every
customer” (SAP II 111). The Ma was alternately brutal and kind towards her. Munni Bai
was the chief source of Ma’s income.

Munni Bai’s heart was not in her profession. She wanted to marry and settle down
in some unknown place. She was of late thought about by two of her regular customers.
They called themselves her lovers. Raj Kamal was about twenty-five and married and
extremely virile. He was rich with his wife’s benefactions. He divided his passions
between Munni Bai and his wife. He considered Munni a Hindu and would exclaim, that
the Muslims were “dreaming of a country of their own...” (SAP II 113) and they were
living in a fool’s paradise. He strongly felt that “no force on earth can drive us from our
homes and hearths. Lahore—Hira Mandi particularly—belongs as much to us as it does
to the Muslims. Nobody can dislodge us from our city" (SAP II 113). He proclaimed to her that he would be with her in thick and thin.

Jafar Khan was Munni Bai's Muslim lover. He was a thoroughbred Pathan. He would tell her, "...when Pakistan is formed, and after we have driven out all the 'kafirs', Munni Bai, You will belong only to Jafar Khan" (SAP II 114). He was also married like his Hindu rival. He boasted then that he would convert her to Islam and marry her. There was more fear than passion in his lovemaking.

In the communal frenzy that soon followed, Ma's establishment was burned down soon after Ma and her retinue escaped to Delhi. They were in a refugee camp with countless other refugees mourning for the loss of their kinsmen. But Ma and her group had no sense of loss. Suraiya Qasim rightly observes, "Human bonds are not forged in commercial transactions" (SAP II 115).

Munni Bai had been hoping that her life would start anew and some day, her Raj Kamal would turn up to make love to her. She would then remind him of his promise to marry her. But such fond hopes did not materialize. However, very soon, Munni Bai's exceptional beauty spread far and wide and rajas and nawabs started visiting her in their limousines. The surprising thing to Munni Bai was that the nawabs that had escaped butchering were thought to be pauperised; but they had enough money to spend lavishly for one night's pleasure. She asked Ma, "Who lost and who died in the Partition?" (SAP II 117).

In Krishna Sobti's "Where Is My Mother?", the author presents how Yunus Khan, a fiery, inspired Muslim soldier from Lahore was moved by the plight of a little girl lying unconscious by the roadside. He had seen worse scenes than this in the mad fury of the
birth of a new Mughal Empire. But strangely, he felt an excruciating pain on seeing this urchin, whose “salwar was soaked in blood” (SAP II 136).

He had never stopped his jeep for the dead before. He had seen “countless bodies of dead women” (SAP II 136). Yunus Khan picked up the girl in his strong arms. Her hair was wet with blood. Her pale face “was splattered with blood” (SAP II 136). He had never been sentimental before. The cruel hands “which had killed her brothers were now caressing her so lovingly” (SAP II 136). Yunus Khan had killed so many people “for his religious faith” (SAP II 137). He had “played holi with blood” (SAP II 137). With the girl in the back seat, Yunus Khan’s memory went back. On a very cold night in Quetta, he was standing with his arms around his 12 year old pretty sister, Nooran. They watched their widowed mother, close her eyes and die. Later his sister too died. He had buried her. Yunus Khan began to cry as he recalled that day. He took the girl to Mayo Hospital in Lahore and pleaded with the doctor-in-charge to save her. He was at a loss to understand why he was so much perturbed over the fate of an unknown ‘kafir’ girl. However, when the girl opened her eyes, she screamed, “Fire, fire...they are shooting...the soldiers...” (SAP II 138). The girl stared at Yunus Khan for some time. There was “fear, hatred and suspicion in them” (SAP II 138). She trembled with fear and horror. She thought that his strong hands would strangle her. Yunus Khan however believed that “she was Nooran” (SAP II 139). With terror on her face she felt that “he would take her to a lonely spot and kill her... shoot her or stab her!” (SAP II 139). She started screaming, “Where is my brother? Where is my sister? Where is my mother...?” (SAP II 139). The girl had lost all.

Ibrahim Jalees’ “A Grave Turned Inside Out” is a heart-rending tale of some unfortunate, hapless women who had to face all sorts of humiliation, before they were
sexually used, harassed and thrown out by their own community men. All this took place soon after the creation of Pakistan, and within Pakistan the East and the West. The Patriarch-predators were criminal elements, goondas and ‘badmashes’ who preyed upon the helpless women in temporary camps and after using them to their heart’s content, either abducted to be sold or used later or killed cruelly. On all counts women were the worst sufferers. Even the local police and military frequently participated in the abduction and distribution of women. As one of the close associates of Mahatma Gandhi, Anis Kidwai observes,

The better ‘stuff’ would be distributed among the police and army while the ‘small coin’ would be given to the rest (the other attackers). After this the girls would go from one hand to another, and after being sold four or five times, would become showpieces in hotels, or they would be kept in ‘safe-custody’ in a house for the enjoyment of police officials. (Major 6)

In the terrible confusion that preceded and followed women had been abducted by the thousands. According to one conservative report, 100,000 young girls kidnapped by both sides, were forcibly converted or sold on the auction block. The exact number based on documentary evidence on this appalling event is very difficult to get. Even the Pathans brought a very large number of abducted women and children from the Kashmir front and they were selling them like cattle and chattel. There were pathetic cases in which a woman had been sold thrice or four times. The Pathans had made it a regular trade.

Ayesha, in Jalees’ story “desperately longed for the earth to open and to be buried in it for ever” (SAP II 141). She was awfully disgusted with life. Off and on she was screaming loudly with terror. A young man, Nural Amin, escorted her from Dhaka to
Kathmandu. The same man was now flying with her to Pakistan, the Promised Land. Ayesha was not a Bengali, but a Bihari. She was the wife of Abdul Waheed, a taxi driver. She had followed her husband to Dhaka because, “in this male-dominated world, a wife’s nationality is determined by her husband’s” (SAP II 142). In Dhaka the Census Bureau listed her as a Pakistani citizen, but her neighbours called her “Ayesha Bihari” (SAP II 142). Dressed like a Bengali, Ayesha learnt to speak Bengali. In spite of all these, she was made to feel that “she was stateless” (SAP II 143). In East Pakistan, when the Bengali and the Bihari goondas began to kill each other indiscriminately with knives and sticks, and the hooligans hired by politicians began to loot houses and violate the sacred bodies of the women of their opponents, Ayesha saved herself by speaking in Bengali and Urdu.

Well before Ameena’s wedding to Nurul, a local goonda, Hassan Ullah wanted to marry her but her father drove him out from home. When the language riots suddenly broke out between the Bengali and the Urdu speakers, Hassan Ullah got his opportunity to take revenge on Ameena. Disguising as a Mukti Vahini soldier, he raided Ameena’s house with his henchmen. He “stripped her naked, dragged her out and threw her into the jeep” (SAP II 144). There was no one to go to the rescue of Ameena. All that the Imam of the local mosque could do was to mumble his prayers rapidly:

Ya Allah! Show the path of virtue to the Pakistanis!

Ya Allah! If this is what you wanted us to witness

Why did you create Pakistan? (SAP II 144)

When Nurul ran to Hassan Ullah’s house with his knife, a bullet from the gangster’s pistol killed him. In a drunken rage, Uassan Ullah pulled Nurul’s hair and
screamed, "Sala—Pakistani Jasoos... Your Ameena—no, the lower part of your Ameena's body speaks such beautiful Bengali—that I feel as if I am in Heaven..." (SAP II 145).

Ayesha fainted and fell across Abdul's lifeless body. The injured Nurul told Ayesha that her 13-year-old daughter, Razia, had also been abducted. Later enquires revealed to her that Razia had been sent for her safety to Karachi. Nurul enticed her to go with him to Karachi so that Ayesha could see her Razia. Ayesha was migrating for the second time, not because she had been lured by a political vision, or had been enchanted by the idea of Pakistan...Nurul was taking her to Pakistan and had promised her a new life there" (SAP II 147). Poor Ayesha did not know that Nurul had evil intentions. His plan was that as soon as reaching Karachi, he could "use Ayesha as his taxi—!" (SAP II 146). In East Pakistan itself, Ayesha's young daughter, Razia, "was like a bearer cheque" (SAP II 140) to the goondas. So she could never meet her Razia in Karachi.

In Karachi Nurul took Ayesha to a Bengali settlement close to a graveyard. But the Bengali refugees put up a notice board: "Biharis...go back" (SAP II 150). In the same day of their landing, some goondas dragged Nurul to the Police station, for illegally grabbing Government land" (SAP II 151). Meanwhile, another goonda punished Ayesha "for illegally grabbing Government land for the land of her body" (SAP II 151). The other women heard Ayesha's cries for help. But "they covered their ears with their hands" (SAP II 151). The next morning, they saw Ayesha's naked body on the floor. It was reported that poor Ayesha had been "bitten by a snake...!" (SAP II 151) Ibrahim Jalees ironically says, that the snake that bit Ayesha was a funny one, because "he wore an underwear...!" (SAP II 152).
Saadat Hasan Manto’s “Mozel” narrates how Mozel, a Jewish girl, offered her life and honour and of course everything for her former lover and his family at the time of the Partition. The story takes place in a multi-storied apartment called Advani Chambers in Bombay. Mozel and a Sikh youth had their flats there. Very soon, Tirlochen became entangled with her; “he was all over, like soapsuds” (SAP II 156). She was his greatest weakness. He wanted to hold on to her at all costs. But when he tried to go beyond kissing and hugging, she spurned him. She would also make fun of his beard and religious beliefs. Some times, she would tell him, “You’re a Sikh—I hate you” (SAP II 161).

However, Tirlochen could not continue his relationship with Mozel for long. He wanted to marry Kirpal Kaur, “a chaste girl” (SAP II 162) and settle down in life. Accordingly, he did so in the riot-torn days. Within a few days Bombay was in the grip of a riot. Communities clashed with each other. Angered Muslim gangs looked for Sikhs. They came to the Advani Chambers and spotted the Tirlochen family. Mozel watched everything. She acted quickly and daringly using her presence of mind and saved the Sikh family. But she had to pay a heavy price for it. She went naked to lure the killers away from the Tirlochen family. She fell down the stairs. Her nose was bleeding and “there was blood trickling from her mouth and ears” (SAP II 171). There was a large gathering around her. They were watching “Mozel’s naked and fair body which was covered with bruises” (SAP II 171). Tirlochen tried to cover her nakedness with his turban. Mozel pushed it away from her body. She whispered, “Take away... this religion of yours” (SAP II 172). Her arm fell lifelessly over her robust breasts.
Kamleshwar’s “How Many Pakistans?” is a sad narrative of displacement and dispossession, of large-scale and widespread communal violence, and of the realignment of family, community and national identities. The author presents this through the voice of a young Hindu boy, Mangal who is in love with a girl, Salima alias Bano. Kamleshwar makes an honest attempt to communicate an experience of partition through their tragic love story. The story takes place in the small town of Chinar on the banks of the Ganges at the time of the creation of Pakistan. Mangal was forced to leave the place, the place of his birth, to an unknown destination; otherwise, his affair “may lead to communal riots” (SAP II 175). In those troubled days of communal tension, both Mangal and Bano used to meet at the check post or some other place. Mangal’s People were living in fear because as Mangal says, “every one was afraid that I would be killed or that the Muslims would suddenly attack our house” (SAP II 176).

Bano’s father was a drillmaster and a highly learned man. He was writing the life of a Hindu Saint-Poet, Bhartrhari Namaha. The drill-master had no objection to Bano’s love affair. But he was scared of the Maulvi Sahib. Bano used to tell Mangal, “If the Maulvi and his followers continue to harass me, I’ll eat dhatura leaves and commit suicide” (SAP II 176). She wanted him to take her with him; otherwise she would jump in to the Ganges and end her life.

However, before long, half a dozen Hindu youths exhorted Mangal to the railway station and packed him off to Bombay, where one of his uncles was staying. In a way he was driven out of his own house. He felt that the creation of Pakistan “had pierced through my heart like a sword that day” (SAP II 178). And Bano had been locked up in her house.
When Chinar was destroyed in the communal war, Bano was taken to Bhiwandi. There she got married. Even in Bhiwandi, there were communal riots for “the two communities had no love for each other” (SAP II 180). Some ten days after the riots, Mangal went to Bhiwandi and “saw the charred remains of houses, like gaping block holes, between tall buildings. There was nothing but ash, rubbles and dust everywhere” (SAP II 181).

It was then that he saw Bano “lying on a cot bathed in moonlight. Her blouse was open and her sari was pulled up to her waist. Her breasts were full like balloons. She was convulsing with pain...” (SAP II 183). It was dreadful. Her naked body was soon bathed in milk. Mangal was shocked. In the nightmarish vision that soon followed, “he saw breasts full of milk hanging from the sky...! Blood rained from the sky, corpses walked in the streets, fountains of blood spurted out of chopped heads, naked bodies danced in the flames” (SAP II 184). People were hysterical and cried aloud, “Qadir Miyan...Sala, Pakistan has been created...O sister, Pakistan has been created...!” (SAP II 184). But the drill master knew that “Pakistan...is the fragmentation of man.... It is the refusal to consider the whole man...” (SAP II 184). The rending of the social and emotional fabric into pieces at the time of the partition could never be easily mended. When the police took Mangal away for questioning as to why he was wandering there, he felt that he and Bano “had become victims of Pakistan” (SAP II 184).

Mangal learnt from the drill master that when Bano was admitted to Dr. Sarang’s Nursing Home for delivery, there was a terrible riot. The rioters set the Nursing Home on fire. The government was crippled and failed to prevent the brutality. A few pregnant women jumped out of the second floor to save themselves from being defiled by the
brutes. Some women even threw their newborn babies out of the windows. Many children were burnt to death. Bano's baby died when she had thrown him out into the street below. There was a terrible massacre.

Muneer, Bano's husband was a chronically sick person. He became impotent because he used to sell blood to get money for his drinks. Every one was in agony; every one had made his or her own Pakistan. They had all been disfigured, mutilated, crippled. They were only half-alive. Not before long, even the drillmaster had gone mad. And Bano though survived the trauma of Partition, landed at Colaba in Bombay as a brothel. Mangal was in a terrible fix. He asked himself some questions: “Where should I go now? Where should I hide? There are Pakistans everywhere. Where can I find the kind of life I desire? How can I live an undivided life?” (SAP II 190).

Lalithambika Antharjanam’s “The Mother of Dhirendu Muzumdar” deals with the trauma of an aged mother, by name Shanti Muzumdar living in a small hamlet in East Bengal. She is the narrator of the story. She had given birth to nine children—seven boys and two girls. She sacrificed five for India and four for Pakistan. She was totally against Partition. She wanted to live and die in an undivided land of Bengal. All her ancestors were born in that soil and became part of it. Originally she was from an orthodox Hindu family. In the good old days when her family was flourishing, even the Governor and the Viceroy used to visit her family. Her people were “feudal lords, zamindars and village-chiefs” (SAP II 200). Her husband was a Rao Bahadur, honorary judge and member of the advisory committee of the British Government. The children were college-educated and were friendly with the poor. Excepting the father, all the others in the family actively took part in the freedom struggle. Dhiran, her eldest son was marked as a terrorist and the
police were after him. Another son Surya was “captured and sent to the gallows by the police” (SAP II 202). Shortly after this, Dhiran was killed “in a dynamite explosion during an attack on an arsenal” (SAP II 202). When the mother heard it, she sang “Vanda Mataram” crying, laughing, screaming like a mad woman, she sang at the top of her voice.

Dhiran’s revolutionary zeal haunted a good many girls and boys. They did some unbelievable things for the freedom of their nation and sacrificed themselves. The mother points out, “The freedom that you now enjoy, sprouted in the blood of these people” (SAP II 203). At the time of Partition, she decided to stay back at East Pakistan. She felt, “Come what may; here or there, it is all the same” (SAP II 203). Her grand daughter, Nazeema, was once singing the Tagore song, “Sonar Bangla...” The soldiers snatched that child, and killing her by throwing her on to the road. Such an illustrious mother was finally brought to India as a helpless refugee. She asks only one question, “Is the mother of Dhiran, Samaren, Satyan and Nityen an outsider here?” (SAP II 204). She was unable to hold back her tears.

Vishnu Prabhakar’s “I Shall Live” centres on the plight of a couple of women and a child soon after Partition. Pran chose Mussourie to stay with Raj after the Partition holocaust. Raj had a sad past. Off and on she was deep in thought and was trying to untangle her past from the present. They had a small boy Dilip. As she didn’t give birth to Dilip, both Pran and Raj were uncertain about the plight of Dilip. They felt that anytime the boy would be parted with. So a storm was brewing in their life. It had destroyed Raj’s inner peace. She wanted to go away.
As they feared, a man and a woman came one day and claimed the boy Dilip. The visitors revealed that the boy’s real name was Ramesh.

Raj’s mind went back to the past. She had found the boy “while she was fleeing with a group from Lahore” (SAP II 210). A few months ago, in Lahore, people were running away from their homes to save their lives. There was a lot of killing. Bodies were piled up everywhere. All sense of humanity had been “drowned in a river of blood” (SAP II 211). Raj found herself in a refugee train. It was also attacked. She had lost everything. But she had a child now. She looked upon heaven and said, “O God, you snatched everything from me and gave me this child as a gift in return” (SAP II 211). She had risked her life to save the child’s. But now, he was to be taken away from her because she wasn’t his mother. Raj put the child on his original mother’s lap.

The next day Raj and Pran left Mussourie. Raj felt that she had “no life left in her. She had turned very pale. Her eyes were swollen” (SAP II 212). She was very despondent about the past, and skeptical about the future.

In the meantime, another distressing event took place. Wherever Pran went to, a stranger used to follow him. Very soon Pran came to know that Raj was the stranger’s wife. The stranger felt very much ashamed and flabbergasted because in those terrible days, he didn’t make any effort to save his wife’s life. Pran felt as if someone had slowly cut through his inner life with a blade. He asked the stranger whether he was willing to take her back. The stranger replied without any hesitation, “Yes, that’s why I am here” (SAP II 215). Raj left with her husband. Pran’s thoughts dwelt in Punjab. As he was running away from the burning Punjab, he “had rescued Raj from a pile of corpses. At that time she had thought that her husband had been killed” (SAP II 218). That’s why she
agreed to live with him. Her husband took her back even though she had been living with a stranger for some time.

Mulk Raj Anand’s moving tale “The Parrot in the Cage” describes the plight of a displaced old woman called Rukmani in Lahore who had lost everything except a parrot. The bird was her only companion. She expected some help in her old age from the higher-ups but of no avail. Seeing what happened right in front of her eyes at Partition, she became panicky. From her entrails arose confusion, which was like the panic she had felt at the mad mob bursting with full-throated, frenzied cries of Allah ho Akbar! Har har Mahdev! Sat Sri Akal! On the night of terror when she had fled from her lane, she had seen “flashes of blazing light; cracking of burning house-beams; smoke, smoke, choking smoke.... And she had thought that her last days had come” (SAP III 86).

She was waiting outside the office of the Deputy Collector. She pleaded with the officer to lend her a patient hearing for she had come on foot all the way from Lahore. There was a little crowd of some unfortunate men and women standing in front of the office. A posse of policemen charged them with lathis. Old Rukmani was brushed aside and she reeled and fell down. She wiped her face with the end of her dupatta and felt an enormous sadness overwhelming her. She thought that anything could be possible in the ‘kaliyug’. A gram-seller watching everything gave some grams to the parrot. Rukmani was telling the parrot, “... Han my son.... I don’t know where I am! I don’t know...” (SAP III 89).

Kartar Singh Duggal’s “Kulsum” too illumines a moment of horror. It is a tragic tale of Kulsum, a young Punjabi Muslim ‘hourī’ who was cruelly raped by an old man who happened to be her saviour. He did so because she objected to offer herself to the old
man's acquaintance. As the old man comes out of his hut with a sense of achievement tying his 'lungi', and knotting his 'tehmad', we are dumb-founded as the girl Kulsum.

In one of those troubled days the old man was sitting on a prayer mat with a rosary. A schoolmaster, obviously an acquaintance of the old man, came to him for a chat. As if he was doing a great favour, the old man asked the schoolmaster to go in and enjoy the girl inside. With burning eyes he approached the girl. The girl looked aghast. She felt that a touch from the male "would soil her" (SAP III 92). She resisted him with the plea, "Marry me first. How can I sit on a bed next to a stranger? (SAP III 93). Unmindful of her pleas, the schoolmaster tried to rape her. The hapless girl repeatedly begged him not to hurt her:

I beg you, don't do it. Marry me first. I was engaged to a man of your age Tall and well built like you. His forehead was as broad as yours; his teeth were like your teeth—white like pearls. My father and mother and my brothers and all my relatives were hacked to death with swords by the rioters. I don’t know how I escaped. I was running aimlessly like someone who has lost her wits when the old man caught me and brought me here. On the way here, he promised that he would find me someone to live with. Marry me, please. (SAP III 93)

Her tearful pleas repeated many times on bended knees fell upon deaf ears. When he tried to force her, she turned on him "like a lioness and pushed him with all her strength" (93). Knowing what had happened inside, the old man went in and cruelly raped her. When the schoolmaster went in for the second time, the room was completely dark and Kulsum didn't move when he placed his hand on the shoulder.
This is just one instance of many such rapes and violent incidents. There were plenty of such pathetic cases. They had no champion to protect such unfortunate victims from the hyenas. In the eighteenth century, there was Waris Shah, the celebrated Punjabi poet to speak for the afflicted women. But, today as there was none, Amrita Pritam, the distinguished Punjabi poetess, invokes the deceased Waris Shah to speak for the women in her poem, "I Say unto Waris Shah":

Today I implore Waris Shah
to speak up from his grave
and turn over a page of
The Book of Love.

When a daughter of the fabled Punjab wept
he gave tongue to her silent grief.

Today a million daughters weep
but where is Waris Shah
to give voice to their woes?
Arise, O friend of the distressed!
See the plight of your Punjab.
(Mushirul Hasan 277)

Dipendranath Bandyopadhayay’s "Jatayu" is the story of a fatalist woman Durga who had been a victim of the Partition holocaust. Her life had been "swathed in inky cobwebs" (SAP III 95). She had to marry Nityacharan, a fire dancer, who would "dance within the flames" (SAP III 95), bearing flames. On such occasions, he would "become a
flame" (SAP III 95). Both the husband and wife were victims of Partition. They were “almost wiped out, yet... somehow survived” (SAP III 97).

Having been a victim of rape, Durga had been quite restless. At times “she trembled like a dry bamboo leaf” (SAP III 96). Of late, she was especially scared of strangers. Vaguely she remembered that a hairy hand had pinched her breast violently, and then clamped down on her throat. But she didn’t know who it was. So much so, pursued by an indefinable dread, Durga skulked past like an animal, her ears alert, full of suppressed anxiety and suspicion. She could not stand crowds. When some one looked at her, she felt like running away.

She now remembered everything. There was a big fire. The rioters set fire to everything. When her house was on flame, they pushed her father in. She recalled sadly,

Father was running from room to room. His hair, his beard caught fire. He pulled his dhoti off. All his life, my father went from village to village reciting tales from the ‘Puras’. But no puranic hero came speeding like the wind to save him. They didn’t let my father out. And when the sky split open with the demonic scream from my father’s sweet purana versed throat, with the sound of bursting bamboos, with the sound of Muslim call to prayer, they laid me in the open field lit by the burning house. My mother beside me. A hand began pinching my breast. (SAP III 98-99)

She lost everything. Having found herself in the cremation ground, she remembered that her father and mother were gone and with them their country too. One nagging question in her mind was, “why did this happen to me?” (SAP III 99). She ran away from there for cover and lived for a while a life of hide and seek in the railway
station and then met Nityacharan. Living with him, she was "half-dead with fear" (SAP III 99), for she was "terrified of that hand" (SAP III 99).

Amid the loud sound of drums, Nityacharan danced his ghostly dance before the image of Kali. It was a dangerous dance because he was standing between two circles of glowing fire. Durga saw that the mighty fire was advancing "like a twisting serpent" (SAP III 103). She knelt mesmerized. In the meantime someone set fire to their settlement and it was burning. Then the chariot of fire was speeding towards Calcutta. Like a cruel tyrant, "the fire began to burn up everything" (SAP III 103). People ran panting towards the river Padma, but "Padma was a dry desert" (SAP III 103). The fire invaded Nityacharan’s body and he was beckoning Durga to him for a permanent release from the mad, mad world.

In S.H. Vatsayan ‘Ajneya’’s “Post-Box”, the author brings out the sufferings of women and children in Lahore at the time of Partition. When Roshan, a boy with his father, mother and Chacha (father’s brother) were running away from Shekherpura to a place of safety in Lahore, the father went to a nearby town, to fetch Roshan’s Bua and Phupa from another town, a mishap happened. Some rioters opened fire and killed Roshan’s Chacha. Firings, beatings, and killings with axes and lathis continued unabated for many days. The attackers came there as swarms and “abducted women in the group” (SAP III 107). One brute with hot desire approached Roshan’s mother and dragged her away. She screamed and resisted with all her might. She bit him on the assailant’s shoulder, but the assailant right in front of Roshan’s eyes threw the ill-starred woman down on the ground,
...and smashed her face with the blunt end of his axe. She had screamed. Roshan had shut his eyes, and when he opened them he had seen that her eyes, nose, jaws had been reduced to a bloody pulp. There was nothing left of her face. Yet the man, who had planted one foot on her chest, continued to hit her with his axe. (SAP III 107)

Abandoned by all, the wretched woman fell to her ravisher’s mad fury. Damayanti, her predecessor of yore passed over similar sorrow and re-wed Nishadha’s chief, Nala, but this Damayanti of the 1940’s as we find in Nala Damayanti had not even the remote chance to

Overpass the river of sorrow, and come safe

Unto its farther shore....'(Valmiki 137)

Roshan wept bitterly. Those who survived the attack dragged Roshan away to a place of safety. However, those women who had fallen behind “had been abducted” (SAP III 108). The boy was taken to refugee camp and there he was weeping and wailing for his father. But there was no trace of his father.

In Amrit Rai’s “Filth”, the author presents the callous attitude of some well-to-do people like Roop Kishore Saxena, Harban singh, Purushottam Das Khatri and S.S.Raman who indulge in gossips about the plight of women at the time of the riots in Punjab, “with all savouries of detail and the delicacy of gesture” (SAP III 115) and they all cackled with pleasure. These stories of abduction and atrocities committed against women were so scandalous that the listeners always listened to them “with pleasurable attention” (SAP III 115) because the narrators provided them with juicy details. Every one cackled with delight. Each of them saw in those stories “reflections of their own naked desires” (SAP
III 114). Earlier the trouble-shooters kidnapped only a few girls. And that did not create many ripples. But now “more than a lakh of women had been abducted and the incidents of barbarities were so many, that it was difficult to keep count of them” (SAP III 115).

Now there was an uneasy calm after the storm. The calamity had ended. The weeping and wailing subsided. Even the newspapers were silent. As Amrit Rai says, “Lakhs of men had died, lakhs of children had been orphaned, lakhs of women had lost their homes and honour. Now all that remained were their stories, stories which were told and heard by people as they smacked their lips with an epicurean delight” (SAP III 115).

From their stories it was evident that only the women were the worst sufferers. Each man in the group described how they targeted the women of the other religious group, and destroyed them. The only difference was that in some cases the stories were not published. Harbans Singh with his eyes glowing whispered passionate stories about the abducted Muslim women in Western Punjab. Amrit Rai writes that

He (Harbans Singh) told them how they had been kidnapped, how they had been kept, fifteen or twenty together, in a house, how many had been sent to brothels; he told them about the beauty and grace of these women, about how they had been set upon by groups of Hindus and Sikhs; he told them how the heads of those women who had protested had been separated from their bodies, and how even those who had quietly submitted their youthful bodies had been finally sent to hell.... (SAP III 118)

The eyes of the listeners too glowed with infernal light.
Gulam Abbas in his story, “Avtar: A Hindu” presents the untold misery the women experienced at the time of the holocaust through the narrator Hamzah. The narrator is a young man, who returned home after absconding for six months. He looked very strange. He had grown thin like a thorn. His eyes had become lustreless like extinguished coal. His parents asked him many questions. He then narrated how he happened to meet an aged Muslim who had a terrible experience to share with. That aged man was a Muslim trader. He had many children. When the anti-Muslim riots broke out in the city, Hindu rioters surrounded his house. He was tied to a tree and “his virginal daughters were raped before his eyes and cruelly butchered. His sons too were slaughtered “ (SAP III 201). Hamzah could never forget their agony and their horror. That was why he looked like one who had been hit by a ghost.

The weeping and wailing of the oppressed reached up to heaven. The Lord Vishnu heard it and wanted to deliver the victims from the ravens. Even as he took the ‘avtar’ of Kalki and came down as a handsome young man riding a white horse gorgeously adorned, amidst a deafening burst of thunder and lightning, he saw the Hindus making a big pyre in front of a temple, and putting the innocent Muslim victims into it one by one. Earlier they had pounced upon the Muslim women in the midnight when the latter went to the village well to fetch water. They raped them amidst fearful cries and “cut off the breasts of those who tried to resist” (SAP III 202). Many Muslims became martyrs while defending their women folk; Sara, a prominent woman in that colony was tied with a rope to her mother while her aunt was thrown down on the ground. Her uncle was writhing in pain with blood oozing out from many parts of his body. There was “utter hopelessness” (SAP III 203) in their eyes. Those who saw the
Lord were terrified. He looked at the perpetrators of violence and said, “You are not human beings. You are worse than jackals” (SAP III 204). The Lord looked unnerved, and continued that in the name of the Hindu religion,

You have spilt so much of blood.... You have raped women; stripped them naked and paraded them through the streets of the city chopped off their breasts and noses; burnt them alive. You have their children with your spears and flung them in the air. You claimed that you committed these crimes in the name of your religious duty. (SAP III 204)

Unequivocally he condemned the violent rioters.

Jyotirmoyee Devi’s The River Churning which is rightly subtitled as A Partition Novel focuses on a partition victim Sutara, “hit”, as Jasodhara Bagchi observes in her Introduction to the novel, “twice by patriarchy: first by the male of one community who establishes his own ‘identity’ by exercising his territoriality over her body, second by her ‘own’ community which invokes compulsions of ritual purity to exclude her from the ritually pure domains of hearth and marriage, and drinking water” (xxxii). Having been a victim of Partition, Sutara was considered a bottleneck at auspicious functions, and “an obstruction to the marriage prospects of future generations” (Bagchi xxxiii). Being a lecturer in a Delhi college, thanks to her education, in spite of her being socially ostracised, she swallows the bitter pill and gains understanding that “it is the bodies like hers that have to be expunged in order that the community may nestle and breed in the bosom of the nation-state” (Bagchi xxxiii).

Jyotirmoyee Devi records her anger in her ‘Author’s Note’ at the way the patriarchs of yester years let the history to shape. She observes that in all the epic poems
the epic poets who happened to be males chose to hide the savage acts of barbarism and the exploitation of the female body may be due to shame. Vedavyasa, the epic poet in section of ‘Stree Parva’ of Mahabharata skimmed over the heartrending tale of women in that chapter. The incidents occurred after the passing away of Krishna and Balaram. Though Arjun arrived at Dwarka to look after the women, with his mighty weapon, Gandiva, he found himself helpless. The Gandiva slipped from his mighty hands. Before his very eyes, “women were insulted and humiliated, some were forced to accompany the bandits out of fear, perhaps some were killed—the chronicler has not been able to give us a complete account” (Jyotirmoyee Devi xxxiv). Vedavyasa is curiously silent about that.

Before the grief-stricken Draupadi’s heart-rending cry in the court of Duryodhana—“Which prince would pledge his wife? Had he nothing else to pawn?” (Rajagopalachary: 92) subsides in our memory, here are Sutara Dutta’s and thousands of such unfortunate victims’ anguished cries tom-tom the eardrums.

When the communal frenzy swept Noakhali in East Bengal, the harmony and peace that existed between the Hindus and the Muslims snapped all of a sudden. Hell let loose everywhere. Sutara’s trusted family servants—Rahim and Karim turned cruel villains. Chased by the shadowy figures, Sutara’s mother jumped into a well and committed suicide. Sutara’s Didi, her married sister was raped and carried away. Sutara, teen-aged was gang-raped till she lost her consciousness. Though her neighbour Tamjkaka and his family nursed her back to health, she felt as the novel shows “so shattered physically and psychologically that she couldn’t even get up from her bed” (The River 10). She was too young to understand why such things happened. Gopal, her father, a teacher, who got along quite comfortably with all his Muslim neighbours, was
“stabbed and dumped in a ditch” (The River 12). Sutara’s house was set ablaze. Her bosom companion “Durga had hung herself” (The River 12). Another intimate friend “Alaka jumped into the river, but the ruffians picked her up and took her away” (The River 12). Seeing all these, Sakina, a Muslim friend of Sutara, was terribly upset. Sharing her views with her mother, she says, “You want to partition the country, go ahead; you want to fight over it—do it by all means. But why don’t you leave the women alone? Does your religion allow you to dishonour women the way they are doing? Does the Koran approve of it? (The River 13-14). Her anguish is shared by many conscientious women like Imelda Whelehan who says in her book Modern Feminist Thought that “crimes against women in the contemporary world amount to nothing less than genocide” (225).

Though her kind-hearted Muslim neighbours brought Sutara Dutta back to normalcy, she had to face a lot of hardships in life. The pathetic side of it is that even her own family members considered her an outcaste. They zoomed in their minds the fact of her defilement and wherever she went to, she became an object of derision and curiosity. Her family members “came out of their rooms to have a good look at her; others peered at her from within” (The River 31). Grandmothers are proverbially compassionate to their grandchildren. But Sutara’s grandmother told the others in the family to “see that she does not sit on the bed. She must be purified with Ganga water first. God only knows what kind of food she has eaten there” (The River 33).

Sutara’s brothers too treated her “like an outsider” (The River 35). She was even considered a low caste. Her eldest brother thought that to have such a sister in the family
would "jeopardise the marriage of his own daughter" (The River 43). Ironically, nobody had an iota of the trauma that she had undergone.

The traumatised victim's troubles were akin to the troubles of Damayanti, Sakoontala and Sita and millions of their progeny. Rejected by her Lord Prince Nala, the Princess Damayanti scantily clad, "so weary, weak and miserable" (Valmiki_118), and lost in the wood, alone and weeping, "seeing no help near" (Valmiki 118) was seen accosting every beast of the jungle whether he had seen her Lord. Seeing the yellow forest king tiger the daughter of Vidarbha's king prays to him,

Abandoned, sorrow-stricken, miserable,

Comfort me, mighty beast, if though canst (Valmiki 119)

As the tiger doesn’t answer, she requests him,

Terrible friend, devour me, setting me

Free from all woes! (Valmiki 119).

Again seeing a mountain, "the fortuneless, husbandless and spineless"(120) Damayanti stands before it with folded hands and prays:

O Mountain, why consolest thou me not,

Answering one word to sorrowful, distressed,

Lonely, lost Damayanti? (Valmiki 121).

In Kalidasa's Sakoontala too, the great sage Visvamitra and the nymph Menaka's only daughter Sakoontala was seen going from post to pillar in search of her husband King Dushyanta, and prove to him that she was his wedded wife. She was thus cruelly disowned. The King even accuses her of falsehood, and calling her "wily koil" and a "harlot" (Kalidasa 382). He then dismisses her from his presence in spite of her tears and
lamentations. Seeing the pregnant princess's plight, Gautam, the holy matron wonders: "Alas! Poor child, what will she do here with a cruel husband who casts her from him?" (Kalidasa 383).

In the same manner, Princess Sita, who has the power, as is shown by Padmanabhan Thampi, in his book *Ramayanas of Kampan and Eluttachan*, "to burn even figs with her chastity"(304), and is quite capable "of burning the whole world with a single word" (Padmanabhan Thampi 304) is suspected of her fidelity to her husband. She remains silent, shocked and speechless when she is informed of the banishment. Though she is Goddess Lakshmi incarnated, and earlier on rejected Hanuman's offer to carry her on his shoulders to her Lord Rama, saying that such an action will never bring fame to her husband, she has to undergo a lot of travail even after Rama's annihilation of Ravan. Living in the jungle, she has to manage all her affairs malelessly with her two small offsprings, Luv and Kush.

The helpless victim of Partition, Sutara, separated from her family and home, like the mythical Indian women of yore, charted a lonely path through her life in Delhi and battled courageously. Partaking all the woes and travails of the abducted and displaced women, she gradually came to terms with rejection and alienation.

Sutara was rather able to regain her balance of mind due to her position in Yajnaseni College, Delhi. She was a Lecturer in History there. The students flocked to this college from various parts of the truncated Mahabharata. Many of them were victims of Partition.

The harrowing incidents which happened at the time of the Partition could be construed as an extension of all that happened in *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. They are
in the germ plasma of every Indian whether Aryan or Dravidian. That's why we are not surprised when a couple of Muslims argued with Tamijkaka, the guardian of Sutara: “Can you tell us of a single instance when women have not been molested, pushed about? Look at the stories in their Puranas—what about the abduction of Sita? What about Draupadi?” (The River 14).

It is no secret that at the moment of the birth of the two nation-states in the place of one colonial state, the bodies of countless women were brought under the control of the respective communities to complete the grand act of vivisection. Women and community are thus presented as two fragments of the nation. Hordes of women like Sutara had to witness the incomprehensible birth of two nation-states from the margin of the community.

The essence of the novel thus is female issues surrounding sexuality, victimisation, culture conflicts, and plight of refugee women and critiques of male-dominated political positions in the process of nation building.

Shiv K Kumar’s novel A River with Three Banks too presents the plight of women at the time of the communal frenzy and partition holocaust. Gautam Meta, a Delhi-based journalist was grievously wounded in heart because his wife Sarita ditched him for one of Gautam’s colleagues Mohinder. She even had an illegitimate son with Mohinder. As he wanted to get a release from his wrecked marriage, he met Father Jones of St. John’s church to embrace Christianity. He thought that the Hindu law did not offer him release easily, but in Christianity there was ample scope. His advocate also counselled him so. As he emerged after meeting the bishop, he saw a terrible crowd chasing a bearded man, obviously a marooned Muslim. Within the twinkling of an eye,
the religiously charged crowd stabbed him all over his body and he fell dead. Gautam found a letter in the dead man’s pocket and learned that he was Abdul Rahim, and the letter was addressed to Sultana Begum living in Allahabad. In the letter he had expressed his anguish at his inability to trace his abducted-college-going daughter Haseena. He had sadly mentioned, “most of the girls abducted from Allahabad, Lucknow and Patna have been brought to Delhi, where they are forced into prostitution” (A River 11).

Strangely, Gautam felt that the more he looked at the man, the more he resembled his own father. He had the same features more or less. Gautam felt that it was not the India of Mahatma Gandhi’s dreams. He wondered, “When will the Hindus realize that this country is not theirs alone?” (A River 37). He conjured up the plight of Haseena, most probably in a brothel, held under duress. He thanked God for not giving him a sister.

The news that a Muslim old man was hacked to death in front of St. John’s Church spread like wild fire in Delhi. It soon sparked off a series of violent episodes. Even Gautam and his friend Berry were asked to strip and show their insides. When Gautam showed his certificate of conversion, the spear-wielding irate mob dispersed saying, “Let’s go—they’re Christians…” (A River 35). Gautam and his friend stood there transfixed. As they mustered up courage and took a few steps forward, they heard a woman’s poignant cry. A few rioters were pulling away at a young woman’s sari just as Dussassana taking orders from Duryodhana, as is observed by Kuttikrishnamarar, “caught of Draupadi’s long, dark curly tresses and dragged her to the court” (56), in spite of her pathetic cries, “I am in menses and have only one cloth…. I could not be taken to court” (Kuttikrishnamarar 56). As the woman in question was harassed, a man in dhoti
and kurta stood close by with folded hands, praying them to let her go. One of the ruffians then kicked him in the stomach. Still the kurta-clad man pleaded, “Spare her, please, she’s my sister” (A River 59). The leader then said, “Good for her, we’ll let you have her first so that she knows the difference between a grass eater and a beefeater” (A River 59). These words of wanton lechery lanced through Gautam’s heart” (A River 59). The woman’s brother went on imploring them to spare them as they were on their way to see their sick mother. One of them said, “Then we’ll have your mother too. We’ll ravish the whole lot of you—bloody grass-eaters!” (A River 59). In the mean time, the woman’s sari was pulled off, “then the petticoat, the blouse, the bra, till she stood totally stripped, trying in vain to cover up her breasts with her hands” (A River 59). When her brother tried to intervene, he was stabbed on the back. She pleaded not to kill her brother. The leader then “pushed her against the wall, and was now pulling at her breasts” (A River 60). With a lascivious sparkle in his eyes, his mouth went for her breasts. Gautam and Berry stood utterly helpless. Only when the police came, the mob dispersed with the woman’s clothes. Seeing all these, Gautam heaved a sigh of relief and said, “I feel as tough I’m through a baptism of fire” (A River 63).

Soon after getting the desired release from his unhappy wife, Sarita, Gautam felt relieved. Still he looked downcast. In order to boost up his sagged spirits, Berry took him to Bridge Hotel at Neel Kamal. Berry knew that that hotel was a brothel centre. It was here he met Haseena accidentally. She was the riot victim’s unfortunate daughter. In the brothel, the college-going girl felt aghast and “revolting in agony” (A River 79). When he told her of her father’s sad demise, she “buried her face in the pillows and started to sob” (A River 79). Having got all the details from Gautam, she said, “You took the trouble of
writing to my mother. That was very gracious of you. The news would shatter her, I knew, but still. . . . And here I am in Delhi—abused, humiliated—and now so brazened to any sense of shame” (A River 79). When she was rather composed, Gautam learnt from her that she was studying for her B.A when she was “whisked away from the college gate by some masked men. Pannalal’s accomplices surely” (A River 80). Pannalal was a dangerous pimp. Haseena was living “in a sort of a concentration camp” (A River 80).

There was a ring of supplication in her voice. She prayed to him to rescue her from her captors and take her back to Allahabad.

Risking his life in the troubled times, amidst widespread riot, arson and all sorts of violence, Gautam took Haseena to the railway station in a jeep. Scenting their escape, Pannalal was chasing them, but they escaped. In fact, both had “a close brush with death” (A River 98). As they were waiting for the Howrah Express from Patna to Allahabad, a refugee special arrived from Amritsar, to unload hundreds of Hindu and Sikh refugees from Lahore, Multan and Peshawar—men, women and children—“men with amputated penises, young women whose breasts had been chopped off after they had been raped” (A River 99). The social stigma with which these refugees had to live through was much more painful and heart rending than the physical pain. Their tales of woe had incensed some volunteers in the platform. So when they spotted a Muslim couple trying to hide behind a newspaper stall, they were “pulled out, stripped and knifed to death...” (A River 99). Their assassins shouted: “Blood for blood! Death to all Muslims!” (A River 99).

Gautam and Haseena got into the Allahabad train before Pannalal could do anything them. Both of them had gone through hell. Having felt rather safe, Haseena spoke about the plight of the abducted women in Pannalal’s brothel: “Imagine a group of
young abducted girls, holed up in a house, murky as a dungeon, forced into prostitution at knife-edge. I don’t know why I submitted myself to all that ignominy.... But each time I felt a customer take me, I felt as though I’d thrown a bone to a dog” (A River 103).

Walking with a bowed head, Haseena was terribly confused as to how her people would treat her. Her abduction was an open secret. She was returning to a fatherless home. She wondered, “Would she be discarded as a defiled thing, a fallen woman?” (A River 115). Gautam disguised himself as a Muslim and escorted Haseena to her house. Haseena’s people were so grateful to Gautam. Haseena’s mother felt so shaky and decided to migrate to Pakistan. She knew that it was so painful to be uprooted from one’s native place after living there for generations.

Before Gautam could marry Haseena, in a nikah, he had to escort Haseena’s mother and sister to Wagah, the international border as they wished to migrate to Pakistan. With the help of his friends, Gautam escorted them to the Wagah border in a refugee special running from Delhi to Amritsar. The train was overflowing with refugees from the eastern parts of India—Allahabad, Lucknow, Kanpur and Agra. They were fleeing into eternity of oblivion. This is the focus of the next chapter.