CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

All over the world, women are the worst sufferers during the communal unrest of any place and at anytime. History has recorded instances, where mothers and daughters were raped in front of their families and their throats cut casually afterwards. Many women were abducted and never returned back to their family. Those who managed to return were ostracized by their own people. Thus they were not only put to physical torments, but they were also subjected to psychological tortures. Defilement of a woman proved to be one of the worst kinds of violence that was silently lived by the victimized women. The society that they lived in, looked upon women as symbols of purity, and the defilement of their women by their ‘enemies’ became an unacceptable factor to be eschewed. This turned out to be the main reason for an unimaginable violence on women in the form of rape during the partition days. Women were subjected to a systematized and constant ‘ethnic cleansing’. Fearing the adversities, women gave up their lives unable to face the spurn of their community. History reports that the number of women who committed suicide out of shame would have populated a small town. Thus, women were treated as a play toy that was supposed to be used, sold and later discarded.
A handful of novels and stories which dealt with the theme of partition have highlighted the barbaric indignities heaped on women. It is evident from the study that, these novels and stories not only sheds light on the violence perpetrated on women, but also renders an insight into the situations that undermined the psyche of the victimized women during the pre and post-partition periods.

Kushwanth Singh’s *Train to Pakistan*, Bishm Sahni’s *Tamas*, Bapsi Sidwa’s *Ice Candy Man*, Jyotirmoyee Devi’s *The River Churning*, Saadat Hasan Manto’s short stories *Open It* and *Cold Meat*, Jamila Hashmi’s *Exile*, Rajinder Singh Bedi’s *Lajwanti* and Lalithambika Antharjanam’s *A Leaf in the Storm* portray women victims of violence, who were raped, killed, abducted and ostracized inhumanly. The chapters also analyses the mental state of such women. The victims were forced to suffer their lot silently or revolt. They were either defiled victims or defying new women.

The two novels, *Train to Pakistan* and *Tamas* by Kushwanth Singh and Bishm Sahni respectively studied in the second chapter, reveals the actual tense situations of the communal frenzy. Both the novels, offer a systematic development of the tense atmosphere, which gradually gains momentum to reach the destruction level. Both the novelists have explored the reasons and causes for the development of communal passion and its subsequent violent effect. Train to Pakistan, being the first partition representing novel in English
gives a vivid account of the changing nature and behaviour of the innocent people of Mano Majra. The once happy and prosperous living villagers degenerate their harmony and develop vengeance. Though the seeds of vengeance were sown by the outsiders, the villagers did not reason to think of their past living in amity with their fellow Muslim brothers. The novel portrays the corrupt bureaucracy in the form of Hukum Chand, who becomes a key player of internal politics among the people. It is he, who paves way for the evacuation of the Muslims and at the same time saves the Muslim refugees from the Sikh attack through Jugga. The communal hatred in the novel is revealed through various sources in the novel, but Hukum chand’s description of the sexual violence perpetrated on Hindu women is significant in the novel. He describes how women were raped and mutilated and their husbands’ penises were desecrated. His account of the sexual violence is the only description in the novel, which strongly pictures the defilement of women. The violence perpetrated on women by one community creates not fear but anger and an attitude for revenge is clearly explained through Hukum Chand in the novel.

Though the novel does not highlight any sexual violence, Kushwanth Singh portrays two women characters whose bodies become the subject of defilement. Haseena, the prostitute is portrayed as a girl, who leads her life dancing before bureaucracy and becomes a subject of love for Hukum Chand. On the other hand, it is Nooran, who is defiled through her evacuation. Nooran’s love affair with Jugga and her pregnancy is a stigma, which cannot be
erased. She had to lead a life full of pathos separated from her lover and also should live with the stigma that she is a fallen women. The disharmonious scenario in the village exploits the condition of Nooran. Even though, she is not raped or subjected to any kind of physical violence, her displacement from Mano Majra will make her life miserable. The novel ends at the note of the Muslim refugees reaching Pakistan safely, and there is no further account of Nooran’s displaced life. However it can be assumed that she will have to lead a life full of sorrow and hard memories. The novel ends with the train reaching safe to Pakistan over the body of Jugga. Singh leaves the readers to think of the plight of Nooran. It is obvious that she will be marked defiled, because of her pregnancy, and there is a chance of ostracism from her community because of the stigma that is labeled on her. Whether she will be able to defy the society and live a life of her own will is a question that is untold in the novel. From the study it can be concluded that the chance of Nooran’s defying the society is weak compared to the stigma as a defiled woman that is to befall her once her pregnancy is revealed.

Bishm Sahni’s *Tamas* brings out the development of communal tension in the cities that spreads rapidly towards the neighbouring villages. The novel, pictures the effects of communal violence in an episodic manner. The description of violence and the instigation of communal hatredness are given as a detailed account. The novel also highlights the exploitation of innocent people through the portrayal of Nathu. Sahni tries to read through the psyche of the victims and the offenders equally making the novel unbiased. There are various
instances that describe the madness of the people during the partition. The incident of the slaughtering of the pig and placing it in the gates of the mosque is a realistic picturisation of the partition days, which ignited the communal hatredness among the two communities. As usual, the novel brings to limelight, the plight of women amidst the commotion. Sahni portrays Nathu’s wife as a typical woman, who is forced to dislocate along with her husband fearing the fast spreading riots. To complicate things, Sahni portrays her as a pregnant woman, who at the end of the novel stands aloof seeing her husband dead. The psyche of Nathu’s wife suffers the effects of trauma. Like Kushwanth Singh, Sahni also ends the novel, without revealing her plight. Once again the readers are left with choice to assume if she will be able to defy the society and lead an independent life. There is also a chance for the society to stigmatize her as a fallen woman, as she was pregnant and lost her husband in the riot. Her future becomes a question mark only because of the partition, which led to her dislocation.

Sahni also explains the plight of Sikh women, who fearing their defilement, gave away their lives jumping into the well. Though it was considered as a form of defiance among the Sikh community, the incident only proves the helpless condition of the women. The incident of women jumping into the well is once again a picturisation of the real incident that took place in the village of Thoa Khalsa. The reason for these women to commit suicide was naturally the fear of being abducted, raped and polluted. Honour was considered as an important aspect, which was given high prominence more
than their life. The chastity of women was a symbol of honour for the entire community. The impurity of one woman was meant to be a disgrace to the entire community. The community also taught their women to kill themselves rather than letting the enemies conquer their bodies. Suicide in general is considered as an act of cowardice according to the law of nature, whereas mass suicide in particular communities during the times of adversity was considered as an act of bravery and women in particular were labeled as martyrs. The patriarchal codes of such misleadings prove the impotency of men to protect their women and their honour. Such misrepresentation in the name of ethical codes only proved to kill the natural defying ability that these Sikh women possessed. The women who were shaped so as to show their valour in killing themselves were not given a choice to show their courage in fighting the enemies and their own society and its codes pertaining to honour. Their minds were mended not to be ready to face the enemies but to be ready to kill themselves. Though chances were restricted for the enemies to defile these women, the patriarchy of their own community also denied the chances for their act of defiance by stunting the reasoning of their women. This in itself is a defilement worked out by the patriarchy on its own community.

The third chapter analyses the two novels, *Ice Candy Man* and *The River Churning* written by women writers, Bapsi Sidhwa and Jyotirmoyee Devi respectively. The chapter focused on the perspective of women writers belonging to different region and different community. Bapsi Sidhwa is a Parsi, who belongs to Pakistan and Jyotirmoyee Devi is a Bengali Hindu, belonging to
Bangladesh. Both these writers have taken effort in bringing out the plight of women who were raped and abducted in a very detailed manner.

Sidhwa’s *Ice Candy Man* gives various accounts of women’s suffering during the partition holocaust. The novel tries to unveil the silence surrounding the victimised women. Ayah is the central character whose happy life transforms into a life filled with physical abuse and mental violation. Her abduction, rape and subsequent life of a prostitute is evident of the multiple defilement that women faced during the partition holocaust. Shanta’s life falls under the clutches of patriarchy, which initially sees her as an object of sexuality and later plays with her sexuality in order to revenge the opposite community. She is also a typical victim of the partition scenario, who stands helpless unable to resist the physical and mental agony perpetrated on her by the patriarchy. Her plight is entirely pathetic compared to other women victims in the fictions in the present study. Her life faces repeated blows in the form of abduction, gang rape, a life as a prostitute and as a wife of her abductor. This cycle of her life eventually brings her down mentally, where she loses her natural self and leads an artificial life with the Ice candy man, who in the beginning of the novel was her admirer. The mental agony that Ayah faces is untold and she covers herself with silence. At the end of the novel, Ayah tries to show some defiance by rejecting an artificial life as a wife to Ice candy man. Her defying idea proves successful only through the help of God mother’s intervention. Ayah would have remained a so called defiled woman, if God mother had not found her place. Her defiance breaks out only when there was
an agency ready to rescue her. It can be said that Ayah’s is not a full fledged
defiance, but rather a semi defiance which broke out with a slight instigation
from the helping agency. She hated her present life with Ice candy man unable
to forget his revenge mission carried out on her body. Her longing for a new life
and a new beginning comes true only after her rescue and rehabilitation. She
decides to go back to her village in India and start a new life. Though defiled in
a very adverse manner, Ayah represents the women who showed some courage
in breaking their silence to set themselves free from the cage that they were
jailed in. Sidhwa does not portray only the plight of Ayah, but she also gives a
detailed description of the incidents that take place in Pir Pindo, a small village
where in the name of ethnic cleansing, women belonging to a particular
community were wiped out completely after being raped and molested. It is a
horrific picture presentation in the novel that demands sympathy and vents
angers at the perpetrators of violence. In another event, Sidhwa captures the
horridness of the train massacre, which becomes the cause for Ice candy man’s
revenge attitude. The train carries mutilated bodies of people along with gunny
bags full of chopped women’s breasts. This brutal violation of women’s bodies
suggests how women were treated in a country where women were considered
as Devi/ goddess. The chopping of women’s breasts indicates the mutilation of
motherhood and victory over the enemy communities restricting their progenies
to establish with revenge attitude in the future. Moreover the mutilation of the
breasts of women was considered as a mark that would disgrace the men of
opposite community. In this regard Sidhwa exposes the torture that women
underwent during the partition commotion. The number of defiled women portrayed by Sidhwa is more compared to other novels taken for study. Ice Candy Man is the only novel which speaks from a Pakistani’s perspective and yet stands unbiased in exposing the form of violence forced upon women’s bodies.

Jyotirmoyee Devi’s *The River Churning* is a novel that talks about the plight of Sutara, the woman protagonist who is rejected by her extended family after her stay in her friend Sakina’s house following the violence which killed her parents and sister. The present study tries to understand the cause of Sutara’s miseries, which happens to be because of the lack of patriarchal protection. Sutara surrenders to silence after her rejection by the family members. The novel tries to convince to make us believe that Sutara was sexually assaulted by members of the other community through its narrative technique that surrounds Sutara’s story along with its situation. The belief that Sutara was sexually assaulted by members of the other community and the shame attached with what is represented as the defilement of her sexual purity is the rationale in the novel which informs both her violation and her recovery. But the narrative does not give any evidence to assess whether or not Sutara was sexually polluted, but it deviates to inform the patriarchal rationale that constructs and governs women’s sexuality as polluted or pure.

The novel also focuses on Sutara’s mental agony and tries to recover what she has lost. Sutara falls under the category of woman who were
neglected and misplaced with the stigma as a fallen woman. It is also evident from the novel that the gendered violence that Sutara experiences proves the failure of the nation’s and community’s attempts to recover and rehabilitate the women. The study also locates the so called abducted and pollutant woman as an aporia in Hindu cultural nationalism by refusing to reconcile her identity and experience within the script dictated by the nation state and the related community. Sutara’s longing for to enter the domestic spheres of her life and the consistent refusal from the extended family is suggestive of her incapability to come out of the conventions run by the patriarchy. Not only men, but women also joined hands to mark Sutara as a defiled and an untouchable subject ready for humiliation at any time. Many a things were denied as rights to the so called fallen women who were recovered. Sutara also faces such denial of her rights and was completely ostracised from the family and community. She was not let inside the kitchen nor was she allowed to mingle with the family members. She was denied access to family marriages and even if she attends, she was treated like an untouchable. Such denials marked her absence-presence in the family, which did not elevate her status in her community, even though she had a good job. It is only at the end of the novel that Sutara tries to defy the society by taking a decision to marry Promode.

The first short story *Open It* by Sadat Hasan Manto, analysed in the fourth chapter is a spine chilling account of a young girl’s tragic plight. The story is significant for disrobing Man to his nakedness. The rapes that was committed on Sakina, was not just because of religious differences, but also
because of women’s utter helpless condition. The story also brings to limelight, the inhumanity of the Partition effect to a point of obliteration on the moral realm that there was nothing left for women to hope for. The bestiality of the people was so degenerated that Sakina, the young female protagonist of the story becomes so much submissive that she is completely defiled and scarred to a level where her consciousness fails to understand the consistent violence and perverted acts played on her body. She is subjected to repeated rapes, not only by her abductors, but also by the so-called social workers who were supposed to protect her. Sakina is just one among the countless other women subjected to similar atrocities. Her defilement plays adverse on her psyche. She not only loses her chastity but also her self-consciousness. She is one such victim, whose defilement is perpetrated through physical violence and reaches to the level, disturbing the equilibrium of her mental state.

Manto’s Cold Meat is another heart wrenching story which accounts the sheer helplessness of women during the partition mayhem. The story offers an understanding of the immediate shock underwent by women witnessing the bestiality perpetrated on their family. The protagonist of the story is a young girl, who is forced to stay in a fit of shock and bewilderment not once but twice. Witnessing her family being plundered of their lives, she is given no time to stabilize her emotions. What follows the murder of her family members was her abduction only to be raped, which was even more shocking to her. Her mind faces continuous blows, that unable to resist it, she dies of shock. It is also clear from the study of the story that, the mental agony of such victimised
women reaches beyond a level of control, which leads to the ultimate nothingness in a woman’s life. The death of the protagonist explains the tenderness of women’s heart. They are so fragile that they cannot withstand any rudeness on them. If done so, it is obvious for them to break down. The young girl is an example of those women who witnessed the brutality exhibited on their closed ones and succumbed to the situations, even without recovering from their shock. The very thought of being defiled, involuntarily puts their life to a standstill state completely destabilising their mental equilibrium. Some victims recover and some live as a mere corpse, but manto’s protagonist loses her life out of shock and grief.

Rajinder Singh Bedi’s *Lajwanti* can be considered as a story of an abducted and recovered woman’s suffering in a different dimension. The abducted woman in this story is recovered and brought back to her husband unlike other women, who were put into rehabilitation camps. Babu Sunderlal, Lajo’s husband, is the leader of the local committee for the rehabilitation of such women. He leads morning processions of fellow workers, urging people to treat women as they had always treated them, instead of rejecting them as defiled women, the sight of his genuine personal suffering at the loss of Lajwanti always silences the morally self-righteous critics of the committee. His concern and regard for these women, whom the others refuse to acknowledge is not hypocritical. But just as his earlier violence had denied Lajwanti the right to a life of kindness; his new solicitude fails to satisfy her desire for affectionate regard. He begins to regard her as a ‘devi’, but Lajo,
wants her to be accepted as a victim of circumstances; and she longs to be treated as a human being with flesh and blood who has endured a lot. She wanted her husband to feel that she is physically alive and her only longing is his generosity of love.

Jamila Hashmi’s *Exile* probes into the psyche of a woman who was not only raped, but also forcibly converted and married. The protagonist represents those women, who were unable to come to terms with their forcible marriage and subsequent pregnancy. Even after giving birth to a child, she was considered an outsider in the family that she was married to. Through the protagonist, the story emulates the psyche of women who longed to go back to their country and were forced to live their life in a place where they did not belong. They remained with unfulfilled dreams till the end. The story opens on an auspicious Dassera day and deliberately locates itself within a sanctified space. The protagonist even equates herself to Sita. This parallel is drawn in order to make the readers understand her own predicament as well as to draw attention to the fact that a society whose epic celebrates the defeat of evil every year has finally succumbed to evil. The ‘Sita’ of this story yearns for her own Rama and Lakshmana to come to her rescue. But her yearnings remain futile. Her new ‘husband’ urges her to forget the past while her own brothers suspect her purity and reject her. Thus the modern Sita has to finally accept Ravana and live with him. Both Sita from the epic and the protagonist of the story are women, who remind us their plight, in which they had to suffer at times of violence. Hashmi’s protagonist is stoned with repeated humiliation from all
corners, but in the end, the modern Sita refuses to brood upon those aspects of her life that are too painful. She decides to nurture her daughter and live her life performing duties as a wife and a mother. Her duties soon earn her a status as the ‘devi’ of the family. Though she scorns the term, she realises that it has humanised her ‘husband’ and helped her recover her sense of herself as a human being. Her life becomes a challenge, to those who had abused and rejected her to live up to the ideals they celebrate only during public festivals every year.

The above stated stories bring out the trauma of women who have been raped and uprooted from their thresholds. The protagonists sakina and the the young Muslim girl of Manto’s stories withdraw into their mental core from where they never really come out. Jamila hashmi’s protagonist gets defiled but she does not lose her equilibrium. She accepts her new ‘home’ with resignation, which was in fact expected from a woman in society run by the patriarchy. The rehabilitation process meant for Lajwanti, the protagonist of Rajendra Singh Bedi’s story proves futile and barren. The society was unable to accept her back. The sita image is carried further in Lajwanti and she has to go through the trail of fire which included the stigma and the suspicion of her surrounding community. These stories expose the hypocrisy of society which only saw woman as a victim and sometimes venerated her to a pedestal, which offered no real meaning to her life. Her thoughts of expectation as a woman herself were never considered.
Unlike the four stories studied in the Chapter, Lalithambika Antharjanam’s, *A Leaf in the Storm*, portray women who were willing to defy society and lead a life of their own choice. Antharjanam’s protagonist is also one among the typical women victims who had to suffer the trauma of rape during the partition. Though she is still tormented by her experiences, her rage is immense and she longs for revenge. She understands the bitter irony of the fact that during the Partition, as during all processes of ‘ethnic cleansing’, the bodies of women had become the contested sites for men of the warring communities to prove that they have the proper claim to be called God’s own people and hence, the right to possess or to kill the women whom they find in their kingdom. After all, it was ‘natural’ for men of distinct religions to claim the women of ‘enemy’ Gods – they could violate them to prove their own purity. The narrator in the story is justifiable when she learns in the refugee camp that she is pregnant. At first she wants to abort the child, as many women in such camps were advised to do so by the social workers, in order to avoid both social stigma and to seek revenge. But she decides not to do so and the moment the child is born, she is filled with enormous compassion for the life she had delivered. In a moment of visionary understanding she decides to nurture and nourish it. Thus her acceptance to rear the child can be seen as a symbol of defiance against a society that wants to get rid of a moral stigma. She realises that to destroy the child would have meant subscribing to a society which is the actual cause of her suffering. Though defiled, she is defiant enough to lead her own life.
Though there have been numerous literatures on communal unrest during the Partition of the Indian-Subcontinent, only a handful of writers have realized its gendered nature. The violence perpetrated on women was the greatest taboo that surrounded the Partition. There is plenty of knowledge among people regarding the riots, arsons, the train massacres and other forms of genocide that hovered around the partitioned nation-state, but the extent of knowledge on the sexual violence during the dark days was either superficial or it was concealed behind a veil of silence and shame. There was only a little focus on the experience of women, who were abducted, raped and subjected to defilement. The novels and short stories analysed in this present study tries to highlight the anguish of women during those dark period. They are not only realistic portraits of the experience of the women victims of the Partitioned India and Pakistan, but also the representatives of similar women throughout the world in times of crisis. In this respect, the Partition becomes only a backdrop to the violence that was unleashed in the name of communalism. The study tries to conclude that it was not partition the real enemy, but it was the dominant patriarchy run society, the actual enemy, which gave prominence to communal passion instead of integrity that a religion teaches. Because of which, women became preys to the insatiable thirst of the religious madness. This makes the Partition fiction more universal in appeal. They not only depict the sufferings of women of the partitioned nation-state but represent the sufferings of women throughout the world.