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Biopolitical nature of Partition violence in Sidwa's *Cracking India* and Saadat

Hasan Manto's Partition Stories

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Letter of Recommendation

This Thesis entitled "Biopolitical Nature of Partition Violence in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India* and Saadat Hasan Manto's Partition stories" has been prepared by Miss.

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This Thesis entitled " Biopolitical Nature of Partition Violence in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India* and Saadat Hasan Manto's Partition stories " has been submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Miss. Astha Subba It has been approved by the undersigned members of Research Committee.

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Abstract

In the mass exodus of India-Pakistan Partition of 1947, thousands of women died of repeated rapes, tens of thousands were forced into marriage, many converted, some were forced into prostitution or sold as slaves. Partition violence has been seen as a trope for reconstructing Hindu-Muslim conflict but those women whose lives were uprooted by the hurricane of maelstrom are either ignored or surreptitiously overlooked. The dissertation reinterrogates Partition violence, the exchange of population during Partition and exchange of women after Partition, and reveals how those women were characteristically victimized by men of other communities, men of their communities and even by their own states. Using Giorgio Agamben's concepts of bare life and *Muselmann*, the dissertation presents these physically assaulted and mentally scarred women, often in complicity of their states, left to the state of bare life. These victims with bare life are found in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India*, particularly Ayah and Hamida and the female characters in Saadat Hasan Manto's Partition stories (for example Khol Do). The analysis of these narratives along the lines of bare life brings to the fore the biopolitics associated with the gendered violence.

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Chapter One

Biopolitics in Sidhwa's *Cracking India* and Manto's Partition Stories

This dissertation concentrates on Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India* and Saadat Hassan Manto's short stories on Partition that present the gendered partition violence perpetrated on women. It shows that these female victims have been reduced to the lowly status of homo sacer and left in a state of what Agamben calls the *Muselmann*. Drawing upon Giorgio Agamben's notion of bare life and biopolitics, this dissertation claims that the physically assaulted and mentally scarred women are what Agamben calls bare life, a life which is the politicized form of natural life. Bare life indicates the exposure of natural life to the force of the law in abandonment, the ultimate expression of which is the sovereign's right of death and life. Agamben claims that under a regime of biopolitics all subjects are at least potentially if not actually abandoned by law and exposed to violence as a constitutive condition of political existence. This dissertation assumes that women are the worst victim of women during the turbulent times where their bodies are equated with their respective communities, nations and national territories. Regardless of obvious overlooking and callous representation of female characters in Partition literature, a

critical analysis through the lens of feminism and biopolitics reveal that these women were exposed to violence not only by men but also by their natal states which decided upon their fates without even giving as much thought to what the women want. One of the primary objective of the study is to pit the hegemonic representation of women affirming that women belong to community and country and not to themselves against the feminist perspective which views communal and national lording over women as their subjugation and seriously questioning it. Through the critical analysis of Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India* and Saadat Hassan Manto's short stories, the dissertation intends to expose the patriarchal mindset of men and states which are at play all the time but comes to the fore more prominently during turbulent times.

The national history has glorified community and nationhood and has remained silence on the voices and representation of women's pain and experiences. However, the violence that followed during the process of Partition was unprecedented, a phenomenon un-witnessed in the history of two nations, and could be paralleled only with holocaust. This dissertation focuses on those women who were the victims of cataclysmic partition violence in 1947 where the men of the different communities competed with each other on which community could cause as much damage to women from other community as they equated female bodies with notions of home, their respective communities, nations and national territories and by violating female bodies, they were violating everything, the female bodies stood for. As if the violence by men were not enough for women, post-partition many women were forcefully sent back to their natal nations when they have only started to come to terms with their new lives, in new state. Their states subjected them to physical, psychological and emotional violence. This dissertation using

Agamben's concept of biopolitics, which he largely presents through the conditions of Jews in Nazi concentration camps, illustrates the condition of women who are left physically assaulted and mentally scarred and sometime driven to the state of *Muselmann* where it becomes increasingly difficult to tell whether they are dead or alive. Though there has been a formidable partition critique but feminist literary analysis of Partition violence using tools of biopolitics is less than abundant. This dissertation intends to critically analyze condition of women during and Post partition violence through the lens of feminism and biopolitics to show that these women were homo sacers, who can be killed but not sacrificed and they were set outside the purview of human life, whose life could be destroyed with impunity.

This dissertation analyzes biopolitics of the gendered partition violence. During the partition, women were subjected to brutal use of violence, and hardly the dust of the violence had settled and people were trying to adapt themselves to new ways of lives, the two newly formed nations came to an agreement on the question of recovering those women who had been abducted, and rehabilitating them in their native places. Women had little to no choice on the matter. The state did not give them the option of whether they wanted to live in their newly-found homes or they want to return to their natal countries. They were considered as incapable of making decisions of their own lives and, suspending their humanity, they were treated as chattel. Agamben links up biopolitics with sovereignty and posits that the production of a biopolitical body is the original activity of sovereign power. The defining characteristic of sovereign is to decide when law is applicable and it operates as threshold of order and exception, determining the purview of law. The key figure in the inclusive exclusion is bare life, a life which could

be killed but not sacrificed. The capture of bare life within the exception is a general condition of existence, such that the rule and the exception, inclusion and exclusion, and right and violence are no longer clearly indistinguishable and its worst form is *Muselmann*. They have reached such a state of physical decrepitude and existential disregard that one hesitates to call them living or dead. Feminist writers like Urvashi Butalia and Kamla Bhasin and Ritu Menon expose the gendered politics in rehabilitating the women forcefully to their natal countries after they had adapted themselves to their new ways of lives, which reveals how these gendered beings are suffering different forms of violence, under suspension of regular laws.

This dissertation takes Saadat Hasan Manto's short stories depicting murder, loot, rape, frantic attempts at escape or concealment, and police corruption and participation in violence and brings forth how the characters especially female characters were reduced to the state of *Muselmann*, more than often with states' tacit compliance. *Muselmann* indicates a fundamental lack of distinction between human and inhuman, in which it is impossible to separate one from the other. *Muselmann* is an indefinite being in whom the distinction between humanity and non-humanity, as well as the moral categories that attend the distinction, are brought to crisis. *Muselmann* are the transition from bios to zoe, from a form of life to bare life, inclusion by exclusion. Like the pile of corpses, the *Muselmann* document the total triumph of power over the human being. Although nominally they are alive, they are nameless hulk. In the world of short stories of Manto there are *Muselmann* everywhere. In a crowded refugee camp in Pakistan, there is Sakina who does not recognize her father but when she hears someone ordering to open up, she reaches up for her trouser. There is a nameless girl in "Cold Meat" who remains in the

state of *Muselmann* for so long that it takes a while for others to realize that she is actually dead. This dissertation brings out those characters in Manto's stories that are completely crushed, and yet, who is also the true witness, whose testimony would be truly valuable but who cannot bear witness.

This dissertation exposes nationalist violence enshrined in the structures of patriarchal social institutions and deprivation of women of any individual agency not just by men and their communities but also by their nations by applying Agamben's concept of biopolitics and feminist works of writers like Urvashi Butalia and Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin in Bapsi Sidwaha's *Cracking India* and Manto's short stories. These women were reduced to the obscure and paradoxical ancient roman figure, homo sacer, whose life was excluded in political order only by way of its exclusion; a life that could be killed with impunity and whose death has no sacrificial values.

The second chapter of the dissertation deals with biopolitics as discussed by Giorgio Agamben and analyzes how bare life and *Muselmann* could be found in partition violence. The third chapter of the dissertation discusses Partition stories of Saadat Hasan Manto and illustrates characters who have been so much mentally and physically tortured that it is difficult to discern whether they are dead or alive, reducing them to the state of *Muselmann*. The fourth chapter of the dissertation exposes states' atrocities where women were forcibly relocated across the border, vulnerably leaving them as bare life, that have no say on the matters related to their lives. The final chapter reiterates that patriarchal mindset of men and states wreck havoc in the lives of women and in extremely turbulent times like Partition, this mindset leaves women to be bare life and in worst case *Muselmann*.

Chapter Two

Biopolitics of the Gendered Partition Violence

The contemporary historical and cultural imagination is fascinated by the trauma of holocaust. This fascination has greatly assisted in the understanding of contemporary transformation of politics into biopolitics. The development is actually a transformation of a fundamentally jurisprudential domain into a domain of human being in its species existence. The notion of biopolitics was first floated by Foucault in “The History of Sexuality” (1978), wherein biology was drawn into the domain of power and knowledge. In the final chapter, Michel Foucault argues that the regime of power that emerged from the seventeenth century onwards involved a fundamental reversal of the principle of the power’s operation. He claims that whereas sovereign power operated on the principle of the right to commit its subjects to death in order to enhance the strength of the sovereign, modern power reverses this axis and works through the administration of life. The entry of life into the mechanism of power and correlative organizations of political strategies around the survival of the species of the strategies constitutes the threshold of modernity for him. (21)

Giorgio Agamben takes up the concept of biopower as proposed by Michel Foucault to provide the radical interpretation of the modern political condition as one of

legal abandonment and nihilism in *Homo Sacer*. Agamben links biopolitics with sovereignty to posit that the production of a biopolitical body is the original activity of sovereign power. Catherine Mills, in “The philosophy of Agamben”, suggests that the political status and function of the legal exception is central to Agamben’s analysis of biopolitics and it is this that allows him to identify the contemporary condition as one of the abandonment and nihilism.(5) It is through the exception that sovereignty and life are brought into conjunction, or it is the exception that founds sovereign power, and allows the law to take hold of life.

Though it is indebted to Foucault’s work on biopolitics, *Homo Sacer* diverges from Foucault’s trajectory on several major points. First, in conducting his own archaeology of sovereign power, Agamben concludes that the biopolitical state is not simply a modern phenomenon. The recognition that the biopolitical structure of power has archaic roots leads Agamben to criticize this structure even more radically-that is, from these very roots to the present-and in ways that require serious modification to our contemporary understanding of power. A second major difference from Foucault lies in the attention Agamben pays to the concentration camps, where biopolitical terror reached an unprecedented level. Despite Foucault’s keen eyes for power structures, he chose to investigate the processes of biopower in the smallest, more containable spaces of prisons, clinics and mental institutions. Agamben’s study demonstrated not merely, the biopolitical basis of totalitarianism, but more importantly, the fact that power-always exerted as biopower-is indelibly marked by totalitarian principles. Kalliopi Nikolopoulou, in “Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life by Giorgio Agamben”, argues that by establishing the camp, rather than the clinic, as the exemplary biopolitical space of

modernity and by exposing the fundamentally totalitarian basis of any biopolitics, Agamben does not merely propose a different example. The change has the effect of significantly differentiating his analysis of power as opposed to a horizontal one in which the power disperses continuously from one place to another.

The crucial difference between Foucault's conception of biopolitics and Agamben's is found with respect to the theory of sovereignty. To quote William Schinkel in "From Zoepolitics to Biopolitics: Citizenship and the Construction of 'Society'"

For Agamben, it is the sovereign body which produces the biopolitical body, since it is the sovereign state of exception that separates the bare life from the life under law. The question of law is, thus, for Agamben, intricately tied up with the question of the biopolitical body. Instead, Foucault claims that the question of survival of the population, which is closest to what Agamben calls naked life is no longer a juridical question (a question of sovereignty) but a biological question (a question of population) In fact, the development of biopower, according to Foucault, means that the law becomes of increasingly secondary relevance vis-à-vis the norm. (161)

Foucault finds the law starting to function more and more as a norm instead of as a mechanism differentiating between friends and enemies of the sovereign. Agamben clearly disagrees with this to the extent that for him, the juridical question is a question of naked life. Foucault argues that the law no longer has a role in separating inside from outside, or friend from foe, but rather that it traces deviation from the norm.

For Agamben, the difference between what Foucault calls sovereign power and biopolitical power is that the former was the power to bring death and let live, while the latter produces life and lets die and by doing this he largely subtracts from the concept of biopolitics.

For Agamben, biopolitics is less a matter of setting a norm, as it is for Foucault, but with a matter of law. For him, biopolitics operates from a paradoxical position within which and without the nonetheless given domain of law. The limits of the law are the limits of the bios, separating the life that is only naked life (zoe) from the life that resides under law and is also part of the bios. He argues that increasingly, and with the normalcy of the state of exception, all life is potentially reduced to naked life. Agamben's focus is more individualizing than Foucault's, and he analyzes less the problem of population than the problem of exception. He returns the techniques of biopower to the question of sovereignty, but only by reducing the scope of the concept described by Foucault, and on the assumption of a seemingly unbreakable law which implies its own exception.

Agamben revisits the Aristotelian definition of man as living animal with the additional capacity for a political existence. It is the distinction between two different mode of living zoe and bios, that allows for the production of the biopolitical subject- that is, bare life. In this way, Agamben revisits the reversal of political and bare life. Catherine Mills notices that by reversing political and biological life that Foucault diagnosed as threshold of modernity Agamben resists his idea and instead, proposes an intrinsic or originary relation between law and life established through the exception structure of sovereign power. (14)

The apparent paradox of sovereignty is the point of departure in Agamben's discussion of biopolitics in *Homo Sacer* as this is an apparent paradox, wherein the sovereign is simultaneously inside and outside the juridical order, a situation encapsulated in the notion of the sovereign exception. Taking up Carl Schmitt's thesis in *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, that the "sovereign is he who decides on the exception" (5) Agamben argues that what is at stake in the state of exception is the very possibility of juridical rule and the meaning of state authority. According to Schmitt, in deciding on the state of exception-a process in which the sovereign both deciding on the law of exception- -a process in which the sovereign both includes and excludes itself from the purview of law-"the sovereign 'creates and guarantees the situation that the law needs for its own validity'" (*Homo Sacer*:17) He argues that since the exception cannot be codified in the established order, a true decision that does not rest on a pre-existent norm or rule is required in order to determine whether it is an exception and, thus, whether rule applies to it. Sovereignty resides in this decision on what constitutes public order and security, and, hence, whether the social order has been disturbed. Sovereignty is the "border-line concept" (22) of order and exception, where the exception or the normal order, such that sovereignty itself becomes apparent in that decision.

Agamben takes up the notion of the sovereign as borderline or limit concept to argue that the defining characteristic of sovereignty is that the sovereign determines when law is applicable and what it applies to, and, in doing so, must also create the conditions necessary for law to operate since the law presupposes normal order for its operation. As Agamben states "what is at issue in the sovereign exception is not so much the control or

neutralization of an excess as the creation and definition of the very space in which the juridico-political order can have validity”. (19) The sovereign thus operates as the threshold of order and exception, determining the purview of the law. This means that the state of the exception is not simply the chaos that precedes order. For Agamben, it operates both as a condition of law’s operation and an effect of the sovereign decision such that the exception is not simply outside the realm of the law, but is in fact created through the law’s suspension. The sovereign determines the suspension of the law vis-à-vis an individual or extraordinary case and simultaneously constitutes the efficacy of the law in that determination.

Agamben adds that while the law might be suspended in relation to the exception, this does not mean that the exception which is without relation to the rule; rather, the state of exception is such that what is excluded from the purview of the law continues to maintain a relation to the rule precisely through the suspension of that rule. That is, the exception is included within the purview of the law precisely through its exclusion from it. The effective consequence of this is that the exception confirms the rule by its being other than the normal reference of the rule. Agamben concedes that there is an essential correlation between life under a law in force without significance passes into life while always subsists in relation to the law. Importantly, Agamben is not simply suggesting that natural or biological life founds the existence of law. Rather, the key figure in the inclusive exclusion is bare life, understood as zone of indistinction or hinge through which political and natural life articulate. For Agamben, bare life arises because “human life is politicized only through abandonment to an unconditional power of death” (90).

Agamben notes that the qualitative distinction made by Aristotle in his treatise on the formation of the state between biological life (zoe) and political life (bios) effectively excluded natural life from the polis in the strict sense and relegated it entirely to the private sphere. The category of bare life emerges from the within this distinction, in that it is neither bios nor zoe, but rather the politicized form of natural life. And in being that which is caught in the sovereign ban, bare life indicates the exposure of natural life to the force of the law in abandonment, the ultimate expression of which is the sovereign's right of death. Thus, neither bios nor zoe, bare life emerges through the irreparable exposure of life to the death in the sovereign ban. The capture of bare life within the exception is a general condition of existence, such that the rule and the exception, inclusion and exclusion, and right and violence are no longer clearly distinguishable. Agamben claims from this that under a regime of biopolitics all subjects are at least potentially if not actually abandoned by the law and exposed to violence as a constitutive condition of political existence. He cites the Roman legal figure of homo sacer, a genocidal violence, the apparently ever-expanding phenomenon of concentration camps. Noting the etymology of the word life, Agamben highlights that the Ancient Greeks had two semantically distinct terms for it: "zoe which expressed the simple fact of living common to all living beings (animals, men or gods) and bios, which indicated the form or way of living proper to an individual or a group" (1) Agamben argues that the sacredness of life emerges only to the extent that life is incorporated into the sovereign exception: "life is sacred only so far as it is taken into the sovereign exception" (85). He states that "sacredness of life, which is invoked today as an absolutely fundamental right in opposition to sovereign power, in fact originally expresses precisely both lives'

subjection to a power over death and life's irreparable exposure in the relation of abandonment"(83)

Agamben subsequently argues that the paradigmatic manifestation of exceptional biopolitics is the concentration camp. Given this critique of the camps and the status of the law that is revealed in them, it is no surprise that Agamben takes the most extreme manifestation of the condition of camps as a starting point for an elaboration of an ethics without reference to the law, a term that is taken to encompass normative discourse in its entirety. In *Remnants of Auschwitz*, Agamben develops an account of an ethics of testimony as an ethos bearing witness to that for which one cannot bear witness. The key figure in his account of an ethic of testimony is that of the *Muselmann* or those in the camps who had reached such a state of physical decrepitude and existential disregard that "one hesitates to call them living: one hesitates to call their death death" (1) But rather than seeing the *Muselmann* as the limit-figure between life and death, Agamben argues that the *Muselmann* is more correctly understood as the limit-figure of the human and inhuman. As the threshold between the human and the inhuman, the *Muselmann* does not simply mark the limit beyond which the human is no longer human.

The *Muselmann* indicates a more fundamental lack of distinction between the human and the inhuman, in which it is impossible definitively to separate one from the other, and which calls into question the moral distinctions that rest on this designation. The key question that arises for Agamben, then, is whether there is humanity to human over and above biologically belonging to the species, and it is in reflecting on this question that Agamben develops his account of ethics. In doing so, he rejects recourse to

standard moral concepts such as dignity and respect, claiming that “Aushwitz marks the end and the ruin of every ethics of dignity and conformity to a norm The *Muselmann* is the guard on the threshold of a new ethics, an ethics of a form of life that begins where dignity ends ” (69)

The privileged figure within Agamben’s ethical discourse is that of the *Muselmann*, who were perhaps the most wretched of the inhabitants of the camp in so far as they were reduced to the status of merely existing-living without purpose, desire or sensation. He locates the figure of the *Muselmann* at the zone of indistinction between the human and the inhuman. Agamben argues that the *Muselmann* should not be seen as occupying a threshold between life and death, but is more correctly understood as the limit-figure of the human and inhuman. Rather than simply being geared towards the manufacturing of death, then, Aushwitz is the site of an extreme biopolitical experiment, “beyond the life and death, in which the Jew is transformed into a *Muselmann* and human into a non-human” (52) However, as the threshold between human and inhuman, the figure of *Muselmann* does not simply mark the limit beyond which the human is no longer human. Agamben argues that such a stance would merely repeat the experiment of Aushwitz that places the *Muselmann* outside the limits of the human and the moral status that rests on the categorization. Instead, the *Muselmann* indicates a more fundamental indistinction between human and inhuman, in which it becomes impossible to distinguish one from the other. Agamben describes the *Muselmann* as “the non-human who obstinately appears as human: he is the human that cannot be told apart from the inhuman” (82). Recalling the discussions of bios and zoe in *Homo Sacer*, Agamben states that biopower’s supreme ambition is to produce, in a human body, the absolute separation

of the living being and the speaking being, zoe and bios, the inhuman and the human-survival. In contrast to Foucault, Agamben suggests that the definitional formula of biopower is not to make live or let die, but rather to make survive, that is, to produce bare life, as life reduced to survival through the separation of the human from the inhuman.

The concept of biopower of Agamben slightly differs from the definition forwarded by Laura Bazzicalupo and Clarissa Clo in “The Ambivalence of Biopolitics” where they call it “the government of life” (109) It is politics as the governing, administering and taking charge of humans as living beings as biological or bare life. Bazzicalupo and Clo notice politics exerting power over life directly without mediation. In the second instance, biopolitics also signals the moment when the meanings that have been traditionally attributed to the term politics are now profoundly modified. Politics slides incessantly towards an immanent process-the time of life above all a process-which intensifies, produces, and normalizes biologically. However, this aspect of politics remains unclear. Certainly, this does not mean that everything in the end is political. The writer duo see the effects of biopolitics in two significant changes related to how people conceive politics, two essential though admittedly ambiguous features that provoke a reciprocal tension: a) the displacement of the site where power seizes life and b) the shift and the transformation of the modality or, rather, the stigma of power (120)

At the center of this tension between politics and life lies the new site of the living, ambivalent body. They follow the lead of Foucault and Arendt, both of whom theorized the politics of modernity as the politics of how to govern life. The life of the species becomes the direct object of politics in modernity. It is modernity that witnesses the entrance of life into domain of politics as an object of care, which is to say, when

bodies emerge as the subject and object of expansive and productive strategies. The point of departure is the classic distinction between zoe and bios. Zoe, on the one hand, is bare life, the life we share with animal, and the horizon necessity that links human beings to mere survival, to what Aristotle called “the nutritive life,” that is, the power of self-preservation and the resistance to death. Bios, on the other hand, refers to life that has form, which is to say, to that form of life which is specifically human and in which politics takes place. In Greece, zoe or biological life, was excluded from the political. Producing and consuming the means of sustenance, as well as the reproduction of the species-hence work and family- are subject to necessity: they engender relationships of dependence, inequality. It is exactly this biological life that takes central stage in the now modern space, a life whose needs are common to the entire species. It is a site in which work, production and family are bound by the constraints of non-choice and of the struggle to survive when resources are scarce.

In the midst of these needs, a new social corpus is born: a hybrid of public and private that is crowded with people who demand protection, security, government and administration so as to produce, reproduce and hence survive, and by so doing to increase life. Politics is transformed into police action. Power retreats as direct exercise in favor of the request for good government, the wise administration of goods and the protection of the health of the body politic that increases its productivity and reproductivity and so guarantees its security. Where power seizes, life now intersects with the shift in the modality of power. The general and abstract law is weakened while the imminent, regulative norm is strengthened. Making politics ethical implies the presence of power and of legitimizing devices that are collected together in a way that always pushes

forward in an imminent transcendence that integrates sovereign power and biopower. This occurs precisely by upholding what is held in common beyond individual differences: the corporeal, the vital, the biological. Aiming more at organization than at vertical, general and abstract command, this coordinative power tends to be articulated in devices that are simultaneously diversified, personalized and all-absorbing: devices that opt for normalization. They effectively incite, reinforce, and increase the subdued forces, while at the same time strengthening certain kinds of habits. This power acts through rules of organization through flexible and modular rules that confer more power.

The process whereby politics is socialized therefore carries with it the evident weakening of the sovereign nexus of obedience/disobedience and exclusion/inclusion, in favor of a praxis of reciprocal implication of two terms. Here then we find the dialectic of immunization: a praxis, which regularizes while containing both within and without, a praxis that aims not at annihilating the enemy or danger, but rather at maintaining the enemy, at least until it is statistically vital, into the same corpus of the citizenry. It is an injection into the collective body of the mortal threat so as to complete the task of safeguarding life.

Biopolitical power traverses bodies, and so any expansion of rights has, as its corollary, the increasing inscription of life in the realm of government. Yet the body is elusive. On the one hand, it is anonymous; it is the fungible site of the species; it is generic and as such is the chosen object of biopolitical power. On the other hand, it is most singular singularity, we have, it is an extreme singularity that cannot be exchanged for another. It is difference itself, and therefore it is in corporeality that the demands of a power for self-managing the body take hold; a power for the management of happiness

and for satisfying needs, as well as the capacity and the possibility of finding one's expressive spontaneity against discipline, docility and repression. The body, the flesh becomes the leverage of politics that would not be only one of government, management and objectification, but rather one of power and difference. With biopolitical discourse power ideologically establishes a reductive paradigm that entails survival and necessity. It limits the space for discourse on forms of life and therefore on politics. Bare life in itself is revealed as a formidable limit-concept that is nonpolitical: it is the life of anonymous bodies, common to all sentient bodies that experience pain, hunger, loss and deprivation.

William Schinkel takes the example of one such hunger and pain to throw light on the concept of difference between zoepolitics and biopolitics, in "From Zoepolitics to Biopolitics: Citizenship and the Construction of 'Society'". He writes about Sami al-Hajj, an Al Jazeera cameraman who was mistaken for an enemy combatant, and was released from the US detention facilities at Guantanamo Bay after being detained for over six years. In February 2008, he went on a hunger strike, as a consequence of which he was force-fed twice a day by means of a tube down his throat which at times was bloody from other prisoners' throats and which roughened his throat and nose. He had a Quran, but it was taken from him. Sami al-Hajj is an example of modern version of ancient *Homo Sacer*, a concept elaborated by Giorgio Agamben. He was detained on extra-legal grounds (a recognition of the mistake was implicit in the offer of freedom in exchange for his spying on Al Jazeera for the US military, which he refused), he was thus reduced to bare life and was subject to a biopolitical control 'in which law encompasses human beings by means of its own suspension' (Agamben, 2005:3). Guantanamo Bay marks a

state of exception that defines the limit or threshold of the law. The very fact that al-Hajj was artificially kept alive indicates the control over bare life by the state (in its exceptional state). It shows how biopower requires life to remain alive in order to shape it. William Schinkel argues that in today's forms of population control a distinction between zoepolitics and biopolitics is relevant. He writes:

Zeopolitics is primarily externally directed towards persons outside the state, as becomes visible, for instance, in the reduction to bare life, of those detained in Guantanamo Bay and in administrative detention of 'illegal aliens'. Biopolitics is a second form of biopower. It is internally directed and aims at the control of populations occupying the state's territory but which are discursively placed outside the domain of hegemony marked as 'society'. Biopolitics takes as its object the social body, the bios that is usually referred to as 'society'. It involves the sorting of populations according to who is deemed part of 'society' and who isn't. Whereas zoepolitics focuses on bare life of the person outside the state, biopolitics more immediately tacks onto the boundaries of social body. Citizenship is a mechanism of population control that has zoepolitical and biopolitical aspects. In terms of formal citizenship, it separates citizens from non-citizens who are thereby zoepolitically reduced to bare life. In terms of moral citizenship, it distinguishes 'good' and 'active' citizens from 'inactive citizens' (132)

It is crucial to note that the distinction separating bios from zoe is not necessarily the law, as it remains in Agamben's perspective. Within what Agamben defines as the

community, a diagrammatic exists that marks the difference between bios and zoe through a culturalized form of moral citizenship. On the other hand, a focus on the differentiation along the lines of those who are members of the true bios and those reduced to zoe offers a more fine-grained perspective on the use of concept of society as the product of a biopolitics that discursively constructs the boundaries of the bios of society.

Agamben observes the emergence of the state of exception as the normal functioning of the law, that is, the increasing incorporation of an exceptional order inside the juridical nomos. But the person exempt from law- who is paradigmatically the inhabitant of the camp- is reduced to bare life, to zoe. He equals the Roman figure of the homo sacer, the one exempt from law who can be killed but not sacrificed. This applies, according to Agamben, to the *Muselmann* in the concentration camp, but also to those incarcerated in Guantanamo Bay called illegal aliens in Western European detention centers. And Agamben concludes that, with the generalization of the state of exception, everybody is potentially a homo sacer. That also means, rather provocatively put, that the bios itself is reduced to the camp, and that the camp becomes the nomos of the modern democracy's juridico-political order. For him, the birth of the camp decisively marks the political space of modernity (53). And at the same time, the very fact that the inhabitants of the camp are wholly riden of any political Status and are entirely reduced to naked life, the camp is also the most absolute biological space ever realized where power is solely concerned with unmediated, pure biological life (51).

Agamben's model for the biopolitical control of life is that of confinement, one in which the exception from a closest whole is the crucial operation. For Agamben, the exemplary places of modern biopolitics are the concentration camp and the totalitarian

state. And he sees Western politics as characterized by an exclusion that is at the same time an inclusion (an inclusive exclusion) (21). Agamben explicitly states that the camp is topologically different from the prison, and hence that 'it is not possible to inscribe the analysis of the camp in the trail opened by the works of Foucault' (20). However, he stresses this difference because the prison is a site remaining within the law, while the camp is a location wholly outside it. But the camp is nonetheless a form of visible localization. Considered purely spatially, then the camp operates on the basis of a disciplinary model of confinement, for Agamben, crucial in separating the homo sacer from the citizen is citizenship. He regards citizenship as a mechanism of biopower that has the effect of producing the homo Sacer, as inclusion through citizenship necessarily involves exclusion.

Citizenship can be regarded as a technique of population control which operates within the territorialized logic of the nation-state. It attaches to bodies certain territorialized privileges and life-chances, ranging from the freedoms of civic citizenship to the biopolitical possibilities of the welfare state that are part of social citizenship. As such, citizenship is a technique of population management, as for instance, noted by Hindess in "Citizenship in the International Management of Population". Hindess notes that citizenship has been predominantly approached internally as a state-internal regulatory mechanism, and he analyzes it externally as a mechanism of territorialized population control that is a consequence of the emergence of West European nations (21). Early or even mid-nineteenth century recoded citizenship as a mechanism of population control first of all by formalizing and juridically codifying it, and second, by generalizing

it in extending citizenship to all members of the state, better yet, by turning citizenship into the mechanism of membership of the nation-state.

For Agamben, the citizenship is crucial to the current biopolitical situation. He speaks of the virtual equation between citizen and homo sacer- the point being that, with the generalization of the state of exception, every citizen is potentially reduced to naked life and is thus expelled from the bios. Elaborating this idea, Schinkel writes

To this expulsion conforms, on the one hand, the figure of the 'illegal alien'. On the other hand, the regular citizen is now drawn into this perspective. Each citizen is potentially reduced to bare life. This we might call the zoepolitical aspect of citizenship. Apart from this, citizenship has a biopolitical aspect, which refers to the way citizens in the formal sense are included and excluded from the domain called 'society'. While citizenship differentiates between members of the bios and those reduced to bare life through a form of zoepolitics, it also functions in terms of an internal differentiation in the bios-and then it can be truly said to be a biopolitical technique. In the wake of a discourse on immigrant 'integration', which discursively constructs an opposition between 'society' and persons 'not integrated', a discourse on citizenship has emerged that is highly focused on culture (166)

Society is thereby juxtaposed to a domain outside society, in which non-integrated individuals reside- marked as such by a spatial metaphor (inside/ outside) which rhetorically emphasizes the divide between society and its other.

Citizenship discourse operates on the basis of a crucial distinction, which differentiates *active citizenship* from *inactive citizenship*. The moral aspects of citizenship have always been stressed. For Aristotle, the good citizen actively participates in political affairs. In Dutch discourse, the stress on active citizenship entails a highly culturalized notion of active citizenship. This not only involves republican duties such as active participation in the public sphere and in politics, but also keeping the streets clean, raising one's children correctly, being tolerant beyond the limits of the law and not radicalizing religiously or politically. Its opposite consists of incivility, non-societal behavior. (167) This active/passive distinction is possible on the basis of an implicit and more fundamental distinction. This is the distinction between formal citizenship and moral citizenship. Formal citizenship denotes juridically codified rights and duties of citizen-members of states. Moral citizenship refers to a counterfactual ideal of citizen participation and citizen behavior. Formal citizenship refers to both juridical status as membership of a juridico-political order and to social rights. Moral citizenship is something quite different and entails an extra-legal normative concept of a good citizen.

Moral aspects of citizenship have always been stressed. For the Greek political philosophers, citizenship was an ethos. For Roman humanists such as Cicero, it was a virtue. Such approaches exist throughout the history of political thought, and they influence current notions of citizenship. Agamben's discussion of citizenship and the *homo sacer* is confined to formal citizenship. But citizenship discourse has lately undergone a relative shift in focus from formal to moral citizenship, and there it gains biopolitical relevance next to its zoopolitical aspects. The differentiation between formal and moral citizenship allows the state-propagated biopolitical control of life in the bios

within the confines of generalized citizenship. Within the collection of subjects who are citizens in the formal sense, a new boundary is constructed that separates the true citizens from those whose citizenship is only formal. The bureaucratic apparatus of the state now operates on the basis of a reverse logic in defining immigrant integration. It no longer propagates the formal, the juridically codified, as the operative mechanism of inclusion and the marker of distinction between *zoe* and *bios*, but it valorizes the non-formal, subjugating the formal to the moral, returning to classical, privileged notions of citizenship as a virtue.

Reworking Aristotle's distinction between biological existence (*zoe*) and the political life of speech and action (*bios*) between mere life and good life, Agamben introduces in *Homo Sacer* his own interpretation and his own necessarily selective genealogy of bare life from antiquity to modernity. Stripped of political significance and exposed to murderous violence, bare life is both the counterpart to and the target of sovereign violence. Ewa Plonowska Ziarek, in "Bare life on Strike: Notes on the Biopolitics of Race and Gender", puts that for Agamben "mere life is not simply natural reproductive life, the *zoe* of the Greeks, nor *bios*, but rather a zone of indistinction and continuous transition between man and beast" (*Homo Sacer*, 109) More emphatically in the conclusion of *homo sacer*, Agamben stresses that "every attempt to rethink the political space of the West must begin with the clear awareness that we no longer know anything of the classical distinction between *zoe* and *bios*" (187) We could say that bare life, not only the referent but also the effect of sovereign violence is damaged life, stripped of its political significance, of its specific form of life. For Agamben, bare life constitutes the original but "concealed nucleus" (7) of Western biopolitics insofar as its

exclusion founds the political realm. Bare life is captured by the political in a double way: first, in the form of the exclusion from the polis-it is included in the political in the form of exclusion-and second, in the form of the unlimited exposure to violation, which does not count as a crime. Agamben's revision of biopolitics has led to the analysis of the way bare life is implicated in the gendered, sexist, colonial and racial configurations of the political, and thus because of the implication, how it suffers different forms of violence.

Agamben argues that sovereign body produces biopolitical body and it is sovereign exception that separates bare life from the life under the law. The defining characteristic of sovereignty is that the sovereign determines when law is applicable and what it applies to, and, in doing so, it must also create the conditions necessary for law to operate since the law presupposes normal order for its operation. When the sovereign has the power to apply conditions of exception, where there is suspension of law and implementation of state of exception, the effective consequence is inclusive exclusion where the key figures are bare life or homo sacer, living in the state of indistinction. These homo sacers are often gendered beings suffering different forms of violence, under suspension of regular laws, and implementation of rules of exception. After Partition of India, which left two nations at daggers-end, the laws were suspended and state of exception took place when the two nations came together and unanimously decided to flush out women from their territories and return them to their natal states, without as much giving single thought to what these women want. These women were reduced to homo sacer, whose life could be taken with impunity. The stark example of bare life, suffering the violence inflicted by the state could be women, Hindus, Muslims or Sikhs, regardless of the religion they follow. Women

theorists like Urvashi Butalia in “The Other Side of Silence” and Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin in “Borders and boundaries” present the violence wrecked on women from the perspective of women who lived through it- whether they were rendered destitute, rehabilitated, or came from more privileged positions and worked with women in refugee camps. Their works are full of anecdotes of women who saw their female relatives commit suicide so that they would be honorably dead; of a Sikh father who killed off his six daughters rather than marry them to Muslim neighbors who offered to take care of them. What is often most shocking is the very ordinariness of people’s lives afterwards- like the story of Dr. Virsa Singh who killed 50-60 women, including his own wife, many of them allegedly on their own request, to save them from armed groups of another community.

Agamben’s concept of barelife as not just referent but the effect of sovereign violence, stripped of its political significance are the women on both side of borders who after surviving the violence of Partition, were subjected to state violence where they have no say on their own lives. On December 6, 1947- a bare three-and-a-half months after partition-the two newly formed nations came to an agreement on the question of recovering those women who had been abducted, and rehabilitating them in their ‘native’ places (13) This vocabulary of recovery, rehabilitation, homeland was actually a euphemism for returning Hindu and Sikh women to Hindu and Sikh fold, and Muslim women went to the Muslim fold. Urvashi Butali in *State and Gender: On Women’s Agency during Partition* posits that Women who had been taken away by the other community had to be brought back their ‘own’ homeland: both concepts that were defined for women by the men of the respective countries. (14) They did not have a choice. The agreement arrived at, between the two nations was known as the Inter

Dominion Treaty, which was later passed as an act by parliament. The Abducted Persons (Recovery and Restoration) Bill, 1949 which gave the State unlimited power to enter people's houses and forcibly take away those who they thought were abducted, even if the women themselves wanted to stay on with their abductors. The entire Recovery Operation as the women writers argue was premised on the state's claim to knowing what was best for its citizens, especially women, and not on humanitarianism ground.

To deny women-even a judicial hearing in such situation-to ask them where they would rather stay- is as draconian as it ever gets, reducing them to bare life, whose lives are not worth sacrificing, but could be played with impunity. The terms of the act were clear: women on both sides of the border who had been abducted were to be forcibly recovered and restored to their families. Some of the clauses mentioned below highlights the complete absence of volition on the part of women:

- 1) Every effort must be made to recover and restore abducted women and children within the shortest time possible.
- 2) Conversion by persons abducted after March 1947 will not be recognized and all such persons *must* be respected Dominions. The wishes of the person concerned are irrelevant and consequently no statements of such persons should be recorded before magistrates.
- 3) The primary responsibility for the recovery of abducted persons will rest with the local police who must put full effort in this matter. Good work done by police officers in this respect will be rewarded by promotion or cash awards.

- 4) MEOs (military evacuation officers) will render every assistance by providing guards in the transit camps and escorts for the transport of recovered persons from the Transit camp to their respective Dominions.
- 5) Social workers will be associated actively with the scheme. They will look after the camp arrangements and receive the abducted persons in their own Dominions. They will also collect full information required about persons to be recovered and supply it to the inspector general of the police and the local SP.

Vitriolic at the provisions made by the two states, Urvashi Butalia remarks:

Although, the terms of the agreement refer carefully and consistently (except in Clause 1) to persons, what is being discussed here is the fate of women. This is quite clear from the activity that followed, where large-scale rescue efforts were mounted to locate and rehabilitate women. Little attention was paid to men in this regard, presumably because they were able to make their own decisions. There is no record at all of similar recovery of men, and although there were some discussion on children, it was fairly cursory, given particularly that they were among the foremost victims of such dislocation, violence and trauma. (16)

Clearly, the states considered men were capable of deciding their nationalities, their communities, and whatever they decision they took, regarding their identities, the states respected them and did not feel the need to interfere. It was women who needed to be restored and brought back to their natal countries, because they are

incapable of deciding their fates and even if they did, they are nation's properties and they cannot decide for themselves.

Urvashi Butaliya notes that the state did not, of course, enter into the task of recovery entirely on its own. Just as families filed reports of missing relatives, so also they recorded missing women. Interestingly, many of the reports were filed by men, and later it was the men who often refused to take women back. It was perhaps the enormity of these numbers that acted as a pressure on the state to take up the task of recovery. Interestingly enough, although both countries traded numbers to see who had succeeded in flushing more women and restoring them to their families (the word often became synonymous with the nation) there was no disagreement between them on the necessity of the task, although often their functionaries felt differently. The key officers who were charged with the responsibility of rescuing abducted women were themselves women. Mridula Sarabhai was put in overall charge of the operation and there were many female officers working under her. These women social workers were assisted by police of the country they worked in. Every time a rescue operation was to be mounted, a woman officer was required to go along, accompanied by the police and others. In the eyes of state, the women were better placed to handle the delicacy of the situation, and to persuade those who were reluctant to give up their new homes, to return to their national-parental fold. Persuasion was clearly as euphemism, since the agreement had categorically stated that the women's wishes were of no consequence. State decided what was best for them, even though the women might resist the ideas and often openly express disdain and dissatisfaction at the arrangement.

Often forcefully and against their wishes, these women were treated as chattel, where during Partition men asserted their power over these women, abducting them, raping them, buying and selling them with impunity, and finally when they have settled and founded their own families, state intervened and drove them back to their natal lands. The situation was worse for those women who have children born of their unions with men of the other community. For the Sikh and Hindu communities, and indeed here they had clear support from the state, the children born of these unions somehow posed bigger problems. The women could be, in many ways repurified because they had been forced into their situations- and brought back into the family, religious and national folds, but a child of a Muslim father and Hindu mother made things more difficult (22) In the debates that followed on this subject, suggestions were made that such children should be treated as war babies and left behind in the country in which they were born. However, some women social workers protested this idea as where war babies are concerned, it was the mothers who stayed behind after soldiers left, here what was being proposed was different. Other solutions were then suggested: infants could come along with women to the camps, however if the family objected, the children would have to stay behind in the camps and the social workers would have to find homes for them; older children were meant to stay with their natural fathers. The worst fate was meted out to the children in womb as they clearly would have to be done away with. The process of getting away rid of children in the womb-safaya was also called medical treatment in some places and was taken up by the state, and specific hospitals were targeted, which made their fortunes on such cleaning operations.

Pregnant women were taken to such hospitals where they were kept for periods of up to two or three months- their consent was irrelevant- enough time for an abortion (19)And this was all done out of a special budget, put aside by the state, and at a time when abortion was not yet legal in India.

At this stage question may arise why did the recovery of women became such a crucial issue to Indian state? Why did families, more particularly men, bring pressure upon the state to launch such large-scale recovery operations? For men, who in more normal time would have seen themselves as protectors of women, the fact that many of their women had been abducted (no matter that some women may have chosen to go, they had to be seen as being forcibly abducted) mean a kind of collapse, almost an emasculation of their own agency. Unable to be equal to their task, they now had to hand it over to the state, the new patriarch, the new super, the new national, family. As the central patriarch, the state now provided coercive backing for restoring and reinforcing patriarchy within the family. Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, in “Recovery, Rupture and Resistance: Indian State and Abduction of Women during Partition”, posits that by becoming the father-patriarch, the state found itself reinforcing official kinship relations by discrediting and in fact declaring illegal, those patriarchal arrangements that were functional and accepted. For the post-colonial, deeply contested, fragile and vulnerable state, this was an exercise in restoring its legitimacy. In fact, the legitimacy of the state at this time depended very much on this venture of the recovery of what had been lost; prestige, women and perhaps property. Thus the state acted on its own behalf of those communities who appealed to it and invested it with agency on their behalf. The

situation was an extraordinary one: in a sense male authority within the family had collapsed, families had been unable to protect their own, so they appealed to the state. And for the legitimation of the state and the community, the question of gender became crucial.

Newly minted nations, attempting to assert their legitimacy forcefully decided fates of their female citizens. The women carry the honor of their countries and communities but do not have a choice. India and Pakistan, as soon as the mass exodus settled, scrambled to forge an agreement to recover women abducted during Partition. The abducted women had no say on the matter and they were forcefully sent to their natal countries, even when they had come to terms with their new lives and often refused to leave behind their adopted nation. As Agamben posits it is sovereignty that produces and dominates power, here the two new sovereignties decided what is best for them and dictate how their lives should be lived.

Agamben's argument that homo sacer brings to light the inclusive exclusion of bare life in political order as the object of the sovereign decision, is exemplified by these displaced and forcefully relocated women where they were reduced to the symbols of honor of nation and were exchanged like chattels with absolutely no concern about their personal feelings. They were living in the state where their opinions did not matter, they had no rights on their bodies, and their unborn children could be aborted by the states and their young children taken away by the states. They were merely reduced to pawns which could be placed where the states desired. The powerless state of women, where they had no agency and no voice, where their present and future courses of lives were decided by state made them homo sacers,

and in some cases the exclusion from the political realm left these women vulnerable to unlimited exposure to violence, not counted as crime, they leaving them in the state of *Muselmann* where they could not be told apart from inhuman.

Chapter Three

Muselmann in Manto's Stories

The decade of 1940s was the era of two major historical catastrophes, the Second World War with the Holocaust in Europe and the partition in India. These events were not only benumbing experiences but they also laid bare moral, political, and intellectual contradictions, evident only in a crisis. One of the contemporary writers whose work reflect the scourge of the time is Pakistani writer Saadat Hasan Manto who himself was uprooted from India and driven to Pakistan during Partition. His post-partition stories portray very clearly the pains, dislocations and crises of identity faced by people during and after partition. Manto's sympathy towards the people hit by violence and the effects of the circumstances on them could be better understood in the light of Agamben's ideas expressed in *Remnants of Auschwitz* written about the inmates of Nazi concentration camp and especially Auschwitz. A record of Manto's first shocked reactions to the violence of partition, *Siyah Hashiya* is essentially collection of anecdotes, some as short as two lines, others as long as five pages. These stories depict loot, murder, rape, frantic

attempts at escape or concealment, and police corruption and participation in violence. These anecdotes have for their theme man's inhumanity to man, and especially man of the other religious community. These stories are told with barest distant third-person narration, in the least emotional, most stripped down language possible, devoid of character development or even of specific communal reference, with actions depicted in as little as single sentence; these stories produce a chilling effect.

Known for his experimentation with a number of narrative strategies in his short stories, Manto's short stories are grim, ironic, occasionally even humorous, but his works chiefly focuses on bringing forth the deep human pain of partition, of the effects of the violence and dislocation on the common people who were its victims. Some characters are corrupt; some are perpetrators of worst violence while there are few who are so much victimized by the violence that it is difficult to discern whether they are alive or dead. Such characters evoke the image of bare life and *Muselmann*, Agamben talks about in his two major works *Homo Sacer* and *Remnants of Auschwitz*. Agamben's *Homo Sacer* is the historic-philosophical analysis of the relation between politics and life. It begins with the Greek separation of *zoe* which expresses the simple face of living common to all living beings (animals, men, gods) and *bios*, which indicated the form or way of living proper to an individual or a group. The pivot which connects Agamben's *Homo Sacer* with *Remnants of Auschwitz* is the *Muselmann*, the figure which Agamben forwards as the exemplary case of bare life, the best example of the homo sacer. *Muselmann* are the exemplary figure of life that does not live, of a living that has been usurped by the demands of instrumental reason or capital or bureaucratic rationality. The *Muselmann* were the living dead, those in whom "the divine spark was dead, already too empty to the

horror, which makes it forever impossible to distinguish man and non-man” (*Remnants of Aushwitz*, 20)

Paolo Palladino in “From Antigone to Phocion’s Wife: Reflections on Trauma, the Holocaust and the Bio-Political” commenting on Agamben’s *Remnants of Auschwitz* remarks that for Agamben the much sought authentic act of witnessing does not rest with the *muselmanner*, those in the camps who had given up any hope and were quickly dispatched to the gas chambers, but with those, who recognized in the *muselmanner* the truth of the human condition. The *Muselmann* is an unthinking and automatic body, an abject lesson in bare life it is “the final biopolitical substance to be isolated in the biological continuum: after which there is only the beyond of politics, death (*Remnants of Auschwitz*, 85). The *Muselmann* is “the absolutely unwitnessable invisible ark of bio-power” (156). The *Muselmann* neither speaks nor thinks; it is no longer human yet is not natural life. Nicholas Chare in “The Gap in Context: Giorgio Agamben’s *Remnants of Auschwitz*” argues that *Muselmann* is not an extrapolitical, natural fact, but rather exists as a threshold between the inhuman and the human, between zoe and bios. (45)

Agamben describes *Muselmann* as the “non-human who obstinately appears as human” and “the human that cannot be told apart from the inhuman” (*Remnants*, 81-82). The camps produced a figure in the *Muselmann* who threatened to close the gap between the human and inhuman. The *Muselmann* represents “a point at which human beings, while apparently remaining human beings, cease to be human” (*Remnants*, 55). The *Muselmann* appears to be an inhuman human being, a closed gap. For Agamben, an ethics that formulates the human in terms of an obligatory communication or in terms of dignity is an ethics that is unable to recognize and account for the *Muselmann* and as such

is inadequate. Agamben calls for a new ethics, an original means of accountability that is equal to the task of attesting to the *Muselmann*.

Dianne Enns in “Bare Life and the Occupied Body” elucidating on the idea of *Muselmann* writes that *Muselmann* is the terminal point of no return for Homo Sacer, the last step before absolute inhumanity, whom no one cared to save, not even his fellow camp inmates. (39) He has given all hopes. This reminds one of Manto’s characters who are impoverished, dispossessed and disenfranchised member of society, who have faced worst form of partition violence. Amidst the turmoil and violence of Partition, he describes the abduction and rape of women. At the beginning of “I swear by God” (khuda ki qasam) Manto writes:

I often wondered why these women were called abducted women. Under
What circumstances were they abducted? To seduce or abduct a willing
woman is a most romantic feat in which man and woman participate
alike...But what Abduction is this where you clap a helpless and
defenseless woman in a dark room? (Manto 103)

Manto here is talking about abduction of women during Partition, some of whom are ironically abducted and raped by men of their own community to the extent that they are often left in the state where they are rendered so lifeless like the *Muselmann*, Agamben writes about.

Saadat Hasan Manto’s stories portray very clearly the pains, dislocations and crises of identity faced by the Punjabis in Pakistan after Partition but most importantly his story captures the brutality wrecked upon women during Partition, which left them in the

condition where it becomes impossible to tell whether they are alive or dead. Leslie A. Flemming in “Riots and Refugees: The Post-Partition Stories of Saadat Hasan Manto” reiterates that Manto genuinely comes to the grip with the human pain of partition, exploring with a remarkable combination of anger, sarcasm, and tenderness the effects of the violence and dislocation of its victims. “Khol do” is one such sympathetic story of an old man who attempts to find his only daughter, from whom he has become separated while escaping looters. When he wakes up in a crowded refugee camp, old Siraj ud-Din is at first completely numb and unable to recollect anything about the night in which Sakina disappeared:

At ten o'clock in the morning when Siraj ud-Din opened his eyes on the cold ground of the camp and saw the surging sea of men, women and children, his power of thinking became even weaker. For a long time he just stared at the gray sky. Although there was noise all over the camp, it was as if old Siraj ud-Din's ears were stopped up; he didn't hear anything. If someone had looked at him, he would have guessed him to be immersed in some profound thought, but that wasn't the case. His senses were numb and his whole existence was suspended in space. (Khol Do, 28)

Coming to his senses, Siraj ud-Din takes the help of eight young men, volunteers who cross the border in search of the lost and abandoned, who promise to find his daughter. After ten days of praying and waiting, Siraj ud-Din is present when the corpse of a girl found on the roadside is brought up in. When a doctor turns on the light in the room where she is put, she turns out to be his lost daughter Sakina. Like a blow in the stomach, however, fresh on this discovery by the old man, comes yet another:

The doctor looked at the body on the stretcher, took her pulse, and said to Siraj ud-Din, “Open the window.”

There was a movement in Sakina’s half-dead body. Her life-less hand opened at the top of the shalwar and pulled it down. The old Siraj ud-Din shouted joyfully, “She’s alive, my daughter is alive.” The doctor was drenched in sweat from head to toe. (29)

Sakina here is a *Muselmann* who is more correctly understood as the limit-figure of the human and inhuman. *Muselmann* indicates a more fundamental lack of distinction between human and the inhuman, in which it is impossible definitively to separate one from the other. Sakin is certainly alive here, as she responds to the order of opening up, but how can one say her alive when she does not recognize and respond to the joy of her father who has brought her up but follows the order given to her in the past few days by her rapists. The question Agamben raises in *Remnants of Auschwitz* is whether there is humanity to the human over and above biologically belonging to the species, and it is reflecting on this question that Agamben develops his accounts of ethics. In doing so, he rejects recourse to standard moral concepts such as dignity and respect, claiming that “Aushwitz marks the end and the ruin of every ethics of dignity and conformity to a norm. The *Muselmann* is the guard on the threshold of new ethics, an ethics of a form of life that begins where dignity ends” (*Remnants of Aushwitz*: 69)

Agamben argues that *Muselmann* should not be seen as occupying a threshold state between life and death but is more correctly understood as the limit-figure of the human and inhuman (*Remnants of Auschwitz*: 55) Rather than simply being geared

towards the manufacturing of death, then, *Auschwitz* is the site of an extreme biopolitical experiment, “beyond life and death, in which the Jew is transformed into a *Muselman* and the human into a non-human” (52). However, as the threshold between the human and the inhuman, the figure of the *Muselman* does not simply mark the limit beyond which the human is no longer human. Agamben argues that such stance would merely repeat the experiment of Aushwitz that places the *Muselman* outside the limits of the human and the moral status that rests on the categorization. Instead, the *Muselman* indicates a more fundamental distinction between the human and the inhuman, in which it becomes impossible to distinguish one from the other. The *Muselman* is an indefinite being in whom the distinction between humanity and non-humanity, as well as the moral categories that attend the distinction, are brought to crisis: Agamben thus describes the *Muselman* as “the non-human who obstinately appears as human: he is the human that cannot be told apart from the inhuman” (59-69, 82).

Sakina is a *Muselman* where it is difficult to distinguish whether she is dead or alive. She does not respond to her father’s happiness and as Manto writes she is corpse of a girl, she does not seem to have spark of life. However, she is not dead altogether as when she hears the word “Open up” she fumbles and opens the top of her shalwar and pulls it down, indicating the repeated sexual violation unleashed upon her, most probably perpetrated by young volunteers from her own community. They coming across her , instead of returning her to the safety of her father, had brutally raped her over a period of time that left her in the vegetable state, incapable of doing anything other than carrying out the order of opening her shalwar and letting the men rape her. She, like *Muselman*, marks the moving threshold in which man passes into non-man,

marking a point at which human beings, while apparently remaining human beings, ceases to be human.

The condition of *Muselmann*, the mummy-men, who cannot be told apart from dead raises the question of witnessing. The question is whether *Muselmann* can provide the condition of the truth. According to Primo Levi, who has coined “the paradox of witnessing” all testimonies (especially one’s own) are always incomplete (48). The survivor explains that only those who died- the drowned rather than the saved- could speak of the real extent of the camp’s horror. To bear witness is, as Agamben concludes, to bear witness to the impossibility of bearing witness. What had been a realization of the limits of the witnesses’ proper perspective in Levi is declared to be the fundamental structure of the testimony. The subjects of this description are the so-called *Muselmann*, those inmates of the concentration camps who, because of starvation and physical exertion had reached a state of extreme apathy. Most of them were unable to survive this condition; indeed, these *Muselmann* were often considered all but dead, both by their fellow inmates and guards. The *Muselmann* becomes the paradigmatic case of the necessary incompleteness and inadequacy of witnessing. It is this gap inscribed in any act of bearing witness that any testimony needs to reflect.

The *Muselmann* is a being that has been stripped of all humanity. Robert Buch in “Seeing the Impossibility of Seeing or the Visibility of the Undead: Giorgio Agamben’s Gorgon”, posits that it is precisely in this lack, in this absolute bareness in the complete dehumanization that has taken place that a new ethical material appears. The insights Agamben hopes to bring out lay hidden in this material. Once properly understood, these insights will necessitate a fundamental revision of established ethical categories such as

dignity, responsibility, guilt and judgment. Primo Levi in “The Drowned and the Saved” expresses a piercing sense of survivor’s guilt in the following sentences:

I must repeat-we, the survivors are, not the true witnesses. This is an uncomfortable notion, of which I have become conscious little by little...We survivors are not only an exiguous but also an anomalous minority: we are those who by their prevarications or abilities or god luck did not touch bottom. Those who did so, those who saw the Gorgon, they have not returned to tell about it or have returned mute, but they are ‘Muslims’, the submerged, the complete witnesses, the ones whose disposition would have a general significance. They are the rule, we are the exception...We who were favored by fate tried, with more or less wisdom, to recount not only our fate, but also that of others, the submerged; but this was a disclosure on ‘behalf of third parties’, the story of things seen from close by, not experienced personally. When the destruction was terminated, the work accomplished was not told by anyone, just as no one ever returned to recount his own death. Even if they had paper and pen, the submerged would not have testified because their death had begun before that of their body. Weeks and months before snuffed out, they had already lose the ability to observe, to remember, compare and express themselves. We speak in their stead, by proxy” 1

These words express the shame at having survived, and with that the sense of shame that one’s experience is inauthentic, less true than the reality suffered by the many, as if only the extreme in suffering represented by the fate of the *Muselmanner*, the Muslims or

mummy-men, the living dead could provide the condition of the truth spoken in their stead. But then there is also the truth that the y, the living dead, being dead, witnessed nothing.

J.M.Bernstein in “Bare life, Bearing Witness: Aushwitz and the Pornography of Horro” writes that *Muselmann* represents both the furthest reach of the practice of camps in their systematic and administrative stripping away of the qualities of the human from their victims, and thus, simultaneously, the destruction of the human to its furthest reach, the *Muselmann* becoming the limit case of the human. Only the speech of the living dead is true speech, only the speech of those who have been systematically deprived of the power of speech is true speech, and only in relation to the truth might any others have worth. In *Remnants of Auschwitz*, Levi, Agamben contends, discovered at Auschwitz, an area that is independent of every establishment of responsibility, not because it is an area of impunity, but, on the contrary, because it is a responsibility that is infinitely greater than any we could ever assume (16).

Agamben broaches the thought that the ethical, if it is to come to be, must distinguish itself from the moralizing of morality, the incessant desire to stand in the space of autonomous moral truth and render judgment. Surely, the sight of the *Muselmann* lodges an ethical claim, and surely that claim does not concern the rendering of a moral judgment as normally understood. In contending that judgment, responsibility and guilt are idle here, Agamben is in effect putting out of play the most obvious and natural moral modes of attending to the *Muselmann*. Against Levi himself now, Agamben rightly urges the idea that the idea of speaking in his stead, by proxy, “makes no sense; the drowned have nothing to say, nor do they have instructions or memories to be

transmitted, They have no 'story', no 'face', and even less do they have 'thought'"(17). Agamben's goal is to make visible the invisible being who have no story or face or thought to offer us. The *Muselmanner* were the living dead, those in whom "the divine spark was dead in them, already too empty to really suffer" (19) and hence they are the limit of the human, the 'complete witness' to the horror, which makes it forever impossible to distinguish 'man and non-man' (20). *Muselmann* are the transition from bios to zoe, from a form of life to bare life, inclusion by exclusion. Like the pile of corpses, the *Muselmann* document the total triumph of power over the human being. Although nominally alive, they are nameless hulk.

Agamben, heavily borrowing from Primo Levi's *The Drowned and the Saved*, argues that the much sought authentic act of witnessing does not rest with the *Muselmann*, those in the camps who had given up any hope and were quickly dispatched to the gas chambers, but with those who like Levi, recognized in the *muselmanner* the truth of the human condition. Insofar as the *muselmaner's* muteness and blank stares, devoid of any trace of emotion, begged questions about their humanity, they also betrayed how, just as the power of language rests on the assumption of its transparency, entire political order rests on the production of a form of life so devoid of intrinsic meaning that it can 'be killed, but not sacrificed' (Homo Sacer, 8). From this perspective, the *muselmanner* were not witness but the 'real' itself, and Levi is the true witness insofar as he sought to return his encounter with the 'real' to language and thus expose the limitation of political vocabulary. Simply surviving to tell the tale of one's experience and witnessing should not be confused, since the act of bearing witness lies in articulating the inner essence and meaning of the event.

In the light of the idea forwarded by Agamben, Sakina in “Khol Do” is not a true witness whose testimony could be relied upon, but people like doctors who witness the horrors wrecked on *Muselmann* like Sakina and retell it to the world. Another equally chilling story of Saddat Hassan Manto which traces the spiraling of character into *Muselmann* is “Khuda ki qasam”, which is told in the first person by a liaison officer involved in the recovery of abandoned woman. The story portrays an old Muslim woman in search of her only daughter. Wandering from town to town in Punjab, each time she is encountered by the officer, she is in worse condition, but when he tries to convince her that her daughter is dead and offers to take her to Pakistan, she is sure that her daughter is alive:

I saw her again on the third trip. Now her clothing was in shreds and she was almost naked. I offered her some clothing, but she wouldn't take it. I offered her some clothing, but she wouldn't take it. I said to her, “Old woman, I'm telling you the truth. Your daughter was killed in Patiala. With that same iron-hard certainty, she said, “You are lying.”

To convince her, I said, “No, I'm telling the truth.

You' cried enough. Come, I' ll take you to Pakistan.”

She didn't hear me and started to murmur. Then suddenly she stopped.

The feeling of iron-hard certainty in her voice was even greater. “No. No one can kill my daughter.”

I asked, “How's that?”

The old woman said confidently, “She’s beautiful, so beautiful that no one can kill her. No one would even lay a hand on her.”

I thought, “Was she really that beautiful? Every mother thinks that no child is as beautiful as hers. It’s possible that her daughter really was that beautiful. But in this storm was there any beauty that could escape man’s savage hands? Maybe the old woman was deceiving herself. There are many roads to flee on; pain is the kind of crossroads that is surrounded with thousands of avenues of escape.” 30

At last the liaison officer encounters the old woman in a bazaar in Amritsar, just at the moment when a handsome young Sikh walked by with a veiled woman on his arm.

Pointing to the old woman, the Sikh says, “It’s your mother,” at which the young woman averts her eyes and walks by. The old woman, however having seen enough, shouts after her and to the liaison officer that she has seen her daughter. He replies,

“She died a long time ago”

“you’re lying!” she shouted.

This time I meant absolutely to convince her. “I swear to God, she’s dead”

As soon as she heard this, she collapsed on the street. (31)

Leslie A. Flemming in “Riots and Refugees: The Post-Partition Stories of Saadat Hasan Manto” comments that in the ambiguity of the liaison officer’s words, as consolation to the old woman as a true description of the daughter, in terms of her relationship with her mother, and in reaction of the old woman to those words, is summed up all the pain of the

broken relationship—for whatever reasons—that came in the wake of partition. Truly more people died than simply those that were physically murdered. And people like the old woman who collapsed on the street would after regaining consciousness, certainly turn into *muselmann* where it would be hard to discern whether they are alive or dead.

One shouldn't get the idea that it was only women who bore the brunt of Partition violence. Many men were victims of the violence, lost their lives, their dignity. In fact, one of the best stories written by Manto "Toba Tek Singh" is about a male character Toba Tek Singh who is an inmate in mental asylum. The story opens with a series of vignettes ridiculing political leaders on both sides reflecting the confusion of identity felt especially by Pakistanis after partition. An inmate named Mohammed Ali, who fancies himself Jinnah, the founding father of Pakistan, gets into an argument with a Sikh who thinks himself Tara Singh, (32) while other inmates, "were caught in the dilemma of whether they were in Pakistan or in India. If they were in India, then where was Pakistan? If they were in Pakistan, then how could it be that, staying right in the same place, a little while ago they were in India" (33)

The story gradually focuses on one old Sikh inmate named Bishan Singh but called by all Toba Tek Singh because he had been a wealthy landowner in a village of that name. Neither the other inmates and guards nor a former neighbor from Toba Tek Singh can tell him if his village is in India or in Pakistan, and like the other inmates, he cannot understand why he is being uprooted from his home. When at border he learns from a liaison officer that Toba Tek Singh is in Pakistan, he refuses to cross, and all persuasions having failed, he is left standing by himself between the two border stations. Finally,

Just before dawn, an ear-splitting shout came out of Bishan Singh's throat. Several officers came running from different directions and saw that the man who had stood upright for fifteen years was now lying on his face. Over there, behind barbed wire, was India. The other way, behind the same wires, was Pakistan. In between, on his nameless piece of ground, lay Toba Tek Singh (34).

The story focuses on the pains and the difficulties of a great historical event through the eyes of a small but sympathy-inducing figure. Manto has here deliberately used an ambiguous ending in which the phrase "Toba Tek Singh" refers both to the man called Toba Tek Singh, stretched out on the ground and to the piece of ground itself, which at the moment has become for him the place Toba Tek Singh where he most wants him to be. In his death he has finally reached his home in Toba Tek Singh. In that ambiguity and in Bishan Singh's ear-splitting cry and death are focused all the pain and grief of the millions, who like Bishan Singh, were forced to leave their homes. People like Bishan Singh are rendered insane by the Partition, decisions taken by head of the states to divide a nation into two. However, women were worst hit by the violence, where men lost their lives, women before eventually losing their lives, lost their dignity as they were often brutally assaulted to the extent where it was hard to differentiate whether they are alive or dead.

Saddat Hasan Manto's another short story "Thanda Ghost" (Cold Meat), first published in March 1949, depicts the effect of six days spree of looting and murder on the usually passionate and hot-blooded Ishar Singh. He has a equally hot-blooded mistress Kulwant Kaur. Unable to make love to her, he arouses in her the suspicion that

he has been with another woman. When he fails to provide satisfying answer on why he is failing to satisfy her sexually, in the burst of anger, Kulwant Kaur stabs him and mortally wounds him. He, then confesses that from the past few days, he had been on pillaging and killing spree and he attempts to rape a girl, after murdering six members of her family. About to penetrate her, he discovers that she is dead, a cold meat, which he himself becomes at the end of the story.

The beginning of the story quickly establishes Kulwant's warmth so that her later reaction to Ishar's impotence is believable, while Ishar's sexual powers are sufficiently hinted at to suggest that only a terrible experience could have robbed him of those powers: "Ishar Singh, his head bowed, was standing silently in a corner. His tightly tied turban had loosened, and the hand holding his kirpan was trembling a little, but it was obvious from his build and bearing that he was the most suitable man for a woman like Kulwant Kaur" (15). Kulwant Kaur, a woman capable of extreme passion be it lust or anger, in a feat of rage stabs Ishar Singh, but even after she "smells something bad" (16) and stabs him, she is unprepared for what Ishar Singh confesses. Ishar's confession, at the end of the story reveals the depths of evil to which human beings can descent. Having committed the worst possible crimes against his fellow men, without remorse, in his violent reaction to the dead girl, Ishar Singh shows that even in this state he still has within him a glimmer of human sensitivity. In his defense of the story against charges of obscenity, Manto in his "Zahmat-e-mihr-e-daraxshan," the long introduction to the collection "Thanda ghost" stressed the theme:

The story seemingly revolves around one aspect of sexual psychology but, in fact, in it an extremely subtle message is given to man, that even at the

last limits of cruelty and violence, of barbarity and bestiality, he still does not lose his humanity! If Ishar Singh had completely lost his humanity, the touch of the dead woman would not have affected him so violently as to strip him of his manhood. (17)

Moreover, in Ishar Singh's attempt to shield the dead girl from Kulwant's curses and in his realization that with the knife with which Kulwant Kaur has stabbed him he himself has murdered six people, in the last moment of his life Ishar Singh has furthered the process of growth in humanity which began in his reaction to the dead woman. However, the dead girl who evokes the emotions in beast-like Ishar Singh, has moved beyond the realm of humanity. She lost her family in front of her eyes and before reaching the hands of Ishar Singh, she has been passed over so many men and exposed to so much of violence that Ishar Singh himself is at loss on whether she is dead or alive. People like Ishar Singh, who with impunity and fearless of state's persecution go on pillaging and killing spree where people from another community have little or no importance to them.

Ishar Singh and his ilk went on killing spree during the state of exception. As Agamben writes in *Remnants of Auschwitz*, sovereign is one who declares and decides on the state of exception. Agamben sees this condition in generalized or rampant in the post-Auschwitz world, and this allows him to assert that the camp is the prototype of modern life and Auschwitz is everywhere (19). He puts the point in one of his more resounding declamations: "Behind the powerlessness of God peeps the powerlessness of men, who continue to cry 'May that never happens again! When it is clear that 'that' Auschwitz is by now, everywhere'" (RA, 20). In the world of Manto, we see Auschwitz everywhere, whether it is in crowded refugee camp in Pakistan where an old father is happy to finally

find his missing daughter Sakina or a mental asylum where the inmates are at loss on their location, or a bazaar in Amritsar where an old woman, after finally searching for her daughter for so long, comes across her and realizes that her Muslim daughter has long died and transformed into a young Sikh bride. Sakina in “Khol Do”, the old mother in “Khuda ki Kasam”, the nameless girl who could not be told apart from dead in “Cold Meat” are all *Muselmann* who have reached such state of physical decrepitude and existential disregard that in the words of Agamben “one hesitates to call them living: one hesitates to call their death death” (*Remnants of Auschwitz*, 1) Agamben calls *Muselmann*, the ultimate victim, the one who is completely crushed, and yet who is also the true witness, whose testimony would be truly valuable but who cannot bear witness.

Agamben calls the survivor-witness as ultimately bearing witness to the *Muselmann*. In “Cold Meat”, if it had not been Ishar Singh who witnessed the violence and its effects on the nameless Muslim girl, her story would not have come to the fore. In “Khuda Ki Kasam”, it is the liaison officer, who sees the gradual deterioration of the old Muslim Woman, into an insane woman. The doctor in “Khol Do” sees the living dead Sakina and is drenched in perspiration. There appears to be no recourse to resistance here; no power in these “skinny, dirty figures, their skin and faces blackened, their gaze gone, their eyes hollowed out, their clothes threadbare, filthy stinking” (42). There is no desire, no longing for liberation, for a dignified self-determined existence. *Muselmann* is the terminal point of no return for homo sacer, the last stop before absolute inhumanity. As one *Muselmann* survivor puts it: “You become so indifferent to your fate that you no longer wanted anything from anyone... Today was enough; you were content with what you could find in the trash...” and another, who spoke of drifting through the camp “like

a stray dog, dreaming of coming across at least a single potato skin,” no longer hoping to survive. The *Muselmann* like Sakina, the nameless girl whom Ishar Singh almost rapes, the old muslim woman are beyond dignity and self-respect, unbearable to look at. Before Partition, they were healthy, normal human beings. Sakina living happily with her father, Siraj din; the old muslim mother with her beautiful daughter whose beauty stoked pride in the mother’s bosom, the nameless girl with her family. But it is men, often from other religious community and sometime from their own, who push them to the state where it becomes increasingly difficult to tell whether they are dead or alive. They become the limit figure between life and death, between human and non-human, and it is men, without fear of persecution and with complete impunity, reduce them to *Muselmann* .

Chapter Four

Bare life in Bapsi Sidwa's *Cracking India*

In predominant war narrative, political and nationalist violence are rarely linked to societal issues and are often eulogized and even celebrated. However, Sidhwa's *Cracking India* exposes these nationalist violence enshrined in the structures of patriarchal social institutions within which the characters exist and the extent to which the women are deprived of any individual agency not just by men and communities but also by their nations. *Cracking India* follows the perspective of Lenny in the period before Partition, as part of a middle-class Parsee family in Lahore, in a multi-religious household. Her parents are distant and leave the daily raising of Lenny to her nanny, Ayah, a Hindu woman from Punjab. Lenny, a girl upon the verge of sexual maturation sees the eruption of violence in the society around her to be analogous to the violence which accompanied with her new social role when she is being thrust into a woman. Amongst many suitors of Ayah, is a local young muslim man called Ice Candy Man as he sometimes sells ice cream. As the violence of Partition rises, Ice Candy Man stops wooing Ayah and takes on the role of a minor nationalist leader in their area. He eventually leads a mob to the house and Ayah is taken away. Later it is revealed that he is pimping Ayah as a dance girl in the red-light district of Lahore. Lenny's godmother, a stern and powerful woman, extricates Ayah from this situation. Ice Candy Man is dejected and disappears after crossing the border into India.

Kamran Rastegar in, “Trauma and maturation in women’s war narratives: The eye of the Mirror and Cracking India”, notices that though young of age, Lenny understands the differentiation of religious identity to be largely performative, an artifice. (28) As the violence surrounding Partition spreads with incomprehensible speed across her known world, it is Lenny who can most clearly see the changing faces of each character and in particular the Ice-Candy-Man as gestural undertaking, and not reflecting essential differences based on religious identity. Lenny first becomes conscious of the performative nature of religious identity when the Ice-Candy-Man, after quoting one of his nationalist heroes, asks Ayah why she does not wear traditional Punjabi clothes. Her answer is that wearing Punjabi clothes would entitle her to a salary of half of what she earns by wearing a sari. However, Ayah’s failing to assume a religious identity is considered strange while performative nature of identity becomes logical. Sidhwa’s *Cracking India*, in the words of Kamran Rastegas “undoes the nationalist orientation of narratives on Partition” (42). *Cracking India* draws a gendered view of Partition and its outcomes, narrating the costs of this ideological and political process on women and Ayah’s fate reflects the fate of thousands of women during partition.

Urvashi Butalia in, “Community, State and Gender: On Women’s Agency during Partition”, posits that violence is almost always instigated by men, but its greatest impact is felt by women.(14) In violent conflict, it is women who are raped, who are widowed, whose children and husbands are sacrificed. During Partition thousands of women were abducted, raped, forced to convert, forced in what the two states defined as their proper homes, torn apart from their families once during Partition by those who abducted them, again, after Partition, by the state which tried to recover and rehabilitate them. Untold

numbers of women, particularly in Sikh families were killed. Butalia reiterates that in communal strife women are at the receiving end of the violence as its victims, of their homes that are destroyed, their bodies violated, their men killed and they are left with the task of rebuilding the community. She presents an excerpt from an activist pamphlet to show the plight of women during Partition,

I am a woman

I want to raise my voice

Because communalism affects me

In every communal riot

My sisters are raped

My children are killed

My men are targeted

My world is destroyed

And then

I am left to pick up the pieces

To make a new life

It matters little if I am a Muslim

Hindu and Sikh

And yet I cannot help my sisters

For fear that I may be killed

Or that they may be harmed

The irony is that in cases of women, they were not even allowed to make a new life of left pieces, despite their resistance and unwillingness, states decided their fate and forced them to give up their new life they had begun to live, and start living their lives in the places, where the states wanted them to.

Ritu Menon and Kamla Basin, in *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India's Partition* have presented a feminist history of the partition to assess its impact on the lives of ordinary women. In doing so they interviewed survivors on both sides of the Indian-Pakistan border, and in order to place those women's experiences into context, consulted government archives and the reports of many charitable organizations found to care for displaced persons. Among the questions considered, beyond the sheer loss of life- the many women killed in riots and ambushes or those who committed suicides or killed by their relations to preserve their honor-were the various ways that women survived. Many women were widowed in massacres, others were forcibly abducted. Others became separated from their families in the confusion of the migration and were rescued by families of a different faith. Of these survivors, some ultimately made it across the border, but most stayed behind. Abductees were often married to their abductors and adapted to their situation. Others married into their rescuers' families. Some converted, most gave births and became mothers. Though their separation from their natal family and faiths had been involuntary, these women made peace with their

new life. However, in 1949 India passed a law on the recovery and restoration of abducted persons that provided for a continued effort to seek out and recover women, giving police the power to do so and maintaining camps where recovered persons could be housed. These effects restored thousands of women to their original families, but faced with resistance from the women themselves, with their desire to stay with the men who had become husbands and not to be separated from the children; relief workers began to debate the wisdom of continuing. Partition, victimized many women, as did the post partition recovery policies of the new states. Many of the social workers felt that continuing the search for abducted women after 1949 was tantamount to abducting them twice.

Ritu Menon and Bhasin interviewed women involved in the recovery effort as well as women who were recovered. The complexities of the matter are apparent in the ambivalence of some and the sense of displacement of the others. Some were happy to return to former families, others encountered rejection as fallen women. The clear-cut boundaries drawn by politicians were much more ambiguous for women faced with the dilemma of choosing between the old and new ties. Their testimony in Menon and Bhasin's work reflects steely determination and lingering regret, moral and physical strength and the ability to cope with a chaotic reality. Andrew Whitehead in "The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India by Urvashi Butalia: Borders and Boundaries, Women in India's Partition by Ritu Menon: Kamla Bhasin" states that Menon and Bhasin are primarily concerned with the way in which the Indian state and voluntary agencies responded to the mass abduction of women during the partition violence; the Inter-Dominion treaty reached between India and Pakistan to recover

women; the role of women volunteers in the retrieval operation; and the debate in the Indian Parliament, particularly over the issue of whether abducted women had the option to refuse repatriation. (311) Women were still being returned across the new international border, even fully ten years after Partition. Some were obliged to leave the children of their new families behind; others were encouraged to have discreet abortions.

One of the profound ironies of the period is as noticed by Madhuparna Mitra in “Contextualizing Ayah’s abduction: Patterns of Violence against Women in Sidhwa’s *Cracking India*” is that while rhetoric and ideology of non-violence prevailed in the political push for freedom from colonial rule, a bloodbath accompanied the actual attainment of this goal.(23) It is true that communal violence had happened in the sub-continental society but Partition unleashed a maelstrom so horrific that the scale was unprecedented in the history. Many instances of religious violence was orchestrated by politically organized groups, some of the violence was spontaneous where individuals incited into group-think opportunistic acts of aggression, leading to cycles of retribution. People who had lived together for generations turned upon each, becoming murderers, kidnapers, rapists and arsonists. In Sidhwa’s *Cracking India*, one of Ayah’s most persistent suitor Ice-Candy-man turns upon his desired girl, Ayah. When Lenny is confronted by Ayah, she least intending to give Ayah up to the hostile mob looks at “the face, amber-eyed...hypnotic, reassuring, blotting out the ugly, frightening crowd. Ice-candy-man versatile face transformed into a survivor’s in our hour of need” (193) and discloses Ayah’s hiding place. Lenny betrays Ayah not out of spite, but she really believes the assurances of Ice-Candy-Man that he is going to save the Hindu Ayah from the muslim mob bent on finding her and most likely rape her. However, little did she

realize that Partition has generated the legacy where personal feelings are squashed and replaced by communal bonds and anyone who does not belong to one's community or religion was an enemy who is to be annihilated.

Bapsi Sidwa's novel *Cracking India* is a trenchant portrayal of the violence surrounding the Partition which depicts a broad cross-section of Lahore society both before and after the city becomes a part of Partition. The plot's focus is on Lenny's Hindu nanny, of her ardent but often spurned muslim suitors, Ice-Candy-Man and her eventual escape from his clutches. The Ayah's story is paradigmatic: like her, thousands of women were abducted and /or raped by men of the enemy community during the chaotic months before and after Partition. The novel repeatedly and justifiably, focuses on the figure of the Ayah, analyzing the ways she inhabits the subaltern subject position and has her abduction and recovery participate in the contested ideologies of Partition history. Lenny herself is a child of privilege born into an upper-middle class Parsi family and is thus a doubly neutral narrator by virtue of her age and ethno-religious affiliation. While her perspective is that of the upper-class child, her attachment both physical and mental, to her Ayah allows her access to the working-class world of cooks, gardeners, masseurs and ice-cream sellers.

The novel belies its own opening statement where Lenny bemoans that her world is compressed where Lenny roams well beyond the boundaries of her own Parsee family and community. Indeed, the plot repeatedly allows her forays outside the "affluent fringes of Lahore" (11) going so far, on a couple of occasions, to visit, with the family cook, a village forty miles outside the Lahore. Lenny engages socially with a wide variety of people and one striking motif is the pervasiveness of sexual predation and violence. In

the numerous events happening in Lenny's life one can see that many of the events are marked by physical or psychological aggression motivated by male sexual dominance. In the words of Madhuparna Mitra in "Contextualizing Ayah's Abduction: Patterns of Violence against Women in Sidhwa's *Cracking India*" "the novel suggests that Punjabi society, even in a state of pre-Partition 'normalcy' relatively untinged by communal conflict, was suffused with violence, particularly that directed against women, and thus what occurred during the partition, was not an aberration but merely re-contextualization or a re-calibration of an already familiar Phenomenon." (26)

Cracking India refers to a rupture, and Partition certainly ruptured both political constructs and families and communities. There are numerous narrative threads in the novel that portray a routine acceptance of various kinds of casual, almost banal violence and suggests that these episodes indirectly show that Ayah's abduction is one point, though the most prominent one, in a continuum. Though, Ayah takes the centre stage there are lives of other women depicted in the novel which show pattern of victimization. There are many episodes involving women, other than Ayah, which show how the sexual objectification and exploitation of women was an accepted, almost routine element in the society. Madhuparna Mitra comments that at the novel's outset, the Ayah is sexually empowered women deploying her sensuality to rule over a circle of religiously-diverse suitors (26). Even as Sidhwa celebrates this sensuality, she implies, through Ayah's fate and through that of the other women in the novel, sexual violence is pervasive presence in these women's lives. It is precisely the pervasiveness and habitual acceptance of sexual violence that eventually leads to the proliferation of violent acts enacted on the bodies of

women; the turbulence of 1946-47 re-labels or re-calibrates rape and other acts of domestic violence against women as acts of communal aggression.

The early part of novel introduces Papoo, the sweeper's daughter who lives with her family in the servants' quarter behind the Sethi Bungalow. Papoo lives a life of deprivation, a life all too routine for most sub continental girls, where her mother Muccho routinely "maltreats her daughter" (21). She is hospitalized for 2 weeks after a presumed beating by her mother results in a concussion. The underlying cause of Muccho's wrath is never explicitly identified, but one concludes that Papoo is subject to abuse simply because she is a girl, and thus a liability to the family. In a subsequent episode, Muccho's anger explodes at her errant daughter for shirking household chores: "Bitch! Haramzadi! May you die"(54). Yanking cruelly at her hair, Muccho hurls further abuse, calling the child, "Haram Khor! Slut! Work-Shirker!" (54). Unlike other servants' children Papoo is not browbeaten and remains a strong and high-spirited young girl, one not easily cowed by authority. However, the rebellious Papoo is broken when her family marries her off to an older man. Papoo initially resists but is eventually forced to docility.

The story of Papoo's coercion into marriage reflects accurately the misfortunes of millions of sub-continental girls routinely married off before the legal age of consent. It also draws attention to ways sub-continental society in general connived at the subjugation of women, affording societal consent to sexual enslavement. It is especially ironic that Papoo's mother is the primary agent of her daughter's plight. In all likelihood Papoo will have to endure continuing violence, possibly sexual now, not just physical. No voices are raised in protest against the coercion of young girl; indeed the marriage is attended and celebrated by the extended family and the community at large. Papoo's

rebellious spirit is ground into subservience and conformity. After her marriage, Papoo disappears from the narrative; her story however is only strand of the composite picture of women's lives that Sidhwa paints in the novel. It is precisely the systematic and pervasive disregard for female consent that enables and leads logically to the abductions of women during the partition Violence and later even the states disregard question of female consent while they decide on the fates of these women. The chapter devoted to Papoo's wedding directly follows ayah's abduction.

Papoo and Ayah are victims of a system that essentially legitimizes sexual predation. Both Ice-Candy-Man and Papoo's husband are versions of the same male impulse to exercise control over women, a control executed through societal consent. While abduction of the Ayah could be viewed through a political prism and seen as an ideologically freighted event with communal implications (a minority Hindu Kidnapped by a Muslim Mob), it is also at another level a more routine opportunistic sex-crime. The mob is overtly instigated by her former suitor, that he is motivated as much if not more, by his need to possess the woman who has rejected his advances as he is by desire to take revenge on Hindus. The Ayah's post-abduction story, unfolding in fragmentary fashion once she is traced by Lenny's mother and Godmother, complicates the ideological freight of her initial abduction (women essentialized as Hindu, abducted by a Muslim mob and raped repeatedly over a period of several months)

Papoo is coerced into marriage while she is drugged, Ayah is presumably coerced into accepting Ice-Candy-man as husband once kidnappings and rapes have left her no option. In the course of a conversation between Ice-Candy-Man and Godmother, it becomes clear that after the Ayah's abduction in February 1948 the Sethi family tracks

her down, when they have “arranged to have her sent to Amritsar” where she has family (262), Ice-Candy-Man changes from a chest-thrusting, paan-spitting and strutting goonda into a pithy poet, he assumes the role of the misused lover so dear to Urdu poets. When Godmother challenges this rhetoric of protection, which elides the violence by which Ayah was made one of our women, Ice-Candy-Man resorting to the language of the love-lorn lover, declares that he would “do anything to undo the wrong done to her...that no one has touched her since their nikah (marriage), and that he can’t exist without her” (262)

The Ayah’s post-abduction story Madhuparno Mitra suggests, re-calibrates the ideological terrain that is her body. While she presumably has to convert to marry Ice-Candy-Man and she is re-named Mumtaz, his sexual control over her is more of a story of a man’s desire to subjugate a woman than one of religious-communal identity politics. When Godmother and Lenny finally meet Ayah/Shanta/Mumtaz, she declares that she is “not alive” (274) and begs them “to get her away from her husband (275). Lenny’s reaction to Ayah’s plea is intriguing in its psychological complexity:

When I think of Ayah, I think she must get away from the monster, who has killed her spirit and mutilated her angel’s voice. And when I look at ice-candy man’s naked humility and grief I see his as undeserving of his beloved’s heartless disdain... While Ayah is haunted by her past, Ice-Candy-Man is haunted by his future and his macabre future already appears to be stamped on his face. (276)

Interestingly, Lenny does not think of Ayah's captivity in the context of communal conflict; using the idiom of lover/beloved, she sees it as a romantic relation. She seems to have sympathy for Ice-Candy-Man though she labels him a monster. One might wonder why Lenny's reaction is so ambivalent. Is it because Lenny is too young to really understand what the Ice-Candy-man has done or is she so naïve that she is duped by the rhetoric of the spurned, romantic loafer. The fact is Lenny, pre-pubescent in 1948, is conditioned by her own sexual experience into thinking that predatory male behavior is normative and thus worthy of sympathy. Her relation with her male cousin sheds light on how Lenny developed such attitude towards men. To some extent, *Cracking India* traces Lenny's fall into knowledge-about religious differences, about class, about sectarian violence, and above all, about sex. From early in the novel, she is aware of Ayah being the object of male gaze as she recalls:

The covetous glances Ayah draws educate me. Up and down , they look at her. Stub-herded beggars and dusty old beggars on crutches drop their poses and stare at her with hard alert eyes. Holy men, masked in piety, shove aside their pretenses, to ogle at her with lust. Hawkers, cart-drivers, cooks, coolies and cyclists turn their heads as she passes, pushing my pram with the unconcern of the Hindu goddess she worships." (12)

Lenny's tutor of sexual experience is her hyper-sexed cousin nursing a crush on Lenny, to respond to his amorous overtures. Once the kidnapped Ayah's whereabouts are located to Lahore's red-light district of Hira Mandi (literally, Diamond Market), it is cousin who brings the news, and explains to a still-naïve Lenny what this means: "there are no real diamonds there, silly. The men pay them to dance and sing...and to do things

with their bodies. Its the world's oldest profession" (252). To further elaborate on the matter Cousin proceeds to demonstrate : "ever ready to illuminate, teach and show things, Cousin squeezes my breasts and lifts my dress and grabs my elasticized cotton knickers"(253). Lenny resists at first, but then Cousin "succeeds in denickering" her, and "putting his hand there, and trembles" (253). Though this behavior might be taken off as adolescent fumbling, but subsequent episode brings up a more disturbing picture.

Lenny accompanied by Godmother visits Ayah at Hira Mandi and the voyeuristic Cousin wants to know everything that had happened. When Lenny fails to give any amorous details, he says that she would have seen a lot more if she had gone after dark. When Lenny asks for clarification, about what she would have seen, the following exchange occurs:

"Girls dancing and singing-and amorous poet

And you would have been raped.

What's that?

"I'll show you someday," says Cousin giving me a queer look (277-278)

Cousin's fantasy is just not that Lenny would have witnessed a rape, but she herself would have been subject to the experience. In the words of Madhuparno Mitra, "His sexual fantasy is predatory, turning adolescent experimentation into exercise of violent power. And when Lenny asks for terminological clarification about rape, he promises, chillingly, to show her someday. In this way, he brings her into a world where sexual violence appears the norm, where sexual exploitation is garbed in the fake aesthetic of

entertainment” (31)The novel, implicitly presents a society that subtly indoctrinates its men and women to entwine sex with violence and to accept male sexual dominance as the natural status quo.

Lenny sees Ayah being swarmed by her suitors, and she herself is often bugged by her cousin. However, it is her own mother, the seemingly powerful matriarch who exemplifies the violence and harassment meted out on women. Mrs Sethi has a retinue of servants to take care of her children and her household. But behind the closed doors of the marital bedroom, she is under her husband’s thumb and has to wheedle her husband to get enough money for household expenses. The instances of Mrs Sethi cajoling money out of her reluctant husband is treated in a fairly light-hearted way, but the indignity visited upon her as a subservient female is inescapable. Being a member of the neutral Parsi community, Mrs Sethi engages in humanitarian efforts to assist women who have been victimized by Partition violence. She participates in efforts to help Hindu and Sikh families cross the border safely to India and to recover and shelter kidnapped women. As Lahore erupts into communal violence, Mrs Sethi oversees the housing of abducted women in a building abandoned by a departed Hindu family. She even employs one of the rescued refugees from a “camp for fallen women” (226), a woman named Hamida, to replace the abducted Ayah as the children’s nanny. While she is an empowered figure out in public, behind closed doors, Mrs Sethi is herself an abused woman. Mrs Sethi leads a dual existence: while she rescues women from the clutches of other predatory males she has to don the helpless feminine persona to maintain her status as a wife. She has only circulated, displaced and passed on the violence done to her and other women not put a stop on it. There are many cases like that of Mrs Sethi, Pappoo,

Lenny and many more of those who fare worse fate than them, like that of Hamida and Ayah. Partition not just, fractured a country in two; it also unleashed unprecedented violence on women. While before partition, violence, physical and sexual were common in Indian sub-continent, never had been any historical or political event had caused such a brutal violence on such a massive scale, which are often kept under the wraps and not deemed worthy of being discussed in public.

Urvashi Butalia, in “The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India”, presents an extraordinary oral history of horrendous human tragedy. She details the demographic and ethnic developments that affected partition and recounts the traumas that women in particular experienced, including her own family. In the present book, the result of ten years’ worth of research and interviews, there are considerable number of people who experienced the horrors surrounding the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 and lived to tell the tale which is no small feat, as within the space of 2 months 12 million people were displaced and nearly a million people died. 75,000 women were raped, kidnapped, abducted. It is no wonder that Butalia’s interviewees ask her time and again “Why do you want to know this? Why are you doing this?” (14) Butalia does not offer a neat and easy answer to this question. Now that she has embarked on her research, she simply knows she cannot abandon it. Often when people have lived through trauma of this magnitude they prefer to forget: Butalia quotes the author Krishna Sobti “Partition is difficult to forget but dangerous to remember.” Yet in each communal killings in the present day subcontinent, the echo of Partition reverberates. The story continues and recognizing and acknowledging the humanity of

perpetrators as well as the victim may not significantly alter the course of history, but it may help to understand it at a very basic human level.

Lalita Du Perron in “The Other side of Silence: Voice from the Partition of India by Urvashi Butalia” calls it an outstanding feminist study. However, it is much more than that. Butalia is involved with her subject on a deeply personal level- partly because her starting-point is her own scarred family history and partly because she is not afraid to locate herself in the very centre of her material. The power of oral history lies in the fact that it is about regular people, the girl next door, someone’s grandfather, someone’s daughter. And so it inevitably raises questions as to the perceived otherness of the protagonists of these human horror stories; the story of Partition is not about a well-oiled machinery of state-sponsored violence nor is it about institutionalized mass-murder. It is about families, friends, neighbors, and communities being torn apart in a frenzy of paranoia, hatred and fear. In *Cracking India*, friends turn against friends where lover of Ayah is found suspiciously dead and one cannot help suspecting Ice-Candy-Man behind the murder. The biggest betrayal too comes from him when he along with bunch of hooligans storm into Lenny’s home and asks after the Hindu helps. The mob first targets Hari who has converted for self-preservation and is now called Himat Ali. Interestingly, Hari is wearing, not a dhoti, but a shalwar, in accordance with his newly-embraced Muslim identity. He is asked to undo his shalwar and prove that he is a “proper (circumcised) Muslim”.(192) Fortunately for Hari/ Himat Ali, the cook Imam Din is seconded by the barber who performed the anatomical adjustment. He is then made to recite the kalma (Muslim prayer) to the satisfaction of the mob to prove his newly embraced religious identity.

The episodes involving violence directed at servants Imam Din and Hari feminized and rendered powerless in various ways, create a pattern that is reflected in other episodes which feature the power-plays of sexual harassment as an unremarkable aspect of public life. This is decidedly a male perspective which seeks to dismiss sexual harassment as harmless, but during and post partition this escalated into rapes where violence was re-calibrated by religion and nationality, but the targeting of women remained constant. During Partition where twelve million people were displaced, one million killed and about seventy-five thousand women were abducted and raped on both sides of border, as Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin note in that the violence against women were premised on the masculinist alignment scales: female bodies were equated with notions of home, their respective religious communities, nations and national territories. These women were geopoliticized women who were dualistically positioned as ours or theirs and accordingly, encoded as sites for masculinist protection or desecration. During riots Othered women were subject to stripping; parading naked; mutilating and disfiguring; tattooing or branding the breasts and genitalia with triumphant slogans; amputating breasts; knifing open the womb; raping, killing fetuses. In *Cracking India* on the cusp of Partition, Lenny narrates an event when she is sitting with her Ayah and her admirer when Ice-candy-man comes to them riding bicycle and announce while panting “A train from Gurdaspur has just come in, everyone in it is dead. Butchered. They are all Muslims. There are no young women among the dead! Only two gunny-bags full of women’s breasts!” (159) While he says that his glance repeatedly flits over Sher Singh, who belongs to Sikh community. Later Lenny spots

Sher Singh, with a touchy defensive look on his face, carrying an armload of daggers and swords, taking to sharpen their edges.

The violence of one community on another resulted in counter-violence but sadly women were at the receiving end. Rape pollutes women, but for the rapists they were symbolically rendering docile the woman's community/nation through forced penetration of its softened flesh/borders. The raping, amputing, branding are the kind of violence, instigated by the other community/religion. Menon, Bhasin and Butalia exposes another kind of violence women were subjected to, the intra-familial violence, forced to die at the hands of men of their own families. Men deemed the murder of their own kinswomen a heroic alternative to interreligious marriage and conversion. Consider the narrative presented by Menon and Bhasin , related to Charanjit Singh Bhatia, a Sikh whose Muslim neighbor had offered to have his sons marry Bhatia's six daughters to ensure their safety. The man seemed to agree but that night he gathered all thirteen members of his family together and decapitated them. "He then lit their pyre, climbed onto the roof of his house and cried out: "Bring on the marriage parties! You can bring your grooms now. Take my daughters away, they are ready for their marriages!" and so saying, he killed himself, too" (48) Here, the father/ husband retains his own honor (and by extension that of his own religious community and nation) by refusing to renounce control over his daughters' sexuality by handing them over to the Others.

Menon, Bhasin and Butalia directly address women's alleged suicides, an issue at the center of highly contentious debates about women's agency. In Partition, during enemy attacks, women collectively took poison, jumped into fires or off bridges, or drowned themselves in wells. One incident to which Urvashi Butalia devotes much

attention in *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* is the mass deaths of Sikh Women in March 1947 in small town of Thoa Khalsa near Rawalpindi, in what is now Pakistan. More than twenty were killed by the elders of the extended family rather than risk dishonor at the hands of Muslim attackers, and then the next day eighty or more Sikh women and children took their own lives by jumping into a well, again to avoid the risk of abduction by Muslims. These deaths have become the part of folklore of the Sikh community in Delhi where many refugees from this area have settled.

Urvashi Butalia explores the notion of honor, the way in which the death of the women has been celebrated as martyrdom for the community and religion, and the extent to which the women were deprived of any individual agency in the most irrevocable of decisions, the taking of their lives. She presents accounts of the survivors of those incidents where many women took their lives or reportedly begged the men of their communities to kill them in order to preserve their sanctity and purity as otherwise they would have faced conversions. In the memorial service held in Gurudwaras in Delhi, where the Partition survivors hold remembrance service every year, the tales of these women's sacrifice occupy a prominent place. It is they who are seen to have upheld, by offering themselves up for death, the honor of the community. Bir Bahadur Singh, a Sikh who was a child of a ten witnessed the mass deaths in Thoa Khalsa, recounts the death as

...in Gulag singh's Haveli 26 girls had been put aside. First of all my father, Sant Raja Singh, brought his daughter to the courtyard to kill her, first of all he prayed (he did ardaas) saying 'sacche badshah', we have not allowed your Sikhi to get stained, and in order to save it, we are going to

sacrifice our daughters, make them martyr, please forgive us...He killed two and the third was my sister Maan Kaur...my sister came, and sat, in front of my father, and I stood there, right next to my father, clutching on to his kurta as children do, I was clinging to him...but when my father swung his kirpan—vaar kita—perhaps some fear or doubt came into his mind, or perhaps the kirpan got stuck in her dupatta...no one can say...it was such frightening, such a fearful scene. Then my sister, with her own hands moved her dupatta aside and then he swung the kirpan and her head and neck rolled off and fell...and there...far away. I crept downstairs, weeping, sobbing and all the while I could hear the regular swing and hit of the kirpans...twenty five girls were killed, they were cut.” (6)

There is another such incident more commonly known as well-deaths where 90 women jumped in the well and later few survived, when the bodies filled up the well completely and women who jumped towards the end could not be drowned. Ironically, men glorified their killing of their own female family members as the only alternative to protect women and their honour. By killing women before their victimization, men had become savior to the women as Dr. Virsa Singh proudly remembered that he shot 50 women personally:

Virsa Singh claimed he had shot 50 women personally. First he shot his own wife because the Muslims came to get them...all the women into he neighborhood gathered around saying “viran, pehle mannu mar, pehle mannu marr”.(brother, kill me first). Some would push their daughters forward, saying, “shoot her, put a bullet through her now.” He says he just

keep shooting and shooting. “they kept bringing them forward I kept shooting. There was shooting all around. At least 50 or 60 women I shot— my wife, my daughter, mother...I wasn’t a murderer, I was their savior.

(49-50)

Menon and Bhasin underpin that by feigning murder as protection, men were hiding their own weakness of failing to protect their women from the enemy. They were just saving their manhood. In fact, a man has a duty to save woman but if another man appropriated their women, that would be worse than self-murder. To prevent that humiliation they either killed their womenfolk themselves or told the women to kill themselves before their violation by the men of Other community. And the women had ingrained the male ideology of honor so deeply that they simply obeyed what their men folk said. Thus, Menon and Bhasin indict patriarchal nation that persuades women to sacrifice their lives for the prestige of honor.

Moreover, the patriarchal construction of society has taught women to die rather than to submit to other men. Women themselves internalize that they must be chaste and clean. Only their relation to legal spouse was valid and the rest would defile their characters. So death was more preferable to women during partition than conversion and abduction. Women carried opium or poison for immediate death. They would set the pyre and jump into the funeral fire, they would drown themselves in wells. Daughters would beg their fathers and brothers to get them killed first. The fear of stigma compelled women to choose death:

How many of them have been forced to die-at the hands of men in their own families, or by their own hands, poisoned, strangled or burnt to death, put to the sword, drowned. It was made abundantly clear to their men the only choice available to them was to take their own lives...notions of shame and honor are so ingrained and have been internalized so successfully by men and women may quite easily be considered a 'willing sacrifice' even by women themselves...many women lived with the fear that each day may be their last and carried their poison packets around their neck. (46)

Definitely women internalized the concept of honor so deeply that they willingly sacrificed their life. They never regretted their death for it was saving their honor and avoiding their abduction, rape and conversion. Women retained their silence, suppressing the pain in their body even though they lived with the mark of torture on their bodies. And the national history portrayed their sacrifice as martyrdom. In *Cracking India*, Sidhwa presents one such incident of mass suicides through the narrative of a small boy Ranna, a Muslim boy whose village was attacked by Sikhs and who miraculously survived despite being seriously injured, throws light on how the villagers were prepared to protect their women:

“women and girls will gather at the chauthary's. Rather than face the brutality of the mob they will pour kerosene around the house and burn themselves. The canisters of kerosene are already stored in the barn at the rear of the chauthary's sprawling mud house. The Young men will engage the Sikhs at the mosque, and

at other strategic locations, for as long as they can and give the women a chance to start fire.” (210)

Men and sometimes even women frame these acts as a willing sacrifice. But, for Menon and Bhasin, to submit is not necessarily to agree. There is no free will where masculinist notions of honor and shame have been so deeply internalized, in the context of gendered, relations of power (46). Menon and Bhasin call the deaths as forced, “The circumstances in which many women took their lives can hardly be said to have offered them much choice in that matter. Male family members provided them with poison and swords, built fires for them to jump into, and pointed to well they should drown themselves in, while fathers, brothers, husbands, sons, mothers and aunts urged them to end their lives courageously” (45-46). Intra-kin and self-inflicted, anti-woman violence during partition was ultimately part of a continuum of violence that women are subjected to in nonturbulent times. In both situation, one extremist, the other less so, women are called upon to sacrifice for male honor, and their sexuality is controlled.

The continuation of violence of women didn't just stop with Partition. Menon and Bhasin are primarily concerned with the ways in which the Indian state and voluntary agencies responded to mass abduction of women during the partition violence: the Inter-Dominion treaty reached between India and Pakistan to recover women, the role of women volunteers during retrieval operation; and the debate in the Indian Parliament, particularly over the issue of whether abducted women had the option to refuse repatriation. Barely three months after Partition- the two nations agreed on the question of recovering those women who had been abducted, and rehabilitating them in their native places. The words like recovering, rehabilitating, homeland were ruse to cover the

fact that Hindus and Sikhs women were being returned to their fold and Muslim women were being returned to their fold. Women who had been taken away by the other community had to be brought back to their own community. The concept was defined for women by the men of the respective countries, the operation might have been carried by women, as they were deemed right ones to carry such operations, but the decisions were taken by men. Women simply had no say, no choice in the matters of their lives. During the deterritorialization/ territorialization of a religiopolitically marked bodies, the Indian and Pakistani states, in a mutual patriarchal pact, set up a cooperative recovery operations (camps, transportation) for women abducted on both sides of the border. Recovered women were to be sent to their natal families, but many refused to go. Many social workers, accompanying Muslim women from India to Pakistan, remember women who reprimanded the workers for meddling and destroying their lives. Similarly, many Hindu women, who had been abducted and married in Pakistan, wished to stay with their new Muslim families. Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin in "Recovery, Rupture and Resistance: Indian State and Abduction of Women during Partition" writes how the women who were being sent to their natal nation "refused to conform to the demands of their own families, or their governments...Some who resisted resorted to hunger strikes, others refused to change out of the clothes they had been wearing, either when they were recovered or when they had been abducted" (97)

The Inter Dominion Treaty was among the first of the agreements between the otherwise two hostile nations. The terms of the treaty were very clear: women on both sides of the border who had been abducted were to be forcibly recovered and restored to their families. The treaty was followed by large-scale rescue efforts to locate and

rehabilitate women. The key officers who were charged with the responsibility of rescuing abducted women were themselves women, but that fact does not reduce the monstrosity of the act itself. The treaty had clearly stated that women's wishes were of no consequences. However, forcible evacuation was not that easy. Sometimes the women resisted- out of fear of second dislocation, a repeat of the trauma, another uprooting, or fear of non-acceptance, and equally because many of them were happy in their new lives. While the women officials charged with the task of rescuing abducted women they also understood only too well the fear and dilemmas faced by those they were recovering. Anis kidwai, who worked as a social worker in refugee camps in Delhi sums up the dilemma of many of these women poignantly. Urvashi Butalia quotes her in *The Other Side of Silence*:

In all of this time, sometimes a girl would be killed or she would be wounded. The good maal would be shared among the police and the army, the second rate stuff would go to everyone else. And then these girls would go from one hand to another and then another And after several hours would turn up in hotels to grace their décor, or they would be handed over to police officers in some places to please them. And every single one of these girls, because she had been the victim of a saazish, she would begin to look upon her rescuer. Perforce as an angel of mercy who had in this time of loot or killing, rescued her, or fought for her, and brought her away. And when this man would cover her naked body (whose clothes had become the loot of another thief) with his own loincloth or banian, when he would put these on her, at that moment, she would forget her mother's slit throat, her father's bloody body, her husband's trembling corpse-she would

forget all this and instead thank the man who had saved her. And why she should not do this? Rescuing her from the beast this good man has brought her to his home. He is giving her respect, he offers to marry her. How can she not become his slave for life?

And it is only much later that realization dawns that among the looters this man alone could not have been the innocent, among the police just he could not have been the gentleman. But all were tarred with the same brush. Each one had played with life and death to 'save the honour' of some young women, and thousands of mothers and sisters must be cursing these supposedly 'brave men' who had abducted their daughters.

But by the time this realization came it was too late. Now there was nowhere for her to go: by this time she is about to become a mother, or she has been through several hands. After seeing so many men's faces, this daughter of Hindustan, how she will ever look at the face of her parents, her husband? (34)

The women's fears were real. Their non-acceptance by Hindu families became a major problem; suddenly the state, so quick to come forward with its recovery was at a loss to know what to do for the re-integration of these women into the new nation, which became, in the eyes of the state, synonymous almost with their families. Several things were here at work: families had filed complaints about missing relatives, particularly missing women, but between the filing of complaints and the actual recovery, months, sometimes even years, would pass. In the interim the women would often have married, become mothers, or simply settled in their new homes. Anis Kadwai says, "But now a

new different problem arose. The majority of girls did not want to go back” (36) While this was true for some of the women, where their families were concerned, they faced a different dilemma. Some of the women were now soiled, they had lived with, married, borne child to the men of the other community, and they had therefore diluted the purity of their community. So acute was the problem that Gandhi and Nehru had to issue repeated appeals to Hindus, asking them not to refuse to take the women back into the family fold.

For several years afterwards- indeed well into 1955, the fate of these women was of considerable concern to the two governments. Legislative assembly records for the year following 1947 show an ongoing concern and debate on how many women had been rescued, where the largest number of recoveries had taken place, why had other places done so badly and so on. Interestingly, although it was women who were key in the actual recovery operations, questions were raised mainly by men. There was close parallels in the notion of honor as defined by the community and family on the one hand and the state on the other. For the survivors among communities and families where women were martyred or chose to become martyrs they (the women) were taking upon themselves the task of preserving the honor of the community, perhaps the biggest blow to which would have been forcible conversion- a transgression or a blatant violation of the boundaries and spaces delineated for themselves by the two communities Hindus (Sikhs) and Muslims, and equally importantly, for the spaces delineated for the women by each of the communities. These family codes were paralleled by the codes of the state where the women themselves, did not, by and large necessarily take on the task of holding up the honor of the nation. But the state invested them with this, their rescue or

recovery was seen as a humanitarian task, an honorable enterprise and so on. Thus the patriarchal family and the patriarchal state came close in their perception of women's role.

While there was a similarity in how the state and the community saw women as carrying the honour of both, there were also differences in how both approached the question of women. For the community it was the woman's sexual purity that became important, as also her community and/ or religious identity. For the state, because the women the state was rescuing, were already in a state of sexual impurity having often lived with their captors, this problem had to be pushed aside, and their religious identity made paramount. Urvashi Butalia writes that the state did not enter into the task of recovering women on their own. Just as families filed reports of missing women, so they also recorded missing women. It was the extension of family's grievance that took the national level. Interestingly, many of the reports were filed by men, and later it was the men who often refused to take women back. It was perhaps the enormity of these numbers that acted as a pressure on the state to take up the task of the recovery.

Urvashi Butalia in "Community, State and Gender: On Women's Agency during Partition" expresses her bemusement on the fact that although both countries traded numbers to see who had succeeded in flushing out more women and restoring them to their families, there was no disagreement between them on the necessity of the task, though often their functionaries felt differently. Reportedly many bulky Sikhs would come outside camps and weep, asking that their women, who had become pure by tasting Amrit (Muslim women whom the state had rescued) be restored to them, the functionaries would respond that they were only doing their jobs, which they would lose

if they did not return the women to their rightful homes. One such incident is presented in *Cracking India*, though the characters involved may not share similar kind of love and longing for each other. After Ice-Candy Man abducts Ayah and after probably passing through many hands, Ayah ends up in Mandi Bazar. When she is rescued by Godmother and placed in a centre meant for recovered women, the rapist-turned-lover Ice-candy-man follows her there and is badly thrashed by the guards there. So much so that Lenny's mother screams at him and says, "Duffa ho! Show your blackened faces at someone's door! That Scoundrel! He can't deceive me again! If he dares show his face I'll call the police and have him hung upside down!" (284). Ice-candy man may have been exception here who was not loved back by Ayah but at the time there have been many cases where the girls who were rescued and married by their husbands were very much in love with them and very happy in their marital life. Sadly, the states issued diktat which was followed blindly without giving any thought to these women, or any voice to them.

Cracking India is peopled by female characters who represent the conditions of their ages, in pre, during and post Partition. The women before partition were subjected to domestic and sexual violence, as evidenced by the cases of Pappo being married at an early age to a man who is old enough to be her father, and Mrs Sethi who is although respected in society, suffers at the hands of her husband; during Partition, extreme violence was unleashed on them as shown by the case of Ayah who was a working woman, loved and admired by people around her, but Partition left her a broken, raped dancing girl in diamond market; and after partition State forcefully sent these women to their natal countries in the name of resettling them as evidenced by Hamida who lives in

the Camp meant for these resettled women. These women who were victim of recovery and resettlement by states were merely bare life, an idea existent in ancient Rome, further explained by Agamben in *Homo Sacer*. Bare life, not only the referent but also the effect of sovereign violence, is damaged life, stripped of its political significance, of its specific form of life. Stripped of political significance and exposed to murderous violence, bare life is both the counterpart to and the target of sovereign violence. To quote Eva Plonwska Ziarek in “Bare life on Strike: Note on the Biopolitics of Race and Gender” “Bare life is captured by the political in a double way: first, in the form of exclusion-and second, in the form of the unlimited exposure to violation, which does not count as a crime” (7). Homo sacer is the notion of the banned man, who can be killed with impunity by all but, is unworthy of either juridical punishment or religious sacrifice. Homo sacer is the target of sovereign violence exceeding the force of law and yet anticipated and authorized by that law.

Banished from collectivity, homo sacer is the referent of the sovereign decision on the state of exception, which both confirms and suspends the normal operation of the law. The state determines when law is applicable and what it applies to, and in doing so, is must also create the conditions necessary for law to operate since the law presupposes normal order for its operation. If one looks at the clauses of The Abducted Persons (Recovery and Restoration) Bill it is apparent that the two Sovereign States suspended all the normal laws and applied the law of exception on women, reducing them to bare life. Clause 4 stating powers of police officers to recover abducted persons mentions that If any Police Officer not below the rank of an Assistant Sub-Inspector or any other police officer specially authorized by the Provincial Government in this behalf, has

reason to believe that an abducted person resides is to be found in any place, he may, after recording the reasons for his belief, without warrant, enter and search the place and take into custody any person found therein who, in his opinion, is an abducted person, and deliver or cause such person to be delivered to the custody of the officer in charge of the nearest camp with the least possible delay. It is quite clear from the provision in the clause that police officers were in full charge, could work without impunity, could forcefully enter anyone's property without warrant and could take away any woman, they think were abducted. Clause 9 of the bill makes the matter worse where there is provision that no suit, prosecution could be charged against an officer or authority who has worked in good faith intending to work in pursuance in this Act. State could forcefully take any woman away from her family, her husband, even her children and send her to her natal state even if she does not have a single soul there.

This horrible predicament women were pushed into reminds of Agamben's bare life. These women's lives could be played with impunity, the decisions of where they would live was made exclusively by the states, which raises the complex issue of citizenship, as these women were in the grey zone where they were citizens of both states at different times, one by birth, and another by marriage. One might question if bare life itself can be mobilized to oppositional movements against sovereign power and in reply, Agamben answers the question in *Homo Sacer* "The 'body' is always already a biopolitical body and bare life and nothing in it...seems to allow us to find solid ground on which to oppose demands of sovereign power"(12).This reminds of women who once abducted, raped and sold, found some semblance of peace and solace in their new lives, but were forcefully taken back to their natal countries in the name of restoring

their and their nations' honor. Few of them were happy with the recovery; the majority of recovered women were rehabilitated in greater or smaller measures or restored to their families. However, what is disturbing is the fact that their opposing voices were often suppressed, their efforts to hold on to their existing lives were rendered futile and any attempts of resistance against the newly founded sovereign power were in vain.

Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, in "Recovery, Resistance: Indian State and Abduction of Women during Partition" presents an account of a social worker who was the superintendent at Gandhi Vanita Ashram Jalandhar, for several years and worked with recovered women which shows how helpless these women were and how every efforts of resistance were meted by even greater suppressive forces. She recalls once she was required to escort 21 recovered Muslim women to Pakistan, who did not want to return but the Tribunal had decided that they had to go. These women, who were married to Sikhs wanted to stay because they were happy with their husbands. The social worker herself confesses that she was not happy with the use of real force against these women, but she was told "These girls are simply creating a commotion for nothing, their case has been decided and they have to be sent back" (7). Here these women's lives had been decided by state and they had to leave behind their happy marital lives, not because they wanted to but they had to. These girls were desperate and were raising huge hue and cries. Some of them shouted at the social worker and kept saying "Why are you destroying our lives?" (7). When she reasoned that this is a government agreement and girls from both sides of border are being returned, they had shouted "Who are you to meddle in our lives? We don't know you? What business is it of yours?" (8) But the social worker recalls that as soon as they crossed the Indian

border and reached Pakistani soil, they grew silent. In Lahore, the camp for recovered Muslim women was in the Women's Penitentiary. When they reached there, the women got down and each one of them made a burqa of her chunni and emerged in parda. They were well aware that if they protested now, there would be more trouble for them from their supposedly own state.

In Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India*, post partition one such character makes appearance who is a recovered woman and works ironically in the place of Ayah, who herself has been victim of Partition violence. Her name is Hamida, and though she never directly alludes to her recovered state, Lenny has seen her in the Centre for recovered women and notices the nuances of her behavior. Lenny recounts while hiring her, when Mrs Sethi instructs her to take good care of Lenny, she says "'Don't I know how careful one has to be with young girls? Especially these days!'" Her tone of voice and choice of words- as of village woman uttering platitudes-is grotesque in the obviously straitened and abnormal circumstances of her life." (203). Hamida tries too hard to please, works rigorously, tries to learn the ways around the affluent house, and though as much she tries to cover the scar of her past wound, it occasionally surfaces. Lenny sees that "Sometimes her eyes fill and the tears roll down her cheeks. Once, when I smoothed her hair back, she suddenly started to weep, and noticing my consternation explained, "When the eye is wounded, even a scented breeze hurts." (205). The reader never knows the story behind her teary eyes and her abnormal behavior, but the fact that she is a recovered woman who is uncomfortable around men, loves kids dearly and often has tear-filled eyes, it is not difficult to gather that she must have been forcefully sent back to her natal country where she does not have a family to fall back on.

Once Lenny wheedles out information out of Hamida that she has two children and following conversation ensues:

“Don’t you miss your children?” I ask

Of course,” says Hamida.

“Then why don’t you go to see them?”

“Their father won’t like it.”

“They must miss you. You could see them secretly, couldn’t you?”

“No,” says Hamida, turning her face away. They are better off as they are.

My sister-in-law will look after them. If their father gets to know, he will only get angry, and the children will suffer.”

“I don’t like your husband,” I say.

“He’s a good man,” says Hamida, hiding her face bashfully in her chuddar. “It’s my kismet that’s no good...we are khut-putli, puppets, in the hands of fate.” (233-234)

Women like Hamida are, in reality, not puppets in the hands of fate, but puppets of states, where their lives are controlled by the strings pulled by their states. They have no voice, no volition, but mere receiver of state’s violence.

Women like Hamida are the examples of what Agamben calls bare life, the life of Homo sacer, the obscure and paradoxical ancient roman figure, whose life was excluded in the political order only by way of its exclusion; a life judged unworthy of being lived; a life that could be killed with impunity and whose death therefore had no sacrificial

value. Diane Enns in “Bare Life and the Occupied Body” writes about bare life that their lives are regulated, rendered vulnerable by the state power that penetrates all aspects of life (21). There is systematic destruction of all semblances of normal life and in cases of women like Hamida and her kind, there is destruction of their domestic and marital life where Partition violence uprooted them from their normal lives, and barely had the storm of Partition settled and women like her had come to terms with their new lives, sovereign power in the names of recovering their women, uprooted them again from their newly settled somehow normal lives.

States in the name of welfare promises and death threats put mere biological life at stake. This power over life and death becomes the hallmark of sovereignty. Kalliopi Nikolopoulou, in “Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare life by Giorgio Agamben: Daniel Heller-Roazen” puts forward that ultimate criterion of sovereign power consists in the decision over the protection or destruction of human body (126). Agamben too argues that the category of homo sacer, and by extension of sacredness, is legal through and through. For the two newly founded sovereign powers namely India and Pakistan there was nothing wrong in recovering their lost women, bringing their women back to their own folds, their turfs, their birth countries. However, none of the states even as much gave a single thought to what these women want. The women made strong resistance, often refused to conform to the demands of the state. Some women who resisted returning to their own countries resorted to hunger strikes, others refused to change out of clothes they had been wearing either when they were recovered or when they had been abducted. Kamla Bhasin and Ritu Menon, in *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India Partition* relate an incident which had happened to Mridul Sarabhai,

who was heading the Recovering Operation. One young recovered girl confronted Mridula Sarabhai thus:

You say abduction is immoral and so you are trying to save us. Well, now it is too late. One marries only once-willingly or by force. We are now married-what are you trying to save us? Ask us to get married again? Is that not immoral? What happened to our relatives when we were abducted? Where are they?...you may do your worst, if you insist, but remember, you can kill us, but we will not go. (97)

Recovered women fought with their tooth and nail to resist their dislocation, in state's eyes relocation, but their resistance was puny force against the sovereign powers, hell-bent on bringing back their lost daughters and sisters. In *Cracking India*, where Lenny's neighboring house was turned into makeshift Camp for recovered women, Lenny recalls "The mystery of the women in the courtyard deepens. At night we hear them wailing, their cries verging on the inhuman. Sometimes I can't tell where the cries are coming from" (224). They are rendered so helpless by their state that upon enquired by Lenny on why do these women wail and scream at night, Hamida replies "Poor-fate-smitten woman. What can a sorrowing woman do but wail?" (224). Lenny rightly stumbles into appropriate word for the encampment and asks Hamida why she was in jail, for what could have been the enclosure but a jail where they were brought against their will and forcefully placed in the name of restoring back to their countries. As Lenny had already seen Hamida in the camp, and being a curious child Lenny is, she enquires her about it and following conversation ensues:

“Why were you in jail?” I ask at last

“It isn’t a jail. Lenny baby...it’s a camp for fallen women.”

“What are fallen women?”

“Hai! My fate!” moans Hamida, suddenly slapping her forehead. She rocks her heels and makes a crazy keening noise sucking and expelling the air between her teeth. (226)

For these women, they are no longer merely women, but fallen women who are uprooted from the new lives they have made, after witnessing vortex of violence unleashed on them. Their new lives are taken away from them and all they have left is an enclosure where they have to live for rest of their lives. In one particular poignant moment when Ayah is recovered and brought to the camp to be registered, Lenny wants to meet her, and Hamida, attacking the long official procedure of registering says “let her be. It’ll take hours if she ‘s being registered. They’ll be asking her a hundred-and-one questions, and filling out a hundred-and-one forms.” (285)

The newly declared sovereign powers went to considerable troubles and expenses to care for recovered women who either had no families in their natal countries or were rejected by their husbands and parents. These women had no right to refuse repatriation. Women were still being returned across the new international border, fully after ten years of partition. In *Homo Sacer*, Agamben exposes how tenuous relation of human life to power has long been disguised in the language of social contracts as the inevitable and beneficial relation of the individual to collective. In the case of these recovered women, these individuals were flushed out from their newly settled homes, where their

wishes were the last concern for the states in the name of recovering and restoring honor to the collective community and nation. They are banished from collective lives. Where they were living with their husbands and children in their new surroundings, they are brought to confinements leaving behind their homes and families. In *Cracking India*, Lenny is bewildered by this flux of women, suddenly invading her neighborhood while Hamida, who herself has gone through this process is all sympathetic towards them.

Lenny recalls thus:

I spend hours on the servants' quarters' roof looking down on the fallen women. The turnover, as they are rescued, sorted out and restored to their families, is so rapid that I can barely keep track of the new faces that appear and so soon disappear. The camp is getting crowded. If this is where they bring kidnapped women, this is where I'll find my Ayah.

Hamida knows where to find me when Mother asks for me- or when someone is going to Godmother's on an errand and thinks of taking me alone.

Sometimes, furtively climbing the stairs, Hamida sits quietly with me and together we look at the dazed and dull faces. If they look up we smile, and Hamida makes little reassuring gestures; but the women only look bewildered and rarely smile back (233)

The women who had barely started living their new lives and coming to their terms with the havoc that had just upturned their lives, were again driven back to the similar kind of displacement. Only this time, it was not people from another community; it was their own natal states.

The state did not just decide where the women belonged, and whom they should live, it even went to the extent of aborting unborn children the women had conceived in their non-natal county. Women were being exchanged for women, between Pakistan and India. They were treated as chattel, where their wishes did not matter at all, their resistance meted by even stronger resistance from state and their forceful recovery never viewed as crime. As Ritu Menon and Bhasin in “Borders and Boundaries: Women in India’s Partition” rightly observes that state constituted itself as mai-baap (mother-father) as protector-provider. States provided them food and shelter, offered them protection. But it also denied women’s civil rights (by subsuming them under “community” rights) and citizenship rights (through forcible relocation across borders) (159). The acts of states of forcibly relocating women against wishes, forcing them to leave behind their husbands and children, sometimes forced abortions, indicate that states were affirming that women belonged to community and countries, not to themselves, reducing them to bare life, which could be exposed to any forms of sovereign violence with impunity.

Chapter Five

Gendered Partition Violence in Manto and Sidhwa's *Cracking India*

Partition violence has often been seen as a trope for reconstructing Hindu-Muslim conflict and is rarely viewed as exposure of patriarchal violence unleashed on women on unprecedented scale. The dissertation has focused on Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India* and Sadaat Hasan Manto's short stories set during and after India-Pakistan Partition of 1947. Both writers, Sidhwa and Manto depict the murders, rapes, man's inhumanity to man. Sidhwa's female protagonist, the svelte Hindu Ayah who is swamped by suitors from different communities in easier times witnesses the worst face of violence during the partition when one of her fiercely loyal suitor rapes her and sells her off. Manto, with his almost callous and even cruel depiction captures the dehumanized state of survivors of violence in the inferno of Partition.

This dissertation has drawn on Giorgio Agamben's concepts of bare life and presented how physically assaulted and mentally scarred females, often in the complicity of their states, are reduced to bare life. This bare life is key figure in inclusive exclusion, understood as zone of indistinction or hinge through which political and natural life articulate. Bare life is neither bios nor zoe, but rather the politicized form of natural life. The capture of bare life within the exception is general condition of existence, such that the rule and the exception, inclusion and exclusion, and right and violence are no longer clearly distinguishable. Agamben's claim that under a regime of biopolitics all subjects are at least potentially abandoned by law and exposed to violence as a constitutive condition of political existence is exemplified by characters like Hamida and other restored women in Sidhwa's *Cracking India*, who have been forcefully rehabilitated in the women's centre near Lenny's home and where she hears them wailing every night, probably remembering their new homes, families and children, they had to forcefully abandon under the duress of the Inter Dominion Treaty.

In the midst of the partition, when violence was at its worst women were premised on the masculinist alignment scales where their female bodies were equated with notion of home, their respective religious communities, nations and national territories. Stripping, raping and humiliating women's bodies were equated to stripping, insulting and demeaning the communities they are part of. At such times, these women considered suicide a better option than giving into men of other communities, as women too had internalized patriarchal notion of honor. Sidhwa presents one such incident where Muslim women burn themselves alive than to be taken by Sikh. The dust of Partition violence had barely settled and women had barely come to terms with their new lives, the

continuation of violence on women recurred, but this time it was not blood-thirsty, religion-fanatic men from communities, but the newly formed states set out to recover the women they had lost to their rival country. The words like rehabilitating, recovering, homeland were ruse to cover the fact that women were being returned to their own folds because states deem these women as their properties and they could not stand the fact that their properties are in possession of someone else.

The dissertation has presented how these bare life tries to resist but as Agamben's concept goes, the sovereign is simultaneously inside and outside the juridical order and sovereign is he who decides on the exception, these bare life have been so entrapped in exception declared by sovereign, despite their resistance, they are forced to move from their new homes to their natal homes. These women are rarely accepted by their families as they have been soiled when they married men from other communities and begotten their children. Women like Hamida, and others who are staying in Shelter home in Sidhwa's *Cracking India* have nowhere to turn to as their families will not accept them, nor do the states let them live with their new families. These women's lives could be played with impunity, the decisions of where they would live was made exclusively by the states, as the Inter Dominion Treaty had clearly stated that state could forcefully take any woman away from her family, her husband, even her children, and send her to her natal state even she does not have a single soul there.

This dissertation has also presented how state's apathy and total disregard of women's condition where they could be treated any way the men desired, have reduced these women to the state of *Muselmann*, a figure in Agamben's work, who had reached such state of physical decrepitude and existential disregard that one hesitates to call them

living one hesitates to call them death. The *Muselmann* indicates fundamental lack of distinction between human and the inhuman, in which it is impossible definitively to separate one from the other. Manto's impoverished, dispossessed, and disenfranchised member of society, who have faced worst form of partition violence are often found in the state of *Muselmann*, where it becomes increasingly difficult to tell whether they are dead or alive. Manto with his sparse style, most stripped down language possible, with actions depicted in as little as single sentence, comes to grips of these unexplainable sufferings of these characters which forced them to the state of *Muselmann*. Through the critical analysis of Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India* and Saadat Hassan Manto's short stories, the dissertation has exposed the patriarchal mindset of men and states which are at play all the time but comes to the fore more prominently during turbulent times, and whose insensitivity and callousness reduce women to bare life and in some cases, even *Muselmann* where they could not be told apart from humans.

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