

Tribhuvan University
Central Department of English

Womanist Revision of the History of 1947 through Oral Narratives

A Dissertation Presented to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Master of Philosophy in English

By

Sabita Nakarmi

August 2011

Approval Letter

The dissertation entitled “**Womanist Revision of the History of 1947 through Oral Narratives**” submitted by Ms Sabita Nakarmi to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University for the partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy in English has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

Internal Examiner

Dr. Beerendra Pandey

External Examiner

Head of the Department

Dr. Amma Raj Joshi

August 2011

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Beerendra Pandey, Reader in English at Tribhuvan University, whose scholarly guidance and regular supervision shaped this dissertation in this form. Madam Kalpana Pandey also deserves special thanks for her motherly love and encouragement.

I am grateful to Dr. Amma Raja Joshi, Head of Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University for providing me an opportunity to do this research work. I would also like to extend my thanks to Dr. Sanjeev Uprety for his inspiration and suggestion. I am heartily indebted to Dr. Abhi Subedi, Dr. Arun Gupto, Dr. Krishna Chandra Sharma, Dr. Sangeeta Raymajhi and Dr. Shiva Rijal without whose initial guidance this study would never have been accomplished.

My family members deserve special thanks for their unconditional love and continuous support while preparing this dissertation. I acknowledge my parents (Shyam Krishna Nakarmi and Shova Nakarmi), my sister (Manita Nakarmi) and my brothers (Bijesh Nakarmi and Rabin Maharjan) for their cooperation and encouragement.

I am pleased to acknowledge my colleagues Ms. Indira Gohiwar, Ms. Ila Mainali and Ms. Shrijana Adhikari for their genuine understanding, continuous encouragement and selfless support for the completion of my M.Phil degree. Last but not the least, I am deeply indebted to my classmate Mr. Khagendra Acharya for his inspiration, suggestion and urge.

Abstract

This dissertation concentrates on Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin's *Border and Boundaries: Women in India's Partition*; Urvashi Butalia's *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India*; and Meenakshi Verma's *Aftermath: An Oral History of Violence* that present a radically alternative understanding of partition violence through the personal narratives of female partition victims and survivors. They posit the women -- the gendered subaltern -- in the subject position letting them to speak for themselves and keeping them at the centre. Women were the innocent victims of the cataclysmic partition violence in 1947 as the men of one community physically exploited the women of other community in order to breach the manhood of the latter. Women were victimized in multiple ways—in abduction, rape, suicide, conversion, rehabilitation, abortion, migration and alienation. Their bodies were a site for the game of revenge and retaliation of men. In fact, women, their victimization and their death were the pretensions to hide the effeminated manhood of patriarchy. Notwithstanding, the national history silences the voices and representation of women's pain and experience as it only glorifies the birth of two independent states. However, the personal narratives that Menon and Bhasin, Butalia and Verma have chronicled, work through subalternist feminist subjectivity to recall the acts of violence against individuals and ethnic groups and to restore women's pain to history with a sense of human compassion. In other words, the oral narratives read against the grain of national history that glorified community and nationhood and present the history through feminist subalternity with the retrieval of the muted voices of women directing the reconstruction and representation. In the oral narratives, the boundaries of national history are redrawn to restructure the patriarchal social structure, thereby give space, voice and empowerment to the gendered subaltern women.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One

The Mute Can Speak: Subaltern Feminist Revision of the Partition Trauma of 1947..1

Chapter Two

Memory of Partition Violence in Oral Narratives by Women.....61

Chapter Three

CONCLUSION.....101

Works Cited.....106