

**Tribhuvan University**

**Biopolitics of Gendered Violence in Selected Short Stories on Partition**

**A thesis submitted to the Central Department of English, Kirtipur, Kathmandu in  
partial fulfillment of the requirement for the  
M. Phil degree in English**

**By**

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**Letter of Recommendation**

The thesis entitled “**Biopolitics of Gendered Violence in Selected Short Stories on Partition**” has been prepared under my supervision by Uttam Poudel. He carried out the research from July 2012 to May 2013. I recommend it for evaluation to the research committee.

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The thesis entitled “**Biopolitics of Gendered Violence in Selected Short Stories on Partition**” by Uttam Poudel has been submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University. It has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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## Abstract

Saadat Hasan Manto and Rajinder Singh Bedi, in their Partition stories, explore the gendered violence during the horrendous event of the Partition of India. By foregrounding the plight and predicament of abducted, displaced and raped women caused by the biopolitical violence, the violence in which human bodies and lives are targets and focal points of politics and war, they attempt to show the most horrible picture of the Partition and its consequences. Due to the patriarchy - unleashed violence perpetrated on women they are ultimately reduced into *homo sacer* and *muselmann* as conceptualized by Agamben. *Muselmann* is a specific form of life which is alive but dead, and dead but alive. All female characters who suffer from brutal rape, abduction and mutilation in the stories are nothing but the abject objects which speak the vastness of trauma without speaking. In other words, the victimized women characters and their somatic testimonies verge on the authenticity of their traumas. While dramatizing the pervasive effects of gender violence during the precarious time of the Partition of India by keeping the falsity of religious and political rhetoric of the Partition violence at bay, these writers project the testimonies of the traumatic events of the Partition without perpetuating the cycle of revenge and recrimination. They do not see the perpetrators as Muslims or non-Muslims, Indians or Pakistanis; rather they just see and depict them as human beings with all their wilderness and barbarity. By executing the unmediated testimony of the Partition violence, and combining evil and suffering within it, they also capture the specificity of the Partition violence without being provocative in any way. In doing so, they bring in the humanitarian and moral perspective on the Partition holocaust which helps evoke the therapeutic effect of the trauma of the Partition— and that effect is the hallmark of the aesthetic of the literature of violence or trauma.

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## Chapter I

### Introduction: A General Map of the Dissertation

20th century has been largely a century of war and violence. Sometimes, the violence has taken genocidal proportion. Incidents like the holocaust and the Partition of India in 1947 were characterized by trauma and biopower, which remain as specters haunting the construction of viable future; the drift to extreme violence pitting population against population, especially that of the females by males is very atrocious and is of biopolitical nature. The theory of biopolitics which evolved from the ideas of Foucault has been advanced by Giorgio Agamben in his most celebrated book titled, *The Remnants of Auschwitz*. My dissertation applies this theory to study the gendered violence on south Asian women in Partition stories written by Saadat Hasan Manto and Rajinder Singh Bedi. Drawing upon Agamben's concept of biopolitics in relation to his notion of *homo sacer* and *muselmann* this project claims that the female characters and their bodies in the Partition stories by Manto and Bedi become a territory to be conquered, claimed and marked by the assailant thereby reducing them into bare life—specific form of life that is not yet or is no longer.

In his book, *The Remnants of Auschwitz* Agamben gives the reference of *muselmann* in association with Nazi concentration camps. It is a term used to describe those, who through exposure to starvation, deprivation, violence and brutality experience a fundamental loss of will and consciousness. Agamben finds *muselmann* as a limit condition of human life. This term also refers to those in camps who have reached such a state of physical disrepair and existential disregard that one hesitates to call them living as they simply look like living corpses that move inevitably toward death in the camps. They are the so-called beings who through exhaustion and circumstance have lost the capacity for living. Agamben asserts that they are

anonymous mass that form the backbone of the camps. For Agamben, *muselmann* as an unthinking and automatic body is the true witness of the camps. Although it can not speak, it speaks through silence. Agamben takes this figure as a witness of trauma which is more telling than other testimonies of trauma. I argue that the female victims of the traumatic event of Partition in the selected short stories, who undergo with rape, abduction, mutilation, forced migration and other forms of violence inflicted by the conflicting groups/ communities are equivalent to Agamben's *muselmann*, living a shaded life without any glorious space in the family, society and the state that regards the body of women as a foundation of the family's honor.

The dissertation is based on a library-based research; it uses a close discursive analytical style which will draw on trauma studies and the concepts of biopolitics and the vocabularies related to these fields. As the study gives sustained attention to biopolitics of gendered violence in the traumatic event of the Partition of India in the stories of Manto and Bedi; it follows the lead of the theory of biopolitics, particularly theorized by Agamben. Giorgio Agamben in his book, *Homo Sacer* maintains that politics knows no value other than life. He also asserts that the authorities manage, control and impose violence on human bodies by making them subjects to discipline, surveillance and coercion. Part of the theoretical framework also comes from the trauma studies. The idea of the critics of traumatic literature like Cathy Caruth, Kali Taal, Elissa Marder, Dominick LaCapra and R.S. Spargo will be supportive to a greater extent. Cathy Caruth maintains that literature enables us to bear witness to events that cannot be completely known and opens our ears. Kali Taal, By the same token, places emphasis on unmediated and uninterpreted testimony of violence of greater magnitude. Similarly, Elissa Marder and Dominick LaCapra give the highest premium on the therapeutic effect of trauma. This effect of trauma is the nub of the



stories of the mentioned writers.

This project makes significant contribution in a couple of areas of critical concern. Firstly, this study contributes by bringing the female characters victimized by the traumatic events of the Partition of India in 1947 in the purview of critical analysis. Besides, this project also contributes by showing the brilliant connection between the theory of biopolitics and the gendered violence. And lastly, this study unravels the context of gendered violence during the precarious time of the Partition of India, which reduced the women as living objects on whose soft bodies victors and losers express their anger and celebrate victories.

The purpose of this study is to spotlight on the male (sovereign/ state)-perpetrated violence against female during the rampant violence of the Partition of India in 1947. Through the critical analysis of the stories of Manto and Bedi, and the suffering of women characters on those stories, this study revolves around expressing and exposing how the Partition of India was characterized by trauma and biopower. At the same time, how the so-called violence of extreme kind was of biopolitical in nature is another concern of this study. By doing so, this study also aims at showing that females are the immediate targets during the time of violence and war.

My dissertation problematizes that regardless of the obvious projection of the suffering of women in the patriarchy- unleashed violence in the Partition stories of Manto and Bedi, a critical inquires along the lines of biopolitics and trauma in their stories bring to the fore the horrific reality of gendered violence rendering women in to the position of *homo sacer* and *muselmann*. This research not simply assumes that Manto and Bedi's Partition stories dramatize the pervasive effects of gendered violence during the precarious event of the Partition of India but it also presumes that the female characters in their stories are the victims of biopolitical violence. The

stories of the mentioned writers show the female characters as the most traumatized ones suffering from brutal murder, rape and mutilation being ultimately reduced into mere abject objects whose somatic testimonies verges on the authenticity of their traumas.

Although this study makes significant use of the concepts developed in biopolitics and trauma study, it does not make all-inclusive analysis of these fields of scholarship. Rather, an analysis of *homo sacer* and *muselmann* as conceptualized by Agamben remains primary tool of analysis. Besides, this study limits within the forms of the gendered violence. Violence of other kind remains outside the scope of this project. By the same token, this project will take up the idea of the critics of trauma studies such as Cathy Caruth, R.S. Spargo, Kali Taal, Elissa Marder and Dominick LaCapra. Given the nature of the research, available time and resources, this study does not offer the analysis of all the stories of Manto and Bedi. Only the below-mentioned stories will be interpreted. “Toba Tek Singh”, “Khol Do” (Open It) , “Thanda Gosht”( Cold Meat), “ Sharada”, “Xuda Ki Kasam” (I Swear By God), “Sharifan” ( Bitter Harvest), “Ghate Ka Sauda” ( A Raw Deal) by Manto and “Lajwanti” by Rajinder Singh Bedi.

## Chapter II

### **Politicization of the Human Body in the Biopolitical Era**

Biopolitics refers to how politics and government policy directly impact on biological aspect of people's lives. Drawing from Michel Foucault, biopolitics can be understood as method of examination in which the state controls people through political power. Biopolitics can also be discussed as to how the biological features of human beings are measured, observed, and understood through the execution of different forms of state mechanisms.

In his article “Biopolitical and beyond: On the reception of a vital Foucauldian notion” Thomas Lemke says, the term "biopolitics" “designates what brought life and its mechanism into the realm of explicit calculations and made knowledge-power an agent of transformation of human life” (1). Along with the emergence of modern techniques and technologies, disciplining the individual body and the regulation of body of the population have become a frequent occurrence. Expressing the idea of the connection between the beginning of political modernity with biopolitics, Lemke further says:

According to Foucault, biopolitics marks the threshold of political modernity since it places life at the center of political order. In this theoretical perspective, there is an intimate link between the constitutions of a capitalist society and the birth of biopolitics:

"Society's control over individuals was accomplished not only through consciousness or ideology but also in the body and with the body. For capitalist society, it was biopolitics, the biological, the corporal, that mattered more than anything else. (1)

Here, highlighting the Foucauldian concept of biopolitics, Lemke points out that capitalist society not only controls with consciousness and ideology but also in the body and with the body. In other words, the bodies of people hold great value in modern states and politics.

In the last chapter of his first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault talks about the notion of sovereign subjectivity in modern politics and warfare. In this book, he discusses on the notion of biopower and biopolitics, which implicates the sovereign power over life and the management of life. The crucial part of his argument is that this power is exercised through the sovereign's "right to *take* life or *let live*" (136). To put it more explicitly, the way in which power is exercised by actually taking life, allowing certain lives to live on, and controlling life. He further explains that the sovereign exercises the right to life by implementing the right to kill, or by ceasing to kill, and this power was put into practice through death. This power can also be explained as "a right of seizure: of things, time, bodies, and ultimately life itself that "culminated in the privilege to seize hold of life in order to suppress it" (136). The sovereign; therefore, is the operator of the life and bodies it governs. By highlighting as to how the bodies become focal point for sovereign, Foucault says:

Wars and conflicts are no longer waged for the sovereign to secure its power; they are waged on behalf of the existence of everyone; entire populations are mobilized for the purpose of wholesale slaughter in the name of life necessity: massacres have become vital. It is as managers of life and survival, of bodies and the race, that so many regimes have been able to wage so many wars, causing so many men to be killed.

(137)

In other words, biopolitics is the politics of the population, bodies, and life. And as

Foucault points out, "the emergence of techniques and technologies to subjugate bodies and control the population marks the beginning of the biopower era" (140).

For Foucault, in this sense, biopolitics is something in which human bodies and lives are made targets in politics and war. Unlike Foucault, Lemke points out, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri attempt to give biopolitics a positive meaning:

By synthesizing ideas from poststructuralist and Marxist theories as well as Deleuzian vitalism, they claim that the borderline between economics and politics, and reproduction and production is dissolving. According to them, biopolitics signals a new era of capitalist production where life is no longer limited to the domain of reproduction or subordination to the working process: "The subjectivity of living labor reveals simply and directly in the struggle over the sense of language and technology, that when one speaks of a collective means of the constitution of a new world, one is speaking of the connection between the power of life and its political organization. The political, the social, the economic, and the vital here all dwell together." (qtd. in "Beyond" 4)

Hardt and Negri hence, regard biopolitics as a potential platform for new revolution for the new era. My dissertation; however, takes the concept of Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben which is different from that of Hardt and Negri regarding biopolitics. Foucault uses biopower to describe the new apparatus and approach of power focused on life whereas Agamben uses biopolitics as a power focused on life in connection to sovereignty and law. In this sense, one can say that Foucault's concept of biopolitics is strategic one whereas Agamben's is legal one.

Despite this difference, they both strongly hold the belief that the so-called modern era is of biopolitical nature wherein life itself has been brought into the realm of the mechanisms and calculations of power. Foucault “identifies two great technologies of power in modern epoch— discipline and biopolitics” (qtd. in Kelley 58). Distinguishing between discipline and biopolitics Foucault says:

Discipline is a technology which is concerned with individuals, the control of individual bodies; biopolitics is newer and correspondingly more sophisticated: it deals with populations at the level of multiplicity; where discipline is the technology deployed to make individuals behave, to be efficient and productive workers, biopolitics is deployed to manage population, for example, to ensure a healthy workforce. (qtd. in Kelly 59)

In fact, discipline and biopolitics are two key forces which authorities or sovereignties execute to manipulate, manage and mar the human bodies in this modern era. The focus of sovereign is on humans, by which it manages and controls the people it governs by means of oppression and violence. What needs to be taken seriously is the fact that sovereign /authority exercises its power using methods of control, coercion, and brutality over bodies and population. Human bodies are hence, rendered targets or prey, which has become the prime motto of modern politics and warfare. It has been seen that during the time of war and violence human bodies are politicized making them the primary objects of destruction and damage.

As Andre Duarte says, at present the “states have enacted repressive policies against immigrants and refugees, political movements that organize the unemployed, non-conformists of all sorts, displaced and homeless people, among many other undesirable social groups”( 2). These people cannot be incorporated into the capitalist

system of globalized production and consumption hence, regarded as undesirables or misfits to be disposed off.

In order to further clarify the idea of biopolitical violence and reduction of citizens into “expendable” or “undesirable” it will be pertinent to discuss the idea of Italian political philosopher, Giorgio Agamben. Agamben, in his book, *Homo sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, presents a provocative theory on the relation between politics and life, especially the “hidden point of intersection between the Juridico-institutional and biopolitical models of power” (6). He begins the book by providing an explanation that in Greek, there are two kinds of life: *zoe* and *bios*. *Zoe* is the natural life that is “the simple fact of living common to all living beings” (1). *Bios*, on the other hand, is a special kind of life that is only possessed by people who are valued and qualified, or “the form or way of living proper to an individual or a group” (1). In the classical Greek world, *zoe* and *bios* are not equal and not granted the same privileges in the political realm, the *polis*. The simple natural life of *zoe* is excluded from the *polis*, where *bios*, the qualified life, matters and rendered valuable. But there has been a shift in the *zoe-bios* relation, in that the simple life, *zoe* becomes a part of *polis* and started to matter. In the Agamben’s words the “natural life begins to be included in the mechanisms and calculations of state power” (3), which sounds as if every life is treated the same. However, there is an asterisk to *zoe*’s inclusion to the *polis*, in that they are still constrained by the sovereign. They do not have autonomy or agency but are considered the inferior life. It is up to the sovereign to decide on the fate of this natural, simple life. This shift of including *zoe* into the *polis*, according to Agamben, is the beginning of biopolitics (3).

However, the positioning of *zoe* is in fact not only of inclusion, but also of exclusion— inclusion in a sense that the natural life needs to exist in order to bring

relevance to the sovereign and politics, and exclusion in a sense that these lives are not fully integrated into politics and not granted full citizenship, situated outside of the political. It may sound paradoxical, but life \ *zoe* is included in the realm of politics by means of exclusion. Human lives become slaves to politics, expendable and undermined; however, sovereign needs these lives to maintain and validate its existence. Agamben; therefore asserts that the "inclusive exclusion of *zoe* in the *polis*" is the key to modern politics (7).

Agamben expands on the Foucauldian notion of biopolitics by introducing *homo sacer* or bare\ sacred man— "the life of *homo sacer* (sacred man), who may be killed and yet not scarified" (8). These lives are disposable and signify importance only being included in law and politics in the form of exclusion or by the capacity to be killed. What is powerful in his elaboration of *homo sacer* is that Agamben captures its unique positioning. The bare\ sacred man (life) was originally began to overlap with the political, and in the end, "exclusion and inclusion, outside and inside, *bios* and *zoe*, right and fact enter into a zone of irreducible indistinction" (9). Nicholas Chare says:

Bare life is not, therefore, natural life. It is not *zoe*. It is a liminal state occurring between *bios* and *zoe*, between life styled by law and natural life, between language and non-language. The most extreme example of bare life in the camps is embodied by the *Muselmann*. (45)

*Muselmann* is a term used to describe those, who through exposure to starvation, deprivation, violence and brutality experience a fundamental loss of will and consciousness. Agamben finds *muselmann* as a limit condition of human life. This term also refers to those in camps who have reached such a state of physical disrepair and existential disregard that one hesitates to call them living as they simply look like living corpses that move inevitably toward death in the camps.



What is disturbing is that this creates a dismal space where any acts of cruelty and inhumanity to a "bare life" is possible because killing or doing harm to a *homo sacer* is unpunishable and goes unpunished" (Bauman 39).

Because of its precarious and desolate orientation crimes and violence committed to the *homo sacer* is not accounted for and persecuted. It creates a legal no man's land, and impunity is an enormous problem in that regard. How the sovereignty produces *homo sacer* by disseminating war and violence is pointed out by Agamben in his most celebrated book, *State of Exception* (2005).

The most significant and disturbing aspect of state of exception is that— what is at stake are human lives and their warfare, subjugated by totalitarian regimes and degradation of basic human rights. This is a way in which the sovereign manipulates and mars the legal system in order to bring about biopower. What is highly problematic, as Agamben argues, is that creating an exception to the rule and suspending the law eventually becomes the norm. It is no longer rendered anomalous and becomes normalized. In other words, there is no distinction between what is inside and outside of juridical order. The indistinction is key and at the heart of why state of exception is utilized widely. Agamben summarizes his point by saying:

The sovereign, who can decide on the state of exception, guarantees its anchorage to the juridical order. But precisely because the decision have concerns the very annulment of the norm, that is, because the state of exception represents the inclusion and capture of a space that is neither outside nor inside (the space that corresponds to the annulled and suspended norm), the sovereign stands outside of the normally valid juridical order, and yet belongs to it, for it is he who is responsible for

deciding whether the constitution can be suspended into. (*State of Exception 35*)

Although distinctly problematic, the state of exception becomes the working juridical paradigm of sovereignty. People may argue that in an emergency situation, creating an exception to the rule is necessary, that in order to lessen further crisis, it is imperative to put a halt to law and create a contingency plan. However, as much as an emergency situation maybe a powerful enough reason to suspend the law in the short run, it raises a problem that highly undermines legitimate political procedures based on trust and democracy. Agamben calls this positioning “ecstasy-belonging” in which the structure of the state of exception is defined by the sovereign being outside and yet belonging to the rules of law (35). It is precisely the undefinability and the condition of nonplace that allows the state of exception to remain in existence and unchallenged in the juridical and political realms.

Biopolitical violence through the state of exception has become the common in our contemporary political experiences. The formation of modern nation states particularly in South Asia has already faced biopolitical violence, “whether we are speaking of the first Partition of India in 1947, the second Partition of Bangladesh\ Pakistan in 1971, ethnic wars in Sri Lanka, ethnic and imperial wars in Afghanistan, insurgency and wars in Kashmir or Nepal, the troubled convulsions of postcolonial births” (qtd.in Banerjee et. al 126). They all have often been understood in the frameworks of biopolitical violence in which multitude of people are were reduced into *homo sacer* — specific form of life which is not yet or no longer.

My dissertation, focusing on the rampant violence during the Partition of India, gives the highest premium on the issue of *homo sacer* or “bare life” conceptualized by Agamben. The genocidal violence during the Partition of India in 1947 was caused by

the formation of two modern nation states. During the traumatic period of the Partition of India, politicization of human body was widespread. India that experienced mass rape, dislocation of millions of people, brutality and cold-blooded murder had laws prior to the outbreak of communal violence, advocating peace and security and protecting its citizens from harm.

However, these laws were suspended during the conflict. Perhaps the perpetrators thought that war is an emergency situation, an exception, that they could disregard the laws and commit crimes. Or it could be that because they knew that murder is a punishable and prosecutable crime, they resorted to rape instead, which is considered lesser a crime. Whether or not decision to suspend the law was made purposefully, whether it be government forces or conflicting groups, took advantage of the legal no-man's land and used rape as a weapon of war.

The notion of state of exception is often used to theorize the situation with regard to the camps such as concentration camps, refugee camps, and rape camps. It is a zone where legal exceptionalism is realized under "normal" conditions. In fact, the initial reasons for its construction was to create a place where law enforcement cannot touch what goes on inside and humans are reduced to "bare life" in the eyes of juridical powers. This space is positioned as an exception where the officers can commit any violence to the detainees, while the detainees are deprived of fundamental rights.

Agamben explains:

The camp is thus the structure in which the state of exception— the possibility of deciding on which found sovereign power is realized normally... [i]n this sense every question concerning the legality or illegality of what happened there simply makes no sense. The camp is a hybrid of law and the fact in which the two terms have become

indistinguishable [...] whoever entered the camp moved in a zone of indistinction between outside and inside, exception and rule, licit and illicit in which the very concepts of subjective right and juridical protection no longer made any sense. (*Homo Sacer* 170)

Camps are common places during the war and violence. Perpetrated people are normally placed by the authorities into sports hall, class rooms of school, the soldiers' apartment or in the open camps. Such camps are liminal spaces full of uncertainties. They are precisely a juridical no-man's land and a place where every form of violence and human rights abuse become possible. It is a space where the distinction between law and no-law is blurred. Because of the normalcy of "state of exception" and "camps", it becomes difficult to distinguish what is licit and illicit. As Raffaella Puggioni writes, "[t]he juridico-political structure of the camp creates this very zone of indistinction, a zone where the law is suspended and its suspension allows for the emergence of a space of confinement, a space where any act of cruelty and inhumanity are not only possible but more tragically, they are unpunished and unpunishable" (qtd. in Huysmans, et. al 170).

The tragedy is that the perpetrated people during the war and violence are left limbo, and the perpetrators get away with the crimes. The pertinent question; however, is that how can international legal experts monitor a sovereign's unfair juridical shift to implement a state of exception? Is there a way to protect the rights of people in a legal no-man's land? And importantly how could the bare lives\ *homo sacers*, the products of war and violence be disassociated from an exceptional status?

Taking Agamben's idea of "camp" as metaphor we can argue that how the lives of modern people are under the persistent intervention of the state mechanisms. Camp has another meaning for confinement without any freedom and rights for the people.

The sovereignty is there to promote the life of people but to reduce people into bare life, the life that is judged unworthy of being lived, it is a reference to extreme and absolute human fragility; a vulnerability— that is no longer excluded from political life, yet one that exhibits its own strange power. With our modern political order turning into a state of exception, Agamben argues, this bare life, trembling on the threshold between the human and the inhuman, "becomes both subject and object of conflicts of the political order, the one place for both organization of state power and emancipation from it" (*Homo Sacer* 9).

Agamben's concept of bare life becomes useful for thinking about the state-occupied body, the inhabitant of no where, stripped of political identity, nationhood, and basic human rights, by virtue of the fact of birth, a body whose very biological rhythms are regulated and controlled by a sovereign power. We can explore a number of examples in the modern world in which human lives are simply reduced into bare life. The Iraqi's body ravaged by hunger and disease occupied by a sinister program of economic sanctions which Joy Gordon calls "a weapon of mass destruction" that has caused "a legitimized act of mass slaughter" (39). Similarly, the Tamil, the Chechan, the Tibetan, the Bhutanese refugees, the tribal people, the landless people and a long list of people who are victimized to one extent or another by an occupying or colonizing power.

In the contemporary world we can see how human life is under the shadow of occupied territories. Human body as Dian Enns says:

is regulated and rendered vulnerable by the state power that penetrates all aspects of daily life from controlling where one can and cannot travel, where and how one can work, whether one can import or export produce, medical supplies and cooking fuel, to whether one is safe in

one's home. This is a systematic destruction of all semblance of normal life through a complicated and extensive network of enforcement from passes, identity numbers, permits, routine interrogations, road blocks that require leaving home in the night to get to work, to surveillance and political assassination. (12)

In the above-mentioned scenarios, without a moment's hesitation, we can say that the goal of modern democracy is to find a form of political life to accommodate bare life, and yet this aspiration determines for Agamben, the specific aporia of the democratic ideal insofar as "it wants to put the freedom and happiness of men into play in the very place— "bare life" that marked their very subjection" (*HS* 9-10).

This unhappy identification of freedom and subjection has particularly sinister consequences in our own time because it marks the point of ambivalence where democracy becomes indistinguishable from the nightmare of totalitarianism. As Agamben submerges:

Today's politics knows no value other than life, and until the contradiction that this fact implies are dissolved, Nazism and Fascism which transformed the decision on bare life into the supreme political principle— will remain stubbornly with us. (*HS* 10)

The ambivalent relationship between politics and life that inheres within the juridico-political order reappears in the paradox of sovereignty and the sovereign exception, for it is difficult to define the boundaries of politics and law when "the sovereign is, at the same time, outside and inside the juridical order" (*HS* 15). The law is identified with the body of the sovereign, who oversees it and ensures that nothing evades its reach, but the sovereign can also suspend law, make its limit and, by so doing, occupy a position inside and outside its field of operation.

The *modus operandi* of the sovereign is, thus, directed to producing bare life to maintain its power and dominance. Producing bare lives may not make logical sense, but keeping them inside and outside the legal and political realm helps sustain its power. By taking recourse to violence of multiple forms sovereignty at modern times tend to produce bare lives. In other words, violence has become the common denominator of the contemporary politics. To put it more pointedly, the politicization of human body has become the common place phenomena in the world politics today. The most devastating thing is that when human beings are politicized the biopolitics comes to the fore front by the provocation the violence of different sorts. And it is through the biopolitical violence human beings are reduced into bare lives— the lives which are incorporated into and excluded from juridico-political platform.

I have discussed the biopolitics of gendered violence in Partition riots in the third chapter.

## **Chapter III**

### **Biopolitics of Gendered Violence and Partition of India in 1947**

India and Pakistan emerged as independent modern nation states with great trial, trouble and tribulation. It is because under the veil of glorious moment of independence from British colonialism, the ignominious violence of extreme kind was rampant in which “twelve million people were killed, and about seventy-five thousand women were abducted and raped on both sides of the boarder” (Bacchetta 570). During the traumatic event of Partition, women were the immediate sufferers. They suffered from the violence on three levels—Communal, familial and national.

In communal level, women had to undergo with rape, abduction and mutilation as male members of “other” communities perpetrated them. Those communities include Hindu, Muslim and Sikh. Each of them targeted the women of different communities by taking recourse to rape, abduction and mutilation. In different wars and genocides, women are found to have been raped and abducted as Hromadzic asserts, “for varieties of reasons: as retaliation, to damage another man’s “property,” and to send a “message,” to the enemy” (3). In familial level, they were disregarded by their family members and sometimes, encouraged to commit suicide for the sake of family honor.

By the same token, in national level, abducted and dislocated women were forcibly recovered by their natal countries, India and Pakistan. These countries deprived those women of their citizenship rights and commanded them to desert their wrong children conceived by the members of “other” communities.

In the male-dominated society as that of India and Pakistan, women are associated with family honor and reputation. Raped and abducted women are regarded



as abject objects having no respect in the family. They are simply made subjects to demoralization and humiliation. By hinting at the engagement of Hindus and Muslims to control the young women of each other's group during the Partition violence, Veena Das in her book, *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent of the Ordinary* argues:

The “foundational” event of inaugurating then is itself anchored to the already circulating imaginary of abduction of women that signaled a state of disorder since it dismantled the orderly exchange of women. The state of war [between Muslim and Hindu / Sikh men], akin to the Hobbesian state of nature, comes to be defined as one in which Hindus and Muslims are engaged in mutual warfare over the control of sexually and reproductively active women. (21)

A part from getting hold of enemies' territories, women's bodies became targets and focal points in the Partition holocaust. For the formation of new states of India and Pakistan, women's bodies were politicized leaving them as traumatized and dislocated condition having no direction and destination in life.

The raped woman's body as Hromadzic says, “is perceived as an object of communication. In this communication process, men communicate with their enemies by using enemy's women as a sign of communication” (5). But the point is that after men communicate their enemies by taking recourse to rape and abduction and later on, the society or the state excommunicates them. As Ruth Seifert suggests:

[T]he rape of women carries an additional message: it communicates from man to man, so to speak, that the men around the women in question are not able to protect “their” women. (59)

In deeply-rooted patriarchal sap of Indian and Pakistani society, raped and abducted women do not get glorious space in the family as they are regarded as contaminated

and polluted. The kind of society where virginity or chastity of female is valorized, one can easily imagine the plight of raped women. They are regarded nothing but expendable and disposable objects. How the perpetrators inflicted violence on women's bodies in the Partition violence becomes clear when Bacchetta mentions:

During riots of the Partition of India, "othered" women were subject to stripping, parading naked, mutilating and disfiguring, tattooing or branding the breast and genitalia with triumphant slogans; amputating breast, knifing open the womb, raping, of course, killing fetuses. (571)

Ritu Menon and Kamala Basin note that each acts treats "women's bodies as territory to be conquered, claimed or marked by the assailant." The act of stripping and parading women naked in the public is an indication of the insult to their men who failed to protect their women and the nation / community at large. By the same token, tattooing or branding the breast and genitalia with triumphant slogan is a sheer insult against the motherland. The brutal act of amputating breast or raping "at once desexualizes a woman and negates her as a wife and mother" (qtd. in Bacchetta 571-72).

Such act is a great threat for the women to get the respectable space in their families after being raped and abducted. It is; therefore, such women did not like to return their home thinking that returning home with such condition means to be ostracized and denigrated. Rape and abduction were not only violations women faced. In addition, some men themselves mutilated their women. In *The Muslim League's Attack on Hindus and Sikhs 1947*, the committee reported, "women's breast, noses and arms would be lopped off. Sticks and pieces of iron would be thrust into their private parts. Sometimes, the bellies of pregnant women were ripped off open and the unformed life in the womb thrown out" (qtd.in Frischmann 11).

Due to such tattooing and branding, the victims can never forget their ordeals and traumas. The permanent marks on their bodies will always be the reminders of their abusers, who violated them. The women with such plight and predicament are disgusting abject objects. They are *homo sacers* of Agamben, who are fated to live a shaded life in the society. They do not have self autonomy and agency. They are expected to die. Even if they die, their deaths will never be mourned, honored and memorialized.

Ritu Menon and Kamal Basin interviewed a Sikh woman, Taran, victim of Partition violence, who managed to survive with her sisters. By spending several days with the victim, they got her traumatic experiences:

So we formed committees which met and discussed what to do. One day, they were talking about what to do with all the young girls in the community. We would listen stealthily and overheard them saying that all of us should be locked up in a room and burnt alive. Our own families were saying this— they had seen what some Muslims had done to the women, raped and killed them. The ones who escaped and came back were in such bad shape—disfigured, mistreated. They felt it was better to kill their women than have them go through this. Should I tell you what I felt when I heard this? I loved life, was in love with it. And I saw death starring me in the face. (qtd.in Frischmann 14-15)

These lines are enough to tell us that male members did not accept their raped women in the family regarding them as damaged and polluted. In such situation, they preferred their death to life. Taran; however, wanted to live despite all those adversities.

Urbashi Butalia has also mentioned the gruesome story of a woman, Prakshvanti, whom her husband wanted to kill in the fear that she would be polluted

and dishonored by the enemy groups. She met her at the Gandhi Vanity Ashram in Jalandhara. Her story goes:

She and her husband and a small child lived in Sheikupura. In 1947, she was some twenty years old... Prakashvanti's husband came to her and suggested he killed her, else, he told her, "they will dishonor you". She remembers little after little that, and she lost consciousness. (qtd.

Frischmann 15)

In the Partition holocaust, many women were killed by their own family members to maintain the family honor. Similarly, they also committed suicide feeling the sense of embarrassment. Butalia also mentions the memory of Besant Kaur regarding how male relatives killed their female relatives and how women committed suicide by jumping into well. Her memory goes:

Because they had killed the girls, his daughter, sister, grandchildren, with their kirpans, and then my jeth's son had a pistol and he killed his mother, his uncle... then my nephew killed my husband with a pistol. He had a small daughter, one- and-a- half years old, she also ate pistol shots. (qtd. in Frischmann 16)

In many wars and violence, we have seen that men have victimized women with different forms of violence. In the Partition holocaust, rape and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence were used as weapons of war. The production of raped bodies was a method for sovereignties and conflicting groups to achieve political power. The root cause of executing such violence is to destroy, dysfunctionalize, humiliate, and terrorize the people and territories.

The point of using rape and sexual violence as a tactic is to keep the victims alive after the heinous crime, severely scarred, traumatized, and deranged with lifeless,

deathlike bodies and souls floating between life and death. Rape is an effective trick causing massive destruction not only at the time of assault but also for many years afterwards, even to the following generation. In this chapter, I have made an attempt to examine different aspects of sexual and gender based violence during the precarious and horrendous period of the Partition of India.

This chapter is also a review of various ideas and reports on rape in Partition violence. In South Asian societies, particularly in India and Pakistan, rape victims occupy a space between and beyond life and death, and I intend to highlight what it is like for them to inhabit this liminal space—a shaded domain that defies the dualism of life and death. They are bare lives or *homo sacers* as conceptualized by Agamben in his idea of biopolitics, totally expendable and undesired. However, sovereign / authority needs these lives to validate power and its existence.

The reason why I examine this concept is because I argue that the prime example of *homo sacer* is raped bodies, mad and displaced people due to the genocidal violence in India in 1947. The life of these people exists inside and outside the juridico-political system completely expendable and exploited by the authorities. The production of raped bodies is a tactic for the authority during the violence. But once, these bodies are produced they are disregarded and become disposable. The Partition stories which I have discussed here are about raped women, and people being mad and dislocated due to the trauma. These are like “bare lives.” The key example of *homo sacer* is raped, dislocated and mentally disturbed people in the violence. They are *zoe* that exists inside and outside the juridico-political system. They are expendable and exploited. The raped bodies are bare lives and are produced for the perpetrator groups to gain political and sovereign power during the violence. Once women are raped they are dumped and uncared for. The raped bodies are simultaneously positioned inside

political power mechanism, but also deemed excluded and expendable. They are the lives whose death is never honored, mourned and memorialized. The unique positioning of “inclusionary exclusion” or “exclusionary inclusion.” is where raped bodies are situated in war and politics.

Agamben’s notion of *homo scare* becomes pretty relevant as the authorities/sovereignities politicize human bodies transforming and labeling them undesired, biological beings and deprive them of political rights and citizenship. For this particular reason, raped bodies are in limbo and even not included in political as well as legal, economic and societal systems. Although the victims are technically alive with a beating heart, they live in a death world, and surviving the violence is only a fragment of their lasting predicament. Their position is just like the position *muselmann*, relic of biopolitical violence—which is not yet or no longer.

The bodies of the perpetrated and traumatized women in the Partition violence themselves speak the magnitude of their traumas. Women’s bodies; hence, were highly politicized from the part of conflicting groups and sovereignties thereby leading them into the position of *muselmann*— specific figure with liminal position of life and death. My argument is that they are true witness of trauma, who capture the specificity and vastness of trauma. Although they cannot speak, their bodies speak. In other words, their somatic testimonies are more telling than other forms of testimonies.

## Chapter IV

### **Authentic Testimonies of Trauma: Bioplotics in Partition Stories of Saadat Hasan Manto and Rajinder Singh Bedi's "Lajwanti"**

“The victims of rape are not included in the public rite of mourning about the lost war; they are not venerated as heroines, and they are not awarded any compensation” (qtd. in Hromadzic 7).

No writer has been able to convey the violent ambiguities of communal conflict with as much force and conviction as Saadat Hasan Manto and Rajinder Singh Bedi. Many of their stories focus on the sense of despair, dislocation and trauma by the Partition of Pakistan and India in 1947. The writings of the mentioned writers vividly recreate the angers and horrors of this period and the trauma of the refugees especially, of women uprooted and victimized by the delineation of arbitrary borders.

As the characters in Manto' and Bedi's stories (especially women) confront the ruthless inhumanity of Hindu-Muslim violence— murder, abduction, rape and mutilation; their only conceivable response is madness. Madness itself is the collapse of the human mind in situations which fails to fulfill the basic needs of growth and sustenance. When emotional pulls override all rational arguments in favor of adherence to the external imposition, one descends into madness. Personal loss, the impossibility of recovery of lost dignity, identity or values, all conspires to push people towards madness. Loss of memory and insanity are the effects of trauma on the mental faculties but loss of consciousness becomes total when the bruised body also succumbs to the terror.

The Partition stories of the mentioned writers attempt to capture this state of trauma— a mental state which reflects on the self-in-the world because it represents a

phase when the self is not in the world or of the world. While a statement pushes one to think and look for a solution, a literary piece pulls the reader in and transfers the anxiety to the readers thereby widening the traumatic experience.

My claim is that the female characters in the stories of the mentioned writers, who undergo through amnesia, frenzy, a slow realization of loss and a deep sense of sorrow, and through presenting the hallucinatory state of mind due to the trauma, are nothing but *homo sacers*, or “bare lives” victimized by the biopolitical violence of Partition riots. These characters are simply in liminal position— neither totally alive not totally dead. They are fated to live in a kind of suspended state. Their bodies speak themselves about their plight and predicament. In other words, they are the most traumatized ones suffering from brutal murder, rape and mutilation being ultimately reduced into the position of “muscleman” or mere abject objects whose somatic testimonies verge on the authenticity of their traumas. I will be discussing as to how female characters in the Partition narratives of Manto and Bedi undergo with biopolitical violence. Before it, it will be imperative to know something about Saadat Hasan Manto.

Saadat Hasan Manto, a noted progressive Urdu writer, was born in Samrala, on 11<sup>th</sup> May 1912. Samrala is 22 miles way from Ludhiana and lies enroute to Chandigarh. He spent most of his early life in Aligarh and Bombay, where he worked for number of years as a film writer and editor of literary journals such as *Musawwir* and *Samaj*. While living in Bombay, he witnessed communal rioting on the city, which he condemned in essays and editorials. For brief period of his life between 1941 and 1942, he worked in Delhi at All India Radio, writing a larger number of plays and stories. Despite his prolific output, Manto became restless and bored with Delhi, which was a relatively small and provincial city. He missed Bombay and quarreled with his



colleagues, finally quitting his job at All India Radio over the unauthorized editing of one of his plays. Returning to Bombay, he discovered that Hindu-Muslim tensions had increased. Alienated from his friends in the Progressive Writers Movement, he became depressed and disillusioned with the literary and political life of Bombay. Though he eventually found work at Filmistan studios and Musawwir, Manto faced financial difficulties and began to drink more heavily. When Partition occurred in the summer of 1947, Manto's wife, Safiyah, and her family moved to Pakistan. Manto remained in Bombay for several months but followed soon afterwards. He settled in Lahore and faced an uncertain and disorienting future. Though he continued writing and produced some of his most powerful stories during this period, his alcoholism had become more severe. Exiled from Bombay and living in poverty, Manto was unable to reconcile himself to his new life in Lahore. He died in 1955, of cirrhosis of the liver at the age of forty-three (qtd. in Salim 3). Now, the researcher analyzes the exploration of biopolitical violence and trauma of Partition riots in the stories of Manto and Bedi.

In the widely-acclaimed short stories "Open It" and "Cold Meat", Manto accentuates the testimonies of traumatic event of the Partition holocaust so cunningly that they appeal to our moral and humanitarian ethos without letting us any chance to identify ourselves with either of the community politics.

The story, "Open It" revolves around Sirajuddin who had come as a refugee or rather dazed and confused survivor to Mughalpura, a place in the city of Lahor in Pakistan from Amritsar in India. Lying unconscious on the ground at a camp, when he finally wakes up he cannot really understand the reason behind the turmoil that is apparent all around him with everyone shouting, crying, running in a state of utter disarray. It is only after a while that he recuperates from his state of shock and recalls the happenings of the previous day:

Sirajuddin lay gazing absent-mindedly at the dusty sky, till he suddenly caught sight of the sun. The warmth of the sun's rays penetrated every nerve of his body. He woke up with a start. A nightmarish vision before his eyes- flames, loot... people running... a station... firing... darkness and Sakina. (Manto 69-70)

The gruesome picture of the traumatic event of the Partition that Manto expresses and exposes is enough to traumatize the readers. Sirajuddin wakes up from his unconsciousness only to find that his wife and daughter are not with him. As he is still in daze, the image of his wife, about to die, with ripped open stomach comes in front of his eyes, just telling him to leave her alone and run away with Sakina, his daughter:

Sakina's mother was dead. She had been killed before his very eyes- but where was Sakina? Before closing her eyes forever, Sakina's mother had urged him, "Don't worry about me- run, take Sakina away at once..." (Manto 70)

By portraying a brutal and inhuman act of killing people caused by the artificially drawn demarcation line of the country, Manto pungently criticizes the traumatic and tragic event of the Partition of India as crime against humanity. In the story, "Open It", Manto does not take recourse to any ethnic or religious identity. He provides the testimony of the violence in the horrendous event of the Partition at its nakedness. As in the case of this story, a group of young men promise to find Sakina and bring her back to her father, Sirajuddin. After much searching and risking their lives the young men find Sakina but instead of returning her safely to Sirajuddin they rape her repeatedly until she is unconscious. The irony is that a Muslim girl escaping from the clutches of Hindu rioters only to fall prey to lustful grasp of her own co-religious

Muslim rescuers. Valorizing the use of irony from the part of Manto, Beerendra Pandey says:

The representation in *Siyab Hashiye* and 'Khol Do' is more than narrativization: a transmission of violence packed with the same intensity as that which underwrites violence, bringing about a metaironic rupture that tears a hole in the readers, making them feel a presence of the holocaust of Partition in their soul. (130-31)

Here, Pandey is hinting at the fact that in Manto's stories the effect of trauma and the effect of irony lead towards the metaironic effect that has potentiality to purge the trauma to some extent. In the aesthetic of trauma literature purgation is always given frontal value. It is Dominick Lacapra "who interpreted the trauma from the perspective, or at least the prospective perspective of a therapeutics resolution" ( qtd. in Spargo 2). Manto, by showing the so-called rescuers of Sakina who simply pretended to act out of a sense of honor and piety but reduced to bestiality and violence, secretly wins the empathy of the readers with the victims who became prey of the violence in its most elementary form inflicted by humanity against humanity.

Such violence in its grotesque form from the part of humanity during the shocking record of the predatory times of the Partition can be seen in "Cold Meat". It is a story of a truck driver, Ishwar Singh and his mistress Kulwant Kaur. They have good physique and they have been enjoying sex too much. Ishwar Singh often says that his mistress is a real woman and she also thinks that he is just wonderful. Their lives are going fine but Singh disappears some days. When he comes Kulwant Kaur asks him what the matter is but he says some excuses and tries to change the topic. She tries to allure him and he also tries to play with her body. His foreplays go on and on and she is aroused but tired also with his ongoing activities. He is tired and he tries hard but he

does not get arousal and falls down on bed like a dead body. Kaur asks him what the matter is, and if he had been to some whore during the days when he was away. He denies but she insists on knowing the real matter and after sometimes he starts telling his story:

Kulwant, my love, you won't believe what happened to me... Man is a strange animal... when people began looting the city, I joined them. I gave you all the money and gold I could lay my hands on... There was however something I didn't tell you about... Ishwar Singh began to groan with pain. Without paying him any attention, Kulwant Kaur said brutally, "tell me now" Ishwar Singh tried to wipe the blood that had dried on his moustache, and said, "the house... I broke into... there were seven... seven people in it... Six men... I killed them... with the dagger with which you... let that be... listen... there was a beautiful girl... I took her with me... (Manto, 95)

Manto executes a silent confusing irony, bodily metaphors of pain and makes use of slippery words so as to arrest in Tony Kushner's view, "complexity and richness of holocaust testimony" (275). The slippery words produced by Sirajuddin in "Open It" and Ishwar Singh in "Cold Meat" not only accentuate the victim's state of unspeakability but also unpack the specificity of the profundity and vastness of the traumatic and tragic event of the Partition of India. By showing such graphic and disturbing projection of Partition violence caused by human beings with all their wilderness and barbarity, Manto pokes fun of the so-called rational human beings.

The most shocking and tear-jerking testimony of the fratricidal sundering of the Partition riot is seen in the climactic moment of the story, "Cold Meat". As Kulwant Kaur forces Ishwar Singh to tell her everything about the incident, he keeps telling

almost in unspeakable position. After he killed every member of the family, he saw a beautiful girl. He also wanted to kill her but she was so beautiful that he thought first he should enjoy sex with her and later on he should kill her. He, therefore, took her away on his shoulders and went to riverside place to have sex with her. As he finally tried to play his trump, a terrible realization dawned on him:

“... but... but”. His voice sank once more. Kulwant Kaur shook him violently and asked, “What happened after that?” Ishwar Singh could barely keep his eyes open. He looked at Kuawant Kaur. She was trembling. “she... was dead... a lifeless corpse... a cold, lifeless corpse... Jani, give me your hand...” Kulwant Kaur placed her hand, which was colder than ice. ( Manto, 95)

Here, by exposing the sick mentality of human beings, Manto slaps on the brutality and barbarity of humanity. He also employs what Kali Tal says, the “unmediated and uninterpreted” testimony of Partition violence, and combines the evil and suffering within it in such a way that the action condemns itself (qtd. in Berger 580). By showing coldness of the girl transcending into Ishwar Singh’s body, he brilliantly shows the perpetrators being the victim of the trauma which helps give humanitarian dimension to the trauma at the expense of provocative politico-ethnic dimension. Being oblivious to ethically-driven testimony and favoring morally-driven testimony as Margalit says, Manto combines “evil and suffering” (148) in his testimony of the violence. Ethically-driven testimony is local, political and compromising in nature whereas morally-driven testimony is universal, apolitical, hence, not compromising.

The exploration of suffering and evil within any traumatic event can also be seen in Manto’s “Open It”. When Sirajuddin is impatiently waiting for young men who are to search for his daughter, Sakina, one day he happens to see those young men in

the camp who are in their truck. The truck is about to leave. He runs up to them and asks one of them, “son ...Have you found my Sakina?”(Manto, 71). One evening while Sirajuddin is sitting in the camp he sees four men carrying the body of a young girl found unconscious near the railway tracks. When he follows them to the hospital, to his great pleasure the girl turns out to be Sakina. She, however, looks almost dead:

He saw a big mole on the girl’s face and screamed, “ Sakina!” The doctor, who had switched on the lights, asked, “What’s the matter?” He could barely whisper, “I am... I am her father.” The doctor turned towards the girl, took her pulse. Then he said, “Open the window”. The girl on the stretcher stirred a little. She moves her hand painfully towards her cord holding up her salawar. Slowly, she pulled her salawar down. Her old father shouted with joy, “She is alive. My daughter is alive.” The doctor broke into a cold sweat. (Manto 72)

These are the capturing and captivating lines to the intense horror and actuality of woman being raped so brutally. Here, the doctor’s cold sweat is a reaction to Sakina’s horrifying submissiveness to her perpetrators who just hearing, “open the window” opens down her salawar in spontaneous reflex. Here, the intensity of trauma, irony and critical response of the readers meet in a single point in such a way that there comes the moral and humanitarian condemnation of the action. In both the stories, “Open It” and “Cold Meat”, Manto provides the testimony of the holocaust of 1947 in the form of gaps, silence and muteness that bear extreme power to surface the specificity of traumatic event like the Partition violence in India. Agamben valorizes silence as a language of testimony by saying, “the catastrophic silence of the *muselmann* who turns into an integral witness” (qtd. in Hartman 89). Dead body of the girl in “Cold Meat” whom Ishwar Singh wants to intercourse and Sakina in “Open It” who starts opening

her salawar in an unconscious position by hearing someone “open the window” are the silent testimonies of atrocities perpetrated on women during the Partition riots which tell us much more than the so-called speech. It is the silence that captures the traumatic event holistically as argued by Agamben. Moreover, in both the stories, trauma of the victims transfers to the readers which retraumatizes them that ultimately helps purge the trauma to a greater extent.

There is another story, “Ghate Ka Sauda” (A Raw Deal) in which the rioters buy a girl apparently belonging to the other community but having abused her the whole night they discover to their horror that they had been cheated. She, in fact, belonged to their own religious community. They then decide to go and return her to the seller, apparently to claim the refund as well. As the narrative goes:

Two friends pooled their resources. They selected a girl from a group of ten or twenty and bought her for forty rupees. After having spent the night with her, one of them asked, “What’s your name?”

The man was furious when he heard the girl’s name.

“We were told that you belong to the other religious community!”

“You were told a lie,” the girl replied. The man ran to his friend and said, “That bastard doublecrossed us. He palmed off one of our own girls! Come on, let’s take her back” (185)

The story clearly shows the fact that how the woman’s body from enemy side becomes a ground to perform their wrath and victory. Here, a woman’s body is not only politicized but also turned in to an abject object—the kind of life that exists inside and outside the juridico-political system— completely expendable and exploited by authorities and the conflicting groups to maintain their power.

The production of raped bodies is a tactic for the authorities and the conflicting groups to gain power and control, but once these bodies are produced, they are disregarded and become disposable. As in the case of the perpetrated girl in the above story, she will be disposable in her own community. She will not be fully included in the political as well as legal, economic, and societal system as discussed by Agamben. She will be fated to live as *homo sacer*.

His story, “Toba Tek Singh” bears the imprint of the struggle to grapple with pain, abnormal condition, insanity and suffering through the humanity and social lenses. Sidestepping the cultural politics of Indian Partition literature, Manto’s “Toba Tek Singh” depicts the violence of the Partition on the basis of humanitarian rays. Though there is no reference of gendered violence in the story, which is the bottom line of the researcher, it is a brilliant story to exemplify Agamben’s concept of “bare life” and “muselmann” the character victimized by biopolitical violence. Hence, it is taken as a reference.

In this short story, the socio-psychological trauma of lunatics is transmitted from the perspective of morality. Here, the traumatic subjectivity transmits through victimhood. Manto uses language of morality to normalize the ethics of psychological trauma of the victims where moral witness is guided by humanistic values. In the length and breadth of this narrative of the aftermath of Indian Partition, Manto underscores the homelessness and insanity of the characters and their bizarre condition caused by amateur statesmen and unscrupulous politicians who draw shadow line boundaries between peoples and countries. Manto’s reporting of the anxieties of the lunatics in the asylum about their precise location in the new alignment, morally acknowledged when physically and psychically uprooted individual, standing at the threshold of a new world and leaves him dead to liberate from absurdity.



With the locus of social and humanistic parable the author's benevolent and liminal treatment of the dislocated, lunatic, absurd and reckless characters of "Toba Tek Singh" specifies the moral witness of the author while acknowledging the traumatic suffering and abnormal condition of the characters. It is through the humanistic, social and psychological approach to "working through" Manto combines the effect of trauma with ironic mode while focusing on the traumatic subjectivity of victim, Toba Tek Singh. Manto's liminal position and thin relations among the lunatics of the Pakistani asylum underlines the ethics of collective and universal line which acknowledge the overwhelming and abnormal activities of the characters of Toba Tek Singh.

In the story, Manto fictionalizes the decision of the governments of India and Pakistan to transfer the lunatics of the asylum and its impacts on people of both sides (India and Pakistan). It also shows the political bankruptcy of the solution dividing not only land but also the people who had lived together for centuries, creating a unique blend of cultural life. The reaction of inmates displayed a unique sense of solidarity within the place and the people without any cultural and political traces. Moreover, true brotherhood and friendliness among the lunatics of different backgrounds is shown as a crucial manner which turns out to be crisis with the news of transfer to their own land. The lunatics are unknown about their geographical location and their belongings. For one lunatic, the entire issue of Hindustan-Pakistan and Pakistan-Hindustan resulted in further dislocation. One day, he suspended his daily task and climbed onto a tree and said, "I want to live neither Pakistan nor in Hindustian- I will live on this tree" (15). Through this expression of an abnormal person, Manto tries to show that the so-called leaders and politicians who claim themselves as an ethical and moral judge but their actions are so insane that even the hard core lunatics of an

asylum are seen wiser than them. Manto portrays the Sikh, Muslim, Hindu, lawyer, engineer, businessmen and landlord as lunatics to reveal the traumatic testimony from the mouth of subjecthood on the basis of humanitarian height. It is also the politics of Manto to judge the victimhood of Indian Partition and their suffering from 'universal' and 'macro' level.

Avishai Margalit, in his book, *The Ethics of Memory* highlights on the moral vision of looking the trauma. In this book, Margalit talks about two types of human relations: thick relations and thick relations. Thick relations function in individual level which he named macro ethics. Whereas thin relations function in collective level which is also called micro ethics. For Margalit, Micro ethics give way to the universal level of trauma. Thin relations are moving beyond the family and community and working in terms of humanity. Manto in "Toba Tek Singh" focuses the thin relations among the lunatics in which the humanistic vision of traumatic testimony is clearly demonstrated through the medium of insane characters of the story.

Moreover, the negotiation between Sikh, Hindu, and Muslim is depicting as a peaceful manner by surpassing the cultural and religious politics. In the story, one man, who has been reading *Zamindar* regularly from nearly twenty years, was approached by a friend: "What is Pakistan?" "A place in India where manufacture razors," he answer after much deliberation. His friend approached to be satisfied by the answer (14). Here we can see the mutual relationship between two lunatics who are the representative of different economical class. Following these lines, a Sikh lunatic asked another Sikh and says, "Sardarji, why are we being sent to Hindustan? We can't even speak their language. But I know the language of Hindustanis, the first one interjected with a smile [...]" (14). Same kind of warm relationship between Hindu and Muslim is benevolently expressed while Bishan Singh was visited by his old friend

Fazal Din, a few days prior to the transfer. Fazal narrates, "they requested me to check you're every once in a while. Now I hear you're being taken to Hindustan. Give my regards to Bhai Baleersingh and BahiVadhwasingh... and Siter Amrit kaur" (17). The harmony and mutual relationship between Sikh and Muslim is revealed through these expressions which accomplish the harmonious world of lunatics.

However, "Toba Tek Singh" has become a metaphor for the utter absurdity and mindlessness of the entire exercise of Partition. For instance Bishan Singh lies stretched out horizontally in no-man's land refusing to advance any further, various meanings emerges in readers mind. As Mohanaz Ispahani puts, "the loss of his most valuable identity and its dignity indicated by his horizontal position at the end... the no man's land suggesting that the old identity has been lost but new one was yet to be located" (14). Bishan Singh's pose at the last when he bent down at the threshold of India and Pakistan shows the liminal position of Manto and also the answer of the question of Bishan Singh "Where is Toba Tek Singh?" Here, Manto ironically expresses his idea to them who forced the people to leave the country in the name of Partition of religion, geography, language and culture.

"Toba Tek Singh" also discloses the lunacy and dislocation of the people but in its heart, Manto ironically teaches the politicians and the sane people through the ideology of insane people. Manto in this story does not take any political and cultural instance. He is looking everything from humanitarian perspective to normalize the psychological and social trauma of the lunatics. The lunatics of this story are not the actual lunatics but our society which is embedded with the cultural politics is a real lunatic. To prove all these things, Manto portrays the lunatic characters and their friendly nature, despite their different religious and cultural lines.

In the mentioned story, Manto as a witness of the contemporary Partition period is revealing his traumatic testimony from the moral and humanistic stance. Manto's universal stands in "Toba Tek Singh" is helpful to normalize the trauma either that is social or psychological. Manto's reporting of the anxieties of the lunatics in the asylum about their precise location in the new alignment, morally acknowledged in the story. As Agamben asserts that "a muselmann (that Bishan Singh is) can bear witness to the violence done to him through an insignification like the non-sense he speaks" (Pandey, "Historiography" 72). Unlike political and cultural records of historian, Manto in "Toba Tek Singh" constructs the fictional antiquity of the marginal, dislocated, lunatic sufferers of the aftermath of Partition violence which is moral, humanitarian and completely new parable in the history of Indian Partition literature.

Another aspect of women's victimhood by hypocritical social outlook on women is revealed in the story "Sharda". In this story, Manto explores a complex relationship between Nazir, a married man and Sharda, a prostitute. Although initially their relationship is commercial, Sharda eventually gets emotionally attached to Nazir. In spite of his desire for Sharda, Nazir is reluctant to give her the status of his wife. He cheats his wife and visits Sharda for days, but when Sharda starts living with him in his house during his wife's absence, his feelings start changing. He thinks, "Why has this woman become my second wife? When did I ever need her? Why is she sticking to me?" (82). Sharda's devotion to Nazir, on the other hand, never alters. She writes letters to him, professes her love and admiration like any lover normally does. Nazir does not pay any attention to her love, and thinks it is "a passage from a romantic novel full of cheap sentiment" (80). Nazir views Sharda as a commodity, and not as a person. We learn that he enjoys her initially: "Nazir was very satisfied with Sharda, so completely contented that he had forgotten all other women in his past" (74). However,

he can only associate Sharda in the dirt of the hotel and not in his clean room. “The atmosphere in the room was clean”, Manto writes, “But why was it that he did not feel as close to Sharda as he did when he lay with her on the hard bed in the filthy hotel” (80). Sharda is a prostitute, not “clean” enough to be Nazir’s wife. Nazir’s feeling of Sharda being “dirty” is a fruit of deeply rooted feelings based on class and cultural differences. Prostitutes are stereotypically assumed to be morally impure and dirty. After reading the story, we begin to question this sense of morality. Is Nazir, the man who cheats his wife and views Sharda as a commodity, morally superior to Sharda, the woman who loves and cares for Nazir? Being a prostitute does not mean being base or amoral. Sharda is a victim of a predominantly masculine society. In the two story, the only submission that is made as a conscious choice by a woman is Sharda’s devotion to Nazir. Ironically, that is also the one rejected rudely by Nazir, and by society at large. Sharda’s graceful exit from Nazir’s life is striking. She does not complain or ask for money, but leaves a tin of Nazir’s favorite cigarettes on his table as a gift from a lover. Nazir, on the other hand wants to pay her and make her leave. Nazir’s commercial approach and Sharda’s love compel us to rethink the conventional image of prostitutes being dirty and men being faultless.

Manto’s story “Sharda” express the same spirit, in spite of being set in different situations. The author describes how society (the state in broader sense) uses women and severely criticizes the traditional views of morality. Sharda’s melancholic exit from Nazir’s life makes us consider how society constructs these set notions of womanhood. We discover a savage, merciless masculinity that remains concealed beneath the deceptive smiles. Manto’s stories place a mirror in front of the hideous, wounded face society tries to hide with charming smiles and happy expressions. Now, the life of Sharda’s is of no value in the society. She will neither get any respectable

position in Nazir's community nor will get any glorious space in her own community. She will rather be fated to live with the sense of despair and dislocation. The society will simply scandalize her; she will be the abject object in the male-ordained society that will take her disposable object. Her position will ultimately be just like in Agamben's word *homo sacer*— a position trembling on the threshold between the human and the inhuman.

Another vibrating story of Manto "Sharifan" (Bitter Harvest) brings to the fore on each other's women during the precarious time of Partition. With a view to taking revenge; and perhaps preventing the future generation of the enemy community from taking birth, if not raped or abducted, the women were merely killed. "Sharifan" superbly unpacks the chilling horrors of rioting done womenfolk during the genocidal violence of Partition. The place is in the grip of rioting. A bullet has pierced Qasim's thighs. As he rushes home, he finds that his wife is lying dead and his daughter lying close by naked. As the narrative goes:

[...] he received no reply from inside. Qasim pushed open the door. He nearly fell on his face. While he was tiring to get up he realized he was near a... Suddenly Qasim screamed and sat up. Only a yard away a young girl's dead body, absolutely naked, was lying on the floor. Fair, well- built body, small firm breast..., Qasim's entire being was shaken up. Inside his soul a scream was born that could touch the sky, but his lips were sealed in a manner that his scream could not escape them. His eyes automatically closed and yet he covered his face with his hands. A sound emitted from him, "Sharifan." With his eyes still closed he fished out some clothes and threw them on Sharifan's dead body. (52)

This scene is very gruesome that tells the real plight and predicament of women, who

were subjected to the most perverse treatment that any sadistic imagination could devise. In an unconscious and extremely enraged and frenzied state of mind, Qasim kills a Sikh and three Hindus, with a broken psyche:

Hatchet in hand, Qasim was running in the deserted bazaars like boiling lava. On the crossing, he was faced with a young well- built Sikh. Qasim attacked in a peculiar aimless manner and with such force that Sikh fell like an uprooted tree in a storm [...] A little far away from crossing, he saw some men. Like an arrow, he went towards them. They shouted: “Har- Har Mahadev”. I stead of replying with “Allah-o-Akbar Qasim called them by choicest four-lettered words, flung his hatchet in the air and entered that group. In a few moments, three dead bodies were writhing on the road. (53)

Here, it becomes pretty clear that the utter sense of communalism was a driving force for the outbreak of violence. In such violence of extreme kind, the women were the immediate sufferers. By showing such terrible scene, Manto perhaps, is hinting at the fact that how enemy groups acted out their wrath over enemies’ women or daughters.

Qasim with utter anger was moving towards the bazaars that were totally deserted. He entered a street. He; however, realized that all inhabitants were Muslims, he felt miserable. He then turned his lava to another direction. “ entering a bazaar he flung his hatchet in air and once again started shouting the worst possible sewer words concerning mothers and sisters”( 53). He went towards a house. Something was written on the door in Hindi. The door was bolted from inside. Like a mad man Qasim broke open the door with his hatchet. His throat was dry. He started shouting, “come out, come out”. He was very agitated. A door opened slowly and a girl appeared. Qasim asked in a tough voice, “who are you?” “A Hindu” (54). Qasim then threw

away his hatchet and pounced on her like a wild beast, throwing her to the ground. He then began to tear her clothes and for half-an-hour he ravaged her like an animal gone out of control. There was no resistance, she had fainted. Later when Qasim looked at the naked body of girl, he was reminded of his daughter, Sharifan and put on the blanket on the molested girl.

Just then a man entered the house holding a sword and asked him, “who are you?” Qasim was startled. His eyes opened but he could see nothing. The man with a sword shouted, “Qasim!” Qasim was once again startled. He tried to recognize the man but his eyes failed him. The man was very upset. He asked, “what are you doing here?”(54). Qasim pointed towards the blanket. The other man pulled off the blanket. The sword fell from his hand; then he staggered out of the house wailing, “Bimala... Bimala!” (55). The readers can guess the further development: a circle of violence and vengeance. The story comes to an end with traumatized individuals.

In this story, Manto unravels the moral condemnation of brutal act upon female subjects. By showing his protagonist, Qasim having identified Hindu Bimala as his own daughter, Sharifan, after his brutal treatment towards her, Manto not only retraumatizes Qasim but also the readers.

By the same token, Manto’s “Xuda Ki Kasam” (I Swear By God) provides the historians with sensitive insight into the impact of abduction on ordinary people. It reflects on the emotional trauma of abduction. It also provides valuable insights which have surprisingly been ignored by historians. The narrator of this story is a liaison officer from Pakistan involved in the recovery of abducted women. During his work, he encounters an old Muslim woman, who is searching for her daughter with desperation. With the outbreak of pervasive violence tens and thousands of women were murdered, raped, abducted and mutilated. The raped and abducted ones were so



traumatized that

[...] some girls had committed suicide on the way, afraid of facing their parents. Some had lost their mental balance as a result of their traumatic experiences. Others had become alcoholics and used abusive and vulgar language when spoken to. (160)

The woman, searching for her daughter refuses to return to Pakistan with the liaison officer, as she is convinced that her daughter is still alive. “Why?” I asked. ““Because she is beautiful. She is so beautiful that no one can kill her. No one could even dream of hurting her,’ she said in a low whisper” (168). The narrator makes another trip across the boarder to India and again he happens to find that Muslim woman who

[...] was no more than a bag of bones now. She could hardly see and tottered about like a blind person, a step at a time. Only one thing hadn’t changed— her faith that her daughter was alive and that no one could kill her. (168)

The pathetic plight of a woman is a site of testimonies of the trauma of the Partition of India especially on women. A dead-alive woman simply wants to her beloved daughter to come. One of the volunteers said the liaison officer, “Don’t waste your time over her. She’s raising mad. It would be good if you take her to Pakistan with you and put her in an asylum” (169). The officer, however, decides to make one last effort to take her to Pakistan. Just at the moment, a young woman looks for a moment, and then walks away. The old woman recognizes her daughter and shouts after the officer, “Bhagbari, Bhagbari... I’ve seen her... I have seen her” (169). He firmly replies, fully aware of what is happening, “I swear on God your daughter is dead” (170). The old woman then collapses on the ground as a bare life— a life which is not yet or no longer.

Manto's ending to the story reveals perhaps better than anything else that Partition involved the death of family ties as well as of individuals. The character of the old woman, moreover, articulates the uncertainties and anxieties of many relatives waiting to hear of loved ones. The pathos and occasional futility of the exercise of rehabilitation are laid bare through the use of irony and reversal, as the abducted Muslim woman refuses to recognize her own mother.

It is true that many women did find a new life after being abducted. Happily married to a Sikh youth, Bhagbari does not wish to risk her happiness by remembering this naked, insane woman as her mother. "Being a story of rupture and loss, "Xuda Ki Kasam" shows that the logic of human relationship is more powerful than the logic of religion" (Patole 3).

This story hence, shows the experiences of human beings (not of Muslims, Hindus or Sikhs) caught of in the traumatic event of the Partition of India. Rajinder Singh Bedi also has captured the trauma of women in his master piece "L jwant " that primarily deals with the ordeals of people of the erstwhile undivided India during the Partition and the riots in its aftermath. The Partition functioned as an instrument of separation, dissolution and fragmentation of human beings, rendering them homeless and beggars, without any sense of direction and/or destination and any future prospects to urge them forward on the tracks of life. Before delving into his story, it will be imperative to write something about Bedi.

Rajinder Singh Bedi (1915 to 1984), a progressive Urdu writer, playwright, Hindi film director, screenwriter and dialogue writer, was born in Punjab region of Pakistan and moved to India at the time of the Partition. He is considered the second best Saadat Hasan Manto, highly regarded Urdu short story writer. Like Manto, his best known works center on the immense human cost of the of the 1947 Partition of

India into Pakistan and India. Much the worst of this holocaust was felt by the women as men of diverse groups took their revenge by raping and abducting women of other groups. Hundreds of thousands of Hindu women were abducted by Muslim and vice-versa. He was educated in Urdu. In his early working career, he was a postal clerk. Later on, he got a job at All India Radio. It was there, he began his writing career. From there, he moved to script writing for Bollywood movies and then into directing. It will be for his 72 short stories that he is remembered.

In the story “Lajwanti” Bedi explores the plight of abducted women during the violence and upheaval of the Subcontinent’s Partition in 1947. Sunderlal, an abusive husband whose own wife went missing during the conflict, actively campaigns for the repatriation of abducted women but is taken aback by the unsettling emotional transformations that attend the acceptance of his own wife back into his home. Bedi raises the problem of silence—the inability of survivors and perpetrators of violence to talk about what happened—which is a common theme in Partition literature.

"Lajawanti" is about a once happily married couple. Then in the riots that resulted in the Partition of India (the effects were at their very worst in the Punjab region where the story is set and where Bedi grew up) the wife Lajawanti is abducted and taken over the border. Years go by and her husband tries to get along with his life. In time Pakistani and Indian authorities begin to arrange for the exchange of abducted women. A truck load of Hindu women would be exchanged for a truck load of Muslim women. There were lots of problems and quarrels over this. Sometimes men of one side managing the exchange would complain that “the women they were handing over were old or middle-aged... and of little value” (75).

While some men were refusing to take back their women by saying, “we will not take these sluts left over by the Muslims” (76). Similarly, some people refusing to

have anything to do with the abducted women who came back were saying, "why couldn't they have killed themselves? Why didn't they take poison and preserve their virtue and their honour? Why didn't they Jump into a well? They are cowards, they clung to life..." (71).

This is the reflection of the popular discourse one encounters in so many narratives about the period. The real cruelty to the women in many cases came when they returned. Hundreds of thousands of women had in fact killed themselves rather than be dishonored. How could the dead know what courage it needed to face the cold, hostile world of the living in a hard-hearted world in which husbands refused to acknowledge their wives. And some of these women would think sadly of their names and the joyful meanings they had..."suhagwanti...of marital bliss" or they would turn to a younger brother and say "Oi Bihari, my own little darling brother, when you were a baby I looked after you as if you were my own son" (71).

Lajawanti's husband is at first overcome with joy when one day she was among the returned women. Sunderlal used to routinely beat his wife for the smallest matters.

He asked if the man she spent long months with while abducted beat her. She says no. Then the husband begins to wonder why she looks better and healthier than before she was abducted. Maybe she was happier with the other man. He promises never to beat her again and he keeps his word. He never criticizes her like he used to. They never fight over anything. At first she is very happy. Then she realizes why this has happened:

Many days passed in this way. Suspicion took the place of Joy: not because Sunderlal had resumed ill-treating her, but because he was treating her too well. Lajo never expected him to be so considerate. She wanted him to be the same old Sunderlal with whom she quarreled over

a carrot and who appeased her with a radish. Now there was no chance of a quarrel. Sunder Lal made her feel like something fragile, like glass which would splinter at the slightest touch. Lajo took to gazing at herself in the mirror. Arid in the end she could no longer recognize the Lajo she had known. She had been rehabilitated but not accepted. (78)

Sunderlal did not want eyes to see her tears nor ears to hear her wailing. However, she wanted to act out her trauma by sharing it with her husband. In other words, she wanted to release her traumatic experiences after being abducted by Muslims but her husband did not cooperate at all. In fact,

she wanted to tell Sunderlal of her experiences and by her tears away her sins. But Sunderlal wouldn't let her broach the subject. At night she would stare at his face. When she was caught doing so she could offer no explanation. And the tired Sunderlal would fall asleep again. (77)

Lajo is described as happy and desperate at the same time. She feels alien in her own body, alien with the image Sunderlal has constructed for both of them. She even wishes to have back the "old" Sunderlal as a husband, who used to beat her, but who was at least able to apologize and to recognize in her uniqueness of being. "The therapeutic effect which lingers as a potential in the practice of remembering cannot take place because Sunderlal has closed himself off from a way to healing" ( Michael 196). Lajwanti's husband, Sunderlal has an emotional exchange with the leader of the conservative faction who is lecturing on Valmiki's Ramayana, explicating the portion of the epic in which Ram turns Sita out.

This situation foreshadows and parallels the experience of Sunderlal and Lajwanti. When Lajwanti returns to Sunderlal, he takes her home but fails to act normally to her. Not only does he refrain from beating her— asserting his masculinity

as he did in the days before her abduction but now he does not allow her to talk about her experiences in Pakistan except to satisfy his own curiosity about the identity of her abductor. To heal her trauma catharsis is needed which she can fulfill by sharing her experiences with her husband but he just disregards it.

As he cannot cope with what has happened to Lajwanti, Sunderlal comes to regard her not as his wife but as devi. “In elevating her, he only emphasizes her pollution. Sunderlal thus engages in a psychological rejection” (Jamila 69). The once vibrant, spirited Lajwanti lives in constant and continuous fear that Sunderlal will someday turn her out.

"Lajwanti" depicts a world, where women have totally internalized the idea that they are little more than property. They keep imagining the horror of being abducted, taken to another country and being raped over and over for perhaps years. When they at last return to their home country, they are told that their failure to kill themselves has brought great shame on their family.

Summing up, both widely-acclaimed writers Manto, and Bedi, in their writings mentioned here foreground the plight and predicament of abducted, displaced and raped women during the violence of the Partition of India. “During the bloody Partition of India in 1947, which had taken on the proportions of a war, at least one hundred thousand women are said to have been abducted and raped by all three parties involved— Muslims , Hindus and Sikhs” ( “Historiography” 184). In the kind of violence as that of one discussed here, abduction and rape are used as strategies by the conflicting parities. The prime aim of rape and abduction in communal violence is to inflict trauma and destroy the family ties and group solidarity within the enemy community. A part from the demoralization of the enemy, Bulent Diken and Carsten

Bagge Laustsen in their article “Becoming Abject: Rape as a weapon of War” say, “war rape can also become an integral aspect of ethnic cleansing” (111).

Rape and abduction leave long-lasting impacts on body, gender, religion and the psyche. During the Partition violence in India, gender differences and religious commitments are said to have been used as instruments of traumatizing not just the women in question but also their families and ultimately, the community in which they lived. In other words, women’s bodies were politicized, resulting in them as biopolitical subjects to be used tactically to traumatize the enemies. The physical damage caused by rape and abduction can be considerable. However, the trauma of rape may, for some, be even worse than bodily harm. The victims of rape and abduction often perceive themselves as abject objects especially in patriarchally and religiously – dominated countries like India and Pakistan. They, therefore, feel morally inferior persons. The penetration inflicted on their body and self marks the stigma, which can not be effaced. Abjection has a communal aspect as well. The victims of abduction and rape are excluded by neighbors and by the family members. Hence, rape victims suffer from twice: First by being raped and second by being condemned by patriarchal community (like as that of India and Pakistan).

Dozens of female characters in the writings of the mentioned writers such as Sakina, Sharifan, Sharada, mad Muslim woman, Bimala, Lajwanti etc. by being victims of either rape or abduction are turned out to be abject objects— the objects that are aliens, disgusting and disposable. These objects are neither fully inside (family/ community/ state) nor fully outside. They, therefore, are *homo sacers* or “bare lives” fated to live a dead-alive life. These figures are testimonies which unfold and capture the trauma of the Partition holistically.

Actually, in attempting to constitute the fragmented subjectivities of female subject of mass violence, fictionalized survivors enable us to imaginatively inhabit the traumatic inner worlds of these women as they are confronted with the disquieting failure of so-called make hospitality in the aftermath of Partition. By capturing the specificity and in-depth picture of trauma of Partition, which the official rhetorics whole-heartedly try to put aside, the narratives of the mentioned writers take us to the haunting consequences of sexual violence for the female survivors. Women normally find it very difficult to give voice to such violence (especially in the male-ordained social structures as that of India and Pakistan), they remain outside the scope of historical records. History also, in the name of objectivity, fails to record such brutal experiences of rape, abduction and pains etc. Such experiences; therefore are to be found in memory, in fiction or in memoirs. We shall have to take recourse to such sources to have the authenticity of the trauma. It is because they are more authentic testimonies than the so-called official histories that constantly and continuously attempt to underpin more spectacular instances of mass violence the kind witnessed during Partition.

Manto and Bedi, thus dramatize the pervasive effects of gendered violence during the precarious event of the Partition of India, focusing on their female characters as the most traumatized ones, suffering from brutal murder, rape and mutilation being ultimately reduced into mere abject objects, whose somatic testimonies verge on the authenticity of their traumas.



## Chapter V

### Conclusion

#### Trauma, Biopolitics and the Aesthetics of the Literature of Violence

The twentieth century was one marked by tragic and traumatic events. This century is marked by the predominance of harrowing events in the time period 1914-1989, which saw two World Wars, the Cold War and, centrally, the Holocaust. Consequently, trauma has inscribed itself into our collective memory and assumed an essential cultural position. The word “trauma” is taken from Greek language which means wound. Doctors tend to use it as Beerendra Pandey in his book, *Historiography of Partition* says, as “a serious external or internal damaged of the body, not necessarily a piercing by an object” (1). Psychologists tend to use it “with reference to condition called PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) by which they mean a kind of emotional or psychological blow landed on the victim by an injurious and / or life-threatening event” (“Historiography” 1). Such event generates such a terrible blow that it keeps coming up in the consciousness of the victim even much after the occurrence of the event. Psychologists, as Pandey says, “attribute the outbreak of such risk factors as assault, domestic abuse, prison stay, rape, riot, terrorism and war” (“Historiography” 1). The Partition violence as the most traumatic period in the history of modern India, has still remained in the collective memory of Hindustanis and Pakistanis. Such trauma has been captured in the narratives of Manto and Bedi.

My dissertation revolves around the Foucauldian notion of biopolitics; in which bodies and lives are focal points in war and violence. Italian philosopher, Giorgio Agamben also expands this notion of Foucault in his book, *Homo Sacer* in which he discusses that biopolitical violence through the state of exception has become the common factor underlying our contemporary political experiences reducing people in

the position of bare lives— specific form of life in dead-alive position. My claim in this dissertation is that the genocidal violence during the Partition of India caused by the formation of two modern nation states was of biopolitical nature. It is because during the traumatic event of the so-called Partition, politicization of human bodies (women's bodies) was widespread. The sovereignties (Hindu-India and Muslim-Pakistan) politicized women's bodies reducing them into living objects (*homo sacers*) whose soft bodies became the targets for both victors and losers to vent their wrath, enact fantastic revenge and celebrate victories. Such trauma of women has been skillfully captured in the literary artifacts of the mentioned writers.

The field of traumatic literature has become increasingly varied and abundant, as authors work to capture feelings, thoughts and emotions that an objective normative history either disregards or is unable to encompass. Escaping precise definition, the concept of trauma consistently carries notions of unreliability and a lack of cohesion or structure. Traumatic literature frequently involves delving into unknown wounds left by tragedy, attempts to speak the unspeakable and make the incomprehensible comprehensible.

A reevaluation of historiographic methodology – both in academia and popular culture – has questioned the plausibility of objective accounts of history. In contrast to traditional normative history, which has proven woefully inadequate in rendering trauma, literature has shown itself to be a productive means for narrating traumatic experiences. As a result, traumatic literature provides a fertile field for exploration and evaluation of human experience. In other words, literature has immense potentiality for the holistic exploration of trauma whereas history tends to be oblivious towards the material effects of trauma; it is simply because history mostly attempts to corner the specificity and vastness of trauma by playing the role of power politics.

Official history of India, for example, projects 1947 as a glorious and jubilant moment of independence from the utter colonial domination of Britain by brushing up the wickedness, violence, and pure evil erupted into powerful mass that soared out of control and consumed everyone that came out in its path. Literature, however, does justice by specifically representing the trauma.

Literature, Cathy Caruth argues, “enables us to bear witness to events that can not be completely known and opens our ears to experiences that might have otherwise remained unspoken and unheard” ( qtd. in Marder 3). Trauma, no doubt, is very painful but when it is acted out it paves way for the survival. It is the literature that provides spacious room for the acting out of trauma for it flatly denies the closure of trauma. As Felman says:

Literature is a dimension of concrete embodiment and language of infinitude that, in contrast to the language of the law, encapsulates not closure but precisely what in a given legal case refuses to be closed and can not be closed. It is to this refusal of the trauma to be closed that literature does justice. (qtd. in Marder 5)

The more trauma is acted out the more it reduces the agony of the trauma. Good trauma literature should always focus on the possibilities of acting out so as to bring in the healthy and wholesome relationship among the members of the community. Another distinguishing hallmark of good piece of traumatic literature is that it appeals the moral sense of the readers at the expense of ethical sense which is likely to be contaminated by the germs of identity politics.

The rendition of the trauma of the women in 1947 from the part of Manto and Bedi is actually a morality-inflected transmission with emphasis on human relations “ backed by the attribute of being human, such as being a woman or being sick” (

Margalit 7 ). Here, Margalit covertly tries to express that morality occupies the universal values and norms whereas ethics is limited and local in its dimension. To say overtly, the line of morality is apolitical whereas the line of ethics is political and hence, compromising.

In the stories of the mentioned writers, testimonies of traumatic event of the Partition holocaust are so cunningly exposed and expressed that they appeal to our moral and humanitarian ethos without letting us any chance to identify ourselves with either of the community politics. At the heart of these narratives, by keeping the falsity of religious and political rhetoric of the Partition violence at bay, the writer projects the testimonies of the traumatic events of the Partition without perpetuating the cycle of revenge and recrimination. In these stories, the writers do not see the perpetrators as Muslims or non-Muslims, Hindustanis and Pakistanis; they just see and depict them as human beings with all their wilderness and barbarity. By executing in Tony Kushner's view, "the complexity and richness of holocaust testimony" (275) of the Partition violence, and combining evil and suffering within it, they also capture the specificity of the Partition violence without being provocative in any way. In doing so, they bring in the humanitarian and moral perspective on the Partition holocaust which helps evoke the therapeutic effect of the trauma of the Partition.

The stories of Manto and Bedi unravel the trauma of women victimized by the biopolitical violence who ultimately are reduced into *homo sacer* and *muselmann* as conceptualized by Agamben. *Muselmann* is a specific form of life which is alive but dead, and dead but alive. All female characters in the stories of the mentioned writers who suffer from brutal rape, abduction and mutilation are nothing but the abject objects which speak the vastness of trauma without speaking. In other words, the

perpetrated women characters and their somatic testimonies verge on the authenticity of their traumas.

Hence, from the perspective of the aesthetic of the literature of trauma, the stories of the mentioned writers are pretty good. It is because they do not give any trace of identity for the perpetrators in their stories; they simply project them as human beings with all their wilderness and barbarity. By showing the suffering of the human beings (especially that of women) with the violence of the highest magnitude caused by the delineation of the arbitrary borders they morally condemn the holocaust. Through the rhetoric of humanitarian politics of testimony, both the writers, in their stories, offer the humanity to revisit the holocaust of 1947, reopen the wounds and wallow in the pain of the violence that was witnessed and, then, to perhaps, in that moment of catharsis, rebuild the bridges with people, reestablish those vital human relationships and renew the hope for a better tomorrow.

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