CHAPTER IV

AN ANALYSIS OF THE THEME OF PARTITION IN SELECT SHORT FICTIONS

This chapter focuses on a select set of short stories written in the early years after the partition that deals with the topic of sexual violence, displacement and its effect on women in a scene of religious conflict. These stories are not mere creativities portraying inhuman sexual violence, but they are in terms discourses that centrals the rights of human beings snatched at the outset. These select stories are the representing agents that allow us to envision the tremendous impact of mass sexual violence let loose on women folk. These fictional works brings forth the unimaginable conditions of females during the partition mayhem, which distorted their territorial, psychic and emotional balance. Many instances of war and mass violence have witnessed women’s rape as a retaliatory act between the communities involved and the civil war that erupted during the division of the nation did not prove an exception. The chapter attempts to read two kinds of fictional narratives that broke out in response to the plight of abducted women of partition. The first type of narratives which displays the drama of masculinity enacted on women’s bodies are analysed in the narratives of Sadaat Hasan Manto’s two short stories, *Open It/ Khol Do* and *Cold Meat/ Thanda Gosht*. The second type of narratives that explored the post rape/abduction issues of women are analysed in the short stories of Rajinder Singh Bedi’s *Lajwanti*, Jamila
Hashmi’s *Exile* and Lalithambika Antharjanam’s Malayalam short story, *A leaf in the storm*.

These fictional narratives exhibit the perversion on women by men, belonging to other community and also from the agents of the same community and projects the survival pattern of fragmented, liminal, othered – of rape/abducted women in a male constructed cultural context, where a women’s silence plays the key role in containing her survival. The path to survival as presented in these stories is never easy for the women who undergo inhuman violence acted upon their body.

The first writer analysed in this chapter is Saadat Hasan Manto, considered as one of the powerful and cynical chroniclers of partition violence. Manto’s *Khol Do/ Open It* and *Thanda Gosht/ Cold Meat* are the two most famous fictional representation of the sexually assaulted subject of partition violence.

*Open It*

*Open It* is a firmly compressed rape narrative that highlights how the traumatic experience of sexual violence may lead to a total breakdown of language and meaning for the female victim. The story is a wrenching account of the Muslim Sirajuddin’s separation and subsequent re-union with his daughter, Sakina. The very opening statement of the story itself unpacks the carnage, “The special train department from Amritsar at two in the afternoon,
and arrived at mughalpura (Lahore) eight hours later. Many were murdered on the way; a number of people were injured while others were lost.”(Bhalla, Vol. II: 69). It unfolds the grim tone of the story which speaks of the train massacres during partition.

The story immediately shifts to the refugee camp on the Pakistaniside, where Sirajuddin tries to recall what happened to his daughter and wife during the riots. His thoughts were suppressed and he was in a state of temporary amnesia. Through flashes of memory, he finally recalls the dreadful image of his wife’s dead body with her entrails ripped open, but unfortunately his mind immediately doesn’t recall her lost daughter, Sakina. He was in a fit of worry, and overcoming his dejection, he tries to remember where he lost his loving daughter. He ultimately remembers the entire scene. His wife, before closing her eyes had told him not to worry about her, but take Sakina into safety. He remembered:

Sakina was with him – both of them had run barefoot. Sakina’s dupatta had slipped to the ground. She had screamed at him when he had tried to pick it up. “Let it be, Abba!” But he had picked it up. As soon as he remembered that, he puts his hand in his coat pocket and pulled it out. He still had Sakina’s dupatta...but where was Sakina?(Bhalla, Vol.II: 70).

Unable to rely on his memory of where Sakina has gone, Sirajuddin turns to a group of eight young self appointed male social workers, who engaged themselves in search and recovery of Muslim women and children
from India, in order to help his missing daughter. Days went by and there wasn’t any success revealed to these young men, until one day when they come across a sacred young girl on the streets of Amritsar with a mole on her right cheek. The mole was the identification mark that Sirajuddin indicated to the social workers. The girl tries to run away in fright, but they reassure her by calling her father’s name.

The narrative makes a shift once again to the refugee camp. The refugee camp is often used by Manto to show it as a confined space, where people themselves get confined emotionally and physically. Sirajuddin finally encounters his daughter in the environs of the camp hospital. Sirajuddin was able to identify a mere corpselike body of his daughter. He identifies her only by the mole on her right cheek. The identification that Sirajuddin makes in the story is supposed to be a joyous moment for Sirajuddin, but not to the readers. The narrative states, “There was no one in the room. Only the body of a girl lay on the stretcher. He walked up closer to the girl. Someone suddenly switched on the lights. He saw a big mole on the girl’s face and screamed “Sakina!” (Bhalla Vol. II: 72).

It is only at the climactic closure; Manto brings to life the horrors of collective sexual violence, especially etched upon the bodies of women. Manto does not describe any actual moment of sexual assault, but he exposes the inhuman violence inscribed inside the body of women, illustrating the complete
rupture between language and meaning. The narrative as in the climax of the story unfurls the gruesome savagery of inhuman beings on innocent victims. The narrative states:

The doctor turned towards the girl and took her pulse. Then he said “Open the Window.” The girl on the stretcher stirred a little. She moved her hand painfully towards the cord holding up her salwar. Slowly, she pulled her salwar down. Her old father shouted with joy, “She is alive. My daughter is alive.” The doctor broke into a cold sweat. (BhallaVol. II: 72).

The condition of Sakina becomes so attuned to the word “Open It” that the imperative to open anything only takes her back to the past-in-presentness of her multiple rapes, the trauma that cannot be so easily erased. The doctor’s reaction shows his paralysis and powerless state in the face of the female other.

When communal passion spread rapidly throughout the northern province of the nation state, the frenzy was only about revenge. Perpetrating horrific violence on the enemy community was the main objective of the subject communities. No community ever imagined that their own folk would turn to them into enemies. But Manto’s exploration clearly lays down the hypocritic and perverted communalists’ existence not in the ‘other’ community, but in their own community.
Though Sakina escapes the fateful violence on her body from the other community, she becomes the victim of her own ethnics. The narrative also reveals the perpetrators deceiving scheme by gathering the identification mark from the father and using the father’s name to deceive Sakina to molest her. So it clearly shows that Sakina’s multiple rape was not incidental or the one which occurred on the wrath of other men, but it was a tactfully schemed deliberate molestation of a girl, taking advantage of the situation that befalls both the father and the daughter.

Manto’s search is deeper into the fractured polity. He tries to explore the hidden motivations and pathological impulses that ideology could mask over. The razaakars/ social workers who assist Sirajuddin, the beleaguered father of Sakina are the typical volunteers, whose voluntary activism are integral to nationalist mobilisation, during which various groups initiated community service. Manto tries to debase such social work on the grounds of immoral perverted thoughts grown by the social workers. The razaakars betray the cause they represent and instead of acting according to humanitarian motives to help locate the missing girl, they themselves violate her and leave her to be discovered by her distraught father. As Tarun K. Saint points out: “Such perversion of altruism is even more horrifying than the absence of altruism, for it suggests a form of hypocrisy that if widely prevalent, might make it impossible for society to continue to function.”(2010, 256). Tarun’s verdict is agreeable that if the society has to function without any chaos, there should prevail integration within the community first and then among the
communities. The smooth running of the community and communities were distorted by a group of individual hypocrites during the partition mayhem. Such adverse activism only leads to the victimisation of innocent people. Sirajuddin was one such father, who had to witness his own daughter tuned to the process of sexual acts. However, for Sirajuddin, Sakina’s act of untying her salwar is just a sign of life to be welcomed. Tarun remarks:

Although the story addresses the trauma of a victim subjected to repeated rape, Manto does not brood on this experience. Rather, the witness trauma experienced by the doctor mediates the more extreme psychological numbing undergone by Sakina (2010, 256).

Sirajuddin’s joy at his daughter’s survival can be premised on misrecognition of her situation and his own failure to understand the trauma that she has underwent. His response is a contrast to many of the fathers who rejected their ‘dishonoured’ daughters due to social stigma as regards recovered women.

The paternal archetype that “all women are our daughters or sisters or mothers” is a significant patriarchal code in India, which is designed to check safe the morality of men belonging to the secular state. But the code is peculiar for its untold distinction made by the community patriarchs. From all women are our daughters or sisters or mothers becomes all Hindu/Muslim/Sikh women are our daughters or sisters or mothers” depending on their respective communities. This provides a moral check confined only to the community
circles. The violence that took place during the division explains this altered notion, which was limited to the concerned communities and during the riots, the notion did not appeal to women who belonged to the ‘other’ community. It was either the code was forgotten or it was temporarily relaxed for the purpose of revenge. The narrative of the story *Open It*, clarifies this suspicion through the heinous acts of the social workers. For them there was no code like all women are our daughters or mothers or sisters / all Muslim women are our daughters or mothers or sisters. The fact is that they did not have any code at all. They did not have any kind of fear in crossing the boundary lines of their religious ethics or the nation’s ethics. These men only prove to be people with false religiosity and hypocritical tendency added with perverted thoughts. Sakina, for them was never a ‘Sister’figure, she was just a female with feminity, who was hapless and vulnerably ready to be conquered and hoisted the flag of masculinity. Her vulnerability is so much exploited that her entire system acts in only one way and only to one command. The rest of her is dead and what lives is little more than a corpse showing some physical movements.

**Cold Meat**

*Cold Meat/ Thanda Gosht* is another masterpiece of Manto’s, in which the narrative focuses on an extremely chilling account of a Sikh Man’s terror filled experience when he was on his way committing arson and looting. Ishwar Singh, a strong and well built Sikh goes on a looting mission in the neighbourhood. He succeeds in breaking into a Muslim household. Looting all
the valuables, he inhumanly kills all the six out of seven members present in the family. The left out member was a beautiful girl. Ishwar Singh abducts her and rapes her only to find that he was molesting a dead girl, whose body was already cold. This incident psychologically affects Ishwar Singh, which makes him an impotent, unable to satisfy her wife Kulwanth Kaur. His wife is a well built strong woman belonging to the Nikhal Singh clan. She smells Ishwar Singh’s unusual behaviour and silence while being with her. Arousing suspicion, she demands to know who his mistress was. When Ishwar Singh tried to explain his grossly act of abduction and subsequent rape of a dead girl. She, in a fit of fury stabs her husband multiple times till death.

Ishwar Singh’s encounter with the dead women gives a different perception of the narrative. The narrative does not display any kind of horrific rape, but it progresses with Ishwar Singh’s abduction of a beautiful Muslim girl and an attempt to violate her. Manto does not give any room for the actual violation as in the story *Open It*. He decodes the rape stereotype, yet making a firm hold on the the vulgar thoughts of Ishwar Singh. Communal passion overtakes Ishwar Singh leading to his murdering six members of the family sparing only the girl whom he find beautiful and desires to enjoy her beauty. Ishwar singh’s perversion is contrary to those of the social workers. It was not a schemed execution of violence on the girl, but an occurring that was incidental. In the narrative, he says to his wife: “Kulwanth my love, I can’t tell you how beautiful she was...she was...I could have killed her, but I didn’t ...I
said to myself...Ishwar Sian, you enjoy Kulwant kaur everyday, taste this delicacy also...” (BhallaVol-I: 96).

Ishwar singh’s act of violence in no way can be justified, though he justifies his attempt of adultery to his wife. Ishwar singh is completely filled with lust more than his communal passion. His initial thought looking at the girl is to enjoy her and as the narrative says, he is stuck with boredom sleeping with his wife. His lust to try a new girl is given a chance unexpectedly when he is in the act of looting and murdering. The victimized Muslim girl here is not subjected to multiple rapes or any physical violation. Either the brutal scenes of her family being killed in front of her or the very thought of being abduction which would result in defilement, kills her. Though she does not undergo any physical violence, the thought of rape itself becomes a violence which kills her. The very thought of having sex with a dead body eventually emasculates Ishwar Singh, who fails to satisfy Kulwanth Kaur in bed. His lust filled deeds kill an unknown girl and ultimately it takes away his own life.

Ishwar Singh’s crisis of masculinity can be justified, because he had overstepped the trust and faith of his wife. Kalwanth Kaur, who offered him every pleasure and satisfied him in all means as a wife, gets enraged at the very idea of Ishwar having an illegal relationship. She cannot withstand his recently developed impotency and the thought of his sleeping with another woman. She stabs him repeatedly only to know who the woman was.
Kulwanth kaur can be considered as a woman with some courage and defiant attitude. Unlike the Muslim girl victim, kalwanth kaur does not go dead unable to withstand a crisis. She is only angry at her husband knowing of a crisis in her relationship. Comparing both the women in the narrative, Kulwanth Kaur’s resistance of her husband’s adultery makes her only to retaliate quickly, whereas the victim girl succumbs to the situation and gives up her life even before she is defiled. What Kulwanth Kaur undergoes is also defilement. Women become defiled when they are polluted by men who are strangers or the one’s who are not their husbands are. But Kulwanth is differently defiled by ishwar himself. The idea of having physical intercourse with another woman eventually gives birth to a sense of rejection to the woman he married. The state of rejection at any point in a women’s life given by her husband is in a way a form of violence which can destabilize her emotional and physical capacity. Fearing the destabilization of her domestic life, Kulwanth kaur acts bravely to stab ishwar singh giving no further thoughts.

If the Muslim girl is portrayed as the victim of communal carnage, Manto equally contrast it with the portrayal, kalwanth kaur. He places the difference between the two female bodies which are opposite in every means. The Muslim victim is portrayed as a girl, who is beautiful and at the same time weak enough to be dead at the right time. On the other hand, kalwanth kaur is portrayed as a woman who is well built, strong and brave enough to kill the man of her life at the right time. The narrative describes her physical appearance thus:
Kulwanth Kaur was strong and well-built. She was a woman with large and heavy lips, exceptionally big breasts, bright eyes, thick lips and a hint of a moustache. The shape of her chin indicated that she was strong-willed. (Bhalla Vol. I: 91).

The story provides with the dichotomy of women’s agency during the times of communal unrest. There were women who were forced to be defiled and there were women who were forced to be defiant at circumstances. But the major underlying factor received through the analysis is that the stories of rape scripted by the male writers differ from that of the female writers in portraying their women victims. In manto’s stories, the raped woman either dies or appears to be a barely living body.

Manto’s stories mark his impeccable vision on the partition horror. Both Open It and Thanda Gosht witness a crisis of feminity through rape. The woman in the former story is an example of those women who were not abducted but were dislocated in the communal chaos, and were subjected to multiple rapes. Sakina is that woman, who is completely suppressed and becomes hapless at the hands of men. The most shocking aspect in the narrative is the unmasking of hypocritic men, who in the name of social work, take undue advantage of the situation in fulfilling their carnal desires. The narrative also exposes the exploitation of men by men who belong to the same community. Sirajuddin, being a Muslim, with Islamic ideals in his mind that a Muslim can’t be a rival to his brother, seeks a helping hand. But the
narrative mismatches the Islamic ideals of Sirajuddin with those of the social workers, whose ideals were in fact perverted.

Manto attempts to represent the impact of a near-necrophiliac experience on the psyche of Ishar Singh, who participates in loot and rape. His state of impotence after the inadvertent rape of the Muslim girl is inexplicable to him and his wife. A sense of manto’s ability to get to the root of Pathological forms of desire, rather than simply representing the symptoms marks his uniqueness. In the words of Tarun, “Through the self-witnessing and confessional disclosures of Ishar Singh the story portrays the psychological costs of a descent into a living nightmare”(2010, 257). There prevailed a sense of inability and refusal to identify the other during the sexual violence and sadism. This is exemplified in the case of Ishar Singh’s admission of horror at realising that he had raped a dead Muslim girl. His subsequent impotency is the fallout of lack of mutual recognition in the previous rapes committed by him. He finally suffers a kind of excruciating death because of his horrific memory that haunted his mind even before his wife stabbed him. For Kulwanth Kaur, even though it was a macabre end, “the self-incriminating testimony to the effects of a kind near-necrophiliac excess and inadvertent indulgence in pathological forms of self-gratification becomes unbearable to her”(2010, 258). For Manto, Kulwanth Kaur is a representation of a type, an earthy Sikh wife unable to come to terms with the evidence of her partner’s subsequent attempts to self-disclosure.
Rajinder Singh Bedi’s *Lajwanti* suggests the everyday agency exercised by abducted women stands outside the modernists conceptions of choice and it also illustrates how subjects contest power in its discursive form and how their desires discontents transform or explode discursive systems. This story attempts to map how the patriarchal modern nation state contained these rhetorical and material struggles by exploring the contradictions between macro and micro- physical configurations of power and knowledge and the technologies of the self they produced in the domestic sphere in post-partition India. Bedi’s narrative can be read as a similar critique of the power relations that inflected the sociopolitical practices surrounding the Recovery Operation.

*Lajwanti* stands as one of the earliest literary accounts on partition which focus on the social stigma faced by abducted women who returned to their families and community through the Recovery operation process. Bedi being a member of the Progressive writer’s Association makes a critique of the situation which was radical for its time. Bedi’s story is also unique for its use of Hindu imagery and symbolism despite his language that becomes the province of the south Asian Muslims. In *Lajwanti*, bedi refers to the story of Sita’s rejection by Ram in the *Ramayan* as to refer to the unhappy lot of widow
living in house no 414. This is an evidence of his use of Hindu imagery. Bedi talks about a socially tabooed subject from a hybrid cultural perspective at a time when identities were being reified along national and communal lines.

**Lajwanti** tells the story of Sunder Lal’s wife lajwanti, who gets separated from him during the sectarian violence. Lajwanti also refers to the name of a touch-me-not plant that has the unique quality of shrinking and curling up its leaves when it is touched. As Jill Didur observes: “the plant is popularly named lajwanti because its curling action has been seen as indicative of shyness or shame, hence the root ‘laaj’ which refers to shame” (2006, 60). The Rehabilitation committee in Sunder Lal’s community sings a Punjabi folksong that refers to the lajwanti plant as they march through the area, suggesting an analogy between the plant and abducted women. The lyrics state, “This is the touch-me-not; it shrivels up at a mere touch” (Bhalla Vol I: 56). This particular song has a special significance for sunder Lal. As the narrative describes:

At early dawn, when sunder lal led prabhat pheris through the half-awakened streets, and his friends, Rasalu, Neki Ram and others sang in fervid chorus:

These are the tender leaves of touch-me-not, my friend; it will shrivel and curl up even if you as much as touch them...,' it was only sunder lal whose voice would suddenly choke; and in utter silence, as he mechyanically kept pace with his friends and followers, he would think of his Lajwanti whom wanton hands not only touches but torn away from
him – where would she be now? What condition would she be in? What would she be thinking about her people? Would she even return? And as his thoughts wandered in the alleys of a sharp and searing pain, his legs would tremble on the hard, cold flag-stones of the streets (Bhalla, Vol I: 56-57).

The reference to Lajwanti’s curling action has an added connotation: the narrative reports that “in the past he himself maltreated his Lajwanti often enough and he had not infrequently thrashed her, even without the slightest pretext or provocation” (Bhalla, Vol I: 57). The recoiling action of Lajwanti could also be analogous to Lajwanti’s response to her treatment by Sunder lal. Further it also suggests that Sunder lal’s faltering steps could be because of the doubts that he has about his own ability to accept Lajwanti if she is traced back.

The lyrics of the song also appear to have an ambivalent connotation for the Rehabilitation Committee and the community it is trying to influence. The community looks down at the abducted women as polluted the ambivalent interpretation of lajwanti’s curling action may be out of shyness, fear and or shame. This resonates with the community’s ambiguous response to the recovered women. The community seemed to respond well to other rehabilitation activites, but as the narrator comments:

[b]ut there was one phase of this problem which was yet neglected and the programme that sought to tackle this aspect carries the slogan:
‘Rehabilitate them in your hearts!’ This programme was, however staunchly opposed by the inmates of the temple or Narain Baba and the orthodox, conventional people who lived in that vicinity. (Bhalla Vol I: 57)

As like in the previous chapters of the present study, women like Lajwanti when returned to the domestic sphere of their own community, were often seen as polluted, having come in contact with the ‘other’ community. The folksong in this respect can be also construed as referring to the consequences of having one’s honour defiled. It resonates with the response of many people in the community who rejected the women once they returned. The return and the rejection are explicitly detailed in the narrative:

for a long moment the abducted women and their relatives started at each other like strangers. Then, heads bent low, they walked back together to tackle the task of bringing new life to ruined homes... But there were some amongst these abducted women whom their husbands, fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters refused to recognise. On the contrary, they would curse them: why did they not die? Why did they not take poison to save their chastity? Why didn’t they jump into the well to save their honour? They were cowards who basely and desperately clung to life. Why, thousands of women had killed themselves before they could be forced to yield their honour and chastity. (Bhalla Vol I: 59).

As the passage reveals, the abducted women naturally shrivelled up in the face of their pollution. The recovery of these women to their community
only evoked aspersions on their chastity and honour, which of course was formulated by the patriarchal codes. The code expected women’s sexuality outside the domestic sphere to be passive. Jill didur reviews it as: “Both the macro- and micro-physical context of post-partion India are well documented in Bedi’s narrative” (2006, 60). For instance, Bedi captures the public exercises of national unity in the form of setting up of Local Rehabilitation committee. As the narrator states:

to give impetus to this programme, a committee was formed in the Mohalla of Mulla Shukoor which lay near Narain Baba’s temple. Babu Sunder Lal was elected secretary of this committee, by a majority of eleven votes. It was the considered opinion of Vakil Saheb, the chairman of the old moharrir of Chauki Kalan, and other worthies that there was no one who could perform the duties of secretary with greater zeal and earnestness than Sunder lal. Their confidence rested perhaps on the fact that Sunder Lal’s own wife had been abducted – his wife whose name was Lajo- Lajwanti – the plant of touch-me-not. (Bhalla Vol I: 57)

The narrative offers a clear exposure of Sunder Lal’s community, which adopted the technologies of the self to produce the identity of the modern citizen subject. Sundar Lal is championed in the public sphere and celebrated as the leader of the committee because of the crisis that took place in his own domestic life. The committee felt that, as Sunder Lal’s Lajo is abducted, he will know its tainting pain and so he can suit to the cause of Rehabilitation better
than any other present in the committee. But the transformation that ultimately occurs in the mind of Sunder Lal demonstrates the failure of the state policy and its electoral policies. What remained tactful in choosing Sunder Lal, the secretary did not serve their purpose. Moreover, the superficial knowledge about his domestic life stands cause for the failure. The pre-partition attitude of Sunder Lal was entirely different compared to his post-partition state of mind. His relation with lajwanti in the pre-partition days was characterised by a consistant physical harrasment. He played power politics in the domestic sphere on his wife. But the redeeming factor is his sense of guilt and shame that occupies him after Lajo’s abduction. He thinks of those bad days in which he put his wife into physical abuse.

There were the memories that came winging through the years as Sunder Lal went about leading Prabhat Pheris along the streets. And as these pods of nostalgia cracked and opened, Sunderlal thought:

For once, if only for once, I get my lajo back, I shall enshrine her always in my heart. I shall tell others that these poor women were blameless, that it was no fault of theirs to have been abducted, a prey to the brutal passions of rioters. The society which does not accept these innocent women is rotten and deserves to be destroyed.(Bhalla Vol I: 59).

Sunder Lal remonstrates at his deeds, which can be interpreted as an intersection between his view of the abducted women as passive victims of sectarian riots and his own sense of emasculation in letting out the abduction
happen on his wife. He is ashamed to the extent that he feels Lajo will not wish to return to him for his previous treatment of her. Jill Didur argues that:

the figuration of this anxiety can be linked to the larger context of the narrative in which male citizens like Sunder lal are becoming aware of how the modern nation-state both requires and circumscribes their power as ‘husband’ in the extended family (2006, 62-63).

It is the enforced separation that has seen men as the identity of the citizen subject entirely relying on their women’s acceptance of the limited options available to them as sub-ordinates in the patriarch governed institution such as the family and the state. They also look for the sanction of the community to allow women to return to their proper positions.

The macro and micro physical bodies being, the family and the nation respectively, Bedi tries to highlight the contradiction between these two bodies in the interest of the return of these women. SunderLal, at first is overwhelmed at the news of Lajo’s return, but his joy is limited at the thought of reconstructing his domestic life. His temporary happiness is replaced with fear in renovating his family sphere. The narrative says: “Sunderlal shivered with a strange fear and felt warmed by the holy fire of his love” (Bhalla, Vol I: 65). His contradictory feeling is because of the fear that he has on the community based notions set by the nation-state in the process of rehabilitating the recovered women. The very thought of rehabilitation of Lajo, suspends his initial joy of gaining her back. His joy is overlapped with the thought of her impurity and
the community based purification. Ironically it is the same community which failed to protect the contamination of their women from the ‘other,’ which demands purity in the domestic spheres. Urvashi Butalia remarks that, “Nevertheless, in order for this exercise to be read as an act of legitimacy for India’s nationalist ‘secular’ imaginary, the emphasis on women’s sexual purity as a symbol of community honour had to be elided” (1998,18). The conflicting goals set by the nation state and the community cannot be accomplished untill there is a re -inscription of patriarchal supremacy in the domestic sphere and the denial of the stigma on women as polluted.

Bedi schemes to recast the women’s identities in post-partition India through his narrative which tries to reconfigure the power relations between Lajwanti and Sunder Lal after her return. Lajwanti is made aware of her need for a patronage from the patriarchy in the form of a husband to survive in the community. Lajo also anticipate with fear on her contaminated status and Sunder Lal’s reaction linking to Lal’s maltreatment before her abduction. The narrator comments: “She and none but she knew Sunder Lal, knew that Sunder Lal had always maltreated her. Now that she was back after having lived with another man, she dared not imagine what he would do to her” (BhallaVol I: 66).

On the other hand, Sunder Lal’s reception of Lajo becomes hostile as soon as he sees her to be healthy and nourished. He is torn between negative thoughts that she may not have been as much of a victim of the other man. He
is thus caught between conflicting thoughts as a player of family and the nation-state. He plays the civil part best by concealing his thoughts of lajo’s well being in the ‘other’ community. The condition of Lajo is described as ‘inebriated with an unknown joy’ (Bhalla Vol I: 580). But this joy, this time in Lajo proves temporary. She realises that Sunder Lal accepted her in exchange of her silence and performance of a new, more disciplined gender identity. She tries throughout the course of the narrative to share her gruesome experience of her abduction in order to wash away her sins through tears, but Sunder Lal always shrank away from hearing her story. The plight of Lajo encounters a new twist that despite her acceptance and new freedom she is put behind a strange apprehension. This kind of a silence itself forced on lajo can be considered as a different form of violence coded by the patriarchal nation state, in the form of rehabilitation process and by the patriarchal community’s notion which called defilement a sin and the abducted women impure. Though lajo is facilitated with a patriarchal patronage, Sunder Lal becomes the managing power of his civil and domestic responsibilities. Not only does Sunder Lal encourage silence in Lajwanti, but he also addresses her as Devi or goddess, in order to make an erasure of the everyday experience she encountered with the other community. Jill Didur observes that:

The only information Sunder lal wants to know about her experiences away from him is, significantly, if the other man had physically abused her; when he learns that he did not, rising to the civil challenge, he
claims that he will never beat her again either and declares the subject closed (2006, 65).

Sunder Lal’s reasoning blames the social conventions for the stigma attached to Lajwanti’s honour and also invalidates her potential to resist those conventions. This gives us the fact that Lajwanti cannot be held responsible for her experience, as she is constructed as lacking the ability to act in her own self-interest. The narrative further suggests that Lajwanti’s reintegration into the community and nation state require her to surrender her identity as a woman who can question her husband and renegotiate the terms of her patriarchal patronage. The narrative states:

ultimately, when quite some time had passed, doubt no more remained an intruder but took the place of joy, not because Sunder Lal had again started maltreating her but because he treated her much more kindly than before. It was a kindness that Lajo had not expected from him – she wanted, desperately, to become the same lajo who would quarrel on a trifle and, all at once, be friends again. Now the question of a quarrel between them did not arise for she was a devi and he her worshipper. (BhallaVol I: 66)

The narrative thus suggests that Lajwanthi’s consciousness suffers quietly, witnessing her transformation into a Devi, a goddess and venerated by her husband. She is no longer lajo to him. She becomes Lajwanti, ironically, the touch-me-not plant, who will shrivel and curl up from both the civil and
domestic spheres. Lajwanthi loses her old identity and her new identity only venerates her to a Devi, which is no good for her.

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 conquered. In such a context, as has been observed by Andrew J. Major, revenge can become a powerful motive or excuse for abuse of women. 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 remarks, power rape – the raping of women in order to demoralize and defeat rival men in patriarchal society – is particularly common in northern India.

**Exile**

Jamily Hashmi’s *Exile* is a story about a Muslim woman who narrates the story in the first person mode. The narrator protagonist is an orphan maid abducted during the partition riots. Her abduction story is pathetic, as her abductor kills her parents before bringing her to his house. Further he marries her and leaves her to crave to see her brother and friends, whom she had left behind. The whole world now suddenly becomes a crowd of strangers. She is left to suffer at the hands of her abductor and her mother. In a completely different environment, she tries to recall her past. She wished to go back to her family. But she turns down the idea surprisingly when the military soldiers
come looking for abducted women. She lives with her abductors family for the sake of the child that she has borne him.

The story deals with the trauma and psychological distress of a woman, who was forcefully raped, converted and pushed into the realm of a family. There was no choice given to her. When he abducts her and brings to his house, his intention is clearly exposed when he pushes her in the courtyard and says to his mother, “Look Ma, I have brought you a Bahu. She is tall and good looking of the girls who fell into our hands tonight. She was the prettiest, she will be your slave” (Bhalla Vol I: 40). This recording of the violation in the story, explains the state of the orphaned girl. She is exposed to the harsh reality for the first time that she has to lead a life of slaves in the house. There was no escape or choice that would save her from this kind of a fate.

Initially she was illtreated by both her husband, Gurpal and his grand mother. The grand mother was cynical towards her when Gurupal brought her to the home. She though it was an added burden to her by inducting a new member in the family. The narrator says: “Badi Ma had looked at me as if her grandson has kidnapped me only to add to the troubles of her life. She had turned her back on me and walked away to the kitchen. She hadn’t bothered to say a word to me” (Bhalla Vol I: 41). The immediate response of the lady of the house clarifies that she was unwelcome in the house. There was contempt and remorse that the protagonist had to undergo throughout her life. She was unable to resist the illtreatments rendered on her by Gurpal. He says, “At least
look at her. You won’t have to put up with insolence of maid servants anymore. She will be your slave. Order her to grind corn, fetch water. As far I am concerned, you can ask her to do anything you wish. I have brought you a Bahu!”(BhallaVol I: 40). It is clear from his action that he has brought home the protagonist as a maid servant, though he often says to his grand mother that she is the ‘bahu’/ daughter-in-law that he has brought for her to work for the family. The protagonist knew that she should perform the duty as a slave in order to avoid their abuses and beatings.

The word Bahu disturbs the protagonist a lot. She did not like someone calling her a bahu and treating her with abuse and beatings. She thinks that a bahu cannot be a slave. The very word Bahu seems to be an abuse on her. She says, “How can I blame anyone? When someone calls me Bahu, I feel as if I am being abused. I have heard myself being called Bahu for years”(Bhalla Vol I: 40). The status of Bahu is given to those women, who are traditionally married and given off by her parents or relatives. It involves lot of rituals. A woman once when becomes a Bahu; she becomes the daughter of the house in which she gets married. In this context, Marriage becomes a ritual to make a woman Bahu. But in the case of the Protagonist, a proper ritual of marriage never does take place. She was not given off by her parents, but on the other hand they were killed and she was forcefully abducted. Even the entry of the Bahu inside the house of the in-laws demanded rituals according to the religious norms. A Bahu has to be greeted at the door step by the in-laws, but
Gurpal brings her to his house and pushes her in the courtyard, only to say that he has brought a slave in the name of bahu. The narrator states:

No one had greeted me at the door of the house with a handful of rice and corn; or anointed my dust covered hair with oil; or adorned me with jewels and fine clothes; or put mehndi on my hands and sindhoor in the parting of my hair. But I had become a bride. (Bhalla Vol I: 40-41).

The expectation of a normal girl’s desire to adorn herself with jewels and fine clothes and other rituals was never fulfilled in the case of the protagonist. Hashmi adds these female vanities to show that the time was so rot to respect a girl’s feeling, her likes and dislikes. They were only subjugated and subjected to liminal space, where their silence speaks more harsh realities than the situation itself. The story also hints at the plight of girls who had been abducted for just to fulfill the purpose of their daily chores. The protagonist accounts:

Many wives were brought to Sangraon during those days. No one had greeted them with music. No one had beaten the drums or sung lusty songs. No dancers had swirled through the night, or swayed their hips and made outrageous demands. (Bhalla Vol I: 40).

Marriage is an occasion of joy and celebration. It is the joy of pairing with the soul mate that needs celebration in the traditional arena. A joyous occasion of this kind is completely deprived of women during the partition. They were brought just like cheap commodities stolen from the market.
Sometimes their beauty gave them some value as in the case of the Protagonist. The initially harsh and crude Gurpal gradually develops a Husbandly feeling towards the protagonist and even the Badi Ma also changes her attitude towards her. But what bothers the Protagonist is not the ill treatment that she received from her in-laws, but her haunting past, which reminisced her happy childhood with her brother.

Hashmi further captures the inner consciousness of her protagonist in the sad monologue that runs through the story. The veiled memories are unfolded to show her past and the present. The protagonist recalls her past but she readjusts and reorders herself with the present hoping for a replanting of her roots. The protagonist’s experience of abduction and her memories of her childhood days and family life before narrated retrospectively in the story, offers an insight to the psyche of a woman whose memories oscillate between the past and the present. Her past as childhood were her familial happiness with her brother becomes prominent is immediately shrunk because of the oscillating thoughts about her present, where she leads a life which did not give her any choice as a woman, and which treated her as chattels by the abductors before being integrated into the family as lower status wife. Her desire for her brother to come and rescue her is the most significant feature of the story, which explains the polemic of the partition days. She refuses the chance to be rescued by relief officers. The acceptance of her family was more significant to her than the act of rescuing. She did not wish to be rescued and live a life carrying a stigma as a defiled woman, rather she preferred her
brother’s approval to live with him, so that she can make a re-entry into her past erasing her present status as an abducted woman. The child she has borne through the abductor also creates a dilemma as she struggles to reconcile herself to the situation. The difference between her identity as an abducted woman and that of a married woman in families around her is underlined in the story. As Tarun K. Saint point out, “Finally, the use of the mythic allusions to Sita becomes somewhat programmatic, in the repeated emphasis on the vitiated nature of such a time in which Sita has to live with Ravana (the mythic demon king of the Ramayana)” (2010, 263). She decides to live with her present instead of attaching herself to the joyous past. She, in a way is forced to compromise with the situation she is in, remaining beset by the perception of the incongruity of the moral/ethical codes underpinning the Hindu epic with reference to her situation. The memory becomes a cage here which contaminates the present and the future in its cold embrace.

Tarun K. Saint says that the protagonist achieves “a certain degree of ironic detachment as a witness through the invocation of such frames of reference” (2010, 263).

The brothers stand as a fatherly figure and a philosopher guide to her, who explains every single event with detail during her childhood. They inevitably become the persons she admires and the persons in whom she looks for safety. Though one has left behind the family to work in abroad, she inadvertently looks for their presence to rescue her. She tolerates all the
abuses and thrashings from her in-laws only with the hope that her brother will come to rescue her. Her monologue states: “I had endured Badi Ma’s beatings and Gurpal’s abuses, because I was sure that Bhai and Bhaiya would come to Sangraon soon to look for me. Then I had thought I would smile at Gurpal, go away with my brothers” (BhallaVol I: 49).

The very thought of being rescued from Gurpal gives her immense joy. The day her brothers would take her away will be the happiest day in her life. She says, “that day the wind would dance playfully in the neem leaves and the entire village would rejoice” (BhallaVol I: 49). An utter disappointment befalls her when her brothers did not turn up during the rescuing operation. She was too much dejected that she felt remorse towards her brothers. She was unwilling to forgive them for their ignorance and lack of concern. She angrily says, “Why hadn’t Bhaiya and Bhabi come with them? I was angry with them. I haven’t forgiven them till this day” (BhallaVol I: 51). Even though angry at her brothers, she still believed that some day she might be rescued by her Bhaiya. She dreams of that particular day with a ray of hope. She blissfully says:

I still dream of a day when a young man will dismount from a horse and I will call out Bhaiyain ecstacy and embrace him. That day will be filled with the fragrance of ripe corn, the sky will sparkle with stars and the waters of the canal will sing songs. (BhallaVol I: 52).

Her present living condition is filled with darkness and hopes. She staggers between motherhood and her own childhood. Suppressed of all her
joys, she leads a life that is plain and simple with no much happiness. The only solace is her children. After the birth of Munni, her life becomes even more tedious. She begins to pay attention to the world around her. Suddenly she wakes up from all her dreams of hope. She finds a world ahead of her that is even smaller, confined to her husband and children. The only thing that she was unable to withhold was her memory, which flashed at every incident that happens in her present. For instance, when Gurpal brings a book of alphabets for Munni, she is reminded of her childhood where her Bhaiya and Bhabi used to tell her, “Bibi, there are even more interesting stories in other books. You’ll read them when you grow up” (BhallaVol I:51).

Whenever her thoughts wandered back to her past, tears were inevitable. Unknowingly she would cry. There is always a gloom that surrounds her heart. A tainting pain submerges her completely into another world. She became unanswerable to questions that her daughter poses every time when she cried. The fact is that she did not have an answer for her daughter. She was left speechless and an eerie silence covered her grieving thoughts. She was totally confused to realize if she was happy in her in-laws home. The treatment towards her has changed from abuse to pride. Gurpal doesn’t beat her or abuse her. Even Badi ma has become close to her. She boasts of her daughter-in-law’s skills and talents with pride. But even then she was in a dilemma, when the military soldiers come for rescuing the abducted women.
Unable to act fast in making a decision, she once again ponders over her past and present. Finally she lets loose her decision by hiding herself from the military people. She had to undergo a lot of torments in her mind to take the ultimate decision to stay with Gurpal. Two reasons predominantly strike her mind. The first, being the thought about her children. She wanted to be a good mother and nurture them up as good human beings. The second one, is her own dreams of hopes. She feels that her dreams will never turn into reality. Her brother is never going to rescue her. Even if he comes, seeing her in the present condition, he would never accept her. She kills her already dead hopes. Her monologue questions:

Oh, why do I stand waiting at the door? For whom? How much longer will I have to carry this dead corpse of my hopes? Why do my eyes fill with tears when I find that the lane outside is desolate? If these tears fall on Munni she will wake up with a start and ask, why are you crying, Ma? How will I ever be able to explain the cause of my sorrow?(BhallaVol I: 52).

She takes a brave decision to safeguard her honour and her children’s future. Instead of waiting for something that is never going to happen, she thinks both logically and pragmatically to stay with her husband itself. She sheds down her emotional duress and console herself and makes a move to learn to live in the adapted situation. She ultimately feels that she doesn’t want to be exiled twice and lead a life with a long lasting stigma of being a
polluted woman. She wishes to live with the scar and live with the same person who had killed her parents in front of her eyes. Hashmi thus gives a climactic twist only to further reduce the trauma of the protagonist which otherwise she might be experiencing all through her life. Hashmi deliberately cuts down her protagonist’s chance of escape and saves her honour. By making her take an audacious decision to stay with the man who perpetrated the worst form of violence on her and her family, is in itself an act of defiance, which not many of the abducted women would wish to do during the riot days. The protagonist becomes a woman who transforms her status from a defiled to defiant

*A Leaf in the Storm*

Lalithambika Antharjanam’s *A Leaf in the Storm* is considered as a powerful story of survival. Jyothi, the central character of the story arrives pregnant and completely despondent in a refugee camp. Jyoti has been betrayed, abducted and raped while crossing the border during the partition days. The child that grows inside her womb because of inhuman rape and ignorance shackles her existence. There were more women in the camp, who were similarly pregnant and were undergoing the same torments as like Jyoti’s. She witnesses births and deaths simultaneously in the camp. In a state of distress her mind falls into contrary thoughts. She decides to throw the baby once she delivers. But after the delivery, a very interesting change happens in her mind. Instead of throwing away the baby, she just starts having motherly
feelings towards it. Her void life gets some meaning through her willingness to nurture the baby.

The Indian government had set up a number of Rehabilitation projects for these so-called ‘fallen women’, but it was not helpful to cope with immensity of the numbers of women seeking support. Such was the scenario which saw hundreds and thousands of women defiled just like that. Similarly, Jyothi is one such unlucky woman victimized to multiple rapes, because of which she gets impregnated.

Jyothi witnessed the lives of a number of women victims present in the camp. She listened to new stories of the horrors of riots every day. The plight of men and women driven away from their ancestral villages moves Jyothi a lot. But she was just like a wave in the ocean and no one cared to speak to her or hear her story. Only a few people knew that she was pregnant and unmarried. She carried her pain and burden along with the growing child. She felt that she has to confront the reality once she delivers the baby. The reality was to throw the child and move ahead in life. What happened in the camp was also the same common practice, which Jyothi often observes as a silent spectator. Once she observes something unusual in the toilet. The narrative says:

There lay in the toilet the lifeless body of a child, new born and deserted. A beautiful child it was, round and gleaming, like a thick clot of blood. Its fair skin was like that of an inhabitant of the territorial border. It had brown hair. On its neck was a thick bluish mark resembling a crescent.
The scavenger dragged its still warm body away, and put it onto his garbage bin. No girl shed a tear. There was no case against anyone. (BhallaVol I : 141)

The scene is cruel, harsh and pathetic. It conveys that the riots and violence encountered by people have made them so stone hearted that they started leading a practical life, understanding the conditions pertaining to their survival. The throwing away of the new born baby suggests the changed mentality of people, who otherwise would have never dared to do such an evil act, if sectarian violence had not broken out. To continue living in a structured community, they need to evade themselves from impurity. The thrown away child was a symbol of impurity and dishonour, which would stay along with them till them. The stigma will not let them live peacefully. A ray of hope that these women envisioned through rehabilitation might once again go in the dark. Stricken with these fear, the mothers did not have any other option than to distance themselves from the duty of motherhood.

Jyothi’s mind undergoes the same thought like that of the other mothers. The child will become the symbol of her impurity. Its growth will also lead to her growing sensation of the remembrance of the past. She has to carry the scar till the end. She decides to do the same thing, the other mothers have done. She cannot imagine a child growing in her stomach, whose father is unknown even without a choice. Memories lead her to the cruel scene of her violation. She recalls how she was safe guarded by her bosom friend Ayesha,
and her father Qasim sahib, who took fifteen girls including Jyothi in his cart hiding them under the hay stalk. She was taken only to be abducted by a gang of hooligans. She was locked inside a cell and subjected to multiple rapes in the dark. She could not recognize the face of any man. The narrative states:

Suddenly, she thought of the prison in which she had lain unconscious. An awful lot of men must have come into that cell. Those devilish faces...reddened by fanatic hate and frenzy! To which one of those faces does this bear a resemblance?(BhallaVol I: 144).

The very thought of an impure child creates a convulsion in her mind. She decides to kill the child and bury with it her misery and shame which she had carried with her all these months.

The contempt and bitterness that she developed during the course of pregnancy gradually disappears and turns into a feeling of love, when she looks at the baby. The little life, she says to herself is seeking refuge, stirring its little feet’ and feeling the mass of the flesh on her belly, she remarks, “oh, how warm it is! Did my body give it so much warmth? I hope its looks are like mine...perhaps I should look at it, its small eyes once... just once!”(BhallaVol I: 144). The so far dark and gloomy thoughts of Jyothi transforms into maternal instincts. She did not distance herself from the idea of mothering, but rather chose motherhood as an immediate solution to erase her shame. But she also understands that the scar would always remain with her and even then she is not the one who can take a life so easily. The once confused Jyothi now says:
It was rather difficult to sever life’s bonds so easily. The scar would remain. The world would suppurate and continue to afflict one’s life till the very end. Jyothi returned slowly. The child was still crying. Its voice grew hoarse. Its limb began to grow limp. There was no time to wait. (Bhalla Vol I: 144).

The plight of Jyothi is quite different from the other victims. She is a symbol of defiance and, invariably of her own instincts. She sets up against her bitterness towards her fate and emerges out to live as a mother and a new woman. She being a denigrated woman throws herself out from the mire of victimhood. She may perhaps defy all the conventional norms of the society to safe-guard her child and motherhood. She is a fine example of a defiant woman, whose source of strength is not from external sources but quite differently from her own internal instincts and existence. She exorcises the rapists and makes an erasure of the past and comes in contact with the reality of the present and her biological existence of the baby within her. Antarjanam is succesful in articulaitng the silence of a woman and portrays the quiet process of positive transformation of thoughts from a vulnerable negative framework of mind.

The narrative offers an internal monologue revealing Jyothi’s emotional imbalance and her reflective response to the growing baby and the growing conditions around her. The story traverses from a dark gruesome reality to a state of warm and light feeling towards the child.
The most noteworthy aspect in the narrative is the narrators mentioning of Jyothi’s friend Ayesha and her father Qasim. They belonged to the agency which believed in integration unlike Ayesha’s brother who developed a strong contempt against their rival community. Ayesha’s gesture of concealing the fifteen women and trying to rescue them from the nemies belonging to her own clan articulates the women agency’s intent of saving the fellow women’s honour from getting defiled. Ayesha’s courageous act proves her defiance against the community norms to disrupt the roots of women belonging to other communities. The narrator says, “She had concealed those ghoshah ladies with great care. Her plan was to send them across the border when her father’s bullock cart went on its usual trip” (BhallaVol I: 143). Whereas, her brother belonging to the patriarchal agency of her community has a different thought. He says, “Damn them! Our land will yield gold only when it is soaked by the blood of these kafirs!” (BhallaVol I: 143). Qasim sahib, on the other hand is a man belonging to the older generation of time, who was a good friend of Jyothi’s father. His kind yet failed gesture of rescuing the fifteen women from their ill-fate stands laudable. Belonging to the enemy group of Jyothi’s and more significantly to the patriarchy, Qasim sahib shows some kind of congeniality on the women, so as to prove that his intent and the community set revenge norms are entirely contrary on basic grounds. He proves to be a true Muslim and more likely a true human being with a heart full of compassion and uncorrupt with the idea of revenge and/or any sexual dominance.
The story offers a valuable hint on prevailing humanity in both Ayesha and Jyothi herself. Jyothi’s humanity is foregrounded at the thought of accepting the child, whose father remains unknown and unseen. She becomes a victim of the female crisis, where both her body and mind get polluted, the former through perpetrators and the latter through her own conflicting thoughts. At a time when human lives were considered cheap and trivial, Jyothi offers a new life both to the baby and herself. She defies against the social conventions by accepting the child as her own blood and defies her corrupted thoughts by overcoming it with love and compassion. She stays a strong willed woman against all odds and notably at a time when other women of her age succumbed to the fear of dishonour and impurity. Her courageous move of accepting the child reveals her self assertion to confront the society and live amidst the structured norms calling her defiled or polluted. The narrative concludes with a positive note, saying, “As the mother walked slowly towards the camp, the stars beamed from heaven. Maybe they had resolved a complicated puzzle” (Bhalla, 1994 Vol I: 145). The sign of positivity is infused by Antharjanam to show that Jyothi, who having lost everything including her parents, home and country has regained a new life through the born child. It’s a new relationship that she gets through her defiance against the community, society and nation at large.
**Vulnerable Women**

The stories taken for the study offers an insight of the sufferings of the women bringing out diverse reasons. All the three stories strongly criticize the failure of patriarchy in protecting and safeguarding their women. The notion exercised by the patriarchal dominance that women are weaker sex is true to the level of women’s haplessness in situation where they are overpowered physically. All the female protagonists in these stories are overpowered by men in some way or the other. More than women, it is their female body that becomes vulnerable to the patriarchy. In each of the stories starting from Manto, his woman protagonists Sakina and the young Muslim girl are subjects that are weak both physically and mentally. In the case of Sakina, she easily falls prey to her emotions. She readily trusts in the people who were complete strangers to her. The rampant chaos that was all over the nation should have easily taught her to not trust anyone easily. She is not brave enough to encounter the young men, but instead she gets frightenend at theirvery presence. Moreover she is unable to distinguish between good men and bad men judging through their behavior. She is so unaware of the outside world where men are callous and cunning. As she was physically weak, she becomes an easy prey for the perpetrators. Their deceptive behavior and her inability to identify the men’s intention cost her body to be savaged. She is so much
emotionally weak that she yields and yields to men until she is totally fine tuned for the repeated sexual act on her body. Her vulnerability leads to her defilement.

Similarly, the young woman in the story, Thanda Gosht/ Cold Meat is much weaker than Sakina. She is both physically and mentally too weak to even witness the horror that surrounded her. Her emotional imbalance is too high compared with other vulnerable women. She is unable to digest the very reality that six of her family members present with her a few minutes ago are slaughtered to death. Her mind is entirely clouded with shock. It can be assumed that, in a fit of shock, her entire system collapsed down and at the thought of getting raped by a man who is built up strong makes her breath her last. Her cause of death is mysterious. No conclusion can be arrives at the real reason for her death. There was no physical violence exhibited on her when she was alive. The only possibility is Ishwar’s carrying her to the fields. She should have died on the way and out of shock and bewilderment. She becomes so vulnerable that she gets destructed by witnessing the horror than really getting defiled.

Lajwanti, in Rajinder Singh Bedi’s story is also one such woman, who is vulnerable as a wife and her pertaining conditions of her abduction. She too becomes a victim not once but twice. First as a wife, she has to undergo thrashings from her husband and then she undergoes sufferings as an abducted woman. Even after her recovery, she becomes vulnerable to the
silence that surrounds her husband. She becomes a subject of physical and emotional weakness from all corners. She is too weak to resist or question her ill treatment. Instead she lives maintaining silence, brooding on her fate.

The protagonists of the story *Exile* and *A Leaf in the Storm* by Jamila Hashmi and Lalithambika Antharjanam respectively are entirely different women, whose vulnerability are luminal compared to the other women protagonists. The protagonist of Hashmi’s story is not weak both physically and mentally. There are instances which make her vulnerable at times, especially when she is maltreated by Gurpal and the lady of the house. She did not yield to their abuses, but rather stood strong in taking decisions. Though physically weak, she is mentally brave enough to overcome the horrible fate of hers. She attains a married woman’s status by not giving room for any hasty decisions in her mind. Even though she broods on her joyful past life with her brother, she decides not to go back to her family, but instead stay with her abductor and live for her children. She had the capacity to resist and bear all the abuses and beatings that fell on her. Her strong determination leads to suppress her vulnerability. She is mentally too strong to think logically and practically. Her defilement is only temporary and through a rare form of defiance, she is able to win the hearts of both her husband and Badi Ma. Her erasure in the mind of the scenes of her parents killed by her husband shows the strength and non-vulnerable state of hers.
Jyothi in Antarjanam’s story is similar to the protagonist of Hashmi’s *Exile* in regard to the vulnerability she possesses in the early stage of the story. She too is a rape victim and physically too weak to resist. But instead of a gloomy silence that was prevalent in other rape victims, Jyothi was filled with anger and contempt. She did not like the very thought of being a defiled woman. She somehow wanted to erase her stigma and move on with her life. Once vulnerable to the dominance of patriarchy, she did not like to succumb to the greed of men again. She feels very strong at heart about throwing away the baby once she delivers it. She also feels that the baby is a symbol of shame. It is at the end of the story that she becomes stronger, where she decides not to throw the baby but to keep it herself. This acceptance of the baby, which she felt was a disgrace is an instance which shows that Jyothi did not succumb to the condition around her. When every woman developed hatred and disgust on the impure babies they delivered, the idea of mothering in such a condition is a very strong act of defiance that Jyothi displays. It is also clear that she was less vulnerable than the rest of the women.

**Conclusion**

The reason for the fate and vulnerability of these women can be blamed on the society, community, nation, patriarchy and the failure of all the four. Out of these failures, the patriarchy and its failure makes it a prominent subject of issue. It is only the patriarchy that governs the society, community and nation. Women are set to live in a society, community and a nation only
through the culture structure formulated by the patriarchal agency. According to the norms of the patriarchy, women were meant to be the governors of the household activities. They were not let out to see the larger world. During the pre-partition days and the early partition days, traditions were given more prominence related to their religion. Each religion had their own set of norms that formed the governing rules of women. Many of the women were uneducated and too innocent to know the world. The patriarchal agency took the entire responsibility of protecting and safeguarding their women. Women were not allowed to enjoy the privileges that were showered on men. Most importantly, they were not let to think of their own. No decision of theirs was considered meaningful and valuable. They were not taught the significance of reacting to a situation. Their practical life outside their homes was cut down by the communal structures. In situation like the outburst of the sectarian violence, women indeed did not know how to react. Their life was so confined to the family circle that they always looked at their patriarchy for protection at adverse condition. They also had a strong belief that their men won’t let them to become victims of their vulnerability.

But what happened at the time of such communal frenzy is a contrasting reality to the beliefs of these women. The patriarchy that was supposed to safeguard their women, themselves succumbed to the communal carnage that they became helpless to save their daughters, mothers and sisters. It was the failure of patriarchy that made already fearful women more vulnerable. They were either defeated by their enemies or went out of their mind completely filled
with the thought of revenge that they forget to safeguard their women folk. Sometimes the men were so weak in front of their enemies that they literally had to give up their fight along with their wealth and women.

Sirajuddin, Ishwar Singh, Sunderlal and the brother of the female protagonist in Hashmi’s *Exile* are the subjects who make the representation of the failed patriarchy.