Chapter III:

Objects as markers of Gender

Objects, as has been discussed in the first chapter, communicate information. In doing so they open up vistas of new possibilities; they, as Barthes tells us, are pregnant with hitherto undiscovered signification: “there is always a meaning which overflows the object’s use”. More often than not, this meaning is created by culture as objects acquire certain connotations that go beyond their functionality and are imposed by the cultural milieu in which they are used. This is true of partition literature that we are dealing with, as certain objects are coloured by certain specific references or gendered associations. Gender becomes important as the partition of the country takes on a gendered aspect. While the country that is partitioned is identified as the motherland being severed, often it is seen that women directly bear the consequences of this act of partition as around 75,000 to 1, 00,000 women are said to have been abducted and murdered. Consequently it becomes possible to analyze several objects as markers of gender. However, in order to do so we must first consolidate our concept of gender.

Gender is defined as “the state of being male or female (chiefly in cultural or social contexts).” Thus though it is similar in meaning to ‘sex’, the latter refers specifically to biological differences. In Gender Trouble Judith Butler tries to re-think the concept of gender. She begins her enquiry by pointing out the basic postulates promulgated by Sartre and Beauvoir in their writings; for the latter, women signifies a “source of mystery and unknowability for men” that is corroborated by Sartre who considers all desire as trouble and as masculine and heterosexual in nature(Butler,
The female is a source of problem as her presence contests the power structure by questioning the hegemonic authority held by the male. Butler wishes to go beyond this binary structure of male and female and enquire whether the categorization of gender is stable. Gender, for her, is “a kind of persistent impersonation that passes as the real” (Butler, Preface, xxxi). Through the analysis of various feminist theories she draws our attention to the development of a language that can properly represent the lives of women. Further, she wishes us to be aware of the fact that the category of “women” is not a stable term and we must prepare ourselves to read through various representations to identify the various identities that lie under the broader distinctions of masculine and feminine identities.

Butler draws our attention to the concept introduced by Foucault who shows that the very subjects represented and controlled by judicial power are, in fact, produced by it. Subjects produced by this structure are shaped through certain prohibitions and controls imposed by this very structure. Therefore, we must not overlook the fact that the very concept of ‘women’ as the focus of feminism may have been formulated by that political system which it seeks to question. Here it must be remembered that the subject, in this case, the concept of women, is produced through a number of processes that are never mentioned once the concept is consolidated, certain attributes are legitimized whereas certain others are excluded from the features of the subject. Thus “the law produces and then conceals” the concept of the subject that is brought before the law and contributes in establishing the hegemony of law itself (3). So while analyzing the concept of feminism and the concept of gender we must be aware of “how the category of ‘women’, the subject of feminism, is produced and restrained by the very structures of power through
which emancipation is sought” (4). The problem of contextualizing the concept of women thus brings us back to the issue of gender. The term ‘women’ cannot express a particular and finite identity as it is through various coordinates that the concept is consolidated. Gender, simultaneously, is not formed along certain set attributes and one agrees with Butler when she points out that “gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities. As a result, it becomes impossible to separate out ‘gender’ from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained”(4-5).

The concept of woman leads us to the question of gender oppression which has often been criticized when it tries to operate on a premise that non-western patriarchy is more barbaric in nature and all concepts of patriarchy or oppression can be explained through a universal concept generated by the West. Questions arise regarding the commonality of women independent of their oppression by masculinist and hegemonic cultures. Butler further wonders if there is any region of the “specifically feminine” that can be essentially separated from the concept of the masculine and taken as the absolute marker of the feminine as the feminine is usually divorced from the other coordinates of identity such as class, ethnicity or race (6). But we must be aware of the dangers of presuming feminism and the concept of women as a stable and universal construct as there are many limitations to this attitude and it can lead to acute misrepresentation of the subject itself.

Butler agrees that gender is culturally constructed and nowhere is this truer than in the partition novels that we are working with. She goes on to suggest that there is a “radical discontinuity between sexed bodies and culturally constructed genders” (9). She
refuses to agree that the concept of ‘man’ must be confined to the male body or the ‘woman’ limited to the female body. This opens up the possibility of not limiting gender to only two physical manifestations. Gender, according to her, acquires infinite options: “When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and woman and feminine a male body as easily as a female one” (9). But the concept of sex itself is questioned by Butler; she tries to identify the premises on which sex has been established and wonders whether sex is as culturally formulated as gender and there actually exists no difference between sex and gender. Thus gender becomes that cultural process through which the concept of “natural sex” is constructed as a “prediscursive” and “politically neutral surface on which culture acts” (10).

This brings us to the problem of the construction of the concept of gender – we are motivated to enquire how and through what circumstances this concept is consolidated. As gender is a cultural construct it is precipitated upon certain bodies that can be termed as “passive recipients of an inexorable cultural law” (11). Culture here becomes the all powerful signifier that is compared to biology by Butler – an unquestionable authority that plays the role of destiny. However, Beauvoir’s contention in The Second Sex that “one is not born a woman, but rather becomes one”3 suggests the construction of gender in such a way that there is the possibility of the existence of an agent who takes control of a particular gender, but could also have preferred some other gender. However, when one becomes a woman, one is necessarily compelled by the prevailing cultural system to become so. Beauvoir thus equates sex to gender as she does
not accept sex to be an anatomical fact that is established prior to the construction of the concept of gender. The body is usually taken to be a passive instrument on which culture imprints its meanings but we must not forget that the body is also a construction which is unquestionably intertwined with the gender it represents thereby questioning the concept of the body being an inactive medium that is enlivened by the touch of a “signifying immateriality” as Butler calls it.4

Gender, then, can be taken as an indication of several differences, whether biological, cultural or even linguistic. This signification is imposed on bodies that are sexually different and it exists in contrast to another body that is signified in a different way. Thus, according to some feminist theorists gender is not a universal characteristic but a conglomeration of relations. Some others like Beauvoir believe that the only gender that is particularly identified is the feminine gender as the masculine is considered to be the universal thereby identifying women with their sex and liberating men from the shackles of their body. This formulation is further debated and problematized by Luce Irigaray who identifies women as a contradiction within the concept of identity as it is difficult to represent them through a language that is essentially masculinist. She argues that women are “unrepresentable” through this phallocentric language as they signify the sex that cannot be conceived; they are “a linguistic absence” and represent “opacity” (13). This gives rise to the concept of the multiplicity of women as they cannot be designated under one identity that is constituted of certain definite attributes; the concept of women becomes unrepresentable through the masculinist language as “the female sex constitutes the unconstrainable and the undesignatable” (13). Irigaray challenges Beauvoir for whom women are the ‘Other’; she argues that it is masculinity itself that has
generated the concept of the Other along with the centrality of the masculine subject as it
serves to exclude the feminine totally from its domain through this phallocentric
language. Thus Beauvoir’s theory that women signify the negative against which man
differentiates himself is questioned by Irigaray who does not consider this mode of
representation adequate because women are not truly represented through this
formulation by Sartre (signifying – subject / signified – Other) which Beauvoir adopts.

The humanist feminist position considers gender to be the characteristic of a
person who forms the ‘core’ that is pregendered. The social theory of gender, however,
replaces this concept as gender is identified as a relation existing between socially formed
subjects in specific circumstances. According to this theory gender is continuously
dependent on the various relations that formulate it. This prompts Butler to deduce that
“gender does not denote a substantive being, but a relative point of convergence among
culturally and historically specific sets of relations” (14). Irigaray presents a totally
different concept of gender as she does not agree either with the Sartrian concept or the
concept of Beauvoir that denotes the feminine as an Other or a lack. According to her the
“female sex eludes the very requirements of representation” as the “feminine ‘sex’ is a
point of linguistic absence” (14). She refuses to accord any singularity to the female sex
and actually echoes Beauvoir’s concept of the limitations of masculinist discourse.
Therefore, these various concepts give rise to two schools of thought: one that considers
gender to be a secondary attribute of human beings and another that believes that the
concept of the human itself is a construct that is essentially masculinist that negates the
possibility of the feminine gender.
Beauvoir and Irigaray thus differ on how gender differences are produced: while the former deduces the failure of a reciprocal dialogue between the masculine and the feminine, the latter considers all significations to be masculine. This leads us to identify a colonizing tendency in the masculine that works through “dialectical appropriation and suppression of the Other” (19). But it must always be remembered that the category of women is not a homogeneous totality. On the contrary, it is marked by several differences in social, cultural and political identities. Thus the problem of the establishment of identity has also to be raised in this context. As Butler says, “certain political practices institute identities on a contingent basis in order to accomplish whatever aims are in view” and this is how the masculine and feminine identities and the genders are consolidated (22). New and fluid identities are constructed when the contemporary political discourses are no longer concerned with the already stabilized identities. The identities are never stable and are open to several alterations and inclusions and the same characteristics apply to gender as well because it is complex in structure and never a whole that is foreclosed and therefore cannot be challenged; the permeability of gender that can not be signified by any closure being suggested by Butler as she asks if identities can persist through time as unchanged and consolidated beyond questioning. Similar enquiries can be applied to gender identities as persons attain intelligibility only by becoming gendered through conformation to accepted norms. Generally the social contextualization of the person is thought to be externally linked to the personality; the question of personal identity being hinged on the internal attributes of the person that remains constant over time. In our present enquiry, however, the question should be the extent of impact of the norms of gender formation and to what extent gender and identity
are both governed by regulatory practices, that is, “‘coherence’ and ‘continuity’ of ‘the person’ are not logical or analytic features of personhood, but, rather, socially instituted and maintained norms of intelligibility” (23). This is why the assured identity that is consolidated through the established notions of sex and gender is challenged when persons who do not conform to accepted norms of gender appear, persons who are identified as “‘incoherent’ or ‘discontinuous’ gendered beings” by Butler (23).

We are thus brought to the concept of sex as viewed by several theorists. For Irigaray there is only one sex that is the masculine which produces the feminine as the Other to consolidate its own position. Wittig, on the other hand, avers that sex is essentially and only feminine as the masculine being unmarked is equated to the universal. Foucault considers the production of the concepts of masculine and feminine through the regulatory authority of sexual politics. Both Foucault and Wittig hope that the concept of sex itself would disappear due to the destruction and removal of the oppression of heterosexual hegemony. Irigaray goes on to suggest that women are absolutely unrepresentable as they are banished from the system of representation prevalent in Western culture. Women are not only the Other but something intrinsically different from the masculine subject – “a difference from the economy of binary opposition, itself a ruse for a monologic elaboration of the masculine” (25). Butler reminds us that ‘being’ a gender or a sex is essentially not possible and Irigaray shows that the binary of male/female actually conceals the masculinist hegemony that negates the feminine as subversion and hence condemns it to silence. Foucault, on the other hand, goes on to identify an artificial relation between the binaries of male and female alongside a misrepresented consolidation within those very binaries. Through the
imposition of these binaries society tries to suppress any other identity that may rear its head and disturb the already established heterosexual matrix.

Wittig believes that the heterosexual system wants to uphold the binaries of male/female primarily to serve the purpose of reproduction. If this oppression by compulsory heterosexuality can be countered, the true self of the person, liberated from the bondages of sex will emerge and the “illusion of sex, gender and identity” will be destroyed. However, both Wittig and Beauvoir agree that the body restricts women and deprive them of the liberty and supremacy availed by men due to their freedom from sexually charged bodily attributes. The abolition of the category of sex would entail freedom for women who are judged by their gender alone and are deprived of the persona enjoyed by men. This realization prompts Wittig to comment that “Gender is the linguistic index of the political opposition between the sexes” as masculine is the “general” and consequently the only gender that exists is the feminine.

Gender can signify cohesion of experience of the various facets of gender, sex and desire when it is considered to be the cultural representation of the self and desire is exclusively heterosexual and is in conflict with the other gender that is longed for. Thus the consolidation of both masculine and feminine gender requires a constant and contrasting heterosexuality. Through the establishment of a heterosexual matrix the concept of masculine is established as being intrinsically different from and ever oppositional to the feminine. The ‘gender core’ that has been referred to by Robert Stoller is, therefore, produced by cultural norms though voices of dissonance constantly rise to contest these fixed characteristics. Through discussions on these various ramifications of the concept of gender Butler arrives at the conclusion that gender is created and
controlled by the legitimizing practices of gender consolidation. Though gender is always created, the subject may not have pre-existed this creation. She subscribes to Nietzsche’s view that the subject is inferior to the construct to which he contributes and the formulation that “there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very “expressions” that are said to be its results” (34). Therefore, according to Butler, “gender proves to be performative – that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be” (34).

Though Nietzsche attaches no importance to the “doer” by referring to him as merely “a fiction added to the deed”, most feminist theories attach great importance to this entity as the doer is the agent that initiates a change in relation. Wittig, for example, considers all agency to be centered in the individual and agrees upon the performativity of gender. The female body, often considered to be the cause of oppression, is actually a device established by the oppressor, certain norms that are formulated to keep the feminine under control. For her, language is anti-feminine not in its structures, but only in the several applications made by it. Irigaray, on the other hand, rejects this very language as the only purpose it serves is to negate the feminine which according to Wittig is a reconsolidation of the mythic concept of the female. She is thus aware of the capability of language to oppress and erase women.

This brings us to the concept of the masculine as propagated by Lacan. He considers the masculine subject as a construct that is fictitious and created by the law to prevent incest just as the feminine is a representation of the lack of the masculine attributes. The patriarchal law which Butler terms as the “law of the Father” imposes certain restrictions which consolidate the heterosexual matrix thereby introducing the
incest taboo that prohibits the son from the mother (38). Similarly the girl is forced to represent maternity itself by being distanced both from the father and the mother by this very law. Thus the feminine and masculine positions are established as ‘culturally intelligible genders’ through prohibitions resulting in the creation of an ‘unconscious sexuality’ that resurfaces in the realm of imagination. Feminist approaches often stress on the exclusion of the feminine by the masculine and theorists like Jacqueline Rose assert that the creation of the binary of masculine/feminine within sexual identity is sure to collapse as voices are bound to be raised against such categorization. Whether sexuality is pre-social or established by the phallocentric society has often been a matter of debate among philosophers. Foucault here takes a mediating position by asserting that power and sexuality are intertwined and questions the existence of a sexuality that can posit itself outside the law. The Foucaultian concept has often spawned what Butler calls a “utopian notion of a sexuality freed from heterosexual constructs, a sexuality beyond ‘sex’”, that has failed to acknowledge the ways in which power relations continue to construct sexuality for women even within the terms of a “liberated heterosexuality” (40-41). Irigaray’s conflation of the female anatomy and the feminine sexuality is another problem that crops up in this regard as it is a regressive step that defeats the concept of biology not being destiny. She, actually, is not clear about sexuality being culturally formulated according to the phallocentric language. However, we are lead to believe that sexuality is formulated within the concepts of power and that too according to phallocentric and heterosexual norms. Certain culturally constructed attributes of gender are consolidated over time and this elicits the definition of gender as provided by Butler: “Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid
regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being” (45).

Some feminists become nostalgic about a utopian and idealized concept of the past that had recourse to the “authentic feminine” though this acceptance problematizes the formulation of gender as a “complex cultural construction” in the present (49). The formulation of Lévi-Strauss about sex being prior to gender is used by some feminists to elucidate the nature/culture dichotomy. According to this structural anthropologist the biological ‘female’ is changed into a ‘woman’ who is socially dominated and so sex is the raw material that is transformed by culture into gender. Butler questions this formulation as there is no way to determine the point when this transition takes place, though this concept acts as the basic foundation of the nature/culture binary. According to the proponents of this theory culture fixes certain meanings on nature thereby designating the latter as an ‘Other’ that can be used for its own purposes. Anthropologists like Marilyn Strathern and Carol MacCormack consider nature to be female and as dominated by a culture that is considered to be male and industrious. Therefore mental agility is associated with the masculine whereas the feminine is considered to be passive waiting for an analytical explanation from the former.9

Butler draws our attention to what Lacan has to say about the identity of man and woman from phallocentric and linguistic point of view. It is signified that by being the Other to the phallus woman is considered to ‘be’ the phallus as the identity of the phallus is confirmed through this process. The privilege of man “having” the phallus is fortified only through the “not having” of women: we are reminded of the Hegelian relation of “failed reciprocity” between master and slave that involves the slave’s contribution in
establishing the identity of the master (60). This inevitably leads to the concept of lack and we become aware that the ‘real’ (the masculine) and the symbolic (the feminine) can never be compatible.¹⁰ Lacan identifies the ‘I’, the speaker in language as masculine; but this position is assumed through the negation of other relations resulting out of repression, for example, of the incestuous relations with the maternal body. The presence of woman is necessary to reconsolidate the concept that the autonomous identity is real and not illusory, and also to provide a possibility of returning to the pre-individuated state of availing the pleasures associated with the maternal body, devoid of any repression. This signifies that women can “be” the phallus by being the “signified object of exchange through which the paternal law extends its power” (62). This is also the ground on which various feminists suggest that women have to accept a ‘double renunciation’ as Freud has shown that the girl is forced to shift her libidinal attachment from her mother to the father and then again to some other object that is acceptable to the society. But even the masculine is prohibited from having absolute authority as it has the phallus but is not equivalent to the Law, rather subordinate to it. Women are further subordinated as they are, for some unexplained reason by Lacan, considered to be in need of protection. The woman, therefore, appears to assume the role of the phallus through masquerade which, according to Lacan, is the result of the melancholy that is an integral part of the feminine. In this respect Irigaray agrees that women masquerade but only to take part in masculine desire by relinquishing their own. The mask that is appropriated has a two-fold function: it hides the loss that it suffers and simultaneously conserves the loss or lack. In this way the masculine becomes a part of the feminine as Butler points out that “dominated through appropriation every refusal fails, and the refuser becomes part of the very
identity of the refused . . . becomes the psychic refuse of the refused” (67). Butler, through the analysis of Riviere further shows us that a woman takes up femininity only because she desires to have masculinity but is also apprehensive of the possible punishments society might impose on her for doing so. Some other psychoanalytical theories consider femininity to be based on the exclusion of the masculine, though the latter forms one component of the psychic fabric that is bisexual.

One, along with Butler, must also enquire what Freud has to say about gender consolidation. According to him “ego formation” and “character” is dependent on the workings of melancholia which is central to the formation of gender. As one loses the other person who is loved and desired this lost identity is preserved through incorporation within the ego of the affected person through certain imitations and appropriations of the characteristics of the other. This preservation is achieved through “the permanent internalization of the other’s attributes” (78). Internalization is integral to the concept of melancholia as Julia Kristeva has shown us; she differentiates the sexes according to the primary objects of aggression towards which they fix their impulses: the feminine position involves an internally directed masochism whereas the masculine position is concerned with sadism that is targeted toward the outer world. This is reflected elaborately in the partition novels where the violence is channelized along precisely these axes that involve suicide in the first case and murder and destruction in the second.

Julia Kristeva considers the maternal body to be a construct that pre-exists the paternal law which she identifies with culture. She opines that the maternal body contains certain meanings that have been inscribed before cultural configurations had been established. Maternity, therefore, becomes intrinsically pre-cultural. The maternal body
also gains importance due to its promise of the *jouissance* denied to culturally conditioned identities. The semiotic here comes to represent the maternal according to Kristeva and stands in contrast to the symbolic which represents the Law. The semiotic actually precedes the symbolic, for example, before a child learns to use the tools of language; the semiotic may also go beyond the use of language as in cases where words can no longer express the inner workings of the mind. Thus the symbolic is considered to be hegemonic by Kristeva as it imposes certain meanings considered to be valid from a particular point of view; this imposition can be countered only through the semiotic. When this cannot be availed people resort to silence as in the case of the women in partition fiction.

Butler discusses the concept of Monique Wittig who postulates that sex is a construct that is subservient to the concept that nature is essentially related to reproductive sexuality. She says that the only sex that exists is the female as “to be male is not to be “sexed”; to be “sexed” is always a way of becoming particular and relative, and males within this system participate in the form of the universal person” (154). Thus she collapses sex with gender and sex and femininity become intertwined. Wittig further considers sex to be an oppressive instrument against women and homosexuals. Butler identifies this as the reason for violence against these identities. Through sexual crimes targeted towards them these groups are reduced to their “sexed” identities, thereby affirming the superiority of the perpetrators, in this case, the males. This prompts Butler to identify sex with the “reality effect of a violent process” that takes as its target the other identities considered weaker and hence unable to retaliate (155). This explains the spate of violence during partition against women.
Wittig believes in a pre-social system where persons had been treated as equals before the distribution of the power of speech to males and the denial of the same to females. This accords an authoritative position to males and has politicized the categories of men and women. As women are ‘sexed’ by men through language, this identification is done so surely that it cannot be challenged or reversed. Moreover, when women are required to speak through that very language it becomes oppressive for them as they have to speak according to the terms imposed by patriarchy and accept their own lack of intelligence or agency while doing so. Thus this involves a denial of expression to their true self; it is as Butler calls it “a performative contradiction” (158). This is perhaps the reason why many women affected by partition take refuge in silence: language is inadequate for them, for expressing the trauma they have encountered.

Questions arise whether the female body is the site of cultural markings and politically constructed. It is often accepted that the body is a medium that is passive and it is marked by cultural beliefs that are outside this body. According to Christian and Cartesian views the body is often associated with nothingness that signifies the impure and the sinful, thereby relating it to the feminine that is temptation incarnate. Only thought or consciousness can attribute some meaning and hence legitimacy to the body thereby consolidating the mind-body dichotomy. We must remember that the body acts as a structure that encloses the soul which is invisible and can only be encountered through the body. Here the soul is on a higher plane than the body as Butler comments: “The soul is precisely what the body lacks; hence the body presents itself as a signifying lack” (184). Thus according to Foucault it is the soul that holds the body hostage and not vice versa as common religious perceptions because it is the workings of the soul that are
inscribed on the body. Foucault further draws our attention to the fact that the body has been attributed certain meanings by history which is dominating and repressive in nature. History appropriates the body in its entirety to inscribe on it the mandates of culture, so much so, that the body is entirely transformed from a blank page to a “sublimated domain of values” (177). As Mary Douglas suggests that through the inscription of culture certain norms are established which the body must adhere to, though the body often tries to fight back such demarcations and definite codes of culture.\(^\text{12}\) The person who poses such a threat is referred to as the “polluting person” who can bring destruction and must be avoided.\(^\text{13}\) During partition often the polluting person is thought to be belonging to the other religion or community.

The Other is established through expulsion from the self, it is something that has been originally a part of one’s identity but is now considered to be denigrating and hence avoidable in all circumstances. The rejection and subsequent destruction of the female body or parts thereof, or even parts of the male body is the result of consolidation of identities along religion, sex or communities. This is done, according to Kristeva, for establishing social domination. This is precisely the reason why female members of the other religion or community is targeted against and defiled or dismembered. The body of the Other simultaneously becomes an identity as well as an object that has to be dominated to establish power structures signifying the domination of one religion over another.

Thus the definition given by Butler is very important in understanding the role played by gender in partition fiction: “Gender ought not to be constructed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity
tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*” (191). She goes on to explain why gender consists of certain established behaviors, certain acts which the performers themselves start believing in and perform accordingly. This explains the attitude of different genders in partition fiction as well as in real life incidents. We are confronted with the fact that gender is not an already established identity, on the contrary, it is consolidated through certain repetitive social behaviors or performances that may question the set notions of masculinity or femininity and even the compulsory heterosexual matrix. Thus gender becomes essentially performative in nature and not absolute as established heterosexual and patriarchal social systems would like us to believe.

Partition fiction is replete with instances of masculine or feminine behavior that consolidates the concept of performativity. Gendered beings act according to certain norms that are imposed on them as they cannot go beyond the acts expected of them. As Priyamvada Gopal calls nationalism a “gendered and sexualized process”¹⁴ we are drawn to the concept of Bharatmata being mutilated by her children to fructify the secessionist movements to dismember her. In this connection the image offered by Urvashi Butalia is noteworthy: “One issue of the *Organiser* (August 14,1947) had a front page illustration of Mother India, the map of the country, with a woman lying on it, one limb cut off and severed with Nehru holding the bloody knife responsible for doing the severing” (186). This direct relation of the feminine with the country had far reaching consequences: women were to bear much of the brunt of this momentous event. The formation of the new state of Pakistan came to be associated with the mutilation of the purely Hindu state symbolized by the concept of mythical Bharatmata which involved a violation all her
sons were supposed to avenge and this directed the anger of the men towards real women, who were now taken not as individuals but as representatives of their religions and properties of the patriarchy, as objects having no personality or agency of their own.

Women have been long associated with the domain of home as opposed to the outer world which has been the realm of the men. Partha Chatterjee identifies these two worlds as ghar and bahir, the home as opposed to the world. The home appears to be unsullied by the demands of the world which is vitiated by the negotiations one has to make to eke out a living in this material world. Thus the male, the negotiator in the world, tries to protect the home for his woman, his greatest possession, from the vagaries of the outer world. The home represents for the man his “inner spiritual self, [his] true identity”15 which must be protected at any cost and the woman is elevated in status as long as she stays at home. Women are supposed to formulate and uphold the “god-like qualities” that distinguish them from men; not subjected to the requirements of an external world “women express in their appearance and behaviour the spiritual qualities which are characteristic of civilized and refined human society” (Chatterjee 242). Women too, take the home as their defined space where they must belong to allowing a lot of love and care in the creation and maintenance of these spaces. This attention and involvement is clearly manifested in the house of Prabha Rani and Lala Kanshi Ram in Azadi by Chaman Nahal where each object bears the stamp of individual attention on the part of the lady of the house: the beds are covered with printed sheets and the beddings and other daily household articles arranged in trunks kept neatly stacked. Here the things become important not for their intrinsic worth but for the involvement of the lady that spreads “peace and goodness in the house” (Nahal 23). The house itself acquires an identity of its
own – that of a guardian angel that showers their lives with blessings; a protective entity that becomes entwined with their lives – guiding and providing support to the family members.

The same love towards the home is evident when Ayah decorates Lenny’s house with the gifts she receives from the Chinaman in *Ice-Candy-Man*: “a persistent display of embroidered bosky-silk and linen tea-cosies, tray cloths, trolley sets, tablecloths, counterpanes, pillowcases and bedsheets” (Sidhwa 73). This love that Ayah showers on Lenny’s family is evident of the fact that she considers herself to be an integral part of this family, a bond that is broken when Lenny unwittingly leads to her abduction, scarring her mentally as well as physically, mentioned in a mock epic tone by the author: “I broke plates, cups, bowls, dishes. I smashed livers, kidneys, hearts, eyes . . . . The path to virtue is strewn with broken people and shattered china” (Sidhwa 85).

The destruction of the home is a threat that terrifies women; they have to negotiate hitherto unattended spaces. The tension of the imminent partition and the threat it poses is palpable in Lenny: “There is much disturbing talk. India is going to be broken. Can one break a country? And what happens if they break it where our house is?” (92). When forced to leave their homes they feel that a part of their identity is being severed as they find fulfillment in the objects that surround them. The same attachment is evident in Nooran for Jugga’s house where she does not even officially belong to before she is forced to board the train in *Train to Pakistan*. The little hope given to her by Jugga’s mother when the news of her pregnancy is revealed connects Nooran to all the objects of Jugga’s house: “she felt as if she belonged to the house and the house to her; the charpoy she sat on, the buffalo, Jugga’s mother all were hers” (Singh 153). The woman, the lover
in her, finds fulfillment in being associated with the inanimate objects which she takes as a replacement for Jugga; it does not matter even if Jugga does not turn up immediately. This is perhaps due to the fact that women often consider themselves as second class citizens in their own families. The male members are the supreme owners to whom all property belongs and women too fall within their ownership, therefore, this identification with the inanimate objects surrounding and inhabiting their world.

Household articles that define their identities are often of the basic requirements; the utensils they cook in, the quilts and beddings of everyday use, the steel trunks that house their possessions. When forced to migrate to an unknown land they try to organize these essentials of everyday life not knowing that these objects will have little relevance in the dilemma of life and death that awaits them on this perilous journey. Even here there is a class distinction among women; as for the lowly Muslim weaver’s daughter Nooran the everyday co-ordinates of life are as humble as “a couple of pitchers, cooking utensils and perhaps a brass plate and a copper tumbler or two” (154). Prabha Rani, being the wife of a fairly established grain merchant of Sialkot, is shattered by the thought of the wealth she has to leave behind, fine objects she has amassed over the ages, unknown even to her family, objects that reveal her love for the fine and the exquisite: “white silk handkerchiefs, . . . richly beaded bangles and silver-lined looking glasses”; objects that signify that part of the feminine which goes beyond reproduction and child rearing, that give some form of fulfillment beyond the socially ascribed necessities to the feminine (Nahal 122). But the partition spells the same judgment for all classes alike; just as Nooran has to arrange her few possessions in a gunny bag and a bedroll so does Prabha Rani have to leave everything behind and pack “one steel trunk and a bedroll filled with
blankets and sheets” (Nahal 122). Suvir Kaul captures the essence of this loss when he says that the partition “defamiliarized the everyday, . . . what had changed was the familiar relation between self and society” (6).

The essence of the home is the hearth that is maintained by the women of the house. In Ice-Candy-Man the phulkas made by Ayah and the glowing fire in the kitchen indicate a sense of completeness, a satisfaction in the stability of the household. The same assurance is conveyed by the smell of the earth that is to be found in Dost Mohammad’s village when Chidda, his wife and granddaughter of Imam Din, the cook of Lenny gives scraps of chappatis dipped in buttermilk to Lenny and her son Ranna. The clay hearth in which she cooks in their courtyard is redolent of the centuries long association with the land which the men folk cultivate to keep this hearth-fire running. Whether in the village or in the town the kitchen is the place where the women belong as we see Prabha Rani trying to finish her cooking in the smoke-filled kitchen with Isher Kaur as her company in the adjoining one. It is with the same involvement and devotion that Prabha Rani sets up “a temple in one of the small alcoves in a corner” showing her gratitude to the God who has allowed her and her family such a blissful life (Nahal 23). The woman acts as the guardian angel of the house as Prabha Rani meticulously arranges her son’s room. Through the objects such as the table cloth and the matching printed bed sheet and window curtains that signify luxury in such a family, the mother tries to develop and cater to the finer sensibilities in her son that leads to a general atmosphere of peace and contentment in the house.

The men of the house are affected by the sensibilities of the woman though they are often not aware of it. For them the house becomes an emblem of their achievement in
life as it is traditionally considered that the provider, that is, the male, is supposed to arrange the provisions for his family. In Azadi Lala Kanshi Ram’s attachment to his house and his shop exemplifies this inseparability that he feels. For him his wife signifies the greatest possession that he has; he thinks of her virginity as a pearl that is covered by layers of dresses and only he has the power to uncover the layers and reach the innermost sanctum. When confronted with the reality of leaving Sialkot and deserting his house and shop, he feels that the only object worth taking along is his wife: “if he were asked to take just one article out of this house, just one memento of the blessings of his life here, or one marvel for the future to come – he would take only Prabha. Yes, Prabha alone” (Nahal 122). Perhaps he feels so because during crises men learn to understand the true worth of fellow family members; stripped of material wealth human beings are considered to be of prime importance and so this appreciation of the wife. We cannot but help to notice that though Lala Kanshi Ram truly values his wife yet he cannot prevent himself from objectifying her. Thus one must remember that even when an object is ‘loved’, ‘cherished’, ‘cared for’ and ‘valued’ it still remains an object, bereft of agency and subjectivity. In most families the woman is treated similarly and even as worse and we agree with Martha Nussbaum as she observes that “the damage women suffer in the family takes a particular form: the woman is treated not as an end in herself, but as an adjunct or instrument of the needs of others, as a mere reproducer, cook, cleaner, sexual outlet, caretaker, rather than as a source of agency and worth in her own right” (Nussbaum 243). She is equated to property, the greatest possession that has to be protected from prying eyes that may threaten the sovereignty of the master of the house. It is for this reason that the dress of Prabha Rani is described in detail by the author just
to give us an idea of the protective layers that conceal her virginity thereby assigning it supreme importance. It is this importance attached to proprietorship over the sexuality of women that leads to the violation of many as well as honour killings to prevent this violation.

One object that defines the identity of the woman is the dupatta, Chunni or the headcover or veil. The object is used to keep the woman protected from the inquisitive glances of other males, possible threats that may disturb the equilibrium of the home. In Sikhs it is often thought to be the counterpart of the beard that gives a sort of protective energy field around the face, “it protects the grace of the woman . . . it provides protection so [one does not] attract the wrong kind of energy. It means a woman is not sexually available . . . it actually changes the way people – especially men – see and relate to her”.¹⁶ Thus, if the woman subscribes to the role patriarchy formulates for her, she considers it her duty to protect herself from inquisitive eyes. It is noteworthy that this system prevails among all religions, thereby granting a universality to the theory that men consider themselves to be the centre of this civilized world as Radhika Chopra says in her reading of Uberoi and Murphy to establish that “the male body is the privileged terrain on which community is articulated”.¹⁷ The women are the dominated and often they actively participate in the propagation of these concepts as veiling is often thought to be “a process that completes a person” (Chopra 182). The transformation of the young girl into a woman is often achieved through veiling practices that are layered. The veiled female body is thus distantiated from the unveiled male body that is taken as the representative of the community through the establishment of the former as the Other.
In the Indian subcontinent the home that is the centre of domesticity and identified basically as the space belonging to the female is shielded from outsiders through different practices that generate invisibility. The home is considered to be the sanctum sanctorum that is not to be vitiated by external influences and the female or the lady of the house is the deity that has to be protected from all violations that may be inflicted by the external world, particularly other male members of society. The interior of the house becomes characterized by the unknowable bodies that people them and the unfamiliar politics that remain confined within the four walls. It is for this reason that we see Prabha Rani and Isher Kaur without their headgear in the confines of their kitchen as this allowance is made not only in the absence of men of other families but also when men of their own families are not present: “Since no men were around, neither of the women were wearing a headdress. Isher Kaur had no dupatta, and Prabha Rani had let the sari slip from her head” (Nahal 33). The dupatta or sari as a covering for the head is ubiquitous in all religions and classes, lower or upper, whether it is the “shabby black burka” of a poor patient of Col. Bharucha or the woman in a “modern, grey silk burka” who pleads with the Ice-candy-man to intercept on her behalf with God so that she is blessed with a son after four daughters (Sidhwa 12, 96). The Ice-candy-man dressed as a phony holy man rains the munificence of God on this woman by assuring her the love of God by establishing that to God the “king and beggar are the same! . . . this son-less woman is queen!”; making us aware that the burka hides not only the woman but her pains too. Bapsi Sidhwa humorously draws our attention to the misplaced sense of security that the veil offers to the Punjabi women – exposing that part which should be obstructed and covering the face that would not have mattered if uncovered as Lenny and
Imam Din experience women engaged in their morning ablutions: “the smooth, plump spheres of young women who hide their faces in their veils and bare their bottoms” – a sense of ludicrous is brought in to highlight the futility of the whole exercise of veiling (Sidhwa 51). The process of becoming a woman is initiated from a tender age: we find Lenny being surprised at the contrast between herself and the dresses and mannerisms adopted by Khatija and Parveen, the girls at Pir Pindo village who look like “miniature women of eight and nine, their heads modestly covered” (54). The same custom is repeated in the child bride Papoo who has to restrain her spirited nature under a ghoongat when she is married off to a middle aged dwarf.

It is noteworthy that women who are identified as promiscuous do not need the protective covering of the veil as we see in Haseena, the young prostitute, who is brought in to service Hukum Chand, the magistrate in Train to Pakistan. Neither she nor the old woman who is her trainer requires being veiled as such “fallen” women cannot enjoy the secrecy and protection offered by a dupatta because they are public property. Nooran, the Muslim weaver’s daughter, is also free from such dictates as she has the courage to take her own decisions, decisions that violate the social norms and religious dictates as she loves a Hindu ‘budmash’ Jugga and is not afraid to meet him on assignations. City-bred women often do not ascribe to this system of purdah as we see Nur, the college going Muslim girl in Azadi not wearing the dupatta in the way her mother does as the latter is accustomed to the confines of her home; covering “her face upto her eyes with her dupatta” when she is in company of other people (Nahal 155).

Ayah in Ice-Candy-Man reveals the significance of veiling in various situations. When in the company of her friends and admirers in pre-partition Lahore she is least
bothered about such external protection. Secure in the Parsee family of which she is almost an extension she has little time for the markers that stress on her femininity, she is confident of the effects her beauty produces not only on lowly gardeners, masseurs or zoo-keepers but also on the British Sahibs who seldom fail to admire her. Her dress at this point is a matter of convenience for her, she prefers the sari to the common dress of Punjabi women, the shalwar kameez, as it equates her to the Goan ayahs who are paid more. With the approach of partition, however, everything changes. The indomitable and free spirit of Ayah is cowered by the spectacle that Ice-candy-man bares for her – the burning of Shalmi and massacre of innocent people generate in her the need to veil herself from the mindless violence men are capable of; she “sits sheathing her head and form with her sari; cowering and lumpish against the wall” (Sidhwa 135). Later when she is carried away by Ice-candy-man and his mob and placed in Hira Mandi her surroundings are revealed through her clothes. Now belonging to a place where, as the author asserts, “none of the women [are] veiled” she has to dress herself anew according to the world’s oldest profession (Sidhwa 259). The “bold girls, with short, permed hair” differ from domestic women as they exhibit coordinates which are unfamiliar in everyday lives (259). The veil is no longer required here as it has been established beyond doubt that these women cannot be reclaimed or restituted to the normal folds of society; the women of the kotha have also accepted this fact and are no longer desirous of the veil. Thus they are liberated from the constraints of patriarchal society in one way, refusing the performativity of those acts which the dictates of society want them to abide by. The forced transformation of the Ayah is evident in her dress as she arrives to meet Lenny and Godmother: “tripping on the massive divided skirt of her garara, jangling gold bangles.
Her eyes are lowered and her head draped in a gold-fringed and gauzy red *ghoongat*” (260). In her case, the ghoongat is an object that has lost its utility; after subjecting her to prostitution the Ice-candy-man has now offered her a veil, apparently to protect her from the atrocities of the world for which she does not care anymore. From her ‘sari’ she has transitioned to this ornate wardrobe that is forced embellishment. She has been transformed into a person that she is not; she is as artificial as the “tiny pieces of tinsel glitter stuck on her chin and cheeks” (260). The atrocities committed on her have extracted her soul and she has become a living corpse and only her eyes are indicative of her mental state: “Her vacant eyes are bigger than ever: wide-opened with what they’ve seen and felt” (260). We are tempted to equate her to Sakina in Manto’s famous short story *Khol Do (Open It)* who, sexually tortured by men of other and her own religion, is transformed into a mechanized person who takes off her shalwar whenever she hears any such command. In both cases we are shown “how the experience of bodily mutilation [can] permanently mutilate the use of ordinary language”.\(^\text{18}\)

Through the veiling of Ayah the Ice-Candy-Man tries to reestablish the familiar coordinates of everyday lives as they existed in the pre-partition era. Though the Ayah has been cast to the outer world and pandered to all and sundry now the Ice-Candy-Man wants to establish himself as a poet and wants to establish his exclusive rights on her by relegating her to the confines of the ghoongat as well as the inner recesses of his house, though it is in Hira Mandi. Here he shows the tendency to “treat other human beings as mere tools rather than as ends in themselves” (Nussbaum 244). He wants to establish himself as a poet and use Ayah as the inspiration to fool the outer world – he wants to improve his stature in his own eyes, leaving behind sinister tendencies and putting on a
refined and cultured façade that can only be established if his wife is present to return his passion for her. But the extreme torture the Ayah is subjected to not only from unknown men but also from friends has changed her forever, a part of her is dead, and we realize what Veena Das means when she says that “the greatest opposition that such a living death brings to the fore is not that between being and nothingness, but between utterance and silence” (Das The Word 207).

Judith Butler points out that “there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; . . . identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results” (34). This is very true in the case of partition fiction where objects like the dupatta gather meanings that overflow its use; it becomes the marker of the purity of a woman, the identity of a woman. Thus we see Hamida, the replacement of Ayah, clinging to her “frayed voil chuddar” when she comes to secure employment at Lenny’s house (Sidhwa 190). Her dress, “a faded kamize that is too short for her over a wash-greyed shalwar”, indicates that she had been cast out of her familiar world as she had been abducted by Sikhs to Amritsar and now perhaps awaits restitution by the state, through it is unlikely that she will be accepted back by her husband as Godmother says, “sometimes, the husband – or his family – won’t take her back . . . . Some folk feel that way – they can’t stand their women being touched by other men” (190,215).19 Her dress signifies the loss of colour in her life and the amount of pain and suffering this woman has to go through; she is reduced to a bruised and battered person, perpetually afraid and panic stricken. She is ready to do any household chores offered to her as she asserts, “After all, I’ve been a housewife” (191). Thus she wants to return to the familiar world of a household that has been denied to her, if not as a part of her own family, as a servant in
another. When she makes this assertion she suddenly realizes her changed situation and
takes recourse to the same chuddar to hide her pain from unfamiliar outsiders as “she
hunkers down on the bedroom floor and draws her chuddar forward over her face” (191).
Hamida does not question her ill-fate; she accepts the dictates of patriarchy that forbids
her to have any claim over her children conceding her situation to the vagaries of fate.
The veil remains her only companion as she hides “her face bashfully in her chuddar” to
cover her shame and the extreme pain that she cannot share with anybody (222). She
drapes herself in the coarse chuddar; forever an outsider in this new world, a world that
can not return her lost peace.

The dupatta or the veil thus becomes the anchor to which women connect
themselves to maintain the semblance of normality; it is an instrument to keep their
modesty intact, a quality that is considered to be an intrinsic part of any woman. We may
refer to the experiences of one Rajendra Kaur, forced by circumstances to migrate from
Rawalpindi to Delhi as she voices the extreme pain and helplessness felt by people who
go through such experiences: “When I was young I had never crossed the
dyodhi(threshold) of my house barefaced and bareheaded. When the riots started . . . my
husband’s head was without a turban. I had no chunni to cover my head. Suddenly I was
exposed to so many men’s gaze. This was so frightening.”20 This changed situation forces
women to accept the altered gaze of society and also alters the way in which they view
themselves as the primary emotion generated is that of shame which is concerned with
the “awareness of other’s regard for oneself” (Madianou 4). Shame always involves an
audience which can be actual or fancied and this audience can be either the society or the
individuals themselves as often the self appropriates the gaze of the other and constantly
measures themselves against this gaze. The imbalance in power structures is often responsible for the generation of shame as the self has to establish itself against the accepted norms of society and often realizes oneself to be a deficient person. Shame thus involves sudden and unwanted exposure to the outer world, thereby generating a sense of lack in the concerned person, in this case the women who have been stripped off the security of their veils during partition. This makes us understand what Erikson means when he says that “shame supposes that one is completely exposed and conscious of being looked at – in a word, self-conscious . . . shaming exploits the increased sense of being small” (Identity 110). The habits of the confines of a home and the layering of a veil are denied to women through the changing circumstances ushered in by the partition.

What is felt acutely by the women during the partition is experienced by men to some extent when they are deprived of their turbans. If we study partition fiction then we shall see that turbans forms part of male identity in most communities during this period, whether it is the religious turban of the Sikh or the readymade hat like turban of the sub-inspector in Train to Pakistan. Kemper suggests that it can be “the agent’s excess status, or lack of status, that gives rise to shame” and we realize that whereas in women it may be generated by the lack of status, in men the loss of turban may signify the loss of the excess status they have in society; they are the formulators of law and now, in changed circumstances, they must adhere to the laws made by other men, usually from the other religious communities. A conscious refusal of the turban is demonstrated by Lala Kanshi Ram when he has to adjust to a new life of penury after the migration enforced by partition. His diminished status from being a wealthy grain merchant of Sialkot to a small makeshift store owner in the verandah of his refugee camp quarter hurts him immensely
and questions his self-respect: “From the time he set up this little shop, he had stopped wearing a turban. A turban was a sign of respect, of dignity. He had no dignity left. He now wore a forage cap. Or he sat bare-headed, advertising his humble position to the world” (Nahal 323). This loss of turban may be related to the impact of the loss of material property in the men. Lala Kanshi Ram exhibits this angst when his house has to be abandoned for a safe passage to India. The dismantling of the objects that constituted his house of three decades is compared to the stripping of his flesh: “they were stripping the walls bare, and Lala Kanshi Ram felt they were stripping his flesh from his body. The bone was showing – whichever way he turned” (121). When his shop is looted his whole constitution is shaken as he forgets to bow before the household deity after he comes home, perhaps because his faith in the goodness of God is shaken. His whole being resonates of a failure, a sense of inadequacy in being unable to protect the shop which has been part of his identity; “he now stood motionless, unable to decide what to do, as though he had come to the wrong house or were not the same man” (115). As men value the material achievements of the outer world more than women, the loss of the same results in a fragmentation in their identities that cannot be mended. The sense of exposure and irreparable loss that Lala Kanshi Ram feels is exhibited through the furniture of the house which are so huge in size and so solidly made “that stripped of their coverings they presented a gory sight, as though several giants lay in ruin” (122-123). This signifies the emotional ruin suffered by Lala Kanshi Ram and innumerable others like him affected by the partition.

There have been instances of women suffering from the problem of properties too. Bibi Amar Vati in Azadi is one such woman who is the landlady of two large houses
in which she has many tenants. With the approach of partition she has to arrange the evacuation of herself and her family along with Lala Kanshi Ram and others. As the houses have been her maternal property her inefficient husband Gangu Mull has no claim over the property or the rents received from it. This makes him a second-class citizen in his own house and when ultimately Bibi Amar Vati goes to the refugee camp and crosses over to India; Gangu Mull returns back to the city of Sialkot to claim himself as the sole proprietor of this property. The property becomes an important coordinate to judge a woman as in this case the husband is happy to leave his wife and family for the property he never could enjoy. This is the other side of the coin Urvashi Butalia shows us as she talks of her own uncle Ranamama who had forcefully detained his mother in Pakistan as the family property was in her name. Instances of abductions of older women holding properties were also not uncommon as she notes that “they would keep these old women, kill off their sons and make themselves their sons . . . and then they would get their property” (Butalia 158). Thus the position of privilege enjoyed by Bibi Amar Vati in her matriarchal family by virtue of the two houses she owned is challenged as partition forces her to migrate. Objects and people share a symbiotic relationship in which each are defined by the other, just as Bibi Amar Vati loses all her agency through the relinquishment of the houses, the houses themselves become bereft of life: “there stood the houses already like ruined monuments before them, in which no one seemed to have lived for ages. They looked spectral and forbidding: everything around them, the windows, the doors, the ventilators, were shut tight . . . . Now the quiet of the grave seemed to have settled on them, and it seemed the life which had been lived in them was only wasted away” (Nahal 136). Houses often acquire human characteristics, it happens
in partition fiction too: they signify the pain felt by human beings when abandoned by their near ones. The absence of the inhabitants ages the houses instantly as they are defined by the people who inhabit them. Lenny realizes this when she observes: “It is astonishing how rapidly an uninhabited house decays. There are cracks in the cement floor of the Singh’s annexe and big patches of damp on the walls. Clouds of mosquitoes rise in dark corners and lizards cleave to the ceilings. It looks like a house pining for its departed – haunted like Ayah’s eyes are by memories of Masseur” (Sidhwa 176). Houses gather almost a ‘feminine’ identity, inert and without agency, longing for their inhabitants but unable to reach out to them accepting fate as abducted women like Hamida in Ice-Candy-Man have to.

Houses provide a sense of security and comfort which the migrating millions are denied once the process of dislocation begins. Lala Kanshi Ram exhibits this sense of contentment in the pre-partition world: “Sitting there in that house, padded with clothes all around, he felt comforted” (Nahal 25). Clothes, therefore, provide a sense of protection just as they protect the virginity of the women through layering. Whenever people are to be cowered they are denuded as this takes away the primary defense of our bodies that we are accustomed to. In Train to Pakistan Iqbal the communist is shorn of his confidence when he is ordered to strip by the police sub-inspector. This educated upper class reformer who has come to reshape the lives of the people of the villages of Punjab and make them aware of the inequalities and the atrocities of life forgets to question the validity of this command which reduces his stature. His “planned speech remained undelivered . . . His resistance had gone . . . Iqbal felt humiliated. There was no fight left in him” (Singh 79-80). Denuding one turns out to be extremely humiliating
for the sufferer so much so that one forgets to assert oneself. The person becomes powerless and loses all agency of his own. Hence this becomes a process of disempowerment. The same situation is noted in *Ice-Candy-Man* when Hari is stripped of his dress by men whom he considers to be his friends. A matter of consensual banter in pre-partition Lahore has the tacit understanding that despite attempts by all and sundry present at the scene Hari will never be denuded. With the change in situation the perception and attitudes of his comrades such as Imam Din and Yousaf change and we see them identifying Hari as the “Other” who must be humiliated to quell the emotional turmoil they go through due to the transformation in their familiar world. To Lenny it appears that Hari’s dhoti is “just begging to be taken off!” so that when he is ultimately stripped the perpetrators of this unfriendly act are absolved of their guilt (Sidhwa 118). However, when the mob comes to ascertain Hari alias Himat Ali’s religious affiliation Imam Din tries to atone for his earlier sin by preventing his denudation.

If men are affected by denudation to such extent one can easily imagine the effect on women who are used to protective layers of clothes on their body. Even the young girls are heavily dressed particularly in villages as we see Ranna’s young sisters being dressed as miniature grown up women. One can then comprehend the sheer pain of betrayal felt by not only such girls but also their family, in this case Ranna, when he sees his “eleven-year-old sister, Khatija, run stark naked into their courtyard, her long hair disheveled, her boyish body bruised, her lips cut and swollen and a bloody scab where her front teeth were missing” (Sidhwa 202). It has been construed that “those who were themselves involved in this violence, either as victims or the perpetrators of violence, have found in these events a symptom of their loss of humanity” (Das and Nandy, 187).
It is this loss that prepares Ranna for the horrors he faces when he tries to reach his family on the other side of the border, watching “men copulating with wailing children – old and young women” and he does not find it unfamiliar when he sees a “naked woman, her light Kashmiri skin bruised with purple splotches and cuts, hanging head down from a ceiling fan . . . as jeering men set her long hair on fire” (Sidhwa 207).

The culmination of the process of denudation is reflected in the procession of the naked women reported in Azadi that Arun and Suraj Prakash is witness to. It is a procession of forty women, making files of two walking side by side. Though consisting mostly of young women, the grotesqueness of the procession is enhanced by the inclusion of two women over sixty. The author gives a graphic description of these denuded women: “They were all stark naked. Their heads were completely shaven; so were their armpits. So were their pubic regions. Shorn of their body hair and clothes, they looked like baby girls, or like the bald embryo one sees preserved in methylated spirit” (Nahal 261). The Muslims of Narowal parade abducted Hindu women after subjecting them to various types of tortures and already maiming them both physically and emotionally even before this parade takes place. The women, without the comfort of the protection of clothes and shorn of the natural protection of their body hair are transformed into the living dead. It is true that they walk, but with unnatural posture as the movements of their hands do not match the movements of their legs. They have been subjected to so much torture that they are mentally bruised and have lost all agency; they do not even cover themselves with their hands: “their arms were free, but so badly had they been used, so wholly their spirits crushed, their morale shattered, none of them made any attempt to cover themselves with their hands” (261). The incident reported in this
fiction finds corroboration in the reminiscences of the famous painter Satish Gujral who had been actively involved in the evacuation of refugees from Lahore to India. He writes about the attack on the Muslim Girls’ Hostel at Amritsar: “the inmates of this hostel were stripped and forced to march in a procession through the city up to the main market called Hall Bazar. There they were openly gang-raped, subjected to the most perverse treatment that the worst sadistic imagination could conceive, and finally murdered.”22 The denudation of women thus leads to their transformation into animals that are herded and paraded. The women themselves are transformed into animate objects who “were all crying, though their eyes shed no tears” thereby giving up human attributes (261).

This example of denudation is noteworthy for its impact not only on women but also on men as the dominant prototype of masculinity that according to Erikson tries to efface all attributes of the castrate from its constitution is aroused and it makes “a shell out of mannishness out of what is left” (59). What Gujral writes about the actual incident is key to the understanding of this behaviour: “The site was packed with a dense and wild crowd, which had gathered to watch the ghastly tamasha staged at the Hall Bazar. From the window of my car, I tried to search for signs of horror or compassion on the faces of those who stood around me, I could find none” (Gujral 53 italics mine). Men view these captured women as representatives of the other religion and try to score by subjecting them to denudation and by inflicting violence on them. Martha Nussbaum cites the concept of Andrea Dworkin to analyze such behaviour and avers that “men have been pervasively socialized to think that aggression, violence and the treatment of women as objects are just normal male attitudes” (Nussbaum 245). This scene becomes abnormal and unnatural as it goes beyond the normal social set up, violating all accepted norms of
society. The parading of the denuded women is done in the name of religion which is considered to be sacred but the mode in which this sacredness is enforced is absolutely profane and banal to its core. Chaman Nahal effectively depicts the evilness of the general atmosphere during this unwelcome incident:

“It was the most unwholesome gathering . . . . Not only did the men there look unclean and vulgar, there was an indecorous thickness in the air and the whole atmosphere was smeared over with smut, as if a brush of some grisly substance had been run over the men, the buildings and the bazaar” (259-260).

The pattern of violence that these men inflict over the women shakes the core of the rules established by human society, but all present in the crowd are unified by their abhorrence of the other religion and the desire to take revenge through these women: “what unified the crowd and soldered them into a single mass was the look on their faces. It was the look of extreme sensuality. And it was the look of hate” (Nahal 260). These men direct their hatred towards the women because in them they find the incarnation of what Erikson defines as the ‘negative identity’, a compilation of the attributes one must avoid, which is, womanhood and the other religion. There is no denying the fact that the collective consciousness of men propel them into such acts as they are emboldened by the power of collectivity and we realize what Veena Das and Ashis Nandy mean when they opine that “violence seems to be conceptualized here as an epidemic, communicated from person to person in the form of a substance” (188).

Clothes become markers of gender in different ways; denial of clothes to women signify their position of weakness and that of being second-class citizens, whereas men
use their clothes to satisfy their mental aberrations. The dress of the crowd present is
noteworthy: “most of them wore plain shirts and lungis or tehmads – garments they
frequently would lift with their hands to cool their legs. Most of them were also wearing
charms and amulets. Studded in silver or copper, and tied to the body with a black thread,
there were amulets around their necks, amulets around their upper arms, and amulets
around their wrists” (260). The author here focuses on the amulets worn by the men to
indicate their Muslim identity. But interesting is the fact that they do not wear the
shalwar, the common Muslim dress which Hari is forced to adopt once he converts to
Islam from Hinduism in Ice-Candy-Man. This is because the garments they wear aid
them in exhibitionism as “many men in the front rows of the crowd lifted their lungis to
display their genitals” (262). The American Psychiatric Association has classified
exhibitionism as a “mental health condition that centers on a need to expose one’s
genitals to other people (typically strangers caught off guard) in order to gain sexual
satisfaction.”23 Usually this disorder is a result of emotional abuses faced during
childhood or imbalance in the family environment. In this case the disturbed social
scenario is responsible for bringing out the disorder in men as they objectify women who
are not appreciated as human beings or in their totality any more as their body parts
become their markers though they lose the magic that characterizes the usual
heterosexual attraction:

Almost to the last man . . . stared at the pubic regions of the women.
Through indelicate exposure those areas had lost their glory, lost all
magic, and there was only a small, slippery aperture you saw there. But
men’s eyes were settled on these apertures. And the moment the women had passed ahead, the eyes were settled on the bruised buttocks (262).

Thus the women as well as the men become scarred for lives as “normality itself become[s] fractured and bruised” (Das and Nandy 190).

In this context we are reminded of Beauvoir’s questioning of the misogynist attitude prevalent in society; she identifies the masculine to be identical with the universal. In this respect she not only draws our attention to the demands of women to be included within this concept of “abstract universality”, but she also questions the very concept of the masculine as liberated from any bodily constrictions (Butler 16). She argues that not only is the masculine free from the body but this very association is imposed on the female as the body becomes essentially intertwined with the feminine. Thus “the female sex becomes restricted to its body, and the male body, fully disavowed, becomes paradoxically, the incorporeal instrument of an ostensibly radical freedom” (16). Beauvoir does not subscribe to the limitations imposed by the female body on women; on the other hand, she opines that it should be an instrument to ascertain woman’s emancipation. Here Beauvoir accepts the long philosophical tradition of the mind/body dichotomy where the mind is understood to have the power not only to subjugate the body but also to escape the spatial and temporal confines of the latter. The masculine is thus identified with the mind whereas the feminine with the body and this accords a subservient position to the latter. Thus Beauvoir identifies the female body as marked and the masculine body as unmarked. Irigaray challenges this binary and points out the imbalance further by stressing that the female body is actually ‘marked off’ or ‘cancelled’ by the masculinist language and femininity is masculinity itself dressed as the Other.
Instead of granting femininity its own position masculinity wishes to subsume the former within its identity by refusing any alternate identity.

Judith Butler draws our attention to what Lévi Strauss has to say about women as objects exchanged as gifts during marriage to strengthen ties between one patrilineal clan and another. The bride here is bereft of any identity of her own and contrary to common perception she does not exchange her premarital identity with a post marital one. She is only an object that opens up a route of communication between two clans alongside a development of an internal bond between each clan. The woman’s importance lies in the fact that “she reflects masculine identity precisely through being the site of its absence” (Butler 52). Thus women are married off to another clan or married in from a different one only to preserve the ‘sanctity’ of the patrilineal system. They carry the name of the clan but are differentiated from the signifier, that is, the patronym that signifies them. Thus Butler explains ‘woman’ as a mere “relational term” used to consolidate the patrilineal structure of various clans (53). It is noteworthy that the clans between whom exchange takes place are all situated within the matrix of masculine identity. As Irigaray points out, the whole exchange is to consolidate bonds among men taking effect through the barter of women and the establishment of the heterosexual system. Kristeva also recognizes Lévi-Strauss’ concept of women as objects that are exchanged for the establishment of social bonds. But this, she argues, necessitates the identification of women bodies with reproduction. She says that what is considered to be the “maternal instinct” is actually a culturally formulated trope thereby questioning her own premise of the maternal being pre-paternal. We must refer to Foucault to resolve these issues as Butler does. She reminds us through Foucault that the maternal body should be
understood as “an effect or consequence of a system of sexuality in which the female body is required to assume maternity as the essence of its self and the law of its desire” (125). Thus the paternal law constructs the female body as a site that is identified with its reproductive function. We must, therefore, not forget that sexuality and power are simultaneously operative and formulated within certain institutionalized structures and also be aware of the impossibility of the existence of sexuality before the imposition of the paternal law. It is this power structure that enables the men during partition to use women as their property if they can lay hands on them. The women are subjected to sexual atrocities; most of them are mutilated and murdered. Some are kept for personal consumption and some others are “parceled out to decrepit wrecks – the aged, the left-overs who couldn’t find a wife, or those Muslims who wanted an additional wife” (Nahal 258). Similarly Sunanda, the beautiful Kashmiri daughter-in-law of Bibi Amar Vati, is demanded as a gift by Rahamat-Ullah-Khan, the Pakistani Refugee Camp Commandant from Arun, his old friend, in exchange of a personally chaperoned safe passage to the Jammu border which Arun has the integrity to refuse.

Reference has already been made to what is identified by Baudrillard as the passion generated in human beings regarding objects. Objects are those things over which humans have absolute control not for their functionality only but also for their subjective attachment. Similarly, during partition, women are treated as objects as they offer little resistance to the sexual desires of men. Here we are reminded that Baudrillard considers the body to be the finest specimen of objects and this is why we fetishize our bodies. During partition both the male and female bodies are fetishized but in different ways: while the male body is usually mutilated and often murdered, the female body is further
subjected to sexual abuse. This is what Martha Nussbaum calls the violability of the body which becomes permissible because of the changed social scenario. The body is denied “boundary integrity” and can be violated in any way by the owner, in this case the perpetrator of atrocities which often consolidates itself in the form of a mob. An effective example is seen in the treatment of Ayah by Ice-candy-man when her abduction is arranged by him. Though he later tries to exhibit his love for her it is he who allows her to be violated not only by the mob but subjects her to repeated sexual violation as a pimp. Why women offer little or no resistance is the question that often arises and perhaps the answer lies in our social conditioning as we live in a society that is shaped by the concepts of power structure and domination; as Martha Nussbaum points out, “men learn to experience desire in connection with paradigm scenarios of domination and instrumentalization” whereas women accept “being dominated and being turned into objects” (Nussbaum 225).

Partition accounts abound with instances of sexual mutilation. In males this deals with castration, often on the pretext of checking whether the person is circumcised or not. Here the penis is treated as an animate object the appropriation of which signifies domination over the man, often belonging to the other religion. Except in the case of Sikhs, where the external features give away the religion, the men are subjected to scrutiny and mutilation as we see with Sundari’s husband in Train to Pakistan: “They held him by the arms and legs and one man cut off his penis and gave it to her” (Singh 203). Here the consolidation of religious identity is achieved through the abrogation of masculine identity of the other. In women the breast becomes the target of such violence as it is the most visible sexual organ in females and often a cause of anxiety in males as
Sudhir Kakar observes: “The mutilation of breast may be derived from the upsurge of a pervasive infantile fantasy – the fantasy of violent revenge on a bad, withholding breast, a part of the mother whose absence gives rise to feelings of disintegration and murderous rage” (Kakar 37-38). The bodies and the body parts of women become the surface on which messages are imprinted by different communities as they are tattooed with symbols of the “Other” religion or the words Hindustan or Pakistan. The mutilated body parts become the mode of communication between men of warring religions as in Ice-Candy-Man the train from Gurdaspur arrives at Lahore with “two gunny bags full of women’s breasts” challenging the masculinity of men belonging to the other religion(Sidhwa 149). This act immediately instigates retaliation as the affected men feel it their duty to perpetrate similar atrocities on the other religion to uphold their religious as well as the masculine identity, that of the protector or the avenger. The Ice-candy-man is thus prompted to attack people he has known for long and abduct Ayah who becomes a symbol of Hinduism for him. The body of the woman becomes an area which must be invaded and branded to establish control over not only the person but also the religion to which she belongs:

Marking the breasts and genitalia with symbols like the crescent moon or trident makes permanent the sexual appropriation of the woman, and symbolically extends the violation to future generations who are thus metaphorically stigmatized. Amputating her breasts at once desexualizes a woman and negates her as a wife and mother; no longer a nurturer, she remains a permanently inauspicious figure, almost as undesirable as a barren woman (Menon and Bhasin 43-44).
This brings us to the concept of the third gender or the transgender. Butler gives us the concept of “intelligible” gender which she says maintains a “relation of coherence and continuity among sex, gender, sexual practice and desire” (Butler 23). The social laws try to establish a relation and continuity between biological sex, culturally constructed genders and the demonstration of both through sexual practice. Gender identity is established through certain regulatory practices along two trajectories – masculine and feminine that must correspond to male and female respectively. The heterosexualization of desire consolidates itself on the negation of certain identities: “those in which gender does not follow from sex and those in which the practices of desire do not ‘follow’ from either sex or gender” (24). The gender identities that do not subscribe to these heteronormativities are considered to be aberrations that need not be paid much attention. But these very irregularities question the universality of the gendered binary accepted by the heterosexual matrix of the society and also make us aware of the hegemonic power of compulsory heterosexuality. The reference to hijras in *Train to Pakistan* raises questions about the accepted gender norms and also gives new connotations to certain objects. It is interesting that the hijras are referred to by Haseena, the nautch girl, who comes to entertain Hukum Chand, the magistrate. She speaks of a sense of solidarity with the hijras who are considered to belong to no religion like her: “Singers are neither Hindu nor Muslim in that way. All communities come to hear me” (Singh 122). The prostitutes, thus, give a border to the structured categorization of the society as do the hermaphrodites – “you can call them Muslim, Sikh or anything, male or female” (122). This confusion in their identity allows them a sort of immunity from clashing religions. Jessica Hinchy informs us that the British administration had tried to
register the hijras or eunuchs under Part II of Criminal Tribes Act (CTA) of 1871.\(^\text{25}\) It is noteworthy that “despite their feminine self-presentation, the British described hijras as neither women, nor a third gender, but used the masculine pronoun” (Hinchy 45). Thus hijras are forced to accept the normative heterosexuality imposed by the society though “the complexities of hijra identity found no place in a binary concept of gender, and they were seen as a figure of failed masculinity” (45). The hijras we encounter, however, like to dress as women and their skirts become markers of their identity as they can decide which identity they are going to accept. The hijras, therefore, have more agency than the women who are subjected to the dictates of society which they are bound to follow unquestioningly though there is no denying the fact that the former are marginalized too.

The description that Haseena gives of the confrontation of the hijras with the Hindu and Sikh mob is noteworthy: “they started to beat their drums and sing in their raucous male voices. They whirled round so fast that their skirts flew in the air. Then they stopped and asked the leaders of the mob, “Now that you have seen us, tell us, are we Hindus or Muslims?” and the whole crowd started laughing . . . .” (Singh 122-123). The hijras, secure in the knowledge of their sexual inviolability, defy the mob through their drum beating, introducing a carnivalesque atmosphere in these tension ridden times. The skirt\(^\text{26}\) becomes a particular marker of their identity – they adopt feminine attire despite having ‘male voices’ but they are different in status from women as they have total control over their bodies as well as their clothes as they can decide whether or not they are to cover or expose their bodies through these clothes. Here the prying gaze of the other becomes a welcome method to establish their identity as their castrated penises which they are proud to flaunt stand them in better stead than other men who have to prove their religious
identities through the religious markings on the male genitals. Their departure from normative masculinity makes them immune to religious violence as the men present consider themselves to be privileged to be physically virile men as opposed to the hijras who are commonly considered as impotent, a trope which the hijra community reiterates as they question their evacuation: “Why? Will all of you become like us and stop having children?” (Singh 123). Normative masculinity finds satisfaction in their lack as “even the Sikhs” start “laughing” and grant them immunity from further violence, secure in the concept of their own superior position due to their ability to procreate (123).

It is interesting how even certain materials connote different meanings when used by the different genders, the kohl being one such. When used by women they signify beauty and certain attractiveness as Nooran wears a silk dress and lines her eyes with antimony when she goes on an assignation with Jugga. Ayah in pre-partition Lahore is secure in the knowledge of the effect her beauty has on her admirers through her eyes which “are large and eloquent, rimmed with kohl, soft with dreams” (Sidhwa 43). The Ice-candy-man also applies kohl to his eyes; what is a common Muslim marker in pre-partition days becomes an indication of his inner turmoil when he experiences the horror of confronting the train filled with butchered dead bodies from Gurdaspur: “the kohl lining his eyes has spread forming hollow, skull like shadows” (149). When we meet him again after the abduction of Ayah he appears in “flowing white robes with dreamy kohl-rimmed eyes” with the appearance of a poet that is actually a sham and we along with Lenny are able to see his true self that is “treacherous, dangerous, contemptible. A destructive force that must be annihilated” (249). The same darkness of character and loss of ethicality is conveyed through the “strong and muscular men” who come to witness the
parade of naked women, “their eyes black with kohl”, unified in their hatred against the women belonging to the other religion and ready to torment them to establish their affiliation to their own religion and perverted sense of masculinity (Nahal 260).

The bangle is another object that bears different implications for the different genders. The women consider it to be an integral part of the feminine identity, an object that enhances their beauty and is part of a married woman’s identity. Prabha Rani in Azadi carefully keeps “many pairs of meshed, richly beaded bangles” in her trunk, along with other objects which form part of her identity that is revealed to her husband only when they are about to migrate (122). Even the Ayah wears gold bangles when she is supposedly married to Ice-candy-man and is rechristened Mumtaz from Shanti to establish her religiously and economically altered position. Sundari, who is the daughter of Hukum Chand’s orderly in the Train to Pakistan, flaunts her newly-married status through the red lacquer bangles covering her arms, bangles which are supposed to be broken by her husband during the consummation of their marriage. The bangles become part of her identity as she dreams of a future with her husband. But ultimately the bangles become markers of her violation as she becomes a victim to the atrocities committed by a frenzied mob: “She did not have to take off any of her bangles. They were all smashed as she lay in the road, being taken by one man and another and another” (Singh 203). The bangles which are everyday coordinates of women appear insulting to men if they are somehow associated with it. It is for this reason that Malli and his gang challenge Jugga by throwing a dozen glass bangles, of blue and red in colour, in his house as an affront to his masculinity. Again, the sub-inspector, while letting off Jugga from prison, tries to whip up his passion by referring to Malli’s power and his masculinity: “Malli is not a
woman with henna on his palms or bangles on his wrists” (186). The bangles thus suggest the concept of emasculation of males and are used as insults against particularly virile males, men who are proud of their masculine identity. It is interesting to note that the kara or the steel bangle worn by the Sikhs is never considered to be feminine, rather it is taken as a power statement that establishes the sincerity and loyalty of a Sikh to his religion.

Weapons gather different connotations when they are handled by different genders. When used by women they speak of daily household requirements and self defense as we see Ayah protecting herself from the advances of Imam Din with glowing tongs though we must remember that these weapons are ineffective during the mass hysteria at the time of partition. Lenny also watches children being sent to sharpen “kitchen knives and meat- cleavers” by their grandmothers and mothers (Sidhwa 150). But the unsure times prompt the men to take charge of these objects and use them for the propagation of violence as they hold out to Sharbat Khan, the Pathan, their “knives, choppers, daggers, axes, staves and scythes” in large numbers to sharpen them (150). The tension in these men is palpable as they prepare for the communal disturbances to ensue. Even the puny Sher Singh is seen with “a tangled armload of daggers and swords” which Lenny construes as “the entire stock of his family’s religious arsenal” (150). Weapons become markers of masculinity and the Sikhs are aided by the dictates of their religion as they are supposed to carry the kirpan on person always. The need to attack others propels them to carry more weapons as we see the young boy who comes to Mano Majra dressed in arms. It is noteworthy that Khushwant Singh describes the leader as a “boy in his teens . . . small in size, slight of build and altogether somewhat
effeminate” (169). The boy warrior may be facing a crisis of masculinity which requires resolution. The masculinity of this boy is consolidated through his use of weapons as they grant him a sort of power over other men which elevates him from the general perception that is generated through his youth and effeminacy; he gains self-esteem through his handling of the weapons: “The boy caressed the holster of his revolver and ran his fingers over the silver noses of the bullets. He looked around him with complete confidence” (170). Emboldened by the support of weapons the boy directly challenges the masculinity of the Sikh men present by referring to them as impotents as he accuses them of not doing enough for their religion. It is this appeal to one’s masculinity that exhorts common peaceable people to take up arms against the Muslims, those very people who were considered to be part of their lives a few days back. Violence by men of other religion emasculates men and often weapons are used as tools to reinforce one’s masculinity as they become phallic symbols. The Ice-candy-man candidly admits this when he says that he has killed and would kill Hindus and Sikhs in retaliation to the violence inflicted on Muslims in the train from Gurdaspur: “I lobbed grenades through the windows of Hindus and Sikhs I’d known all my life! I hated their guts . . . . I want to kill someone for each of the breasts they cut off the Muslim women . . . . The penises!” (Sidhwa 156). The manliness that had been challenged due to his inability to protect his relatives on that train is reestablished through the use of weapons that fragment men of other religion as they are reduced to body parts. Even the masculinity of the state is reinforced through weapons as we see the troops sent by the Indian government to escort convoys from Pakistan carry heavy weaponry such as “bren and sten guns, many rifles, many wooden cases of ammunition” and take the role of the deliverer to the many languishing in
refugee camps (Nahal 223). Manliness, often associated with the “sanctioned use of aggression, force and violence”27, finds an appropriate example in Juggut Singh, the dacoit, in *Train to Pakistan* though his use of the *kirpan* opens up a new possibility of redefining masculinity. When informed of the impending danger to the train to Pakistan carrying his ladylove Nooran he risks his life by trying to cut off the rope tied on the bridge to dislodge people atop the train by his *kirpan*. As his end nears, apart from the *kirpan*, he uses his own teeth as a weapon to cut the last strands of the rope, an action that shows his grit and resolve to be humane and rise above the common tropes of gender identification.

Consolidation of masculinity is often done through the consumption of food which is a sort of offering from the female to the male. Whenever we encounter Chidda, the mother of Ranna in the village, we find her near the hearth; the place which women can unquestionably call their own. Her chapattis dipped in buttermilk are a testimony of her dutifulness to her family. Phulkas made by Ayah also talk of the comfort of home which she also offers to the uprooted relatives of Imam Din as they venture out on their journey to Pakistan. In pre-partition Sialkot Prabha Rani offers food almost as worship to her husband as she would “boil pure cow’s milk . . . and serve it to him in a long brass tumbler . . . she poured a lot of thick cream on top of the milk . . . she also threw a handful of peeled almonds into the brass tumbler before she took the milk to him” (Nahal 4). The same zeal can be noted when she prepares beans that are well boiled and soft so that Lala Kanshi Ram can consume it without any trouble. The satisfaction of Arun, their son, in the meal that is arranged by his mother is indicative of a sense of fulfillment and peace in being looked after in a world that has not yet been fragmented by religious strife
and political conflict. Chaman Nahal’s detailed description of the food presents a world redolent of the appreciation of the finer things in life: “Arun’s nostrils were invaded by the smell of the spices, and the laden thali, the platter before him looked good. With deliberation he poured the beans and the fried cauliflower on the cinnamon-covered rice and ate it up. The soft, fluffy Basmati rice went well with the salty tang of the beans” (52). This food, which he so lovingly consumes, becomes irrelevant and a mere mode of sustenance to Arun when he is faced with the brutality of partition as his love interest Chandni is abducted and cannot be traced: “He grabbed the chapattis and stuffed them into his mouth – recklessly, indifferently” (281). The challenge to his masculinity robs him of his sensitive nature as he is confronted with his inability to protect Chandni thereby failing the conventional role attributed to the male. It should be noted that women are seldom depicted as consumers or males as providers of food except in the case of Imam Din, who is the cook in Lenny’s household. Apart from catering to the family he contributes to the rotundity of Ayah by pampering her with a generous helping of food: “He plies her with beautifully swollen phulkas hot off the griddle, slathered with butter-fat and sprinkled with brown sugar. He prepares separate and delicious vegetarian dishes for her” (Sidhwa 58). In doing so Imam Din expresses that part of his identity which has a bit of ‘feminine’ in it, a softness and an eagerness to please which is dissociated from the conventional trope of masculinity. It is through this part of his identity that he wants to take control when the mob comes to search for Ayah: “Apparently unperturbed, Imam Din beats eggs in the kitchen” (180). When the crowd starts asking questions he comes to the rescue of the family he serves: “still beating eggs, aluminium bowl in hand, Imam Din suddenly fills the open kitchen doorway . . . [he] stands on the kitchen steps looking
bomb-bellied and magnificently _goondaish_ – the grandfather of all the _goondas_ milling about us – with his shaven head, hennaed beard and grimy lungi” (180). Here Imam Din is confronted with the problems of _identity consciousness_ which Erikson identifies as “a special form of self consciousness which dwells on discrepancies between one’s self-esteem, the aggrandized self-image as an autonomous person, and one’s appearance in the eyes of others” (Identity 183). Here the masculine identity of the protector gains prominence over his religious identity as he does not hesitate to take a false oath to save Ayah from the clutches of this frenzied mob. A similar confusion is noted in the Ice-candy-man whose personality undergoes a change as he increasingly identifies himself as a Muslim who is secure in Pakistan. His characteristic friendly nature is missing as “barely bothering to greet anyone . . . he settles . . . chomping on a _paan_. His mouth slimy and crimson with betel-juice, bloated – as if he’s become accustomed to indulging himself” (Siddha 155). Later when he wants to atone for the atrocities committed on Ayah he tries to play the perfect host to Lenny and Godmother by offering them tea, pastry and kebabs; a role which ineffectively tries to establish the changing expression of his masculinity. The refusal of food at this stage by Ayah establishes beyond doubt the fact that their relation can never be mended. Food and the consumption of food thus talk of empowerment and an equation between the male and the female which is usually lopsided though only once when Sharbat Khan offers Ayah dry fruits does she assert her feminine identity on equal footing with his masculinity as she expresses her preferences for pistachios and almonds clearly. The partition, thus, changes the relation between the masculine and the feminine beyond repair.
It is this shift that is reflected in the changing position of women in society exemplified through Sunanda in *Azadi*. The pre-partition world sees her as a woman confined to the labyrinths of her home, engrossed in her domestic life, accessible only to her husband and immediate family members. With the turmoil faced during partition she has to lose her husband and is raped by a member of the other community. But this grants her a dignity that adds to her character. In these altered circumstances she finds a voice that had been absent before:

she withdrew herself to the other end of the world. But with dignity, with absolute dignity. She had lost her husband, she had been defiled. Her honour remained intact, though, in her own mind . . . so innocent and dove-like did she look, as though through some miraculous process she had not only been restored to her wholeness but also to her virginity”

( Nahal 324).

This faith in herself and her ability to dissociate the core of her existence from the unidimensionality of the feminine self enables her to overcome what Partha Chatterjee identifies as the dichotomies of “home/world, spiritual/material, feminine/masculine” in various aspects of daily life. (Chatterjee 244). Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin remind us that “very large numbers of women who had never before stepped out of their homes joined the workforce after partition. Force of circumstances, economic necessity and urgency to rebuild homes and futures pushed many women of all classes into earning and supplementing family incomes” (Menon and Bhasin 205). Sunanda too appropriates the role of the male in the family as she buys a second-hand sewing machine on which she does odd sewing jobs to sustain her family. It is true that the machine cannot be a
substitute for the life of comfort enjoyed earlier as the despair is evident in an interview with one Bibi Inder Kaur who talks about the women residing in camps: “they were given sewing machines thinking that, well, they can stay home and earn a few rupees by stitching a few clothes. But you can’t call that being settled. A woman who has lived well, had a comfortable home . . . what can a sewing machine do for her?” (208). The sewing machine, thus, becomes a marker of the changed status of the feminine which is introduced by the partition. As Partha Chatterjee observes, “The new patriarchy advocated by nationalism conferred upon women the honour of a new social responsibility, and by associating the task of ‘female emancipation’ with the historical goal of sovereign nationhood, bound them to a new, and yet entirely legitimate subordination” (248). However, it is through this changed situation that new roles are acquired and women start establishing themselves as formative components of a new India.

Notes:


4. Butler talks of the body as a form of “incarnation” and hence the requirement “to preserve the external and dualistic relationship between a signifying immateriality and the materiality of the body itself.” This is an outcome of the phenomenological theories of Sartre and Beauvoir. Butler, Notes 15. (209).
5. Butler informs that Wittig considers the lesbian as a third gender that goes beyond the imposed binary of male/female. She calls the lesbian the concept “which is beyond the categories of sex.” Butler, Notes 26. (211).


8. According to Monique Wittig language is gender neutral.

9. Emile Durkheim formulates the same body/mind dichotomy related to feminine/masculine to be elaborated later on in Chapter IV of this thesis.

10. The Other is also important as Butler reminds us that it is also a “promise of a return to the preindividuated jouissance that characterizes the undifferentiated relation to the mother.” Butler, Notes 13. (217).

11. Butler analyzes Joan Rivier’s 1929 essay ‘Womanliness as a Masquerade’ and tries to draw a similarity between the masked woman and the homosexual man.


13. Same source as above, p.113, referred to by Butler. (179).


19. Bapsi Sidhwa gives a parallel example of a bird touched by human hand not being accepted back by its peers. This speaks of the arousal of the animal instinct and the absence of rationality during partition.


26. Jessica Hinchey informs us that “wearing female clothing in public – a key marker of *hijra* and *zenana* identity – was . . . illegal” according to the CTA through it was not strictly enforced in Punjab. (46).