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# Violence on Women: Sikh Perception of 1947 Partition in *What the Body Remembers*

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This thesis entitled Violence on Women: Sikh Perception of 1947 Partition in *What the Body Remembers* submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Mr. Prahlad Sharma has been approved by the undersigned members of the research committee.

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**Abstract**

Shauna Singh Baldwin's debut novel, *What the Body Remembers* is a recently published novel (1999). The novel is set in Punjab between 1937 to 1947, the final decade of the colonial era in India. The text presents the patriarchal institution of Pre-Independence India society, which required women to be object in marriage and sexuality with little opportunity for individuality. They are supposed to be good daughters, wives and mothers moving only from the protection of their father's roof to the protection of their husband. Women were confined within the narrow boundaries of domesticity. They were expected to be chaste and obedient to their husband and motherly and protective to their children.

However, as the official partition of India in 1947 was negotiated by 'nationalist' leaders on all sides, large segments of the population underwent violent dislocations across what was to become the Indo-Pakistan border. There journey of Hindu to India and Muslim to Pakistan left in their wake a series of horrific mutilation suffered by people in cities, small towns and village, in their homes and on their bodies. Women's bodies often because the markers on which the painful scripts of contending nationalism (Hindu, Muslim or Sikh) were inscribed. In response to the mass rapes and abduction as both sides of the border and in order to legislate a 'fair' exchange of abducted women across borders, the government of India and Pakistan signed the Inter-Dominion in 1947.

My research is divided into four chapters. The first chapter deals with the methodology" Reflection on the Genocide and uprooted Sikh women during partition violence" with special reference to Urvashi Butalia's *The Other Side of Silence*, Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin's *Border and Boundaries*. The second chapter is about the Feminist Perception of Partition violence. Third and final chapter is the conclusion of the thesis.7

## Contents

**Reflection on Genocide and Uprooted Sikh Women during the Partition of 1947**

Colonialism in India ended amidst an explosion of internecine violence and blood-letting in 1947. In the interval of a few months -- after Britain decided that its 'divide-and-rule' policy in India should become one of the 'divide and quit' policies-- and the colony of three centuries was transformed literally overnight into mainly Hindu and predominantly Muslim Pakistan in which 1 million people died, 75,000 women were raped and abducted, and 12 million people migrated to the new "other" side (Silence 12). It was the largest mass migration in history, the messiest national divorce and also one of the quickest taking place in just a few months.

In the history of the displaced person, India's Partition of 1947 still remains as one of the greatest social upheavals. The Mountbatten plan, by which the subcontinent was to be divided into Pakistan and India, was announced on June 3, 1947. West Pakistan was to consist of Sind, Baluchistan, the North West Frontier Province, and sixteen districts of Punjab. The remaining thirteen districts of Punjab were to be in India. Though the exact boundary line was not yet determined, migration started taking place even before August 15, 1947. Historians have mainly focused on the causes of the partition and have endlessly debated whether it was inevitable and who was responsible for it-- the British, the Indian National Congress, or the Muslim League. The loss of lives and property and the widespread violence that accompanied the partition were well documented, less well known is the large-scale abduction of women from all three communities: Hindu, Sikh and Muslim. No official estimates exist of the exact number of such abductions.

The history of the partition is based largely on official documents as a history of government to government debate, concentrating on the differences between the

Congress and the League and on the British policy of divide and rule. The history has ignored the dislocation of human lives and the loss, trauma, pain and violence people suffered.

The creation of Pakistan, and the ensuing turmoil as the both countries struggled to cope with the aftermaths of the division of 1947. As an event of shattering the consequences, the partition retains its pre-eminence even today after the wave of communal violence. It marks a watershed as much in people's consciousness as in the lives of those who were uprooted and had to find themselves, elsewhere. Chronologies are still qualified with 'before partition' or 'after partition' : personal histories are punctuated with references to it so much that it sometimes seems as if two quite different, rather than concurrent event took place during the independence, and that partition and its effects are what have lingered in collective memory. Each new eruption of hostility or expression of difference swiftly recalls that bitter and divisive social relations between Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs and each episode of brutality were measured against what was experienced then. In this regard, Butalia says:

> In any upheaval when passion are aroused or violence reigns suggested whether it is caste violence or inter-state wars, women became the worst violence of rival groups. This is not to suggest that women did not face such violence during peacetime. They do, but it goes without saying that upheavals and convulsions make things work for them. (Partition & Women 179)

Partition of the Indian Subcontinent in 1947 was such a deadly shaking events, which had far-reaching consequences in the two countries-- India and Pakistan. The partition

brought in its wake change of great magnitude in the social, economic and political life of the people of the affected areas.

Menon and Bhasin's *Boarder and Boundaries: Women in India's Partition* and Butalia's *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India*, focus on the intimate relationship of war, gender, and violence. Each volume engages the absence of women from the stories of the 1947 partition specially the experience in Punjab, and shows how feminist analysis disrupts both normative understanding of nationalism as ideology and interpretations of State-building as a simple set of bureaucratic practice. Both of these texts are at the forefront of efforts to show how women and women's bodies, as signifiers of community, lead to the erasure of women as individuals. Each shows how women's bodies provide a template for kin and collective honor and for disgrace as well. Violations are justified by inscribing them in a memorialization of a past nation past and the construction of a religio-nationalist future that holds women as central to tradition, spirituality, and the meaning of community. Elitist history of the partition either erase women as subjects in their concentration on high politics or assumes women to be among the masses of victims whose experience can be homogenized as an effect of the costs of war. In challenging this view, these extraordinary contributions transform the debate about war and nationalist struggles by showing how women as well as their erasure are constitutives of historical discourse.

These books highlight the silences of oral testimonies in exploring the everyday worlds of those who lived through the partition of Punjab, and are attentive to the difficulty of asking about, as having people remembered, the personal and collective violence of the period. In this attention to listening and then revealing the

silence attendent to the partition, the authors make transparent the fetishization of war as the work of men who protect the soil as well as national, communal, and familial honor. By inviting women to "speak for themselves," each book challenges the objectivity and adequacy of elitist histories and draw important connections to other communal contexts (180). In a crucially important and strongly argued introduction, Menon and Bhasin describe this methodological approach for providing the women a space to speak for themselves. They acknowledge, the contribution of historical documents, fictions, memoranda, reports, officials statement, and government documents.

*Boarder and Boundaries* and *The Other Side of Silence* situate the partition in the context of religious and nationalists struggle, the organized ethnic difference spatially, through the creation of the separate States of India and a divided Pakistan. Menon and Bhasin's contribution is organized into six thematic chapters : Violence, abduction and recovery, widowhood, women's rehabilitation, and an integrated concluding section which explore the process of rebuilding and belonging. In each chapter the authors show how women's bodies are considered by men of rival communities as a territory to be conquered and by kin as the mark of family honor. The authors even question the women's own transgression of the body by choosing suicide rather than the dishonor of forced rape and mutilation. The authors are attentive to how the women may indeed come to view death as preferable to humiliation. They recall painful memories of men killing kin to protect their own honor.

The usefulness of the both books lie not simply in their retrieval of the historical experience of subaltern people who have been marginalized by mainstream

history. They also bring into the public archive memories, which have been actively suppressed by the community itself, the so-called honor killing of the women, children and old people in the name of protecting them from rape or coerced conversion. The double dislocation of many women who were forcibly recovered from their inter-religious marriages to their one-time abductor and restored against their wishes to their own communities for rehabilitation. The large numbers of women were raped by men of their own communities at a time when popular rhetoric drew upon monolithic of 'us' versus 'them'.

Each book is based on extended interviews with the survivors of the violence and gains an integration of oral history interview to other historical documents which helps flesh out the social context of the voices retrieved. The author's major concern, thus, is to unearth repressed voices.

In nutshell, both the books deal with the partition of Punjab and while they include some narratives from across the border, the focus in each is predominantly on the Indian side of the story. Both books are significant because they re-inscribe women into a history that has dealt the partition violence as mainly a Hindu-Muslim conflict.

***Border and Boundaries***

Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin's *Border and Boundaries* explores the women's experience of the partition of the Indian sub-continent through the feminist historiography, and ethnographic and historical research. This approach provides a compelling reading that unpacks the complexities of a gendered experience of the partition. The partition of the India sub-continent into India, East Pakistan and West Pakistan took place at the removal of British imperialism in 1947. Over 8 million

people were dislocated in this process and one million died. Menon and Bhasin attempt to exposes a significant gap in research on this topic by focusing on the testimonies from the partition survivors, and from the first hand accounts of the women's rehabilitation. Their research agenda include direct conversation to women in order to shape a gendered social history that focuses on "non-actors in the political realm" (16). The authors offer a rich and sometimes surprising analysis of the partition's varying effects on the women's lives and sexuality.

Menon and Bhasin began their project with conversation with women in their own families and moved, in snowball fashion, from one recommended person to the another throughout Punjab often visiting the same women on multiple occasions and becoming friends with many of them. For the women, "remembering was important but the important was remembering to others" (18), because it seemed to validate their otherwise socially neglected experiences.

The text studies violence against the women, including forcible suicide and rape, the experience of dislocation and relocation through forcible marriage and what becomes, in numerous cases, forcible recovery, the experience of widows in contrast to the abducted women, and the vigilance of women social workers. Beginning with a study of the violence against women, the text illustrates the role men often played in convincing mothers, daughters, and sisters to commit suicide in fear of spoiling the family honor through abduction and rape by the rival men. In a manner that recalls Spivak's observation in "Can the Subaltern Speak?," Menon and Bhasin conclude that years after the partition, men were unable to "reflect on their own implication in the women's death: What else would they do?" they asked, or simply, "they wanted to die" (57). Thereby, men exonerate themselves from the responsibilities in the

women's deaths at the same time the women's voices were effectively silenced. This position reflects a "continuum of violence" that included death enforced by the family or rape by the men of the other community (57). In contrast, women often experienced a form of "willed amnesia" surrounding the violence and the roles their own family played in that violence (60). Although, resistance was present, Menon and Bhasin conclude that it must be measured against the weight of the "shame-fear-dishonor syndrome," which makes any choice if choices is presented complicatedly ( 59).

Menon and Bhasin's introduction consists records with their own meticulous debates about the ethics of research and writing. They are concerned with the exploitation on women and with their silence, the place where "memory refuses to enter speech" (18). They are not sure about whether to reproduce the personal narratives intact with commentry. But, "we [feel] that without context or commentry, such a presentation [may] leave their testimonies as defenseless as the women themselves, open to skepticism, dismissal, disbelief, to charges of exaggeration and nostalgia,[and] not to be trusted"(17). Finally, they decide "to use a combination of commentry and [analytical] narratives and testimony to enable...the women's voices to be heard," sometime challenging and sometime agreeing and probing historical 'facts', insinuating themselves into the text and, thereby compelling a different reading of it" (17).

The personal narratives expose "permissible" masculinist sexual violence against the women during the exchange of population. For the authors, the violence was premised on the masculinist alignment of scales: female bodies were equated with the notion of home, their respective religious "communities," nations, and

national territories. The geopoliticized women were dualistically positioned as either "ours" or "their'" and accordingly encoded as sites for the masculinist protection or desecration.

During riots, "Othered" women were subjected to "stripping; parading naked; mutilating and disfiguring; tattooing or branding the breasts and genitalia with triumphant slogans; amputating breasts; knifing open the womb; raping"(42). Menon and Bhasin note that each act treats "women's bodies as territory to be conquered, claimed or marked by the assailant"(42). Further, "some acts are simultaneous or continuous (they may begin with stripping and culminate in raping, branding, or tattooing)" (43). Women were violated not only in public places but also in sacred spaces like temples or gurudwara and also in their own home.

Commenting on the animalistic act towards the women during partition, Paola Bacchetta writes:

> The symbolic meaning of these brutalities rely upon the gendering and sexualizing of intermale relations of domination and subordination. In this logic, stripping and parading women naked ultimately signals the feminization of the women's male counterparts who prove incapable of protecting 'their' women/ "community"/ nation. Killing fetuses, knifing and opening the unpregnant womb, constitute offenses against the father/husband, but these acts also signify genocide. Breast amputation at once desexualizes a woman and negates her as a wife and mother. (44)

Here, recording her as improperly feminine inadvertently presents her male counterparts as improperly masculine. Rape symbolically marks the women as polluted and appropriated as other.

Many women were subjected to intrafamilial violence; "forced to die at the hands of men in their own families" because death was deemed preferable to dishonor(45). The honor in question is male honor, which according to specific historical and contextual construction of masculinity, required male control over the sexuality of female kin. Men deemed to murder their own kins women as a heroic alternative to interreligious marriage and conversion. In the narrative by Charanjit Singh Bhatia, a Sikh. A Muslim neighbour had offered to have his sons marry Bhatia's uncle's six daughter to ensure their safety. The uncle "seemed to agree" (46). But that night he gathered all thirteen members of his family together and decapitated them and at the end killed himself too. Clarifying the incident Bacchetta writes:

> Here, the father/husband retain his own honor (and by extension that of his religions "community" and nation) by refusing to renounce control over his daughter's sexuality by handling them over to the Other. He also resists his own feminization, through dependency on his daughter's marital situation for his own protection (thereby positioning him as-a woman in relation to the Muslim male). (572)

In yet another testimony, Narinder Singh explains that her friend, a physician named Virsa Singh "claimed he had shot 50 women personally. First he shot his own wife because Muslim came to get her. Once he had done this, all the women in the neighbourhood gathered around, saying '*Viran, petile manoo maar, pehle mannu maar'* (Brother, Kill me first)" (49). Afterwards, Virsa Singh felt "no burden at all";

he felt he was the women's 'savior'. He later remarried and wrote a book about the killing (50).

Menon and Bhasin directly address women's alleged suicides, an issue at the center of highly contentions debates about women's agency, which arose earlier, especially around the practice of *Sati*. During the enemy attacks, women collectively took poison, jumped into fires or drowned themselves in wells. Men (some women) framed these acts as "a willing sacrifice" (52). But, for Menon and Bhasin, "to submit is not necessarily to agree" (52). There is no free "will" where masculinist "notion of honor and shame" have been so deeply internalized in the context of gendered relations of power (46). Menon and Bhasin's position is clear; the death are forced: "The circumstances in which many women took their lives can hardly be said to have offered them much choice in the matter" (47). Male family members provided them with poison and swords, built fires for them pointing to jump into the wells. 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 women violence during the partition war is ultimately a part of a "continuum of violence" where women are subjected to the non turbulent times. In both the situations, women are called upon to sacrifice for male honor and their sexuality is controlled.

Women enacted multiple modes of resistance to death, male family members' version of women's deaths. For example, while Iqbal, a refugee man, tells Menon and Bhasin about women who took poison and jumped off a bridge to drown insisting repeatedly that it was voluntary. His wife interjects: "They must have encouraged them, after all, what could the ladies do in this

situation? They must have persuaded them, what could the women do?" (51). Later, Menon and Bhasin interviewed three women survivors of the same incident: they had "stood firm and refused to kill themselves and their children, despite the fact that packets of poison were ready of them" (54).

During the deterritorialization and reterritorialization of religio-politically marked bodies, the Indian and Pakistani States, in a mutual patriarchal pact, set up cooperative recovery operations for women abducted on both sides of the border. 'Recovered' women were to be sent to their natal families but many refused to go. Social worker, Krishna Thapar, charged with accompanying Muslim women from India to Pakistan, remembers the women who reprimanded her for "meddling" and "destroying their lives" (92). Inversely, some Hindu women, who had been abducted and married in Pakistan, wished to stay with their new Muslim families. They "refused to conform to the demands of their own families or their governments . . ., some 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).

One reason for Hindu women's resistance against being "returned" was the stigma of pollution (defined as sexually violated) and its consequences. Politicians, aware of this problem, debated publicly about it. Finally the Indian Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation circulated a pamphlet claiming: "just as a flashing stream purifies itself and is washed clean of all pollutants, so a menstruation women is purified after her periods" (100). The deployment of menstruation as a purifier in such a crisis is quite ironic in light of upper caste Hindu notions. In ordinary times, the menstruation blood is impure. Such a reconfiguration born out of the patriarchal State's desperation

to reappropriate 'its' women's bodies is possible through reliance on previously silenced elements within the Hinduism itself. This incident undoes the spectacular fashion of the fixity of meanings attached to gendered identities, while foregrounding the masculinist attachment to retaining the criteria of purity at all cost. Elsewhere, Hindu social worker Kammobhen Patel reveals that "Muslim women were accepted into their original families more easily for they were not thus stigmatized" (77) — a point that inadvertently counters colonial and Hindu nationalist construction of Muslim men as hyperoppressive to Muslim women.

Partition generated many different outcomes for women. Some would be permanently disturbed, while others would gain independence through their unexpected entry into the workforce and the "breakdown of traditional constraints on their mobility" (205). Many women survivors shave to educate their daughters for highly remunerative work and in fact there was a rise in girl-education immediately following partition. This latter subverts the dominant socio-economic codes according to which women are to depend on men's economic power, thereby reverberating into the next generation.

A particularly interesting focus in their investigation of the recovery of "missing" women, who were abducted or forcibly married and converted during the chaos surrounding partition. In legal discourse, women's bodies were used to establish national honour, neglecting their personal desires. Many of these women wished to remain with the families they had married into rather than be returned to the uncertain future of refuge camps and the whims of family. This chapter raises a series of questions: What happens to the children produced from these forcible marriages? Who do they belong to-mothers, fathers, nations? What does a nation do with women

who do not want to be returned? And when they are returned, how does the nation deal with women whose families no longer want them? To what degree do the women exercise control over their own bodies, and is that control possible? Recovery operations first presented as legal means of returning women often resulted in a "forcible recovery" (124). Menon and Bhasin conclude the control over one's own body was legislated out of the bargain for women. They explore how national honour became closely bound with the "bodies of women, and with the children of wrong unions'" (122). In contrasts Menon and Bhasin's research on widows marks an interesting distinction between the State's treatment of abducted women and of widows. They argued that abducted women were not seen as missing citizens, who must be returned, but as missing members of religious communities for whom. "choices had to be made" (161). Their status was determined by their relationship with men in religious cultural communities and they were unable to exercise any individual agency. Widows, however, were perceived as "victims of a national disaster," who needed help to achieve economic independence as rehabilitated citizens of the State (162). Thus, widows were granted individual agency and control over their own bodies.

Menon and Bhasin's text also adds to the rich discussions of citizenship in the post-colonial State: "Does women have a country" (251). It asks readers to consider the roles that women's bodies play in shaping national identity both at the moments of the partition and in aftermaths. Moreover, it asks readers to consider how each saved women from the violence calls to mind the partition and the gendered cultural memory of its violent dislocation.

***Voices from the Other Side of Silence***

It covers sixty years of the partition with what happened during the period that is distinct from the official historical records. So profound was the traumatic effect of the partition of India on survivors that the only way of them could go on living was to forget. And it took ten years for Urvashi Butalia to break through the silence and published her findings.

The complicated link between current events and the partition prompted Butalia's study. Urvashi Butalia grew up with familiar partition stories, which seemed removed from their own current, middle-class and urban lives. Then, in October 1984, following Prime Minister Indira Ghandhi's assassination by two of her guards who were Sikhs, became the site of anti-Sikh riots. The author was appalled at the "orgy of violence and revenge" in which 3,000 people were killed (4). Butalia recalls the, in the face of government "indifference" like other members of citizens' group, affected relief work among surviving victims. As she "listened to the stories of the people who had suffered . . . the stories of the partition no longer seemed so remote" (5), and she longed to learn more.

In 1947, British ruled India was split into predominantly Hindu India and predominantly Muslim Pakistan, in what Butalia calls, "one of the great human convulsions of history" (3). Within a few months of this division, one million people had did, 12 million had migrated and 75,000 women were abducted and raped by the men of different communities to their own family. Butalia approached the partition as a politico-economic division, whereas for many survivors it was "a division of hearts" (8).

Butalia, the confounder of India's first feminist press spent years gathering oral histories of "ordinary people women, children, schedule castes" (11), whose voices

were often obscured by politics. She particularly focuses on the "double dislocation" endured by the women, whose fate were often decided by the men of their religious communities.

Butalia as a feminist-historographer is interested in history particularly the history of those who have been marginalized by society- a history which "allowed to listen to the most unheard things, silence and to understand and recover hidden voices" (218). She gives importance to "human dimension of history" (6). Butalia rejects the official historiography, which records life history in straight forward representation of experience. She uses oral history as a methodology looking at women's narratives and testimonies and placing them alongside or against the official discourse of history. She questions, "How does 'history look when seen through the eyes of women? How does it evolve in narratives and testimonies when women talk to women?" (16).

*The Other Side of Silence* begins with the author's visit to her uncle in Lahore. During the partition, when all of Ranamama's siblings went to India, he stayed in Pakistan. His displaced family disapproved of him and there had been no contact for forty years. When Butalia crossed the border to meet him for the first time. Butalia describes the emotional tones of how he immediately treated her as a family member and how willingly he was to speak to her about certain intimate issues of his life. But she also notes his silences. After several visits, Butalia become a liaison between him and their family in India until finally her mother and aunt made their first trip back to Pakistan to meet him. Although Ranamama cherishes the opportunity to narrate his life to his niece and gives her permission to publish it, Butalia examines the ethics and politics capturing his uncles' "sense of betrayal" (29). Does he (Ranamama)

really understand the implication of the telling? If she were to tell his story, how should she begin? what should she leave in and leave out? This problematics, based in respect for the speaking subjects, guide each of the personal narratives produced in the book and Butalia evokes by evaluating them in all their complexity at various points through out her work.

The sense of dislocation, disruption of home, difficulties of feeling in place, divided kinship and forced kinship, and being caught in the gendered political economy of property rights are common to many women's experiences recounted throughout the book. They traverse, for example, the story of Zainab, a young Muslim woman and Buta Singh, her Sikh husband which has reverberations memorialized as it was in newspaper accounts. Buta Singh recounts that Zainab had been abducted during her family's relocation from India to Pakistan, who passed through many hands and was eventually sold to Buta Singh, an Indian Sikh. Singh married her and, and "in time, the two grew to love each other. They had a family, two young girls" (127). Apparently concerned that Zainab and her children would deprive them a fuller share of the Sing family's property. Her family requested that she should be returned to them but she expected to be returned to Singh. Meanwhile, Singh learned that her parents planned to marry her to her cousin to retain her property in the family's male line. Buta Singh decided to convert himself into Islam and live with her in Pakistan. By the time he arrived in Pakistan, Zainab's marriage had already taken place. When Zainab proclaimed that she would no longer have anything to do with Buta Singh, he threw himself on the rail road track and committed suicide. A note in his pocked requested that he be buried in Zainab's village. "This wish, however, was to remain unfulfilled" (103).

This story demonstrates some of the gendered complexities of the partition. Zainab was posited as a Muslim. In that incornation she was first appropriated by the collective male enemies, who used, bought, sold, and then married to Buta Singh. Then, Zainab is posited in familial and political-economic terms: her natal family needed her for financial reasons. They reappropriated her and married her to a cousin to retain her property. Buta Singh was at first posited in terms of socio-religious and economic power, but finally because of the love for Zainab, he resists the socio-religious-economic patriarchal order when he acts converted into Islam and voluntarily displaces himself. His rejection by her family constitutes a gendered reversal of received idea about wherein the daughter-in-law, not son-in-law, is understood as familial outsider. Finally, his self annihilation marks the dominant narratives that posit women as the subjects of the ultimate sacrifice for marital loyalty. In this multiple feminities and masculinities, Zainab was victimized; aligning first with the othered male and then with the natal familial patriarchal order; Buta Singh was powerful and then became loving and faithful, self-immolating and victimized; and Zainab's brother as powerful and brutal. The story demonstrates much about the control that natal male family members exercise over women.

Butalia, too, details and analyzes intrafamilial violence against women perpetrated for the preservation of honor. Men shot, stabbed, burned and beheaded their "women family members to ensure they would not be appropriated by Muslim males, while women took poison and collectively drowned themselves in wells" (113). Butalia is stuck by the fact that "nowhere in the different discourses on the partition do such incidents count as violent incidents" (113). "Instead, they are

constructed" as valorous acts, shorn of the violence, and indeed coercion that must have sent to many women to their deaths" (114).

Butalia finds irony in the declaration of Martyrdom to those women who committed mass suicide in many places of India by the State. The State deployed the trope of Martyrdom to enslave women and their sexuality. Death is the reality either by the hands of outsider or family numbers. It, indeed, is violent event ever experienced in India history. Instead of looking such a event through the lens of violence, the State ironically bestowed the act with 'martyrdom.'

In such a fearful situation, apparently the greatest danger that families and indeed entire communities perceived was of conversation to the 'other' religion. Mass and forcible conversion took place on both sides of the border. As Butalia mentions:

> In Sikh community, men were almost sure of their protection but they were of the knowledge that their women be unable to do so. Their logic was that men could fight, die if necessary, escape by using their wits and their strength, but the women were deprived of such tactics. They were therefore particularly vulnerable to conversation. More women could be raped, impregnated with the seed of the other religion, and in this way not only would they be rendered impure individually but through them entire community would be polluted and the purity of the race be diluted. While the men could save themselves, it was imperative that the women be 'saved' by them. (155)

From the above quote, we come across to the free play of irony: men of each hostile camp felt threatened of their own existence yet implicitly remained imperative for the protection of their females. Instead of leaving it up women the men acted out

imposing on them either to live, die, converse or leave it upto them. But the men sometimes candidly or sometimes hiddenly coerced women to accept the patriarchal authority. The patriarchal nexus propagated high sounding word like 'martyrdom', thereby impositions women to accept the decision promptly.

Butalia speaks at first with Mangal Sing who lived in Amritsar Bazar. He was considered something of a legend. People urged Butalia to speak to him because they said that they had killed seventeen members of their family in order to save them from the conversion. At fist, he was reluctant to speak at all, however, broke his silence after sometime. Mangal Singh spoke of the women and children with both pride and grief in his voice. He refused to acknowledge that they had been killed. Instead, he used the word 'martyred'

> after leaving them, we had to cross the surrounding boundary of water. And we were many family members, several women and children who would not have been able to cross the water, to survive the flight. So we killed--they became martyrs–seventeen of our family members, seventeen lives . . . our hearts were heavy with grief for them, grief and sorrow, their grief, our own grief. (154)

Giving the name of sacrifice, Mangal Singh spoke with the tone of pride and manliness of the Sikh that exemplified the heroism of the Sikh women who gave their lives 'willingly' for the sake of their religion. The sacrifice of the many women who died such deaths during the partition in compared to the extreme sacrifice of Rajput women. Talking of the martyrdom of the women is almost always accompanied by the talk of those women whose likes were saved at the cost of those which were lost and although there may not be any direct condemnation, it is clear that those who got

away are in some ways seen as being inferior to those who offered themselves upto death to save their religion. Quite clearly, such events like Mangal Singh, are shown of violence and indeed coercion that must have sent so many young women to their death. These sorts of events, in the veil of pride and honour, *The Stateoman*, a daily English paper considered the mouth piece of the State, valorized the mass annihilation by the women as something heroic deed, an implicit coercion for the women to die rather than defy the every assault. To which Butalia writes, "the tone adopted by *The Statesman* report was similar to that adopted by the families when they spoke of the hundreds of women they had martyred in order to save the purity of the religion" (96).

Hence, the State acted out the role of men, upheld the basic norms and terms of patriarchy and considered them subservient to male. The tone adopted by *The Statesman* was the tone of men whom Butalia came across while interviewing them.

Even today, survivors from Thoa Khalsa seemed to have a higher standing among the Rawalpindi community, than the others. As they had done of Mangal Singh — "in tones of awe and respect" (156). And still today 13$^{th}$ March is observed as Martyr's Day by the Sikh community in the remembrance of the hundreds of women who were 'martyred' in order to 'save' the purity of the religion.

More to the mass killing, looting and arson, intra-familial violence were the less-discussed matter which Butalia relentlessly attempted to unveil in her writing. The kind of familial violence instigated during the bloody partition-perpetrated, by and large, by men of particular communities on their own women in the name of the so called purity and religion. In this light, Butalia writes, "In most instances. . . the burden death, indeed the burden of martyrdom, and that of bearing the so called honour of the community, was put on women by the men of their community". (98).

However, the women, who did not like to kill themselves, were humiliated by the State. Those who were fearful and remained indifference to become martyrs were seen as lacking in courage and responsibility. The above instances shows that martyrdom was the burden for women at the time.

In the another testimony by the son of Bir Bahadur Singh gives the detail account of incident of community violence in Thoa Khalsa.

> In Gulab Singh's haveli twenty six girls had been put aside. First of all my father, Sant Raja Singh, when he brought his daughter, he brought, he did ardaas, caying sachche bodshah, we have not asllowed your Sikhi to get stained, and in order to save it we are going to sacrifice our daughters, make them martyrs. Please forgive us. . . It was such a frightening, such a fearful scene. . . twenty five girls were killed, they were cut with Kirpan. (163)

Later, Bir Bahadur Singh also witnessed the incident in which women jumped into a well to kill themselves, rather than let their 'honour' be put to test.

In the another testimony by Kulwant Singh,who was the survivor from the Thamali, remembers how their sisters, daughters and others were martyred in order to save their honour, their relatives, martyred them by burning them alive. Stories of this kind of mass suicide or of women being killed by their own families, are legion. Commenting on the incident, Butalia writes:

> Through such a supreme sacrifice the women merely lost their lives – or exchanged them for an eternal life of martyrdom – while the community managed to retain its honour. Implied in these accounts was the assumption that the honour of the community by in not

> allowing its women to be violated. In normal times, men can be the guardians of such honour through their responsibility of guarding the women's sexuality. But at abnormal times men need to fight to retaliate in attack and the best way of guarding their honour is to not allow the women to be violated. (166)

For Butalia the issue of the women's "suicides, their coersion, or intentionality must remain unresolved, for their voices are unrecoverable" (138). She explains that, for her, a more important issue than intentionality is the denial of the women's agency effected through the inscription of their acts within the patriarchal logic of familial, "community," and national honor, where they are used "to instigate further violence" (143). Butalia also explains cross religion sexual violation during partition, pointing out that they were often classed: "the majority of women who were raped were poor women, because the wealthy had means to travel by air, car, under escort, seldom by foot" (178).

In its attempt to naturalize and authenticize the recovery of "its" women, the Indian state deployed selected symbolic elments, control among which was one particular version of the epic Ramayan. Therein the main character, Rama, goes through trial and tribulation to recover Sita, his wife abducted by the demonic Ravan. Legislators in Parliament claimed: "*As descendants of Ram, we must bring back every Sita that is alive"* (178). The effectiveness of references rely upon an equation between the enemy Ravana and oreintalist and colonial administrative construction of Muslim men as aggressive, and the notion that Hindu Male honor Ram is became by Hindu male has control over Hindu women (Sita). Although the Indian state defined itself as secular in opposition to an Islamic Pakistan, the quoted Indian legislators

presume a homogenous audience of Hindu male citizens. Butalia also observes male Sikh deployments of symbolic referents to glorify Sikh and Hindu women who committed suicide or "allowed" male kin to annihilate them.

**Violence on Women: A Subalternist–Ironic Critique**

The feminist intervention into partition historigraphy by both Butalia and Menon remains within the post-colonian framework as their intervention is predicated in privileging of the subaltern viewpoint-- a perspective that increasingly tends to understand the patriarchy - perpetrated violence on women. In this sense, their criticism takes on an ironic edge with which they understand the patriarchy.

Beerendra Pandey's comparative study between "Family ties" and "A Leaf in the Storm" by Shauna Singh Baldwin and Lalithambika Antharajanam respectively, draws on Menon and Butalia to posit a theory of subaltern irony. He makes the point that Shauna Singh Baldwin, "reflects a truly subaltern kind of feminist writing that picks holes in the bourgeoisie nationalist patriarchy as it narrates the gendered partition violence" (111).Baldwin's main purpose in using political irony is to enable the marginalized, to quote the words of Linda Hutcheon, "be heard by the center, and yet keep [...] critical distance and thus unbalance and undermine" the patriarchal discourse (Qtd. in Pandey 108).

Both the stories have the female protagonist who attempt to subvert the boundary set for them. The focus is on dismantling the patriarchal norms and values that always impedes them in the pace of their overall betterment and in shaping their concrete identity. Hence, the idea of subverting the pre-established culture of the masculinity society – a deconstruction, which advocates the need of reshaping the role, space and responsibility of male and female. The tone of the writers is

subversive and ironic. The questioning mode of the narrator in 'Family Ties' is more political and vociferous than the passive resistance textualized by Lalithambika in 'A Leaf in the Storm'. For Pandey, "Baldwin unlike Antharajanam, makes no attempt to neutralize the subaltern subjectivity: here is a woman speaking about woman with no transaction between speaker and listener" (108). The story 'Family ties' also shows "that patriarchy is at its strongest when women themselves participate in it, colluding in notions of honour that privilege male control over sexuality, and over their lives and desires" (109).

Normally, the child is not given any agency, but Shauna Singh Baldwin, place

> At the center the silence subaltern subjectivity of a ten/eleven year female child in a manner that helps her avoid marginalizing women--a limitation obtaining in 'A Leaf in the Storm' because of the narrative closer obtained through the tropes of continuity and motherhood. (106)

The child-narrative is capable enough of turning the tables on the patriarchy in the game of manipulation. She bluitly blows away the male dominant norms and values. Whereas, Antharajanam's story "continuous to marginalize women" (111).

The writers of the position era like Amrita Pritam, Lalithambika Antharajanam and others, condemn about the violence done on women and speak against such "irrationality" and yet their victims chooses to live with their abductors because of the demand of motherhood "a demand that remains within the realm of patriarchy" (106). But the granddaughter of partition, like Shauna Singh Baldwin does not fall into the ditch of 'motherhood'; which is male constructed, instead, interrogates the patriarchal native. Hence, "marks [ing] a paradigm shift in the representation of the gendered violence in partition. . .' (106).

Menon and Bhasin's and Butalia's book can be understood as a new outflow genre, which Paola Bacchetta tentatively call" critical-intersubjective feminist-historiography" (570). The books are written in deeply personal styles that refuse to negate the emotional nature of the narrations. They reside at the intersection of previously unheard, variously positioned subjectivities, and feminist insights from a range of disciplines, and ultimately constitute, although inadvertently partition historiography in existence.

**Subalternist-cum-Feminist-but-Ethnic perception of the Partition violence of 1947**

Sardarji is an Oxford-educated Sikh engineer. After more than two decade childless married, he married a new wife, Roop. The novel opens with Satya, the first wife, examining sixteen year old Roop. She feels that the young woman is adorned with jewelry that Sardarji had given her, Satya, over the years. Satya feels jealous of Roop, for taking her position. When Satya sees Roop for the first time after Roop is married to Sardarji, "Satya wants to tear them [earrings] from the girl's ears watch as Roop's tender lopes elongate and rip apart, wants to take what is hers, rightfully hers "(16) Satya wants to hurt Roop for seizing her freedom but restricts herself to the domain of patriarchy.

Patriarchy allowed the man to marry woman to whatever age difference:

> Roop stands, uncomprehending. If she had been a blood-niece or a cousin-sister, Satya would shout at her to stay away, to turn now and run before she gets hurt. And if Satya had been Roop's mother, Roop would be her daughter and none of this would have been necessary. 'Come' she says again, ' it is useless for me to fight Sardarji's will he is my husband, he has married you. Somehow I must accept that and you". (16-17)

The age difference between the two women is so vast that at normal time they would have greeted each other as mother and daughter. Since they are married to the same man, Satya is compelled to give Roop her space in house inspite of her opposition.

Baldwin portrays the position of women during the Pre-partition India, where women were equated with the fertility to meet the demand of male counterparts, "'A

man is pleasured,' Bebeji said… a woman is merely cracked open for seeding like the earth before the force of the plough. If she is fertile, good for the farmer if not bad for her' " (20). Sardarji marries Roop, who is twenty five years older than her for the reason that his first wife Satya is unable to give birth to his heir and, "Naturally, a man who has a childless wife look for another" (120).

The pre-partition Indian society gave much importance to the need and wants of male, when Roop says, "Jeevan will have good Kismat; he is a boy"(89). But the woman's desires and feeling were unattended, and were left in the hands of fate, "Every woman has her Kismat" (22). If the 'kismat' of the men fails to nurture the desires of women, they were thawarted by the society, or even outcasted, "widowed at Roop's age, just seven, Gujri says her whole village thought her unlucky after her husband died, even though she'd never seen him, never, ever and in those days her elders advised she should not marry again let she kill another husband" (33).

Girls were married at the very young age and if misfortune fell upon them, if their husband dies, then they have to live with the tag of widowhood for the rest of their life never getting another chance to live a normal life. Windows were even considered as ill omen by the society.

Baldwin, through the portrayal of the female character, questions about the exclusion of women in the religious practice in the society:

> Mama will be burned and Roop can not be with her: Only Papaji and Jeevan can be present; they are men. Then when Mama is nothing but ashes, Papaji and Jeevan will take her all the way to Hardwar to float away upon the Ganga – way can Roop not be with Mama to hold her hand and say farewell?. (47)

It is in the name of religion and tradition, which is male constructed that the women are not allowed to participate in the social activities and are made agents to practice the agency of Patriarchy.

However, women never dare to question the authority that forces them follow the norms of the society as:

> Gujri says, ' No woman should outlive her children, no matter should wash a dead child.' And her lips move in silent prayer but to Roops surprise though she tends Nani, she will not comfort her, nor will she cry with her.' 'A husbandless, childless woman: such terrible kismat … what she must have done in her past live!' (66)

Women follow the rule imposed on them quietly and blaming the fate for their misfortune or the sin committed in the previous life.

Through, the character sketch of Roop, Baldwin ironically compares patriarchy with the horse, "Jeevan has inherited his eyes from Papaji. Like all men, he sees like a horse, blind to things that lie directly before him" (75). The doctrine of male authority is passed on to Jeevan from the actions of his father, who does not consider about the conditions of women but only think about male honour and position in the society.

Lajo Bhua, teaches Roop and Madani, the principles that must be followed by women to be accepted by the male of the society, when they attend the local Sikh girls school attached to the gurdwara, "Rule number one : you want to make a good marriage ; you must be more graceful, more pleasing to your elders. I want to hear only ' achahaji,' 'hanji' and ' yes-ji' from you. Never 'nahiji' or 'no-ji' "(85). Rule number two says, "Speak softly, always softly!", and the last rule says "Never feel angry, never. No matter what happens, or what your husband says, never feel angry.

You might be hurt, but never ever feel angry", she whispers to Madani and Roop (85). Ravati Bhua follows all the three rules that she teaches, she follows obediently the role of women when at night her husband comes and scolds for her failure and misfortune, "useless women, I have paid two dowries for marrying you, no sons you brought me" (85). The preaching given to the women since their childhood made them very docile and timid, and made them believe that men are god like, and should not be annoyed, their words should be taken as commands. In return of their sincerity, men consider its their moral responsibility to protect and save the female members of the family. Before the marriage it is the responsibility of the father and brother:" No one will ever match Jeevan in generosity or in courage, and he is my protector, Madanis and mine-every year we will remind him with the gold thread of a rakhi tied around his wrist and every year he will renew his promise"(101). And after the marriage husbands bear the responsibility of protecting their females. They enjoy nothing of their own. But their persistent physical labor is accepted. They look after home and rear children but they earn nothing.

When Roop becomes pregnant with the first child of Sardarji, Satya starts loosing her mind. Here, Baldwin has beautifully presented that the women's enemy is always a women:

> Satya shoots. Tha ! the sound echoes again Missed again
>
> Doors slams, servants run, shouting, 'Kya hua? Kya hua?
>
> Satya loads again, locks it, points taking the time.
>
> A Papaya opens like two cupped lands delivering its black seeds.
>
> They ooze from pale gold flesh.
>
> Roop blanches, a nervous giggle escapes her.
>
> Sardarji puts his cups down with a chatter.

'Satya! His voice is sharp, shocked. 'Didn't I say "not a tree"?

How could you? What did it do to you?

'Nothing,' she says. Nothing but bear fruit.

Roop says, 'I don't feel well.'

Oh, yes go to bed, bhain, 'Satya says, sisterly and solicitous. She can go back now, go back to being piteous and wronged and long suffering, how she can stand it a while longer, tell herself again that she desires only Sardarji's happiness, only his welfare

Roop goes to bed early, like a child.

Sardarji goes past Satya's room to Roops that night and probably whispers, 'Never mind, Roop, you look after our son' (172)

The image of shooting papaya reflects intention of Satya to kill the fetus that Roop has conceived of Sardarji. Even with a strong desire to revolt against the boundary set, Satya is forced to follow the rules set for women. She knows she is barren and knows the capacity of Roop's motherhood, "Satya still needs Roop for what Roops body can do" (171). Sardarji on the other hand, tries to sideline Satya for her being barren.

Finally, Roop succeeds to meet the demand of Sardarji, "Roop is weak but grateful; at least she has done what women are for. There is a baby in the lot that swings from the ceiling beside her, girl though it be " (181). Roop is able to show Sayta of her capacity, "But there is something different between them and now. She has passed a fire test, Sita's agnipariksha" (188), which Satya never able to do in her two decade of marriage. Roop comes our victoriously meeting the demand of patriarchy, "She is Sita in her man-inscribed circle"(200).

Neither Satya nor Sardarji comes to visit Roop after she begets a baby girl. At this moment, Baldwin presents the feminist idea through the mouth of Roop. Talking

to her nameless baby, Roop says, "Listen, but do not obey everything", 'she tells the baby, and begins to pour into her tiny ears all she might tell in ten, twenty, fifty years, 'Always speak. Never be silent. Respect your elders, but don't be too generous… say what you want" (189).

Roop does not want her child to be like other women, like a puppet in the hands of man. Most important of all, Roop tries to teach the child, not to be like her.

On the other hand, Satya is bubbling with jealously after the birth of the child. She does not want Roop to stay with Sardarji: "what for do we need her, I will ask Sardarji, she has done the needful, Send her home "(242). Satya, in spite of knowing what would be the fate of married woman when sent back home, enforces sardarji to send back Roop to her parents home, after fulfilling the duty of giving birth to a child for which reason she is married to Sardarji.

Baldwin, not only presents the Subaltern voice of women during pre-partition era but also presents the longing of the women's position:

> Surely there will come a time when just being can bring izzat in return, when a women will be allowed to choose her owner, when a women will not be owned, when love will be enough payment for marriage, children or no children, just because her shakti takes shape and walks the world again.
>
> What she wants is really that simple (316).

Baldwin opposes the idea of patriarchy of thinking woman as an entity, who are considered as ornaments to be used or in use for decoration. Instead, women should have the liberty to live the way they like irrespective of the social demands.

It was not only women trying to hinder the rights of another women but man too made the women's body a ladder to climb up for the better social position or to satisfy their needs:

> Satya was Sardarji's tool, the instrument by which he tortured Roop, then stood back complaining how this women fought like cats, never giving hem any peace, but so too was Roop the instrument by which he tortured Satya.
>
> But is there any man who does not use another to distance himself from his torture ? (331)

In spite of knowing how Sardarji has manipulated her as a tool for his own purpose, Roop thinks- "I'll learn more English, I'll be whatever Sardarji wants me to be (333).

The novel not only presents the fictional story of three Sikhs characters but along with the story of the characters the national history of India is presented. Date signifies the history of the exclusion of the women in the society and the main drama of the movement of Independence. Finally, when India was granted freedom from the British rule in 1947, Baldwin is critical to the freedom of India, "white ant slowly, patiently, doggedly, eating away the foundation of this house" (351). Britishers not only satisfied their economic wants from the land of India but also left behind their legacy of 'Divide and rule'. Two major communities of the country – Hindu and Muslim, Blamed each other for the crises, "Hindu say the mounting violence is the fault of Muslim for supporting the British in their war. Muslim say it is the fault of Hindus for they cannot see that there is not one nation fighting for its freedom in India, but two-two married to one conqueror" (358).

Commenting on the partition of India, lftikhar writes:

> One always hears of the subcontinent undergoing partition though it was largely Punjab and Bengal (and to some extent Assam) which in effect were partitioned. More than anywhere else it was in Punjab where partitioned concurred with 'ethnic cleansing'. Partition, however at a punidable level, was definitely the partition of the Muslim sub-continent itself accounting for the world's largest Muslim community. (Pluralism 99)

The Partition of 1947 divided the Indian–subcontinent into Hindu and Muslim communities but it was the Sikh community that suffered most, "If you ask me, the Sikh are just bloody unlucky to be inbetween "(378). Commenting on the position of Sikh Kirpan Singh writes, "The Punjab was a key province for the solution of the communal tangle. It had a three fold communal dimension, namely, Muslim, Hindu and Sikh, whereas the rest of India had only a Hindu and Muslim problem" (Punjab & Sikh 147).

The sudden religious alignment of the people fans the communal hatred so much that the violence that unfolds became becomes horrific. The communal holocaust of 1947 uprooted and forced thousand of people from all the three communities to migrate to alien land. The time was rife with the mass-massacre, mass-slaughter, killing and fire. Baldwin presents the incident of mass-suicide in Rawalpindi on March 1947:

> There are reports from the village of Thoa khalsa not far from 'Pindi that eighty-four-no, ninety-Sikh women jumped in a well, eldest last, rather than fall into the hands of Muslims. No, not official reports – chatters gossip, rumours – but still, like Pascal's wager, it is better to need then to ignore (375).

Sikh women killed themselves in order to 'protect' themselves from being converted or raped. Commenting on the incident of Thoa Khalsa Butalia writes:

> In manner in which the 90 women of the Thoa Khalsa 'chose' to die was no less violent, although certainly different, from the generally visible violence that formed part of partition. But so patriarchal are location of violence, that we only see it as relating to men. And so communalized have such notion become, that we see violence only as relating to the 'other' the aggressor ("community" 43)

At last, when India and Pakistan were officially declared as Independent nations in August 1947, Mass–massacre and looting was common on both side of the border:

> Slaughter for Slaughter continuous across India. Muslim in Muslim majority areas like Lahore are burning and looting Sikh and Hindu Mohallas:
>
> And in Amritsar and other Sikh – and Hindu – majority areas, Satya would remind him Sikhs and Hindus are burning and looting Muslims homes and Shops.
>
> *Newton's third law: for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction.* (398)

Baldwin is critical of both the nations for mass-killing and looting. It wasn't only Muslim who were involved in the nasty things but equally Hindus and Sikhs were responsible for it.

Baldwin not only presents the mass killing and looting on both sides of the border but also ironically presents the views of the leaders who were involved in the partition of the country:

> He wonders at the temerity of Gandhi and Nehru and all there Hindu congressman, that they do not understand: If you build dams between all religions, Sikhs, Hindus, Muslims, Christians – water's pressure when dammed and raised to levels past its normal flow. Gandhi and Nehru are educated man, qualified man; they should realize that one fissure in any dam holding this pressure back is simply horrifying to consider. When catastrophe strikes, they will be the first to beg for reasons from who have passed it (402)

Baldwin's *What the Body Remembers* remains a top class partition novel chiefly because of its gynocentric view of the partition violence. The representation of gendered violence, rape and abduction remains blurred in the official text books of both India and Pakistan- a gap that Baldwin plays through the texture of *What the Body Remembers*. Baldwin denounces patriarchal system in which men make women the targets of their violence. women were the most vulnerable during communal riots of 1947 partition. Most of women internalized the possible disaster - their abductors or rapists. At such a critical time, it was common for a girl to be abducted by a man of another religion. Both Indians and the Pakistanis identified women as representatives of their community or nation; dishonoring women meant dishonoring the particular community or nation, Roop on her journey to Delhi with her children fears, "Now I die, die young as Mama, without even having seen Delhi or I am about to be raped mutilated like the women where breasts out off or my hair will be out and I will be made to recite, the Kalima and then…" (424). Roop's fear is

> a retaliatory measure it was simultaneously an assertion of identity and a humiliation of the rival community through the appropriation of its women, when accompanied by forcible conversion and marriage it

> could be counted upon to outrage both family and community honour and religious sentiments. (Abducted women" Menon & Bhasin 5)

Whatever may be the reason "the history of partition was a history of deep violation – physical and mental – for women "(Butalia, Silence 104). Many of them, after then abduction were forced to parade naked in the streets, several had their breasts cut off, their bodies were tattooed with marks of other religion in a bid to defile the so called purity of the race, women were forced to have sex with men of other religion, " Rape is one men's message to another: "I took your Pawn. You move" (450).

As, in millions, Hindus Sikhs from the west Punjab fled to India and Muslims from East Punjab fled to Pakistan, they were brutally attacked by armed mobs. Refugee trains arrived, often carrying only dead bodies:

> It is past sunrise but the unfinished moon tarries, astanded eye glued to milling mass of human flotsam littering the railway platform. Some wait for train to leave, some for trains to arrive. Some sit on their belonging, some are empty- handed, their eyes caved carved into skin. Dark bags of bones lying on spit-stained ground, many dead, and those alive breathing in heat and flies (432).

As, Malcom Darling had rightly stated,

> nowhere in communal fighting no dangerous and so complicated as in Punjab. It is dangerous because of Punjabi virile hot handed people and complicated because there is a third and not less obstinate party- the Sikhs…. Fiercer and more dynamic- they never forget that it was from them, we conquered Punjab. (qtd. in Kirpan, Partition 145)

Women faced violence from both their own families and their own communities. On the position of women Butalia writers:

> …..the danger of conversion loomed so large for various communities: conversion , rape and forcible marriage- the fat that in all likelihood awaited many women- meant a violation of community honour and purity, which displace outs the bodies of women, because the prefect for the killing of the women, or for their suicide…. They cannot therefore be named as violent being, as agents with a capacity for violence. This is why their action are narrated as sanctified by the tones of heroic, even other worldly, valour. Such action are meant to keep women within their aukat which is one that defines them as non-violent. (43)

When Roop waits for Sardarji in the Platform, she hears Sikhs conversation. Where one was saying, " I made martyrs of seventeen women and children in my family before their izzat could be taken "and in response the other says, " I made martyrs of fifty "( 438). Instead of using the word 'killing' they used the word martyrs because women were viewed as symbols of honour of the family and community. On this point Menon and Bhasin write, "for many women, it was not only 'miscreants', 'outsiders' or 'marauding mobs' that they needed to fear- husband, father, mother, and even sons, could turn killers" (3).

When Papaji narrates the incident of how he saved the purity of kusum, he says:

> ….. she was my responsibility ….. I said to myself: Kusum was entrusted to me by jeevan, she is young, still of childbearing age. I cannot endure even the possibility that some muslim might put his hands upon him, Everyday I had been hearing that the seeds of that

> foreign religion were being planted in Sikhs women's womb. No, I said: I must do my duty. (455)

And Papaji killed Kusum to protect her from the hand of 'other' and that was what expected from the women of the Sikh family, as Roop recalls, " Revati Bhua was right – Papaji thinks that for good – good women, death should be preferable to dishonor" (458).

Commuting on the victimization of women by male counterpart, Butalia writes:

> Notion of honour as defined by the community and family often parallel those defined by the state. For communities and families, the women were seen as taking upon themselves the task of preserving community and racial honors, and honors was understood as a function both of the mind – which is why the biggest danger was forcible conversion and the body, for after conversion would follow sexual congress with the male of 'other' community. In many instances women themselves internalized these ideas, which should be one reason for mass suicide. (52)

But also the reason behind the acceptance to attain martyrdom from the hand of the family members. At the end, Baldwin ironically presents how the politic was played on the human body, when Roop ask to herself, "Why does a women choose to die? A shadow women whispers in Roop's ear, Sometimes we choose to die because it is the only why to be both heard and seen, little sister" (463). Death was the only means to express the angst for women in the communal strife. In this regard Butalia writes:

> It is mostly men who are responsible for the conflict but its affects fall on women. It is women who are raped, made widow and their children

are sacrificed in the name of national integration and unity. And it is the same women who are given the task of rebuilding from debt caused by communal riots. (121)

## Conclusion

*What the Body Remembers* presents the family chronicle which is merged with national history. Setting is the pre-partition and after partition. Text is a mixture of fact and fiction, concerned with the lives of three Sikhs: Roop, a village girl whose mother had died at child birth and her father who is in deep debt. She longs to break free from her trapped world, where she is hammered in by tradition and lack of money. So, when she learns that she is to be married to a wealthy Sikh landlord, she is delighted; Sardarji, the wealthy landlord who takes Roop for his bride; and Satya, his upper-class first wife who had failed after two decade of marriage to produce an heir. The uneasy relationship between the three protagonists offer rich possibilities which Baldwin exploits with empathy. Written in a flowing prose, the novel captures a time and a geographical location of India's recent history.

Roop (whose name means 'body' or 'form') and Satya ('truth') represent two facts of womanhood, the reproduction and the intellectual. Satya is the perfect match for Sardarji, a dependable companion and his intellectual equal. She is, however, barren, Roop in contrast, is able to give Sardarji the sons on whom the continuation of his line depends. Yet as his second wife, she is valued solely for her fertility. Each woman perceives the other as a threat, without overly revealing her jealously, Satya continues to turn Sardar's estate and the two wives circle around their man and each other, wary and vigilant. Baldwin highlights the similarities between their characters, that they are by nature 'sisters' but shows how they are set against each other by their relationship to their husband. Both women are trapped in complex, sticky wells of culture and history that restricts their freedom but at the same time, offers then security and protection. Both women are victims of the old patriarchal culture. They are alike in many ways, trapped in patriarchal expectations.

The novel is teemed with the political and feminist statements, while Roop and Satya struggle for ascendancy in the domestic setting, a parallel battle is being fought between Hindus and Muslims as the British prepare to divide the country into independent nations-India and Pakistan. The grim politics of partition and the sectarian violence it spawned have been extensively examined in fiction but Baldwin offers a fresh perspective. The philosophy of Sikhism and the quiet dignity of its adherents run strongly through the narrative, and the text is led to feel the tragedy of people dispossessed of their historical homeland, Punjab, in the hasty and arbitrary creation of Hindu and Muslim majority states. Sardarji is caught not only between 'truth' and 'form' not only between the British and India, but also between Hindu and Muslims, signifying how Sikhs were caught in criminal loyalties in the independence struggle. Though, the general picture of patriarchy is articulated, the rivalry between the two women only perpetuated male dominance, and the old stereotype that a woman's worst every is always another woman.

The novel reads as a story of familial relations and social history- the custom, tradition and rural Punjab. The women were in the strangehold of tradition and legitimated by religion they could not obstacle when the lightening of partition felt upon them. Finally, when India and Pakistan was divided into two free nations in 1947, patriarchy was at work on both side of the border. The bloody confrontations arise out of masculine ambition; women from all background had no role but to suffer: "men etch their anger upon woman-skin, swallow their pride dissolved in women's blood" (434). However, it was Sikhs who suffered most during the partition of 1947.

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