

TRIBHUWAN UNIVERSITY

**Theme of Abduction in Partition Fiction by women: Reading *The Skeleton* and
*Cracking India***

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Gynocentric Revision of the History of the Partition of India

The partition of India in 1947 and the resultant migrations and massacres represented an enormous proportion of a human tragedy. It is estimated that more than ten million people crossed the newly created Indo-Pakistan border. Regarding the convulsion of 1947, Horace Alexander writes: "There must be many examples in the bloody history of mankind where the extent of violence has been as greater or even greater but it is probably true that there has never been such a big exchange of population" (qtd. in Basu 16).

Partition was the power play of nationalist leaders of India including both the Hindus and the Muslims. However, women remained as the centre of attack in both the communities. Ironically, women were against the creation of new nation. Partition was male's agenda, to be more precise. Partition unfolded as the uprooting and dislocation of people and the abduction and rape of women. Urvashi Butalia thinks that much is not known about the hapless women. She asserts: "Little is known of the histories of these people and how they dealt with the trauma, pain and dislocation of enforced migration". ("Muslim and Hindus" 61)

The State adopted the strategy of recovering and rehabilitating the female victims of partition violence. The recovery operation constitutes the subject matter of a great body of partition literature by women. The legislative assembly debates, newspaper records, police records and others incorporate a considerable amount of discussion about raped and abducted women. Paradoxically, the abducted women wear an apron of silence.

Of the social workers involved in the recovery operation, two women-- Kamlabehn Patel and Anis Kidwai-- have written extensively about the female

victims. They find it difficult to mould their experiences in the proper shape of writing. Butalia remarks in this regard: " In my encounters with their work and their selves, I was initially struck by how difficult had found it to write about their experiences and their work" (62). Kamlabehn worked with Mridula Sarabhai in rescuing abducted women. It took almost twenty years to write of her experiences because she found them too painful to bear. Anish Kidwai, who worked in the Muslim refugee camps in Delhi, was suggested by her brother to forget the idea of the publication of her work. Why had these women remained silent? Why had their families wanted to remain silent? What blocked out their collective memory? Most of the families chose not to mention anything about abducted women, Butalia writes: "Further questions came up: Why, I asked myself, had families, men, women I had spoken to made no mention, at all of the question of abducted women?" ("Community" 62)

In a contradictory vein, the State honoured the women who had committed mass suicide in a bid to avoid the conversion to the 'other' religion. The suicides valorised as martyrdom remained the subject of much discussion. Widowed women seem to have been accorded a dignified social status which is unusual since widowhood is considered to be a woman's curse in a traditional society. In Butalia's phrase: "Indeed widowed women became a symbol of the state's benevolence and assumption of the role parent" (62). But the situation has been quite different for abducted women. The silence overpowered the people when the issue of abduction was exhumed. When they talked, they spoke about in the context of other families. But they never spoke about their own family. In the light of abducted women, Butalia mentions, "In families, while people were open in recounting many aspects of the

tales of trauma, loss and dislocation, they never mentioned abductions" (62). Thus, the silence of history has been compounded by a familial silence.

Women's bodies often became the markers on which the painful scripts of contending nationalisms were inscribed. In response to the mass rapes and abductions on both sides of the border and in order to legislate a fair exchange of abducted women across borders, the governments of India and Pakistan signed the inter-Dominion Treaty in 1947 among the first agreements between the otherwise hostile nations. The legislation, which set out to rescue women and restore them into the nation to which they naturally belonged, was paradoxical to the very consolidation and definition of the secular nation. Regarding the issue Sujala Singh comments: "For the postcolonial, deeply contested, fragile and vulnerable state, the rescue operation was an exercise in establishing its legitimacy" ("Nationalism's Brandings" 122).

Official history, as proposed by Butalia, says little about abduction and those hapless women. Their voices are choked by male agency in the parlour of history. In the particular case of rape or abduction and often murder, the silence is even more profound. In order to tear out the mask of silence, Butalia falls back on the oral narratives. During her field research, she had met different people who had first hand experiences about partition in different ways. Butalia clearly affirms that her choosing of oral sources does not mean to privilege the experiences of ordinary people over a category called 'history'. However, she opines that history cannot all the time incorporate the reality all experience at all times because it depends upon the writer of history and his attitude towards the particular event. Therefore, Butalia asserts: "But in recovering histories of those who are relegated to the margins, we have little option but to look at sources other than the accepted ones, and in doing so to

question, stretch and expand the notion of what we see as history" ("Partition" 93-94). Thus, Butalia, relentlessly, attempts to dig beneath the surface to exhume the reality. Butalia traces the ambivalences and difficulties to approach the 'objectivity' of writing history and yet she endeavors to research using the tool of memory which is elusive--but most importantly--and therefore she does not claim objectivity in terms of factuality. However, she believes that narrative and memory of any event are as important as those of the so-called "facts" of the incident itself. In this regard, she says:

Instead of casting back into the past and constructing a historical account based on facts and memory... In recent years, the growing polarizations within Indian society around religious identities have forced many people to confront partition again. In many ways, this is the defining event of communal/sectarian strife, looking back at it helps to explain much, and becomes an almost necessary exploration in order to look at how one must act in the present, or indeed how one may look to the future. ("Gender" 94)

Butalia, thus, believes that research into the catastrophic event of 1947 will help to promote mutual understanding between the otherwise hostile communalities.

More significantly, Butalia finds irony in the assigning the halo of martyrdom to those women who had committed mass suicide. The State deployed the trope of martyrdom to enslave women and their sexuality. Death is the reality either by the hands of outsiders or family members. It, indeed, is a violent event ever experienced in Indian history. Instead of looking at such event through the lens of violence, the State ironically bestowed the act with the glory of martyrdom. Butalia, in her essay, "Gender and Catastrophe" specifies event, providing the evidence of Punjab.

Communal violence in Punjab actually began almost seven months before Thoa Khalsa incident of March 1947. In that month, a number of Sikh villages in Rawalpindi district were attacked over a period of nine days by Muslim mobs. The attacks themselves were in retaliation to the Hindu attacks on the Muslims in Bihar. It is futile to speculate whose was the primary responsibility. In Rawalpindi district, in the villages of Thamili, Thoa Khalsa, Mator, Nara, and many others, the attacks ended on 13 March, when the army moved in.

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

In Sikh community, the men were almost sure of their protection but they were of the knowledge that their women would be unable to do so. In such a context, 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 conversion. Besides, 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 also the entire community would be polluted and the purity of the race diluted. While the women could thus save themselves, it was imperative that the women be saved by them" (Gender and Catastrophe, 95).

In the above report by Butalia, we come across 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 to women, they acted out imposing to them. Either to live or die, converse or leave is up to them. But

male agency sometimes candidly or sometimes hiddenly coerced women to accept the authority of male. So without the imposition of male authority, these women would accept their decision promptly. Butalia sees politics in such constructions.

Butalia speaks at first with Mangal Singh who lived in Amritsar bazaar. Mangal Singh spoke of women and children with both pride and grief in his voice. He refused to acknowledge that they had been killed. Instead, he said they had been martyred, that they had become martyrs :

After leaving home, 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 grief. So we traveled, laden with sorrow, not a paisa to call our own, not a bite of food to eat. . . but we had to leave. Had we not done so, we would have been killed, the times were such. (qtd. in Butalia's "Gender" 90)

Putting the pretext of sacrifice, Mangal Singh spoke with the tone of pride and manliness of the Sikh race, and also extolled the heroism of the Sikh women who gave up their lives 'willingly' for the sake of their religion. The sacrifice of the many women who died such deaths during partition is compared to the extreme sacrifice of Rajput women. Talk of the martyrdom of women is almost always accompanied by the talk of those women whose lives 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 up to death to save their religion. Quite contrarily, such events like Mangal Singh's, are shorn of violence and indeed coercion that must have sent so many young women to

their death. These sorts of events, in the vein of pride and honour, the "Statesman", a daily English paper considered the mouth piece of the State, valorised the mass annihilation by women as something heroic deed, an implicit coercion for women to die rather than defy the enemy assaults. In this regard Butalia writes: "The tone adopted by the "Statesman" report above was similar to that adopted by families when they spoke of the hundreds of women they had martyred in order to save the purity of the religion" (96). The State acted out the role of men, upheld the basic norms and terms of patriarchy, and considered them subservient to male. As we see above, the tone of "Statesman" was the tone of the men--a masculinist tone that Butalia came across while interviewing the survivors.

More than the mass killing, looting and arson, intra-familial violence was the less-discussed matter which Butalia relentlessly attempted to unveil in her writing. The kind of familial violence instigated during the bloody partition was perpetrated, by and large, by men of particular communities on their own women--in the name of the so-called purity and religion. About this Butalia notes: "In most instances that I have found, the burden of death, indeed the burden of martyrdom, and that of bearing the so called honour of their community, was put on women by the men of their community" ("Gender" 98). However, the women who did not like to kill themselves were humiliated by the State. Those who were fearful and remained indifferent to become martyrs were seen "as somehow lacking in courage and responsibility" (Butalia 98). The above events show that martyrdom was a compulsion for the women of that time.

If the veil of martyrdom is lifted, the history of 1947 unfolds itself as a massive violence done to women. Thousands of women, Hindu, Sikh and Muslim, were raped by men of the other religion in the extended array of time and events of

partition. The act of abduction followed or accompanied rape, untold numbers of women into slavery and prostitution, and in many places they were humiliated by tattoos of the symbols of the other religion, the cutting off of their breasts, parading them naked in the streets which must have displayed the depths of humiliation for women who had neither lived in seclusion. Many of such histories will perforce remain untold--many of them have by now, lived out their lives, being worn the veil of silence. There are some facts which are horrifying--in Doberan 70 women were abducted, in Kahuta this figure was as high as 500, in Harial 40, in Tainch 30, in Bamali 105, in Rajar 95 and it is said that in Rawalpindi alone between 400 and 500 were abducted. But there is much beyond these facts, which we can only guess. For example, abducted women were often sold from hand to hand and were ill used by their captors. Anis Kidwai, a social worker who worked in Muslim camps in Delhi records:

We have considerable evidence before us to show that 75 percent of the girls are still [probably in 1949] being sold from one man to another. [These] girls of tender years have not been able to settle down anywhere, nor will they be able to settle down for many years. Their youth is being sold for a few thousand and lustful men, having satisfied their lust for a while, begin to think for the monetary benefit that could come from their sale. (qtd. in Butalia's "Gender" 99)

Mostly, women were picked up from large caravans of people called *kafilas*. Often they were exchanged by their families for freedom for the other members. In the initial stages, after the announcement of the Hindustan/Pakistan plan in June 1947, while the two governments set up an elaborate machinery to divide up and share their assets, there was no official plan to initiate an exchange of population. But as

communal violence escalated and people began to fear for their lives, the migration of millions began. In such process of mass migration, and the violence and killing during partition, the abductions and rapes of women took place. For men of each community, the women were easy meat. Women were usually unarmed and so unable to defend themselves. Many of them left behind in foot convoys, or picked up from the caravan, were dragged off trains or being picked up near stations.

The ironic decision made by India, a self-defined secular nation and Pakistan, a communal state not only mocked the idea of secularism but also worsened the poor and pathetic women. On 6 December 1947, the two newly formed nations came to an agreement on the question of recovering the abducted women and rehabilitating them in their native places. In Butalia's words, "This vocabulary of recovery, rehabilitation, homeland was actually a euphemism for returning Hindu and Sikh fold, and Muslim women to the Muslim fold. On this point--that this war what was to be done--both countries were agreed" ("Gender"100). Thus, even for a self-defined secular nation (India), the natural place for women was defined in term of religious, indeed communal basis. Women who had been taken away by the other community, had to be brought back to their own community, their own homeland, both concepts were defined for women by the men of the respective countries.

A major effort was made to recover the abducted women: the primary responsibility lay with the women recovery organization. In November 1948, this organization handed over the work of recovery to the Ministry of External Affairs. Soon after, on 31 January 1949, this work was given legislative sanction with the promulgation of an ordinance, the abducted persons recovery and restoration ordinance, which was later replaced by the Abducted Persons Recovery and Restoration Act of 1949. The right was given to women to recover these women and

bring them into transit camps. They had to stay in such camps until their families came to take them back. The will of the State came as a contrast to the will of most the abducted women who did not like to go back to their natal home because of the multiple reasons: whether they would be accepted or not; some of them truly fell in love; some of them did not have anything in their previous home. In this regard, Butalia encodes:

Several were fearful that they would not be accepted back into their original families. Other had actually chosen to live with partners of the other religion, but had become tarred with the brush of abduction because any mixed marriages/relationships contracted after a certain cut off date were denied legitimacy" ("Gender"100).

The act of Recovery and Rehabilitation of abducted women, in effect, reflects the double-dealing of the State. Recovery was intentioned to give shelter to the abducted women. However, the State announced in the same vein that the wish of those hapless women would get no currency . . . to promote the patriarchal norms and values. In Butalia's phrase, "Persuasion was clearly a euphemism, since the agreement had categorically stated that the women's wishes were of no consequence" ("Community" 47). Hence, irony inheres in the reinforcement of the strategy and mention of its purpose in the State deployed recovery. Recovery operation was intended to shield the women's happiness but it bluffeted their will and choice.

The deployment of policemen along with the social workers was felt cynical act of the state by the abducted women since they were not able to guard them in the widespread communal riot of the partition 1947. These women held the view that the ineffectiveness and incapability of the police was crystal clear—women were abducted in their presence and were the sole spectator of such catastrophic event.

However, they believed that there would be no further disaster than that. The police force, in effect, proved powerless and defenseless for their protection. In this regard Butalia cites Kirpal Singh's documentation of partition in which a woman puts her view with the District Liaison Officer, Gujranwala: "How can I believe that your military strength of two sepoy could safely take me across to India when a hundred sepoy failed to protect us and our people who were massacred" ("Gender" 102). Furthermore, the accompanying of police-force with the women social workers was seen in the light of State's notion of female as timid and non-violent being and patriarchy's either willful or forceful imposition against female's work and target. It is the State's non-believable attitude towards women. Besides, it is the implicit hint of the State, which upholds that women are unable to function independently that they require the assistance of male to be perfect.

From the abducted women's perspective, the recovery operation was the double dislocation--first when they were abducted, in course of time managed themselves in the new environment and after that again they were ordered to return to the earlier place because the majority of abducted Hindu women harboured the fear that they may not be received again into the fold of their society. Butalia remarks: "Sometimes the women themselves resisted out of fear of a second dislocation, repeat of the trauma, another uprooting, or non-acceptance, or because many of them were actually happy and settled in their new situations" ("Community" 48). Ironically, the women officials understood very well the fear and dilemma faced by those they were recovering, and over a period of time began to question the nature and necessity of the enterprise. Many social workers such as Kamlabhen Patel and Damyanti Sahgal used their positions to help women who did not want to go back. Thus the abducted

women's dilemmas were the production of their previous narrowing experiences in their natal families

Abducted women come to see signs of humanity in their abductions. An abductor rescues her and offers her food and shelter, provides her minimum respect, and covers her nude body. For her, he descends on her hapless life as saviour, though for a brief moment. In such situation, she, for the time being, forgets the dead body of her parents whom his group has killed brutally and instead thanks him. In Anis Kidwai's word "Any way why should she not do this ? Rescuing her from the beast this good man has brought her to his home. He is giving her respects, he offers to marry her. How can she not become his slave for life" (qtd. in Butalia's "Community" 49). It becomes too late for her to go back to her place. In Butalia's phrase:

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 will she ever look at the faces of her parents, her husband. ("Community" 49)

In this way, women, in effect, dislocated twice and dribbled as a ball in the feet of both combating campaigns.

The women problem was severe. Both Gandhi and Nehru, major actors to initiate the partition, had to issue repeated appeals to Hindu people. They asked them to accept the women and to take them back into the family. Publicly, in January 1948, Nehru said:

I am told that sometimes there is unwillingness on the part of their relatives to accept those girls and women (who had been abducted) in their homes. This is a most objectionable and wrong attitude to take

up. These girls and women require our tender and loving care and their relatives should be proud to take them back and given them every help" (qtd. in Butalia's "Community" 50).

Similarly, Gandhi proclaimed:

I hear women have this objection that Hindus are not willing to accept back the recovered women because they say that they have become impure. I feel this is a matter of great shame. That woman is as pure as the girls who are sitting by my side. And if any one of those recovered women should come to me, then I will give them as much respect and honor as I accord to these young maidens" (qtd. in Butalia's "Community" 50).

Both these proclamations reflect the acute problem into which the hapless women were entangled. The ironic statement of Nehru and Gandhi show that the voice of men or nationalist leaders implicitly remained the voice of State and community as well.

Notions of honour as defined by the community and family often paralleled with that of the State. Violation of female sexuality was considered as defilement of communal honour. Hence, the bluff of the purity of female sexuality is a manipulative device at the hands of patriarchy and the community enters with nationhood in order to keep alive the class hegemony. The rape and abduction during Partition crystallises the violent tampering with the female body to express the triumph and intimidation of one community over another, as the way it is picked up as an exclusionary boundary with which the women's own community preserves its class identity. Butalia remarks in this regard:

For communities and families, the women were seen as talking upon themselves the tasks of preserving community and racial honor, and honor was understood as a function both of the mind that is why the biggest danger was forcible conversion and the body, for after conversion would follow sexual congress with the male of the 'other' community ("Community" 52).

Mostly, women internalized these ideas, and committed mass suicide. Women who did not acknowledge the honor of the nation, the state itself invested them as a 'humanitarian task'. The interests of the patriarchal family and the patriarchal State converged in their perception of women's place in the larger community. Similar ideas can be traced in much acclaimed book by Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments* (1992) where he says: "Community and women are presented as two fragments of the nation" (qtd. in Jasodhara Bagchi's). At the moment of the birth of two nation states in the place of one colonial state, the bodies of nameless women and their sexuality are brought under the control of their respective communities to complete the grand act of vivisection. In this regard, Butalia says: "A gendered history of partition would thus need to focus attention on the centrality of women in changes in community, and family, in the making of a national identity, in the communalism that so deeply marked, this particular event and in many other aspects" (Abducted and widowed women 92). During partition, legitimation through the control of female sexuality spread like a fire caught in the dry-roof-hut in summer all over the India. The more inward the community the more it needed to demarcate its identity as a principle of difference. The ritual purity of identity needed a pronounced alien--the Hindu sovereignty was put against the Muslim rule from which the British rule handed them freedom. The chaste wife who is called *Pativrata* became the main

signifier in the game between the community, the colonial state and the incipient nation-state. Thus, the instructions for the chaste wife went far beyond the boundary set for the 'angel in the wife'. It is said that it is the duty of men to secure and preserve such angelhood. If she is violated, the violation is marked to the society. So, husband or the son has to protect her. Her sexuality is made socially acceptable through the patent of wifeness. The husband/son became the sole proprietor of the sexuality, which displays the incongruity in their relationship in patriarchal order. Through such notion, the metaphors like *Sati* and *Savitri* were constructed in *Purans*. In Butalia's words, "The relationship, we have to note, is asymmetrical, since the masculine form of the word Sati has no sexual connotation"(103).

In other words, the Hindu patriarchal system created the discourse of Sati and Savitri in purans. Once the discourse is created, it imparted knowledge about something. In course of time, through the knowledge of the discourse, the truth is constructed in favour of the power holder. In this way, knowledge becomes power. Such Foucauldian power and truth becomes pervasive in the then society. The system indeed is patriarchal through such discourse, which regulates female sexuality and confirms its power. If the women transcend the limitation set by the patriarchal system, the system others her from the rest of the people. It brands her as stigma or abnormal or mad. The violation of the sexuality of women can be perceived from two different angles. Firstly, they did not want to accept them because the women transgressed the boundary of Sati and Savitri set by patriarchy. Women's acceptance was the loosening of power. So, many families remained reluctant to accept them.

While, while retrieving the abducted women, their identity was blurred with the identity of the nation and the nation was synonymous with the religion. India was the nation of Hindu and Sikh people whereas Pakistan was the place for Muslim

people. The identity of the women--Hindu or Muslim--extended so far that the Hindu woman was called the citizen of India and the Muslim woman remained the citizen of Pakistan. Kamalabehn Patel, who worked in the Lahore camp for four years in close association with Mridula Sarabhai, said to Menon and Bhasin:

The identification was done according to the countries they belonged to, this one is Indian, this one a Pakistani. Partition was internally connected with Islam, the individual, and the demand for a separate homeland. And since this label was attached, how could the women be free from it ? ("Abducted" 18)

The recovery operation was so debatable and conflicting in between the order of the nation and its people. The people of India did not like to accept their women. So, the problem became so complicated and entangled that ministry of relief and rehabilitation was constrained to print and distribute a pamphlet that sought to educate the public on the subject—it said that just as a following stream party itself and is washed clean of all pollutants, so, a menstruating woman is purified after her periods. Even Gandhi and Nehru had to made public appeal saying "the member of families unwilling to accept women who had been 'defiled' by the Muslims was by no means insignificant". (qtd. in Menon and Bhasin's "Abducted Women"18).

The recovery of the pregnant women brought fierce debate in the parliament. A special conference was held in Lahore to discuss the implications of this, where the majority of social workers felt that it would be wise to leave all such children with their fathers instead of allowing their mothers to bring them over to India where, eventually, they were likely to end up orphanages. In fact, pregnant women were obviously more vulnerable than others. In Menon and Bhasin's words, "Meanwhile the government passed an ordinance to say that those women whose babies were born

in Pakistan after partition would have to leave behind, but those whose children were born in India, could keep them". ("Abducted Women"284)

It was a complex task even for government. According to Kamlabhen, "For the government this was a complex problem" (qtd. in Menon and Bhasin's "Abducted Women" 284). Indian society would never accept a child born to a Hindu mother by a Muslim father. Had the government retrieved those abducted women with their children, the problem of rehabilitation of a large number of women and children would have emerged. Fearing from the impending problem, the government denied to accept those babies. Menon and Bhasin put: "A senior civil servant, a joint secretary in the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation, said the only practical solution was to treat such children as "War babies" and not be guided by emotional considerations while arriving at a decision in this regard" (Abducted Women). However, a compromise was arrived at whereby the women would take their children with them to Jalandhar and, after 15 days, decide whether they wanted to keep them or not. But most often the women declined the idea to take their late babies with them. The conspicuous reasons for this is the rejection by their families, the second, is that they had children earlier. To this light Menon and Bhasin assert, "It was our experience, says Kamlabehn, "that most of the unmarried young mothers were not keen to take their children, for they had other children earlier" (Abducted Women 90).

Rameshwari Nehru and Mridula Sarabhai held a sharp difference of opinion about the recovery operation. Rameshwari Nehru stood against the idea of forcible recovery where as Mridula Sarabhai was in favour of forcible recovery. Menon and Bhasin say: ". . . Mridula Sarabhai believed that no woman could be happy with her abductor, Rameshwari Nehru, not so" (Abducted Women 21). Within a few months of recovery work having been undertaken systematically; Nehru advised the

government to stop it altogether because she was convinced that "We have not achieved our purpose. . . . Figures alone are not the only criterion against which such work should be judged.(22) Viewed from the human and the women's angle, as she proposed to do, removing them from the home in which they were now settled would result in untold misery and suffering. "By sending them away we have brought about grief and the dislocation of their accepted family life without in the least promoting human happiness," she said(qtd in22). And finally, the woman's will was not taken into consideration at all. She was once again, reduced to the goods and chattel status without having the right to decide her own future or mould her own life. But, few were her supporters and had to resign from the post. Menon and Bhasin write: "Her pleas found few supporters and little sympathy within officialdom, however, and in July 1949 she resigned as Honorary Advisor to the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation" ("Abducted Women"20).

It would be a blunder to claim that the social workers all spoke in one voice. They prevailed different notion between Muslims and non-Muslims in case of honour and acceptability. They carried out the search and rescue missions with some perseverance, especially in the beginning and with first-hand experience of their actions. They began to express their disagreement with decisions that they believed worked against the women and rendered their situation even more precarious. When it seemed to them that the women's plight was particularly poignant, more than one social worker admitted to having 'helped' them escape the police and bureaucratic net. In this matter of fact, Menon and Bhasin write:

In December 1949, Mridula Sarabhai was constrained to point out that" the approach of the people and even the social workers is not correct. Public opinion must assert that the honour and dignity of women will

be respected and that in our country abduction will not be tolerated, as it was "in itself, immoral, apart from its being criminal. (*Abducted Women*21)

These differences implies the ambivalent relationship among the government, the women to be recovered and the intermediates. This triangular relationship was in confusion and faced problem because of the flux identity of women endowed by the government. Butalia says, "That this relationship was ambivalent and became increasingly troubled is, we would suggest, precisely because the government's construction of the abducted woman's identity was being called into question" (21). Her identity was unstable since, at first, she was defined in terms of the members of community, thus upholding community honour, secondly, she violated the patriarchal control--her sexuality. For the recognition of the crucial and ambivalent role of government, we need to return to the Bill, the circumstances under which it was formulated.

The recovery operation of the government of India, albeit humanitarian in its objectives, was nevertheless articulated and implemented within the parameters of two overriding factors: first, the relationship of the Indian state with Pakistan and second, its assumption of the role of *Parens Patriae* vis-à-vis the women who had been abducted. As the former, it was obliged, as a responsible and "civilized" government of a "civilized" country to rightfully claim its subject citizens, and as the latter, it was morally bound to relocate and restore these same subjects to their family, community and country. This double role suggests that India was a secular, open-minded society, assuming the role of parents and protecting its citizens, whereas Pakistan was the barbaric country of disorder and chaos. To be more specific, Pakistan was an abductor-country. In this regard, Menon and Bhasin say:

This dual role and responsibility simultaneously cast Pakistan itself as the abductor-country and India as the parent-protector, safeguarding not only her women but, by extension, the inviolate family, the sanctity of the community and ultimately, the integrity of the whole nation.

(22)

So, the moral, political and ideological importance of India's secularism was embraced as an ideal that had to be vigorously championed and defended. These ingredients enabled the Indian State to define itself in opposition to Pakistan.

However, it is wrong to allege Pakistan as being solely responsible for abduction, rape and loot or morally degraded behaviour. India, too, is equally responsible for what happened during riots. India's chameleon nature--its assertion that India is secular state and simultaneously the talk of bringing Sikh and Hindu women have to come to India, and sending Muslim women to Pakistan--further deteriorated the situation and coerced helpless women for double dislocation. India proclaimed itself as father nation but continued its butchery along with. Menon and Bhasin write:

one, Smt. Durgabai from Madras, even went so far as to say, Thanks to the leadership in our country, we have been able to get social workers who are not only public-spirited but non-communal in their out-look and therefore, they are inspired by the noble example set up by the Father of the Nation and also other leaders who support and help are available in plenty for recovery activity. (23)

Thus, set up the backdrop of morality and secularism of India and of its people, it began to evacuate the abducted women despite their wish, compelled them to go back to their original home. To uphold the patriarchal notion, most of the

leaders clapped for recovery operation. The nationality fever clouded the plight of the abducted women and the state remained indifferent to them. Knowing that recovery work is problematic on ethical or moral ground, the state launched the operation, only to return its Sitas from the other wise hostile nation. Menon and Bhasin writes, "For me, said Mridula Sarabhai," recovery work is not only a humanitarian problem, it is a part of my political ideology. The policy of abduction as a part of the retaliatory programme has given a setback to the basic ideals of a secular state and Janata Raj".

(23)

But, when we cast our eyes to the history of India, the Hindus are a great bar to social assimilation. They suffer from the superiority complex. So, they do not mix them up with Muslims. A touch-me-not spirit pervades the atmosphere in Hindu society and is a great strain on social relations. Not only the Shudras, the so-called untouchables, but also the Musalmans suffer social humiliation. The Hindus and Musalmans form two distinct and isolated social groups, with no ties to bind them together. Social conditions, habits, customs, manners, dress, houses and festivals are all different. They do not live mixed together. In Kazi Saud-Ud-Din-Ahmad's phrase, "Their drinking water is separate. There are not opportunities and occasions for common friendly contacts on any large scale." (*Inventing Boundaries* 77) It refers that Hindus were not all non-communal during the extended array of time and events in 1947. Hindus were to be blamed for the partition. They did not faith on Muslim people. They always cast suspicious look at them. They remained reluctant to integrate them in the Independence Move. In B.R. Ambedkar words, "They fear that way lies the establishment of the domination of the Muslims over the Hindus. The Hindus see that the Muslim Move for independent is not innocent. It is strategy. It is to be used only to bring the Hindus out of the protecting shield of the British Empire

in the open and then by a alliance with the neighbouring Muslim countries and by their aid subjugate them." (95) In such pretext, the Hindus self-proclamation as non-communal is ridiculous and ironic; will be oversight to blame Muslims only for the division and creation of Pakistan. Hindus are equally responsible. It does not mean that Pakistan is or Musalmans were not to be blamed in terms of rape and abduction. They abducted Hindu and Sikh women. They did suffer from the communal spirit. Butalia says: "Like its men, the Muslims who had abducted Hindu and Sikh women, Pakistan too became tarred with the same brush." (*Silence* 142)

References to Sita were often made by the State or the Parliament in the discourse on the recovery operation. The concepts like secularism and non-communalism--as often claimed by India and its leaders--are mocked when the Indian leaders frequently used the discourse of the abduction of Sita to retrieve their women from Pakistan. Their frequent quoted remark that Indians are the true-descendents of Ram unearthed the mark of their being called themselves non-communal and secular. In the similar vein, one MP said in Parliament:

If there is any sore point or distressful fact to which we can be reconciled under any circumstances, it is the question of abduction and non-restoration of Hindu women. We all know our history, of what happened in the time of Shri Ram when Sita was abducted. Here, where thousands of girls are concerned, we cannot forget this. We can forget all the properties, we can forget every other thing but this cannot be forgotten. (qtd. in Menon and Bhasin's *Borders and Boundaries* 68)

The Hindu patriarchy has been teaching women about morality, duty, and responsibility of a wife through the discourse of *Pativrata*., The motive, indeed, is to control and subdue women's subjectivity and sexuality. In this sense, they can't even

think to violate *Pativrata*. The demon of *Pativrata* deep-rooted in their psyche, the violation of which resisted them to return to their original home. Menon and Bhasin write: "Hindu woman felt that she had been made impure, had become sullied, was no longer *Pativrata*. . . . We feel we have been polluted, we are no longer worthy of showing our faces in public. How can we face our families now when we go back" (Borders and Boundaries 77).

Since the beginning of the recovery operation arose difficulty, tension and confusion to launch recovery operation. At first, Pakistan remonstrated the inclusion of the Military Evacuation and rather suggested its duties for the guard of transit camps. There was the suggestion of handing down the work of rescue to the police. However, India remained reluctant to do so because it had seen the involvement of many police in the abduction the women. People--in the positions of authority of both nations--abducted women, kept themselves for the time being and sent them away. In this light, Butalia remarks: "In Montgomery, a tahasildar of Dipalpur, while participating enthusiastically in broadcasting appeals for information about abducted women, is said to have kept an abducted woman with him for eight months. In another instance; two assistant sub-inspectors of police went to recover an abducted woman, and themselves raped her" (*Silence* 139).

When both governments agreed upon the recovery treaty, both of them showed concern to their lost women. Legislative assembly record, newspapers and periodicals of that time present different contesting issues, such as, the inequality in terms of recovery in both countries, the number of abducted women, etc. Pakistan was blamed for the recovery of less Hindu and Sikh women. In this regard Butalia writes:

Legislative assembly records for the years following 1947, as well as newspapers and periodicals of the time show an on going concern and debate about various issues: unequal pace of recovery in the two countries . . . why the Indian government did not slow down the pace of recoveries of Muslim women until more Hindu and Sikh women found, and so on. (139)

The ordinance which enabled the Indian government to recover abducted Muslim women from India was due to end on December 30, 1949. Fifteen days before this date the government's representative, Gopalswami Ayyengar, introduced a Bill in the Assembly - the Abducted Person Recovery and Restoration Act. The act was active till 1957, after that it was not renewed. By this time, the pace of recovery had slowed down considerably.

The *Organiser*, the mouthpiece of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh discussed much on the issue of abducted women and blamed government for not retrieving the Sitas of India who were abducted by Pakistan. It ignited people's attitude against Pakistan asserting that the rape and abduction of women was a shameful act which Pakistan did deliberately, and even said that Pakistan was constructed "On the predatory desire for Hindu property and Hindu women [which] took practically no steps to check mate the lust and avarice of its champions" (1460). On the backdrop of the rape and abduction of Hindu and Sikh women, *Organiser* blamed Pakistan for being barbaric, lustful and uncivilized. Similarly, *Organiser* provoked the people of India and it's government pointing the need of bringing back the abducted women. It time and again repeated the story of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* to insist people to retrieve abducted women. Butalia encodes,

On December 29, 1949 the front page of the *Organiser* carried a story entitled 'Pakistan the Sinner: 25,000 abducted, thousands sold'. The story ran as follows: "For the honour of Sita, Sri Rama warred against and destroyed Ravana, when filthy Philji besieged Chitoor its thousands of women led by Rani Padmini all clad in Jarua [saffron] Saris, mounted the funeral pyre smiling, ere the melchha [impure] could pollute a drop of the noble Hindu blood. Today, when tens of hundreds of Hindu women are spending sorrowful days and unthinkable nights in Pakistan, the first free government of the Union of Indian sovereign Democratic Republic has nothing but a whimper for them. (145)

No matter how often the *Organiser* wrote against Pakistan in sugarcoated language and prophetic tone, India, too, had equal share of oversight in terms of mass rape and abduction. The *Organiser* was not ready to admit that the Hindus and the Sikhs had been guilty of abduction. It reported that Hindu and Sikh men had sheltered Muslim women which was (is) ironic-gap between what it said and what they did-- which reflected its attempt to cast veil over the moral lapses of Hindu and Sikh men. In this vein, Butalia writes, "There was, however, another reality. Muslim women had also been abducted by Hindu and Sikh men" (*The Other Side of Silence* 146). The *Organiser* did not see the evil passions of Hindu men as being harmful, weak and lustful. It insisted that the Hindu mind was broad, and could do justice to others but not bold enough to demand justice. Hindus were good, it said, because they have a great tradition, descendents of Aryans and had great tradition and culture. Such magnanimous culture, it viewed, made Hindu male tolerant and civilized. Further it said, had they put them, mistakenly, they would have been ready to hand over the state. They lost their women because of their tolerance. So, it needed the call to arms, to fight and retaliate in the language of the Muslim state. In this way, many writers of

the Organizer spoke in a voice to establish the purity of Mother India and Hindu religion. The country--Bharat or Hindustan--was imaged in feminine terms, as the mother and partition was seen as a violation of its body. Butalia writes "One issue of the *Organiser* (August 14, 1947) had a front page illustration of woman lying on it, one limb cut off with Nehru holding the bloody, knife responsible for doing the service" (*Silence* 147-48). The *Organiser* stressed that the faith in her religion saved Hindustan from extinction since long. Mother India fought against temptation, fear and persuasion, overcame them and did not part with her religion. A good Hindu woman was equal to a good mother. In this sense, the *Organiser* admitted that the abduction of Hindu women was the enforced cohabitation of mothers with the men of other religion. So, the abduction represented a real threat to the ideal of good mother. The responsibility fell on their husbands and brothers to fight for them to bring them back into the fold despite their pollution. As 'Kamal' (a pseudonym for a regular writer) put it, "Not only is Bharatvarsh our mother and we its children, she was the Deity and we her devotees. She was sacred. To go out was to go to foreign, impure, barbaric lands and so a purification on return was necessary. Another article quotes Rama saying to his brother: "O Lakshman, this golden Lanka doth not please my heart. The mother, the country of our birth, is sweeter than the joys of heaven itself" (*Silence* 148).

Through the widespread use of the discourse of motherhood, the Indian patriarchy blew its trumpet to contain, accept and legitimize women's sexuality. However, if those violated mothers truly desired to stay with their abductors, such sexuality would no longer be permissible and conceivable. It stressed to put down the chaos created by partition. In Butalia's phrase, "But allowing it to continue: how could families, the community, the nation--indeed, how could men allow this state of affairs

to continue ?" (150). Hindu women's direct refusal to bind themselves under the mores-- motherhood, womanhood, or--laid down by patriarchy would be threat for patriarchal system, conceived by the men and reiterated the metaphor of motherhood to those abducted women to bring them back to their fold.

The Recovery Operation Act, in effect, was fraught with national honour--the honour was laid on the body of Mother India. It implies that the loss of these women was the loss of their original families. The old families were the legitimate families and the women should be restored to these families. Women were trapped in such a way that they were not able to voice independently even if they wished to articulate their opinion. They did not have freedom of opinion even at their home. So, they were trapped inside and outside. Nevertheless these were the families which were held up as legitimate. Women, therefore, had to be removed from the other non-acceptable families and relocated into the real ones. This would be the honourable act for the state. Butalia's words, "Independence, and its dark 'other', partition, provided the rationale for making women into symbols of the nation's honour" (152).

Just as female victims were a complicated issue for the State, children too were a knotty problem India and Pakistan, in effect, did not fight over children as they did over women. However, children--either born out of abducted women or lost in the convulsion--became problematic not only for state but for families also. Abducted women could be purified after bringing them back to their respective religion but the children were borne out of the blood of the otherwise hostile sects—Hindu, Sikh and Muslim. How to assimilate them again in the same religion which knows only its own religion. In Butalia's phrase:

But it was the bodies and beings of abducted children that posed the greatest challenges of all: For while an abducted and raped woman

could be brought back into the fold of religion, and could, in a manner of speaking, be 'repurified', a child, in whom the blood of two religions was mixed in equal quantities, was not so easily re-integrated. (197)

In many instances government remained ineffective to lessen the anxiety and pain of the children. Rather it severed the problem leaving them to die. The government shut down the camp but still there were children whose families remained unidentified. In such severity of the problem, children were abandoned in the mess. To such light, Savitri Makhijani, a record collector with the United Council of Relief and Welfare, the parent organization set up under the leadership of Edwina Mountbatten to coordinate relief and rehabilitation work among non-government organizations, described a time when a large camp was closed down in Lahore. Shortly after the camp closed down they received information that left behind, who seemed to belong to no one. The children were sent to Delhi, and housed in a home by Mridula Sarabhai. Social workers from the school of social work then put out advertisements on All India Radio, asking for offers of adoption. Among those piles of leftover, only boys got the hand for their adoption and again girls remained in a large number. Had they been adopted, it would have been for domestic works and other such proposes. Butalia writes: "And yet, most of the children who had been left behind-again as in everyday life- were girls. What was to be done ? Finally, most were adopted. And then, one man returned the little girl he had taken, she was too 'naughty'" (198).

Most of the left over children of the partition did not get complacent life, the fate turned them in otherwise hostile milieu. Many lived the life of destitutes, with part time jobs. They worked in vegetable groceries drawing carts, and pulling rickshaws, from which they earned tins and bits and passed their time. These

children--now grown ups--did not like to remember partition since they had lives experience about the death and convulsion. They saw, in front of them, killing of their kins and kiths and significantly, their own parents and adult male members as the perpetrators of violence. Kulwant Singh says:

I was small, my mother, when she saw my father being killed - they cut him up into a hundred pieces, the first blow they struck on his neck, and then they cut him into a hundred pieces - at that time I was trembling, at my feet there were many bodies, there were fires all around, I was dying of thirst, they heard my voice-my mother lifted my head and my chachi took my feet. . . the six month old daughter, first of all they did ardas and threw her into the fire, and then they said, bibis, our izzat is in danger, will we save our honour or our children. And then turn by turn they threw her into the fire, . . . my mother, she took me and put me down by my father's body, where there was fire all around and I felt so thirstily and because of the heat, my legs got burnt.

(201)

Having seen the mass-massacre; gushing out blood like stream, most of the children were often haunted by terrible dream. They had night mares, that they woke up in the middle of the night feeling intense fear rising up around them. The bloody and monstrous events surrounded them in their nightmares. Butalia writes, "Another Sikh living in Bhogal in Delhi, who had actually been part of a killing spree as a child, would often wake in the night screaming. His wife said he could not forget the screams of the Muslims he had helped to kill" (*Silence* 204).

The children began disappearing--they were abducted--in a large proportion. The possibility of their abduction lay on missionaries--Christian missionaries--which

would convert them into Christianity. When Anis Kidwai visited Delhi's hospitals, she was stunned to see the less number of children and Butalia says: "Everywhere there was talk of hospitals being full of children, indeed every hospital was said to have a children's ward for abandoned children but when Kidwai got there, there were no children to be found. . . Perhaps they got well and went away. On could it be that the missionaries took them away ?" (206) . The last was not unreasonable fear. The conversion could happen to anyone. Missionaries were particularly suspect as children were specifically vulnerable to them. By the same token, children were picked up by gangs and organized cartels and sold into prostitution and begging. However, there were not enough records of beginning prostitution.

Although there is no way of confirming the loss of children in prostitution and begging, social workers from India were of the opinion that more Hindu and Sikh children had been picked up by Muslim families than the other way round. Shedding light on this, Damyanti Sahgal explains:

I was told that there was a Nawab in Gujrat who would sit on his throne and abducted girls would be paraded before him and he would choose the pretty ones. The ones who were young, he used to feel them, the older ones he would give away. The girls could not do anything-protest, nothing he would say; give such and such in category no. 1, in category no. 2 and the best ones, give them in the Zenana.
(qtd. in *Silence* 207)

Similarly Sahgal and other social workers said that the myth about the greater intelligence of Hindus and Sikhs was a commonly held one. According to them, the myth was based on the economic and intellectual success of Hindus and Sikhs. Hindus, according to this stereotype, could then be physically weak, but their mental

powers were strong while the Muslims were the opposites to which Sahgal provides testimony:

. . . . Then I heard that two boys, whose parents had been killed, they had been kept also. I heard about this, and I went and asked them to return the boys. They said, no, we will not give these boys back. I said, why you have a family of your own. She [one of the Nawab's wives] said, yes, I have three boys of my own. Then why have you kept these ? She said, there is a method behind this. We don't just simply pick up anybody, we don't just take the garbage. We choose who we take. Now these boys, they are studying alongside my boys, they have tuitions (the boys were brought before me and presented to me) and both of them and my children, they are all studying and then I will send them England because I have money. (207)

For Butalia, the abduction of children in the stereotype of being intelligent and smart is both tragic and ironic: "Just as the bodies of women became vehicles for the honour and dishonour of the race, so the bodies of children, and in this case male children, became the vehicles for the passage of something nebulous as intelligence, and a testimony to the insidious way in which stereotypes can take hold of people's consciousness" (207).

The question of the ownership of the post-abducted children posed a serious problem. The children born of mixed unions after March 1, 1947 were considered illegitimate children. This sort of date was ambivalent such as, a child born in, say June or July 1947, and of mixed parentage, had to have been conceived before the cut of date. So he/she entered the ambivalent space of illegitimacy. Similarly, the mother may have been pregnant when she was abducted and the child in her womb could

have been legitimate, but his/her arrival in the world after the cut-off date would then brand his/her as illegitimate child. To whom such children belong ? The question of ownership of the post abducted children posed the problem. Where to send such children--to the land of the mother or the father? The Indian Constituent Assembly, the mouth-piece of patriarchy stressed to put off the child to the land of father, saying that those children would be maltreated and sent off to an orphanage in Pakistan. Butalia writes: "A child born of a Muslim Mother and a Hindu father, what was there, asked one member of the constituent Assembly, where a debate raged on these issues, to guarantee that child would not be made to live like, a 'Kaffir' if he/she was sent off to Pakistan ?" (214).

The Indian government unilaterally decided about the guardianship of father. The patriarchal nexus claimed that abducted women were vulnerable to protect their illegitimate offsprings on the one hand, and on the other those children remained in the foreign land as servants and coerced to conversion to the alien religion. Being the descendants of Aryan, the father should be guardian of those otherwise illegitimate children. They further admitted that sending off children to Pakistan, in effect, was to over-ride the law of the land. The law was made under patriarchy's mores and norms. So, most of the people said that children should not be put under the definition of abducted persons. It was the tricky statement in order to keep off the children with their fathers. To this light, Butalia mentions:

Sardar Hukam Singh questioned the assumption that the mother was the person most concerned with the child. 'here may be cases', he said, where the mother might not be willing to take that child to Pakistan and the father may be very much anxious to keep the boy or girl here.' His own concern for them, as indeed that of many others in the

Assembly, was, according to him, a humanitarian one. If such children are illegitimate on this side, 'they will be illegitimate on the other side too and I think it would be a matter of shame for the girl to take the child to that place. If the girls take such children *they would be murdered or done away with.* (215-216)

Like Hukam, most of the members of Assembly supported the claim that their natural fathers would look after these children.

It does not mean that none raised the question of ownership of children with mother. Even it was said that abductors could not have the right to claim themselves as fathers. But such voice was wrapped under the veil of silence. Under the nude dance of patriarchal system, many pretensions were set up to up-hold its supremacy. For instance, Butalia writes: "Pandit Thakur Das Bhargava stressed that the children should be kept back in India because "all those children born in India are citizens of India" (qtd. in *Silence* 217).

Here , citizenship was patriarchy's pretensions to separate the children from the mother. One of the veteran members of the rescue operation, Kamlaben stressed to send the children with their mothers. She opined that it was the double suffering for women to leave off their children back. To this light she says: "I told Mridulaben that I would not attend because if I did, I would be constrained to say what I felt. I said to her, how can it be that a mother, who has already suffered so much, is now told that she can go across but she must leave her child ?" (215). But her voice was silenced by the majority voice--indeed, the voice of male.

Gynocentric take on recovery operation brings to the forth the masculinist politics embedded in the seemingly well-intentioned action of the State with regard to

abducted women and their children born out the rape. The Gynocentric view subverts the masculinist approach to the history of 1947.

Feminist Perception of Partition Violence in *The Skeleton*

The Skeleton by Amrita Pritam begins with the identity of the main female character, Pooro who shows mixed attitude to pregnancy as the novella begins. Pooro takes her pregnancy as a consequence of the forceful abduction. Being female, she expresses a marked rage out at her unwanted pregnancy. She compares herself with “a pea-pod inside which she carried a slimy white caterpillar” (1) She undergoes a severe conflict within--whether to accept or abandon the child which she carries in her womb.

However, Pooro cannot forsake the child. She accepts him at the nick of time, overwhelmed by maternal love. Her motherhood impels her to keep the child alive. Even though, she is overjoyed at her maternal love, her mind leads her to the crude reality of the abduction by Rashida, a Muslim boy. The child whom she has delivered is the seed of her abductor. Whenever the boy begins to suck her breast, she feels:

As if the boy was drawing the milk from her veins and was sucking it out with force, just as his father had used force to take her away from her own home. All said and done, he was his father's son, his father's flesh and blood and shaped like him. He had been planted inside her by force, nourished inside her womb against her will--and was now sucking the milk from her breast, whether she liked it or not. (13)

No doubt the child at the same time is the product of her blood and flesh, it reminds her how its father chokes her desire and aspiration. Yet her motherhood requires her to rear up the child.

The gradual acceptance of the by Pooro-turned- Hamida is due to the play of motherhood in her psychology. However, the trop of motherhood is the patriarchal

construction. Amrita Pritam, by privileging motherhood, confines herself within the boundary of motherhood set by patriarchy; yet she exhibits the atrocity of gender violence and uncurls the extreme animosity and malevolence of men to women when she says: “this boy’s father...all mankind...all men...men who gnaw a woman’s body like a dog gnawing a bone and like a dog eat it up” (13). The love-hate refrain with reference to the father of the child gives on until it gives way for Hamida’s love for the abductor-husband. In this regard, in the similar vein, Beerendra Pandey comments:

The stories by the partition generation women writers such as Lalithambika Antharajnam, Amrita Pritam and Jamila Hashmi also underscore the irrationality of the violence on the women. One of the ways whereby these writers underline the absurdity of gender violence is by highlighting the rationality of the battered victims in choosing to live with their abductors because of the demand of motherhood—a demand that remains within the realm of patriarchy—in the texts. (106)

Pritam, through the deployment of the trope of motherhood, however, depicts the greatness of women. Her protagonist is equipped with humanity, though she is herself victim at the hands of the patriarchy. And yet, she helps the victims to her best of her capability, providing food and clothes.

The protagonist’s humanity comes to the fore when she often meets helpless people like Kammo who is only a twelve years old girl who has to fetch water from the well at a fragile and tender age. Hamida, seeing her misery: “wanted to take the heavy pitcher” from her shoulder (22). Both of the women intend to share feelings with each other.

The sharing of the feelings at a time when violence of a most ferocious nature had overtaken their lives. It shows that one woman can truly comprehend the problem and difficulty of another woman. When Hamida replies that it is not too late to worry about, Kammo undergoes an inner transformation. Kammo is a poor female child who is deserted by her own father after her mother dies. Pritam here ironizes the so-called role of man who plays double-role—asserting themselves that they are the rescuer of women, who will fight for their protection till the last breath of their lives, but whenever the time come they turn their back to their women. In the novella, after Kammo's mother dies, she, obviously, needs much more warmth of love and care. But "she was abandoned by her own father" (23). , Pritam here remarks: "people often say that when a person's mother dies, even a real father becomes a step-father" (23). Thus, the authress highlights the role of mother against the callousness of father, thus subverting the role of father as protector in the patriarchal Hindu society.

Swimming against the tide of men's cruelty, Pritam, by means of her central character, Hamida has sought to reinterpret the concept of humanity and demonstrates how far women are successful to follow its path. Hamida, an exploited woman, descends like an angel from sky to console Taro who is in the mist of sorrow. It is Hamida to whom Taro can express herself entirely and to the fullest of her heart. When Taro is exhausted with the pack of shattered and tormented feelings, Hamida acknowledges her pain and begins "to press the girl's limbs and massage the soles of her feet". (28). Unlike Hamida, Taro seems to be a bold character in terms of her rebellious nature. Taro fights against the patriarchy and seems to be assertive to break the bond of marriage—a noose around women--which is pretension for men to exploit women: "This is a big fraud. I have been swindled.... I was never married....

You are lying; the whole lot of you are liars....why do you hold me? Let me alone. Get away from me..." She punctuated her words by kicking her heels in the ground (28).

After listening to the heart-rending story of Taro, Hamida turns her eyes to her own life. Then she comes to see signs of humanity in her abductor, Rashida. Taro's story makes her own home appear like a haven of refuge. Rashida has married her and given her proper respects. How she cannot become his slave for life! She has won a completely changed attitude to her abductor-husband:

Hamida wanted to forget that Rashida had abducted and wronged her. She fervently longed to make love to him. After all, he was her husband and the father of her son. This alone was true; this alone mattered. The rest was a mere prattle and a lie (29) Rashida appears much better than other many men who acted most savagely.

The utmost savagery of men, Pritam exposes with the tinge of irony is the mad woman who is raped and impregnated by a man. It is the extreme state of draining of humanity in men. Women living in Sakkar become stunned after seeing unusual swell of mad women's abdomen. They rage: "What sort of man could have done this to her? The women of Sakkar asked each other. They ground their teeth in anger....He must be savage beast to put a mad woman in this condition" (31). To Hamida's mind, men became the walking and thinking vultures who did not leave women in peace—even a discarded and senseless mad woman: "She is neither young or nor attractive, she is just a lump of flesh without a mind to go with it...a living skeleton...a lunatic skeleton...a skeleton picked to its bones by kites and vultures, thought Hamida" (32). Through this event, Pritam exposes the brutality of people at the time of partition in 1947. Men of each religion were like kites and vultures that

would not leave anyone including a mad woman. It foregrounds how far men had succumbed: they would rape even a beggar woman. A more despairing and hopeless note for Hamida is her encounter with the dead body of the mad woman under the shade of tree who has delivered a child. Amrita Pritam here lays bare the animalistic and barbaric instinct as governing factors raped under the veil of saviour. Pritam further states that men kill, disintegrate and destroy where as women nurture and love. Hamida out of compassion, love and humanity brings the child to her house. The upbringing of the orphan child in a Muslim family does not go well with the Hindu patriarchy. Pritam here lays bare the vile nature of Hindu patriarchy when the Hindu leaders of the locality discuss about the ownership of madwoman and confirmation of her religion. The irony is that when the beggar woman was alive, nobody showed any concern to her but after her death, her child becomes a matter of great concern for the Hindu patriarchy:

The Hindu called a meeting to discuss the matter. Are we sure that the woman was a Hindu? Asked one. I have heard it with my own ears. She was the daughter of a rich merchant of Lala-Musa. Her husband's second wife mixed some sort of poison in her food which made her lose her mind, replied another. (34-35)

Pritam delves deep into the archive of social history of India and exposes the social tension tacitly. She explores how identity-based community consciousness frames and drives onward the social life to which each individual gets succumbed. In fact, Indian society is clearly divided and is largely organized on a communal basis. Religion permeates the entire life of the country. Social conduct is much influenced by religious practices. Pritam knows that the political problem of India is at once communal besides economic. Political right without communal one is meaningless.

No scheme for the future constitution of India can be generally acceptable unless it provides a solution for the communal differences.

Pritam contrasts in her narrative the way Pooro acts and the way men react. Pooro-Hamida, with her feminine sensibility, adopts the foundling and raises him like her own child:

She had nurtured the tiny bundle of skin and bone with her own breast for six months, till he too had started to look as fat and chubby as her own Javed. He had come to look upon Hamida as his mother; his eyes followed her as she moved about the house....why had not the Hindus thought of taking the baby on the first day? Why had they let her spend six months of sleepless nights? Why had they let her swallow palm full of cumin-seed and turn the blood in her veins to milk in her breast?

(36-37)

The narrative exposes the detestation of a woman towards the kind of justice—communal upliftment—men exercise in the society. It is the play of irony at the same time because humanity and brotherhood are men's invention to which women are deeply attached whereas men are busy to slaughter each other for the maintenance of statuesque. As the narrative puts it:

We don't want this business to get out of hand, spoke of one of the Hindus, a little gently. The child is not related either to you or any of us. This is however a matter of religion and one should not stand in its way. Why put your life in jeopardy? If somebody take it into his head to do you harm, don't say we didn't warn you? You should realize what is best for you and give us the child of your own free will. If you

want to be reimbursed for the expense you have incurred, we will pay you. (38)

Through the passage above, Pritam ridicules the nationalist leaders of India who, during partition, advocates that Hindus are less communal and the Hindu people get entangled in communal riots because Muslim's coerce them. The passage above is also the answer to the accusation made by the *Organizer*, mouthpiece of the Hindu Mahasabha, which charges only Muslims for the loot, rape, slaughter and arson of the 1947 riot. The *Organizer* does not see the evil passions of Hindu men as being harmful, weak and lustful. Ironically, the *Organizer* insists that the Hindu mind is broad and can do justice to others but not bold enough to demand justice. Hindus are good, it says, because they have a great tradition of tolerance and non-violence. Such magnanimous culture, it viewed, made Hindu male tolerant and civilized. But Pritam exerts the crude reality—Hindu men were like kites and vultures.

When the child is sure to be snatched away from Hamida, she feels deserted, empty and becomes hopeless to make any ideas and “it reminded her of the day when she had been snatched away from her mother, separated from her father and estranged from her own brothers and sisters”(39). Here, motherhood bursts forth in Hamida and the child becomes the integral part of her life because “the foundling had become a part of her own flesh and blood. Hamida, ran indoors, picked up the child and clasped him to her bosom” (39). Here, Pritam deploys the trope of motherhood to trivialized men—how indifference this show in the plight of others—Hamida and child and ironize their attitude. One out of crowd shouts “Hurry up! It's getting late, ordered one of the Hindus in a harsh tone. We have other things to do.”(39) But the permission of the motherhood by Pritam in the story seems to give space to patriarchal definitions of women's role and is seen in the text as being co-opted by the dominant nationalism

propagating that very ideology. Amrita Pritam here subscribes to an idealistic vision of Gandhi's position. He believes that "It is only in acts of well doing, even as the world goes mad, that humanism resides." (Pandey 108). More significantly, the communal riot of 1947 parodies the concept of humanism as stated publicly by Gandhi asserting each individual to act out on humanitarian ground. However, his men-folk cut in the fabric of slaughter, rape, abduction, arson etc, putting aside the Gandhi and humanism. Ironically, a subaltern female character Pooro, deprived of any role in national level politics copes with the troubled situation with humanism. The Hindu men, eventually, revisit Hamida because they cannot maintain the health of a child who is "in a state of coma" (41). They say "take him, he is yours!" (41). Soon after a week of the hand over "the villagers saw the foundling gurgling and playing merrily in Hamida's courtyard" (41). Through nationalistic framework, Pritam is to express her detest at the disruption of the harmonious flow of humanity, of the private space of women and she tries to reestablish the continuity of the order which is shared by the people of the time—fraught with the familiar code of women's motherhood and compassion. Hamida's wavering, which encapsulates the possibility of her consciousness that threatens to swerve away from the courts of continuity and motherhood is finally absorbed into the project of the narrative and became emblematic of national spaces. Similarly, Amrita Pritam turns to the 18th century sufi mystic Warris Shah, in her love poem Heer-Ranjha. Pritam calls on him to speak from the grave. Like the narrator in Antharjanam's story "A Leaf in a Strom," the poetic persona, marked as female yet clearly hermaphrodite, whose lyrical tone is "saturated with its national responsibility," come across with the disaster that infects the world, Pritam turns to Warris Shah in an ambiguous manner which is at once an admission of her inadequacy and inability and a clear note of approval "of the

writers as the bardic gatherer of a people”(Tharu 77). Like her ancestor, Pritam invokes and gathers people as she speaks. Her task is made all the more urgent by the brutality and chaos around her is explicit “heavy with venom were the winds, poisoning the song of each branch into a snake (77). Today Amrita Pritam like her guru has to make much cry she frames a structure of feeling and binds her readers together into the unity imaged in her voice.

Besides, Pritam's relentless seeking for harmony and order against the backdrop of violence--the riots in 1947-- the novella, through the economic use of words, succeeds in representing loot, arson, killings, abduction, rape, etc. Such large-scale violence, as Pritam perceives, is the resultant consequence of the tension between two rival parties--Hindus and Sikhs Versus Muslims:

Just as a peeled orange falls apart into many segments, the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs of the Punjab broke away from each other. As clouds of dust float over the roads, rumours of "incidents" began to float over the countryside. It was said that men were being slaughtered in hundreds, rows of houses were being burnt down, neighbours were sitting each other's throats. No one's life or property was safe (49). The quote above mocks at the celebration of the

Independence Day. 15 Aug. 1947 marks the wrenching experience for a subaltern like Hamida who exhumes the disarray, resultant migrations and flooded of refugee in convoy from the vault of Independence:

She heard wild stories of what was happening in the cities. The streets ran with blood and were said to be cluttered with human corpses, with no one to bury or cremate them.; the sink from putrefying flesh hung in the air spreading pestilence. In some cities, barricades were put up to

divide the Muslim zones from the Hindu. News came of battered convoys of Muslims coming across the frontier. Many had died in India; many had fallen by the wayside; and many others had succumbed to their wounds after their journey was over. . . . Thus passed August 15 of the year 1947. (50)

Apart from physical damage--massacre and arson, the women--were the most vulnerable and exposed to molestation by men during the communal holocaust of 1947. The statistics by Butalia makes the point clear: "In Doberan 70 women were abducted, in Kahuta this figure was as high as 500, in Harial 40, . . . and it is said that in Rawalpindi alone between 400 and 500 were abducted: (Community 41). Pritam depicts the abduction in the novella poignantly through the eyes of her protagonist. As soon as the rumours about other of abductions reach Hamida, a volcanic eruption takes place within her: "H [er] ears burned with rage when she heard of the abduction of Hindu girls by Muslims and of Muslim girls by Hindus" (50). Pritam here, through the economy of the description about abduction by both parties, makes authentic balance which scores over many partition writers including Chaman Nahal and Bapsi Sidhwa whose representation suffers from an inauthentic balance of the violence perpetrated by both the parties—the Indians and Pakistanis. In this regard, Kartar Singh Duggal remarks:

It is easy to write about a traumatic experience, like the partition of the Punjab, and consequent dislocation, torture and misery it inflicted upon the affected people. And yet it is not easy as it appears. Many of the writers and artists who attempted to write on this theme seem to have been (arrived away so much by what they had witnessed that they lost all sense of balance. The tendency is to hold one side, or the other,

totally responsibly for the holocaust. If the writer was a Hindu, he laid the entire blame at the door of his Muslim neighbours and if it happened to be a Muslim, he held the Hindus or the Sikhs totally responsible for all those shameful happenings. (167)

Quite remarkably, Pritam not only steps back from blaming any one community but she also redeems a Muslim man though an abductor in the beginning. By his helping Lazo is evacuated. Hamida expresses the goodness of her own abductor with Lazo: Rashida certainly committed a crime in abducting me. But thereafter he has been good to me. If he had not helped me, how could I have found you and brought you away ? (69)

In the melee severed by the brutality of the abductors, Lazo and a girl are trampled. It becomes more urgent for Hamida to rescue them and send in their places. The spontaneous love and compassion that gush forth erupted from the cockles of her heart make her take the girl in her custody. She lifts the girl from the sugarcane field. Hamida takes the girl in the refugee camp and hands her over to the custody of Ramchand: "I want to leave this girl in your custody. Take her into your custody. When you get to India, try to locate her parents" (54). After saving the girl from band of goondas, she remains anxious about the suffering of other thousands of women who are abducted by men of other religion in which accompanies her own sister in law:

Hamida spent many nights staring at the beams of the roof. In her thoughts she wondered over the plight of the women - - People's daughter, sisters and wives who were forcibly held by strangers under roofs like hers. Amongst many such, one was Lazo, Ram Chand's sister and her own sister in law. (55)

Seeing the on-going violence, Hamida's humanistic concern makes her look at it poignantly: "Could the earth soaked with human blood produce golden corn ? Would women whose sisters had been dishonoured bear sons for the despoilers ?" (51)

It is obvious that women were abducted and raped which often turned to forcible conversion or marriage. It is done with the purpose of outraging both family and community honour and religious sentiment. In the novella, Rashida confesses that he uses poor as an instrument to avenge the Pooro's father: "Your uncle kept my fathers' sister in his house for three nights My grand father made my uncles swear that they would avenge these insults" (11). Similarly, Lazo is abducted to outrage the religious sentiments. Abductor of Lazo's mother says "she was a Hindu girl. When the Hindus began to flee the village, my son abducted her" ! (65).

Women were also abducted by men of each religion to keep up the religious pride and uphold the communal honour of their abductor. In order to retrieve the abducted women into the original home and fold, both nations passed a functional law known as The Recovery Operation Act, which, however, turned out to be unfriendly to the abducted women. In many instances, the rescue and recovery was carried out forcibly to rehabilitate women into their natal home which both states defined in terms of religion. So, it is seen as the process of legitimation of patriarchal order in a deeply fragile post-colonial state. Suddenly, an abducted woman became a Sita—the pure and chaste wife of lord Ram—in the eyes of the Indian state. Pritam ironizes the turnaround through Hamida who frowns at the chameleon nature of the patriarchal Indian society:

A sense of resentment surged in Hamida's mind. When it had happened to her, religion had become an insurmountable obstacle, neither her parents nor her in laws to be had been willing to accept her. And now the same religion had become so accommodating" ! (58).

That Pooro is right the chameleon nature of the Indian patriarchy is underscored by Lazo's disappointment at the prospect of reaching India. Being a Hindu girl, she knows her limitation abduction. She finds it impossible to go back to India because "I am no good for anyone now. No one will accept me" (68). In her testimony, Butalia says: Sometimes the women themselves resisted out of . . . non-acceptance ("Community" 48). Similarly Aparna Basu remarks: "A Hindu woman felt that she had been rendered impure, had become sullied, was no longer Pativrata (270). In the novel, Taro, too, internalizes that she is soiled and is no longer *Pativrata*. Taro's hopeless temperament is triggered with the narrative juxtaposition of Pooro's abduction. Taro knows how her husband's family disowns Pooro after her abduction only because she soils the community honour. Therefore, Lazo questions her own acceptance by her family through the plight of Pooro: "What wrong had you done that no one of your family has acknowledged you to this day" (68). Pooro - turned – Hamida, however, informs her about the changing scenario and government's proclamation and reassures "Lazo, someone is bound to come for your. Today no one can taunt another. People are taking back their sisters and daughters" (69). Yet Hamida does not choose to go back to India, even though she gets the chance to go to her original home. Even her fiancé seems to be accommodating. Her brother tells her to go with her: "Pooro, said her brother, grabbing her by the arm. This is your only chance. . ." (73). But she has already married with a Muslim man who has offered her love and respect which her own family in the past has refused to provide.

In course of time, she starts loving him. She has also given birth to a child. So, clasping her own son, she rather insists her brother accept Lazo who has abducted. In her acceptance, poor will be as content as she is in her own home. She says: "When Lazo is welcomed back in her home, then you can take it that Pooro has also returned to you. My home is now in Pakistan" (73).

Hamida gets opportunity to use her free will in choosing her home, but most of the women are deprived of their free will. In the novella, most often they are forcibly evacuated. For many Indian women, marriage is like abduction because usually they practice arrange marriage in which women are exposed to unknown man. For Butalia too the marriage to unknown man is not different from the abduction. So, she asks: "Why then this assault be different ? simply because the man belonged to different religion ?" So, many abducted women used to question " why should I return, why are you particular to take me to India, what is left in me now of religion or chastity ?" (Silence, 117). But they did not get chance to remain in the new home. The state used all the measures to bring them back to the original home. Butalia remarks: "Despite the woman's reluctance (and not all women were thus reluctant, many were happy to be recovered and restored to their families) to leave, considerable pressure, sometimes even force, was brought to bear on them to 'convince' them to do so." (Silence 120). In order to confirm her point Butalia brings to discussion the story of Buta Singh and Zainab. Though Zainab is sold to Buta Singh, she is married to him finally. They have a family and two young children. But a search party on the look out for abducted women traces Zainab. She has no choice in the matter and forced to leave, which is the reality of that time. But in the *Skeleton*, Hamida chooses to remain in Pakistan out of her own volition. Pritam here has deliberately brought twist in the story because she has to show humanism in her protagonist. Moreover, in

so doing, Pritam stands against the wave of partition. In fact, retrieving the abducted women to her original home was the idea of nationalist leaders who reiterated to do so in order to justify the partition. But, for Pritam, partition is an injustice for women in particular.

Though Pritam naturalizes the traditional framework of nationalist patriarchy in which a woman is valorised and worshipped with the coinage of the phrases--motherhood, wife hood, etc., she questions at the acceptance of choice given by men--nationalist leaders--at the closure of her narrative. In the novel, Hamida slams the offer by her brother to go with him to India in particular and the offer by Indian government in general. Indeed, Pritam is quite bold and authentic in trivializing and ironizing the masculinist attitude--double-dealings--towards motherhood and humanity. Pritam disowns the call of Gandhi and Nehru's plea for abducted women to come back to India and merge in the old system. The plea, for Pritam, becomes loaded with her feminism. Pooro remains in Pakistan because of her love and compassion towards her son and the abductor-turned husband. Moreover, Pritam's narrative closure--Hamida's disowning to be Pooro again-- shows Pritam's deliberate frowning and disapproval of the partition of India in 1947 on religious basis.

Feminist Critique of the Partition Violence in *Cracking India*

The novel captures one of the most decisive moments in the history of unified India, which unfolds partition in a very compelling way through the perspective of an eight years old subaltern female character, a disabled girl--Lenny. According to Tariq Rahman, "The novel is an imagination response to the traumatic events of the partition of India in 1947, and Sidhwa has use surrealistic techniques somewhat like Salman Rushdie to make it an adequate symbol for the effect of external events on human beings" (qtd. in Jha and Kumar 210). She recounts the partition violence from the the perspective of a polio ridden girl, Lenny who tries to vomit out the wrenching experience.

The plot develops in accordance with Lenny's development from childhood to adolescence which coincides with India's struggle for independence from Britain and the accompanying partitioning of the country into India and Pakistan. The play of communal consciousness in the people of the India before partition is exposed through Lenny in her visit to the village of Imam Din. People are alarmed and shocked at hearing the news and rumours of communal conflicts—the conflicts between Hindus and Muslim--in some major areas like Noakhali, Bihar, etc: "In the stated lull the village mullah clears his throat. 'My brothers' he says. And as our eyes turn to him, running frail fingers through his silky white beard, he says, 'I hear there is trouble in the cities... Hindus are being murdered in Bengal... Muslims in Bihar. It's strange'" (64). The village Chaudhary blames the British for deliberately creating a situation communal violence. Sidhwa here is critical and ironic towards the role of the English policy—divide and rule-- the subjects of India. However, the village Chaudhary assures that no matter how pervasive the riot is in cities," it won't affect our lives"(64). Sidhwa keenly perceives that before the conflict Muslims and Sikhs

used to live in peaceful harmony, celebrate and even participate in each other's festivals such as *Baisakhi* and *ID*. They would help each other in the time of need. In the meeting, Imam Din says to Sikh Granthi: "As long as our Sikh brothers are with us, what have we to fear? I think you are right, brothers, the madness will not infect the villages. Similarly Jagjeet Singh swears: "If needs be we'll protect our Muslim brothers with our lives' " (65). According to the common people, it justifies the selfish and crooked nature of nationalist leaders who, for the accumulation of power, attempt to manipulate the citizen in the name of religion.

Sidhwa stresses that religious division is artificial creation. The religious and cultural differences are deliberately fostered. Sidhwa shows how religious differences are deliberately manipulated, paving the way for partition: Imam Din and Yousuf tuning into religion zealots; they make it a point that they will take Friday afternoon off for the Jumha prayers on Fridays they set about preparing themselves ostentatiously. Hari and Moti--the sweepers and his wife Muchho, and their untouchable daughter Papoo, become even more untouchables they are entrenched deeper in their low Hindu caste while the Shanthas and the Daulatram, Brahmins like Nehru, are dehumanized by their lofty caste and caste marks. Sidhwa sensitively portrays the political anxiety and social insecurity which was shared by all the divided people during the partition days. The readers are made aware of the changing communal pattern of the society in which people from different walks of life suffer from a sense of insecurity. Jokes developed to ridicule other religions suddenly become favourite and people strangely are made conscious of their own religious practices.

The sudden religious alignment of the people fans the communal hatred so much that the violence that unfolds becomes horrific. The communal holocaust of

1947 uprooted and forced to migrate them to alien land. The time was rife with the mass-massacre, mass-slaughter, killings, arson, and fire etc. Sidhwa gives a graphic picture of such a devastation by describing the total damage of the Muslim village of Pir Pindo where Lenny visited before partition. Ranna, survivor of the attack, describes the mass murder that takes place:

Ranna saw his uncle beheaded. His older brothers, his cousins. The Sikhs were among them like hairy vengeful demons, wielding bloodied swords, dragging them out as a handful of Hindus, darting about the fringes, their faces vaguely familiar, pointed out and identified the Musslmans by name. He felt a blow cleave the back of his head and the warm flow of blood. Ranna fell just inside the door on a tangled pole of unrecognizable bodies. Someone fell on him drenching him in blood. Left for dead, Ranna comes to and hears the shrieks and wails of women. Outside their courtyard he hears the anguished sobs of a woman, and at intervals her screams "you'll kill me! hai Allah Y'all will kill me!"(202).

Even in Lahore homes are looted and burnt. There are riots everywhere. Lenny watches English soldiers being chased by a group of Sikhs:

Their wild long hair and beard rampant large, fevered ayes glowing in fanatic faces...roaring slogans, holding curved swords, shoring up a maniac wave of violence that sets Ayah to trembling as she holds me tight. A naked child, twitching on a spear struck between her shoulders, is waved like a flog, her scream less mouth agape she is staring straight up at me. (134-135)

Ayah moans at the horror of the scene and collapses, but the violence excites many

including the Ice-candy man. Shalmi with its Hindu population is set ablaze:

It is like a gigantic fire marks display in which stiff figures looking like spread- eagled stick- dolls leap into the air, black against the magenta furnace. Trapped by the spreading flames the panicked Hindus rush in droves from one end of the street to the other. Many disappear down the smoking lanes. Some collapse in the street.

Charred limbs and burnt logs are falling from the sky (137).

When Lenny finally starts sobbing and screaming unable to bear the bloody melee, Ice-candy-man tells her and Ayah “you must make your hearts stout...The fucking bastards! They thought they’d drive us out of Bhatti! We’ve shown them!” (137).

In a world gone topsy- turvy friends turn into foes. The Ayah and her group of admirers gather at the wrestler’s restaurant. The free friendly atmosphere of previous gathering is however missing--even Lenny is perturbed by the constant quarrels and arguments among friends. Religion has become more important than the individual. Lenny closes her eyes in the hope that they will open a “suddenly changed world”(138). But the arguments about the division of the land continue in a vociferous manner. The Sikhs the Hindus and the Muslims look at the issue from different angles. The Ice-candy-man castigates Nehru as being the sly one stating that he would “walk off with the lion’s share” (141).

Communal riots have become so threatening and alarming that in an attempt to save their lives, many convert. Some Hindus become Muslims, some Christians: “Hari has had his bodhi saved. He has become a Muslim. He has also had his Penis circumcised Hari has adapted his name to his new faith: he wants us to call him Himant Ali. He has also changed his dhoti for the substantial gather of the drawstring Shalwar”(172-173). Out of fear, some Hindus and Sikhs have already fled. Lenny’s

neighbour Daulatram has left the house and fled into India. Lenny says, “We climb to the roof of the Daulatram’s two story house to watch. The Daulatrams flee”(148); even Shankar has gone a far. The aforesaid events crystallizes the dislocation and up rooting.

Migration to the alien territory is, however, fraught with extreme danger. The wide spread train massacre on both sides manifests as carnivalesque of violence. Sidhwa presents this large-scale massacre with the economic use of words. In the novel, when Masseur, Hari, Sher Singh and Gardener are discussing Gurdaspura’s assimilation into India, suddenly the Ice-candy-man appears—dried up and shriveled , looking breathless and frantic, he tells them of the train from Gurdaspura which is loaded only with dead bodies: ‘ “ A train from Gurdaspur has just come in, he announces, panting . Everyone’ in it is dead. Butchered.’ ‘They are all Muslims. There are no young women among the dead! Only two gunny–bags full a woman’s breast”’()Sidhwa remains biasedly one sided in her depiction of the violence. She foregrounds the violence perpetuated by the Indians on the one hand and on the other hand she tries to background the violence wrecked by the Pakistanis. Her politics of demonizing the Indians becomes clear when she portrays in these words:

They are like swarms of locusts, moving in marauding bands of thirty and forty thousands. They are killing all Muslims. Setting fires, looting, parading the Muslim women naked through the streets – raping and mutilating them in the centre of villagers and in mosques. The Bias, flooded by melting snow and the monsoon, is carrying hundreds of corpses. There is an intolerable stench where the bodies caught in the bends, have piled up (209)

It depicts that Sikhs and Hindus are equally tarred with the same brush of brutality

and monstrosity.

Sidhwa's pro-Pakistani bias gets further solidified when she stresses that Jinnah is no longer a monster and notes that in the atrocities committed during partition, both Muslim and Sikhs indulged in violence. Sidhwa makes her Pakistani identity unmistakably clear. She suggests how partition favoured India over Pakistan:

The Hindus are being favoured over the Muslim by the remnants of the Raj. Now that its objective to divide India is achieved, the British favour Nehru over Jinnah. Nehru is Kashmiri, they grant him Kashmir. Spurning logic. Defying rationale, ignoring the consequence of bequeathing a Muslim state to the Hindus: while Jinnah futilely protests. "States men can not eat their words!(169).

Sidhwa's pro-Pakistan political stance in the novel can be dramatized through her repeated comments upon Gandhi and Nehru. Her parody of Gandhi comes through Lenny who says: "He is knitting ..., surrounded by women. He is small, dark shrivelled old' (94). Lenny traduces Gandhi by comparing the Mahatma with Hari, her gardener: "He looks just like Hari, our gardener, expect he has a disgruntled, disgusted and irritable look and no one's dare pull of his dhoti! He wears only the loincloth and his black and thin torso is naked" (94). She perceives Gandhi someone like "a clown or demon" and she wonders "why he's so famous" (96). Lenny realizes that he fuses everything that is feminine, funny, gentle and loving. Sidhwa goes to the extent of accusing Gandhi of being violent through the snide of the butcher who tells the Ayah: "That non- violent violence mongers--your precious Gandhi Jee"(100). Similarly, Lenny speaks of Nehru in derogatory terms: "Nehru wears red, carnations in the batten holes of his ivory jackets. He bandies words with lady mouth batten and

is presumed to be a lover He is in the prime of his Brahmin manhood! (169-170).

Likewise, the Akali's led by Master Tara Singh, are termed as "a bloody bunch of murdering fanatics" (72).

Sidhwa's anger against the Indian leaders, most patriarchy Gandhi—is because of her unhappiness with their sanitizing in the narratives of 1947. In her interview with David Montenegro, she remarks: "The main motivation grew out of my reading of a good deal of literature on the partition of India and Pakistan....what has been written has been written by the British and Indians. Naturally they reflected their bias. And they have I felt after I'd researched the book, been unfair to the Pakistanis. As a writer, as a human being, one just does not tolerate injustices. I felt whatever little I could do to correct an injustice I would like to do, I have just let facts speak for themselves, and through my research I found out what the facts were".(Qtd in Rashmi Gaur 47)

Despite Sidhwa's overt pro-Pakistani bias, *Cracking India* still 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 history text books of both India and Pakistan— a gap that Sidhwa plays through the texture of *Cracking India*. Sidhwa denounces patriarchal system in which men make women the target of their violence. Women were the most vulnerable during communal riots of 1947 partition. Most of the women internalized the possible disaster--their abduction. At such a critical time, it was common for a girl to be abducted by a man of another religion. Both the Indians and the Pakistan identified women as representative of their community or nation; dishonoring women meant dishonoring the particular community or nation. The mob approaching Lenny's home is Muslims; when her mother sees them come, she remarks: "Ayah is Hindu the

situation with all its implication is clear. She must hide” (190). The Ayah is, however, abducted by the Ice-candy man. The Ayah’s abduction by Ice-candy man can be seen “as 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 honor and religious sentiment”. (Menon & Bhasin’s *Abducted women* 5)

What ever 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 abduction, paraded 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 purely of the race women were forced to have sex with her of other religion. The Ayah too meets the same fate. A gang of hooligans rape her. Finally, she is made a prostitute. When godmother criticizes the Ice-candy man for leaving the Ayah in Hira Mandy, Ice-candy man says, "I am her slave, Baijee .I worship her. She can come to no harm with me” (260). But godmother scolds him bitterly, accusing; “You permit her to be raped by butchers, drunks and goondas and say; she has come to no harm”(260).

An abducted woman often such as the Ayah was sold in markets like commodity to the rich people; sometimes they were offered to police offices in order to appease them. There was the system of putting the various hierarchical grades to the abducted women. On the basis of the importance, they would be distributed to almost anybody:

The good mall (goods) would be shared among the police and the army, the second rate stuff would go to every one 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 decor, or they would be handed over to police offices in some places to please them”.

(Kidwai qtd. in Butalia, *Community* 48-49)

Abduction and subsequent rapes made the female victims get reduces to the status of fallen women. They felt themselves ashamed of meeting their relatives because “after seeing so many men’s faces, this daughter of Hindustan, how will she ever look at the faces of her parents, her husband?” (Butalia, *Community* 49). The women’s fear was real. Their non-acceptance by Hindu families became a major problem. Anis Kidwai, Kamlabehn Patel, Damyanti Sahgal, who worked with abducted women indicate that the reintegration of abducted women into the new nation was almost a hopeless scheme. The women felt that they were soiled through forced sexual union with other men. They internalized that they had diluted the purity of the family and the community as well. In *Cracking India* Hamida, too feels that she is a fallen woman because she has been abducted and consumed by men. Her wailing and grief is similar to what Anis Kidwai found in transit camps at Delhi: “The predicament of these women, an oppressed woman, one who has always lived in Purdha, one who has , before this, not looked at a man other than her father and her brothers and who now believes herself to be a loose woman, a bad woman, because she has lived with another man for months, she has lost her honour ... who will take her back?” (Qtd in Butalia, *Community* 57-58) Even the Ayah’s own fate is not different from Hamida and other women in the camps. Godmother desists that “She has a deeply irrevocable sense of shame. In fact, she has nothing to be ashamed of. They have shamed her”(266). Such aforesaid make us clear that Ayah is virtually dead. She is like a walking image from which the soul has already extracted. Lenny finds out:

Her vacant eyes are bigger than ever : wide-opened with what they've seen and felt : wider even than the frightening saucers and dinner plates describe the watchful orbs of the three days who guard the wicked Tinder Box witches' treasures in underground chambers. Colder than the ice that lurks behind the hazel in Ice-Candy-man's beguiling eyes. (272)

Though Ayah is soiled by Ice-Candy-man, she refuses to respond to his offers of love and marital status--in other words, of respectability after rape. She becomes resolute to go to Amritsar, place of her own community. She pleads Godmother to lift her from the gutter of Hira Mandi--brothel-- and send her to Amritsar because she feels impossible to stay with Ice-Candy man who has actually sold her like goods and chattel. He is the person with whom she has trusted and has grown up friendly relationship: how can she forget the distrust created by her own nearest acquaintance ? Ayah determines to go to India despite of her being fallen women, irrevocably ashamed of but does not like to remain with Ice-Candy-man. In this regard, Kavita Daiya remarks:

Ayah knew that her abduction, rape, forced conversion, and marriage would mark, for her family and other in India, her as impure, polluted, and dishonoured. In this context, by refusing to fall in love with and marry her abductor (as often happened with abducted women) and choosing to return to her family in India, she insists on being other to both social spaces of kinship (23).

Withdrawn from the emotion, Godmother rationally suggests Ayah to cope up with the new situation and tell her to "go on and the business of living buries the debris of

our pasts" (273). Godmother's statement make us clear that Ayah's traumatized mind cannot be healed entirely wherever she goes.

Besides, Godmother suggestion reveals that she knows the Indian patriarchal system in which many people even in the post independence era persistently held women as embodied representatives of the communal honour. Her abduction, rape or conversion mark as the impurity and dishonour of the community. Restoring them back to their own fold despite their position of fallen woman is very difficult for the patriarchal system. The testimony of Butalia puts it:

[. . .] for several of those who did allow themselves to be rescued or who were forcibly 'recovered', there was another trauma to face. 'Their families, who had earlier field reports and urged the government to recover their women, were now no longer willing to take them back (Butalia, *Silence* 126).

Even the social workers who assisted the operation of recovery act admit that "the main obstruction facing over rescue parties today is the fear harboured by the majority of abducted Hindu women that they may not be received back again into the fold of their society (Qtd. in Butalia, *Silence* 126-127). Such live testimonies hint at the possible rejection of Ayah in her own community. Internalizing the concept of non-acceptance, Godmother suggests her remain in Pakistan.

Most of the women were recovered with in a year or after many years to their families. But some of them remained in the *Ashram* because their families did not come to take them. Such Ashrams were set up in north Indian cities to house abducted women: In Jalandhar, Amritsar, Karnal, Delhi. Godmother's confused mentality about the Ayah's adoption in her family can be underscored by The testimony of Butalia, she remarks:

Some of [*Ashrams*] were meant to hold women in transit until their families took them back. Often, families didn't; the women were now soiled. The family had made its adjustments to their absence, why should they have to readjust, make new space and take in a person who had become polluted ? So, the ashrams became permanent homes for the women. (Silence 129)

Despite Godmother's unwillingness, she and Lenny's mother, at her expressed desire, arrange for her to be safely escorted across the border to her family in India. Lenny ferrets out the account of the Ayah's extradition from Hira Mandi by Godmother in heroic and adventurous manner:

The long and diverse reach of Godmother's tentacular arm is clearly evidence. She set an entire conglomerate in motion immediately after our visit with Ayah and single-handedly engendered the social and moral climate of retribution and justice required to rehabilitate our fallen Ayah. (285)

The Ayah's determination to go to India, despite the threat of being a fallen woman which may other her from the nexus of patriarchy, still, is her desired choice to remain in no man's land of patriarchy. Her departure to India does not syntax the patriarchal continuity of national territoriality and communal mode of power. Instead, the future of the Ayah interrupts the continuity and mobilization of nation and patriarchal community and marks their discontinuity through her insistent, intentional otherness in civil society to both.

Conclusion

Through the *Skeleton* and *Cracking India*, Amrita Pritam and Bapsi Sidhwa delineate the partition violence, especially abduction of women engineered by men on communal basis. Amrita Pritam, through the trope of motherhood attacks the masculinist propensity to the gendered violence. Besides, Pritam shows the draining of humanity in patriarchy in sharp contrast to a female character Pooro who is equipped with humanity and who nurtures the other who is in jeopardy. The elliptical and discontinuous subjectivity in her character reveals the discontinuity created by men in the life of women in 1947. tearing apart the unified nation on religious basis. Pritam expresses her marked rage against the disruption of such discontinuity and harmony. Though the narrative of Pritam naturalizes the nationalistic framework of continuity and motherhood, she remains bold; for her protagonist, Pooro chooses to Pakistan even though her brother will like to take her back to India. It also shows Pritam's disapproval of partition on the basis of religion.

Similarly, through the graphic portrayal of partition violence, Sidhwa, in *Cracking India*, plays with the theme of abduction by a mob of men to dishonour the rival community. In the novel, tracking the Ayah's life after abduction, it becomes clear that Sidhwa is the novelist of the second generation of writers to attempt to represent both the scene of violence done to abducted woman and her life aftermath. The novel brings into light an aesthetic that represents the Ayah's pain and interiority as the repository of patriarchy's honor. All in all, Sidhwa, in this novel, attempts to destabilize the subordination of women in patriarchy. Sidhwa's innuendo on the Ayah's plight in

India underscores the revisionist historiography that subverts the so-called well-intentioned Recovery operation as stated by the nationalist leaders.