

## **WOMEN IN THE BURNING FIRE OF PARTITION OF INDIA**

Lubna Akram<sup>1</sup>  
Muhammed Ali Haniffa<sup>2</sup>  
Mohan Rathakrishnan<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lubna Akram PhD scholar at School of Language, Civilization and Philosophy, Universiti Utara Malaysia.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Mohamed Ali bin Hainffa, Deputy Director at Centre of Foundation Studies in Management, Universiti Utara Malaysia.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Mohan A/L Rathakrishnan Senior Lecturer at School of Language, Civilization and Philosophy, Universiti Utara Malaysia.

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**Abstract:** *This article is about the women of sub-continent who suffer during the partition riots. Women were brutally tortured, raped, kidnapped, killed and abducted. Being the honor and dignity of the community, they were targeted to degrade the men of other community. It was the brutal time that history ever seen in the name of the religion. Without committed any fault, any sin, these innocent girls and women were victimized in a very inhuman way. To safe their dignity and honor, they commit suicide, jumped into the well or take poison. Statistics were failed to show the pain, sufferings and psychological state of mind of all those women. Narratives and literature can be helpful to understand the feelings of the victim women.*

**Keywords:** *Women, Victim, Dignity, Strata, History*

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### **Problem Statement**

Whenever a nation undergoes any massacre, they suffer a lot in all aspects of life. In 1947 sub – continent of India witnessed the brutality and inhumanity. Many people were killed, kidnapped, raped, loss of property, such as the suffering of these people were unlimited, not only financially, they also bear psychological and social loss. The main target were the women to degrade the men of the other community. Just for this thousands of women were raped, killed and even they took their own lives either by jumping into the wells or taking poison.

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## **Objectives**

Objectives of this article are as follow:

- i. To mention that in any drastic situation women were easily targeted.
- ii. To examine the statistics which shows a big number of victim women.
- iii. To understand the psychology and emotions of the suffered women.
- iv. To find link between fiction and history.

## **Research Scope**

This article is helpful for the students of literature, history and statistics. From this article, they can get a true picture of the scenario of 1947 massacre.

## **Theoretical Framework**

This article is followed by the theory of Frustration Aggression theory by Dollard. According to this theory:

### ***Definition of Frustration***

“an interference with the occurrence of an instigated goal-response at its proper time in the behavior sequence.” (Dollard, 1939)

### ***Definition of Aggression***

The term referred to any “sequence of behavior, the goal response to which is the injury of the person towards whom it is directed.” (Dollard, 1939)

According to Dollard and his colleagues they had the observation that in human behavior when they got frustrated frequently it leads to anger and aggression. Most of the people do not want to admit that they frustration. Sometimes when people not reaching their goals, they are showing the anger which is their frustration.

## **Methodology**

For this article interpretive method of research is adopted to explain the connection between the phenomena that is under investigation or discussion.

## **Introduction**

The partition of British India, not only created two independent countries, but also created the greatest mass migration in history. This migration occurred in two areas; first from east Punjab to west Punjab and vice versa, and second from east Bengal to west. The first one includes the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, while the second one is of majority Hindus. All these people left their ancestral homes and fled across the borders to live their new lives in their new lands, Pakistan and India. About 12 million people suffered this largest mass migration, in that the thing which is more important and prominent is the ‘brutality’ that was wrapped in the name of ‘revenge’. All the killing, kidnapping, raping, riots, and conflicts are emerged from this revenge. This revenge has no starting reasons and has no end, but this revenge affects many lives of men, women and children.

Revenge is the extreme level of anger, which leads brutality and savage, and this savagery was seen on large scale during the mass migration of partition of India, 1947. Everybody suffers in spite of religion and nationality. Hindus and Sikhs butchered Muslims in east Punjab while

Muslims killed Hindus and Sikhs in west Punjab, and the point of sorrow is that, the victims didn't know why they are killed. Their targets are mostly women and children despite of ages. They mostly killed, raped and tortured women very badly.

According to statistics, during the partition of India about 75,000 to 100,000 women were abducted by the men of opposite religious community (Scott, 2009). After abduction, either they were raped, sold into prostitution or forcibly marriage in the opposite community or treated them mercilessly. Not only this, they were forced to enter in a new religion, if they refused to accept then they treated them with inhuman activities both in across the border (Narinder, 1996). Life is not easy for them, they were sold or gifted to their friends or acquaintances like the exchange of fruit basket (Menon, 1998). Their abductors daily tortured them physically or sexually abuse. This violence demolished all the senses of self-respect, and norms of society which were granted and established by the patriarchal system, and the only sufferers were the numberless women during the partition time (Scott, 2009). From all the above mentioned tortured if they not died physically but they died a psychological death. According to Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, political, material and symbolic significance of these abductions were not lost either on the women themselves or their families, community, leaders or governments. It was only humiliation of the rival community through appropriation of their women (Menon, 1993). These were not the individual tragedies, girls and women are the vessels of honor for whole community, if this vessel fell it was a shame for that community (Yasmin, 2007).

All these savagery like abduction, rape, molestation of women were the weapons to degrade and humiliate the men that he is unable to protect the honor of his community. In military, raping is used to demoralize the enemy and its not a new feature (Hasen, 1983). So, in same manner, during partition violence is not actually assault the women body, this one was for her family, her culture, her nation, it was the public defeat for the community whose women had been violated. 1947 violence were the second version of the Nazi camp (Francis, 1956). The collapse of law and order during 1947 also collapse of the moral values, intensified expressions of normal immoral behavior, lost of sense of humanity and deliberately trampled on the virtues of women, there only crime was that they belong to the different religious community. Thus, the biggest trauma of 1947 was the abduction and rape of women on large scale (Major, 1998).

### ***Women's Status in Sub- Continent Strata***

In ancient India, women's position was neither static nor uniform: in Romila Thapar's view, it widely varied from "a position of considerable authority and freedom to one of equally considerable subservience". (Thapar, 1993). With the development of the peasant societies and growth of states, women position in stratum became worsen. Patriarchy is the main ideology of the caste system in Hindu society, both Sudras and women were not allowed to access legacies of vedic ritual rites. Women were restricted only for household, and men, whereas holds all the other norms of the society. This became the cause to start a progressive movement for women education to give them a new identity. Geraldine Forbes classified the spreading of education on the land of India into three: "the British rulers, Indian male reformers and educated Indian women." (Forbes,1996). This may cause the enlightenment of the women all over the India. few famous names are Pandita Ramabai in western India, Subalaksmi in Madras and Begum Rokeya Sakawat Hussain in Bengal, there are also few families who supported for the education of muslim women like, Bilgaramis in Hyderabad, Tyabjis in Bombay and Mians in Lahore.

In our patriarchal society, women are considered as the symbol of honor and dignity. But in partition riots, this symbol of honor and dignity demolishes very brutally, due to this, many women were killed by the hands of their own father, brother or any other relatives. Many of them jumped into the well to save their respect and honor, many were raped by the other community members, many of them paraded naked in their villages. That is a shameful act and all these victims were not accepted by their own family members, which became more terrible for them. Due to this reason, many married to their rapist and many forced to convert or forced into marriage. All these evils carried out to satisfy the egos and the sense of revenge, which is totally inhumiliated.

### ***Women as Victim during Partition***

During partition, the women were suffered a lot and their parents were also helpless when they saw towards the helpless faces of their daughters, sisters and wives. Many of them not understand what is happening around them, in their minds there were a lot of questions whose answer they didn't know like what partition is? Why it happened? Why their parents dragging them in such situation? The only information they had is about the names of few like British Raj, Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Nehru, Jinnah, Hindu, Muslim and Sikhs. But later, they understand that now they had to live separate as separate independent nations and for that they had to move from their native location. Not only this, they also had to bear sufferings when they were refugees, they lost their property, had to leave their homes, all old aged men, women and children started their journey and they had to accept the decision of partition that were made and implemented by the political leaders, they had no other choice. First, they took their families to their relatives, some of them could give them shelter but some refused and shut their doors. Then hundreds and thousands of refugee's women were forced to stay in refugee's camps.

The atmosphere was very wicked at that time, fathers killed their daughters, husbands killed their wives, and brothers killed their sisters by their own hands, just to save their dignity, and spare them from the shame of raped and force conversion that taint their family honor. Beside this many woman killed themselves voluntarily and jumped into the wells, not only this, women who survived from these atrocities could not face the dark realities and committed suicide. If the women of one community were sexually assaulted by the men of others, in an overt assertion, they dishonor and humiliated the women of other community. So, in this way, the raping and molestation of women of all communities like Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, before and after partition, followed the same and familiar patterns of sexual violence, that gave exultation to the men having high ranks of dignity and honor. There were too many stories of these victim's women, and it being stripped of their cloths just like peeling banana. Torture was on the peak of brutality, they broke the skulls of young ones like almonds, being like the dry wood they through the Oldman into the fire, the middle-aged men suffers like the cow dung cakes and they smolder like that. (Hasan, 1983)

We have many examples of abducted women who suffered the pain of leaving their family forcibly among them K is the Punjabi women from Mirpur (Azad Kashmir), she was abducted by Muslims when she was just 15 or 16 years old. She was still in Pakistan till 1956 and after that she moved to India as recovered on her brother's insistence and brought to Jalandar. She was married to man working as police servant and has three children – two girls and a son. She was happy with her married life, but she was returned to India with her children very much against of her wishes.

When she came back she never met with her brother instead of this, she preferred to live in ashram, socialize very little with women there in ashram and never spoke of her life in Pakistan, except to say that she had been well- treated and was content and her children were well looked after, while her stay in ashram, she got a degree in Hindi Visharad, starting teaching in local school and retired in May 1990. She built her own house and lived there with her widow daughter, son and daughter in law.

She was quite happy with her present life as she is now standing on her own feet, being helped by the women there in ashram; she spoke with pride about her struggle but absolutely refused to speak of her past. She kept saying that “Leave it, I forget each and everything about my past, now it is useless to discuss it. Why I looked to past as I am spending a respectable and honorable life, even my children not know about it, I banished everything from my mind related to my past.” Abducted women not only beared the pain of being abducted but they also faced the brutal recovery action. Many of them not want to return as they were happy with their abductors.

Recoveries of girls and women were carried out in the years 1947-52. The number of recovered Muslim women were 20,728 and that of non-Muslim were 9,032. The most crucial was the situation of the pregnant women, or the women having children from their abductors. Government and social welfare institutes trying to restore them to their families, so they can get acceptable social purity. They were forced to take the decision either to go for abortion or send back their children to their fathers or send them to orphanages. It was the pitiable decision, so women keep their children with them and move to ashram or ashram style institutions because their families refuse to accept them with their children. The recovered women and girls from the Hindu background were thrown out from their families, were ill treated by all people, their parents refuse them to rejoin as the family member. The women with such situation were totally frustrated and they were psychological depressed. The only option that they had to avail either commit suicide or become prostitutes. (khosla, 1949)

On January 16, 1948, Nehru made a public appeal through the newspaper, he said, “I am told that there is unwillingness on the part of their relatives to accept those girls and women (who had been abducted) back in their homes. This is a most objectionable and wrong attitude to take any social custom that support this attitude must be condemned. These girls and women require our tender and loving care and their relatives should be proud to take them back and give them every help.” But in the case of Muslim abducted women, they were least unlucky comparative to Hindu and Sikh abducted women. Muslim abducted women were easily accepted by their families. There were different organizations that worked for the welfare of such unlucky women like all Pakistan Women’s Association, they arrange their marriages, so they get shelter and live with respect. Contrary, Hindu orthodox families strictly banished remarriages of widows and they not even allow them to enter in their place the fate of Hindu and Sikh women was not changed before and after partition, they committed suicide, jumped into the well or killed by their parents or brothers. The partition memory of rape and sexual violence reminds of the eternal saga of community cleavages that remained unhealed with normal circumstances. Based on acceptance of abducted women back to their families, we come across the cultural differences of both the communities of Hindu and Muslim, who during the time of partition of India trying to overtake each other.

### **Strategy of Government regarding Recovery**

After partition, governments of India and Pakistan overwhelmed with the complains registered by the relatives of missing women, they wanted to recover them either by means of government, military or voluntary efforts. Both governments seriously thinking over the issues because there were thousands of missing women and girls. For that purpose, the two governments signed an Inter-Dominion Agreement in November 1947, according to it the large number of women were recover from each country and restore back them to their families. The agreement was followed by passing of the ordinances up to December 1949 in both countries. Politicians across the border tried their best to solve the problem of recovery and rehabilitation of abducted women. Due to social and religious perspective, many of Hindu women did not get approval from their families to rejoin. In that case, the Indian government got a tough time to settle all these Hindu and Sikh abducted women.

On this account, representative of both governments, Maridula Sarabhai from India and Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan from Pakistan held a meeting in Lahore on 6<sup>th</sup> December 1947. In this meeting they signed a agreement for the recovery of abducted women and girls and also the missing children. With reference to this meeting, Mahatma Gandhi on December 1947 said,

“Raja Ghazanfar Alikhan and others were present at this meeting. Rameshwari Nehru and Mridulaben informed me that a resolution was passed that the primary task was to recover these women. It has also been decided that some women would accompany the police and army personnel and go to Pakistan as well as East Punjab, and help recover these women from wherever they are almost imprisoned... Moreover, there are rumors to the effect that these abducted women do not wish to return to their own families. They have embraced Islam and married Muslims. However, I am not convinced by these stories. Such conversion to a different religion must not be regarded as genuine and such marriages cannot be regarded as legal. These women have been treated as prostitutes. Now, all that is needed to be done is to see to it that those women who have been forcibly abducted and kept like prisoners, should be rescued and restored to their own families. The governments of both countries should take up this work. Do not conclude that I am accusing either of these two governments as having carried out these abductions. The Muslims in Pakistan, the Hindus and Sikhs in India are responsible for this, and it is these very persons who should bring these women back. And their own families should be large-hearted enough to accept them back. These women were not responsible for what happened. In their state of helplessness, they were abducted by evil men.”

### ***Sexual Violence and Scholars***

Partition scholars from India and Pakistan narrates unusual sexual violence that suffered terribly by women before and after partition. victim women suffered the cultural loss, their bodies mutilated and disfigure, their breasts and genitalia tattooed and brandished with triumphal slogans, their wombs knife open, fetuses killed, rampant raping along with all the brutality to the women's body, easy target to dishonor the other community. To know about the deep analyses of the happenings during partition literary memories are the mandatory sources. The magnitude of this trauma of partition was very high, so even for statistics its difficult to give the exact number of

rapes and refugees. Forms of patriarchy themselves, women often consented. Their martyrdom and their murders consider to be the social norms, men from the society given the name of their lost life as to safeguard their honor and self-respect, so according to them, no matter how women feel, they only concern about their self-respect and dignity.

However, the women who victimized during partition were restricted the imposition of tragic death and confronted the possibilities of rape and stigma of sexual impropriety. Women, during partition riots, lost their families and husbands, now they need a proper shelter and a source of financial stability for their survival. This is very important for them to survive in the social norms, our traditional norms towards widow were very strict and its their need to get a husband just to be the respectable in the society. On government level, such steps were taken for widows to rehabilitate then in a society, so that, they were no more unattached women rather than widows. With the support of this section, the victim women of this national disaster get some extra courage and their existence now negotiate in the scenario of post and pre-partition.

Jalal argued that during the partition time, women were the real and main victims. They undergo too many times to bear the pain of lost, dishonor and unidentification. These women first victimized by their abductors; secondly, during the recovery process after partition as many of them were against of this recovery; thirdly, when they were rejected by their families after recovery and many were lost their children who born after their abduction. (Jalal, 1994). All these emotions were difficult to find in the reports, documents and diaries or memoirs. We can find them in narratives, in the silence of the victims, in their barren eyes. These women were apparently alive but emotionally and psychologically they were dead.

During recovery process, 3,912 non-Muslim women were recovered from west Punjab and 7425 Muslim women from east Punjab between the month of December 6, 1947 and April 27, 1948. According to statistics, by September 20, 1957 total number of abducted women that were recovered from Pakistan was 10,007 and 25,856 women were recovered from India (Major, 1998). In affected areas murder, abduction, rape and conversion of religion became a common practice, communal politics was played on these innocent and helpless women. Later all these injustice with women were given the name of communal violence (Grewal, 2005). All these happened just to degrade the men of other community and to take the revenge of unseen and undone crime. All the law enforcing institute collapsed during that time and the survival can be get through self-defense. Many girls and women were grabbed from refugee's camps, from crowded trains, from villages and it was the wide range kidnapping situation of the modern time (Collin, 1976).

On huge area of India, during the partition time, people on large scale become aggressive, ruthless and careless and demolished the moral values and in all such conditions women were the worst victims (Rai, 1996). According to the pamphlet Ajit 1947, they published that "hundreds of women have been abducted, women jumped into the wells and scarified their lives to preserve their honor." (Narinder, 1996)

The reflection of this tumultuous periods can be seen in the fiction, which depict the inner turmoil and social complexes of the sub-continent. The fiction that were written on the trauma of violence and dislocation that occurred in the event, was the urgent and immediate response. This literature depicts the true picture of the trauma from the literary perspective, it opens the new sight of these

national histories and personal experiences. It offers the historians and the researchers to excavate the whole trauma by examining the experiences of ordinary men, of women and children, upper and lower strata, official's documents and government records (Battalia, 1994). Writers of that time reveal the other face of the freedom, which is full of bloodshed and gore. They put light in such a way that official's chronicles cannot do it, the pain of the divided families, the psychological trauma of been raped and abducted. Many of the texts have been analyzed scholarly in the recent years, but there are many untold stories of women that need to retrieve from silence as they have died unspoken on the lips of these unlucky protagonists (Hasan, 2002).

### ***History and Fiction***

Historians talk in aggregates. Statistics unable to explain even a fraction of the tragedy of the partition, that's why these statistics called cold statistics as they not directed the trauma of husbands and wives, sons and mothers who are separated by the Redcliff Line. Everyone, in their memories had the sense of collective and individual guilt and the feeling of shame about all the happenings during the partition. This can be clearly witnessed by seeing the cases of rape and abduction (Talbot, 2006). The impact of the event 1947 in women's memories are very unpleasant which they wanted to be hide from all, but literature manage somehow to liberate the stories from hiding. The women who were sexually contaminated by the men of the other community during the violence of the partition, it is very difficult for them to unrevealed their experiences in front of others. Now it is the task of the literary historiographers to unveil, uncover all these stories from the silence to the world of spoken (Didur, 2001).

Veena Das an anthropologist describes about the victim's women in such a way that in partition people use women's body as a communicating tool to give the sign to the men of other community, not only this, political program of the independence of two states also engrave on the bodies of these innocent and hapless women (Kudaisya, 1997). When it comes the sides of the ethic or communal identity, the first target were the women and they were purposely targeting to give the men of the other community a good lesson. They were targeted sexually which is the most crucial and critical differences which the men of the both communities were going to be established. It doesn't depend on the caste, religion or origin of the women, their purpose had fully targeted them. The thing which matters was that how they played the politics on the blood of these victims and how they settled the resolution between the opposing communities and states (Menon, Bhasin, 2004).

Women were the chief sufferers of chaos created by the Partition. Facts and figures can easily give us the number of women who are raped, abducted, killed or forcibly converted in the whole process. But with the literary perspective, we can get the view that during this violence of partition the body of women used in a very inappropriate manner which we have not yet understood, we cannot understand that what they felt when they were raped, what was the situation which forced them to take the poison and what was the circumstances that lead them to jump into the well to safe their dignity and respect. We can say that the victory or defeat in war of any nation can be engrave on the bodies of women (Kleinman, 1997). Literary narratives also concern the important social documents, just to compare the reality of their contemporary contexts. The fiction written as the quick response of the trauma of the partition of India, which starts from nationalism and had a very cruel end, depict the unspeakable and in articulatable history (Kumar, 1999). This partition-based literature has been a richer resource to provide all the realities of the era either political or

social. It also gives us the voice of the victim women who were unable to speak for themselves (Menon, Bhasin, 1998). In the absence of the direct testimony, the occasion which were wrapped in the fiction and second-hand accounts, was a little try to give justice and voice to all the experiences which women of that time bear. It is very important to know about the process that how proximity turns into communal violence, hatred, rape and abduction, and to understand this literature is the best source rather than history, these stories depict and expressed all the pain of that trauma (Feldman, 1999). The link between the body and language shown in the communal violence is very brutal, which gave humanity a tragic death to the world, people will never forget this trauma and remember it as a harsh and bitter memory, in which there was only loss. Moreover, some realities need to be fictionalized before they can be apprehended (Das, 1996).

### **Conclusion**

Thus, partition of India was the mega event of the 20<sup>th</sup> century but it brought a lot of sufferings, loss of humanity with it. The biggest mass migration of the world took place during this event. Savagery was in its peak. Innocent girls, women and children were highly targeted to take the revenge, killer don't know why he was killing and the person who killed don't know why he was killed. There was a challenge of killing among both the communities of Hindu and Muslim. women were either killed, kidnapped or raped brutally. They were used a tool to hurt the ego of men but their sufferings, their pain we cannot find in reports, documents or any other official letter. Their pain can be seen in their eyes, in their cold breath, in their silence. Narratives can be give the account of their psychological trauma through which they were passed. Also, in the stories of partition literature where the characters are from our own society, can depict the pain and sufferings. Thus, the careful scanning of the fictional narratives of the partition helps in the emotional and sensitive mapping of the inner terrain of female psyche. These narratives unfold the reality which lies otherwise under the cover of 'grand narratives'. Women being the representatives of their respective communities had to undergo inhuman treatment and literature and literature has tried to portray the injuries inflicted on the women during the partition.

### **Analysis/ Result**

This study is useful in the case study of Jammu and Kashmir, Yugoslavia, Chechnya Herzegovina, where women were target brutally.

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