

## **Partition Wounded Women Physically and Mentally: A Feminist Perspective**

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### **Abstract**

This paper focuses on the problem of violence towards women during the riots that followed India's 1947 Partition. The gender-specific interpretation of the partition genocide makes it easier to talk about the numerous types of violence directed at women and the symbolic significance of these acts. The idea of the nation as a "mother" and its ideological ramifications for female citizens are also explored in this paper. The paper also discusses the subject of kidnapped women, the state's efforts to recover and rehabilitate them, and the guiding ideology that guides those efforts of individual autonomy, and control over their bodies and lives.

**Keywords:** Indian Partition, Ethnic violence, patriarchy, female sexuality, national honor, feminism, religion.

### **Introduction**

However, many different and intricate factors led to the division. This essay focuses on the problem of gendered violence in the communal riots that occurred during the partition out of the various elements that can explain this turning point in South Asian history. There were two types of gender-based violence throughout this ethnic genocide. First, men from opposing religious groups often abducted, raped, and mutilated women's genitalia or humiliated them in public. This type of assault was allegedly used to degrade the men of the competing religion to whom the ladies belonged. The second type of violence against women included abuse at the hands of family members. This can range from honor killings to male relatives requesting that their mothers, daughters, or wives commit suicide to preserve the community's chastity and purity. The assertion that women were not treated as people but rather as symbols of societal and national pride is supported by both types of assault. Our paper's primary sources include a variety of feminist socio-historians from India who have written extensively on the violence of the partition, including Ritu Menon, Kamla Basin, and Urvashi Butalia. According to Basin, Menon, and Butalia, among other scholars, the main reason for violence against women was to uphold religious, national, and family honor. Our goal in this paper is to identify and explain

the operative ideology behind the gendered violence that took place during the religious killings that followed the Indian Partition by using this feminist approach. Additionally, I'll briefly go over the recovery and rehabilitation initiatives launched by the governments of Pakistan and India to help abducted women from both sides of the border return home. The idea behind this rescue expedition was to return the ladies to their appropriate homes with male relations who shared the same religion in addition to bringing justice to the victims but also to put the women back with their male relations who practiced the same religion, which is where they belonged. The Radcliffe Award, as the boundaries set to separate India and form Pakistan were known, had an impact on areas with about 100 million people. To create West and East Pakistan, the states of Bengal in the east and Punjab in the northwest were divided. One of the largest migrations in history occurred as a result of India's division. Menon and Bhasin assert that between 8 and 10 million people crossed borders, with 500,000 and 1,000,000 people dying (1998: 35). Although Butalia claims in *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* (1998: 76, 3) that twelve million individuals left India and that the death toll ranged from 200,000 to two million, it is generally accepted that more than a million people died in the migration.

Similar numbers and data are abundant in the official history of partition, but after over 70 years of independence, there are surely still some details that are typically excluded from the grand narrative and are only found in memoirs and partition fiction. One of them is the sentiment of loss; for millions of people who were forcibly uprooted and forced to relocate to a foreign land that purported to be their new country. All other facets of an individual's identity, like culture, language, local customs, etc., were shrouded by religious megalomania because the two countries segregated inhabitants based on who was a Hindu/Sikh and who was a Muslim. In addition to losing their nation, the destitute migrants also suffered the loss of their friendships and ties. The trauma caused by partition is described beautifully by author Ismat Chughtai in the following words:

Those whose bodies were whole had hearts that were splintered. Families were torn apart . . . The bonds of human relationships were in tatters, and in the end, many souls remained behind in Hindustan<sup>1</sup> while their bodies started for Pakistan. (Qt. in Bhalla 2007: 189)

Chughtai's statement views partition beyond facts, dates and numbers, and political events. It reflects the damaging effects of partition on the masses. Butalia states that the refugees' "experience of dislocation and trauma [that] shaped their lives . . . finds little reflection in written history" (1998: 9). We were able to view the partition of India through a variety of perspectives as gradually as personal accounts and testimonies of what the common people had to endure came to light. However, attempts to learn more about the position of women and their contribution to this time of intense ethnic unrest were greeted with a glaring gap. The assertion that women have not participated in the history of the split is false. However, we only see them in history books as numbers and as "objects of study, rather than as subjects" (Menon and Bhasin 1998: 11). Therefore, it is essential to engage in a gendered reading of partition because it is obvious that women and their experiences were silenced in the official/master narrative of this historical period. The reason why women aren't represented in history is that "they are presumed to be outside history because they are outside the public and the political, where history is made. Consequently, they have no part in it" (Menon 2004: 3). The historical retelling of partition has been challenged in recent decades by the introduction of numerous women-centric partition narratives. As an illustration, Butalia's essay "Community, State and Gender: Some Reflections on the Partition of India" (1994: 128-129) quotes a publication by Women against Fundamentalism, an activist group:

I am a woman, I want to raise my voice because communalism affects me. In every communal riot, my sisters are raped, my children are killed my world is destroyed, and then I am left to pick up the pieces It matters little if I am a Muslim, Hindu, or Sikh and yet I cannot help my sisters.

Although men nearly always start acts of violence, women are the ones who suffer the most from it. Women are the ones who are raped and widowed during violent conflicts, all in the name of maintaining national integrity and togetherness. We ladies won't participate in this foolishness, and we won't put up with it anymore. The protectors of nobody and nothing can be those who believe that bearing weaponry makes them man.

The leaflet raises a strong voice against forcibly designating roles for women as carriers of "national integrity and unity" in addition to simply locating women within the context of partition violence. One must also start by looking at the relevant data and statistics to fully understand the scope of violence against women. According to Menon and Bhasin's book *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India's Partition*, 33,000 Hindu and Sikh women were abducted while trying to immigrate to India, whereas 50,000 Muslim women were kidnapped by Hindu and Sikh men on their route to Pakistan (1998: 70). Similar figures are provided by Butalia in her book *The Other Side of Silence*; she asserts that a total of 75,000 women were kidnapped from both sides of the border (1998: 3). The likelihood is also quite strong that the true figures could be significantly greater than the accepted estimate documented in books and archives.

There were two types of violence against women during the partition, as was previously mentioned. The first type was violence committed against women by male members of a competing religious sect. The most frequent and severe methods of committing this kind of violence against female bodies included rape, mutilation, womb removal, parades of naked women through public spaces, and the branding of genitalia with religious symbols. In addition, it must be stated that every violent act acted as a metaphor "an indicator of the place that women's sexuality occupied in an all-male, patriarchal organization of gender relations, across and within religious or ethnic communities" (Menon and Bhasin 1998: 41). The assaults on women's bodies were not directed specifically at them. Men in the religious organization to which the women belonged felt threatened by the bodies of the maimed and raped women. One group used a woman's body as a platform to assert its theological superiority over another. The importance of the female body in inter-communal conflict is discussed by Jisha Menon in *The Performance of Nationalism: India, Pakistan, and the Memory of Partition* to explain the relevance of the female body in communal conflict. She states (2013: 121): "The female body served as the terrain through which to exchange dramatic acts of violence. The gendered violence of the Partition thus positioned women between symbolic abstraction and embodiment." A woman's body is marked with symbols from a different nation or religious group means that she has been polluted by the sinful religious Other, according to one interpretation of the symbolic meanings underlying numerous violent crimes. For the lady, branding serves as a constant reminder because her guilt over losing her honor is imprinted in her body permanently. Additionally, the display of naked women in public places of worship is an attack on both one's faith and the women who are responsible for preserving that religion's purity.

The motive behind cutting off wombs, burning vaginas, and amputating breasts is even more heinous. These behaviors "desexualize a woman and negate her as a wife and mother; no longer a nurturer," according to Menon and Bhasin (1998: 44). Amputating a woman's sexual organs effectively renders her life irrelevant in a culture that still views women as only suitable

for the roles of mothers and caregivers in their husbands' households. It might be argued that the idea of motherhood is entwined with the idea of the nation, extending the idea that a woman's primary function is thought to be her role as a mother. You may have noticed that Mother India, also known as Bharatmata, is a widespread nickname for India. The nation is viewed as the metaphorical mother, and the land is her body, which Pakistan's formation has already trampled upon and separated. In India, as in any other nation, women are viewed as literal mothers who are tasked with producing children to maintain the continuation of national inheritance. Deniz Kandiyoti writes that "women bear the burden of being the mother of the nation... as well as being those who reproduce the boundaries of ethnic/national groups, who transmit the culture, and who are the privileged signifiers of national difference" in her essay "Identity and Its Discontents: Women and the Nation" (1991: 1490). Inversely, women's conceptual status as symbols of religious and national pride places them in a subordinate social position where their value is restricted to their functioning reproductive organs, which should be exploited and governed in accordance with patriarchal societal norms.

Thus, in the nation-building allegory, the representation of Mother India as a female wearing a red sari performs a similar function. Mother India is viewed as the cherished and venerable mother who rules over her home, which is thought to be the last stand for independence and authenticity in a world that has been altered by the work of empire and colonialism . . . Mother India is all too visible and conspicuous as the artistic labors of visual patriotism render her as a public woman for all woman to behold and revere. (Ramaswamy 2010: 75)

This illustrates how Mother India is a construct created by a postcolonial country that initially produces an iconic figure of a nice Indian lady seen in stark contrast to the bad stereotype of Western women. Second, this fictitious mother serves as an inspiration to all women in the nation, reminding them of their fundamental duty to produce citizens for the motherland. The real moms of India keep the magnificent Mother India vibrant and resilient. For example, it can be asserted that the nation itself masquerades as a family, and "the 'natural' subjugation of wife to husband . . . within the family is alleged to mirror, and hence make also 'natural,' the subjugation of women and other minorities within the national realm" (Kamau-Rutenberg 2008: 27).

Women lose autonomy over their bodies and reproductive organs as parenthood becomes a topic of nationalist agenda. A country naturally becomes feminine in the male/female dichotomy if it is viewed as a mother. This gendering of the nation legitimizes the notion that the nation must be protected from wicked outsiders by its (male) citizens, which authorizes communal conflicts. A typical feature of nationalist vision is the nation as a feminine entity. For instance, *The Organiser*, a publication run by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (an extremely right-wing Hindu political organization), published a photo of Mother India on August 14, 1947, the day Pakistan proclaimed its independence. The drawing included an Indian map with a woman lying on it with her right arm amputated, signifying Pakistan's recent separation from Mother India. Jawaharlal Nehru stood over the woman, holding a bloodied knife (Butalia, 1998: 189). Sukeishi Kamra's *Bearing Witness: Partition, Independence, and the End of the Raj* (2002: 77) contains a similar political illustration in which a woman is shown inside a magician's box with the words Pakistan and Hindustan written on each side, and she is being sawed in half by Nehru and Muhammad Ali Jinnah<sup>3</sup>. As a result, it is possible to say that the country is seen as a lady who has undergone mutilation due to partition. In numerous literal assaults on women's bodies, this symbolic mutilation recurs. In this situation, rape turns into the most extreme form of shaming a woman and, consequently, the religious group to which

she belongs. Furthermore, Shumona Dasgupta asserts that violence against women was a method for males to recover their masculinity in her essay, "The Extraordinary and the Everyday: Locating Violence in Women's Narratives of the Partition" (2015: 46). According to Dasgupta:

Partition was coded as a failure of the male nationalist to protect the political integrity of the nation, as well as the inability of Hindu and Sikh men to protect their women. This led to a very violent compensatory performance of . . . masculinity. Women were accommodated within the disciplinary parameters of a neo-nationalist discourse, only if they consented to be objects of violence.

By extending Dasgupta's statement, it may be said that women were rendered "things of violence" because their physical attributes were tied to the concepts of religious and national honor. It can be said that "women's bodies represent[Ed] the 'purity' of the nation and thus were guarded heavily by men, an attack on these bodies became an attack on nation's men" (Mayer 2000: 18). Consequently, a woman's body needs to be shielded from the religious Other's intrusion because doing so would taint the lady. Rape and sexual assault were frequently followed by the kidnapping of the victims. Most of these kidnapped women ended up working as domestic helpers and sex slaves. Many abducted women were forced into prostitution, and in a very small number of cases, some were married to their captors and afterward claimed to be having a good life. The problem of kidnapped women was so pervasive that in November 1947, the governments of Pakistan and India established the Inter-Dominion Agreement for the return of kidnapped women from both sides of the border. In the first year of the Recovery Act, 9,000 women were rescued from India and more than 5,500 from Pakistan. By December 1949, there were over 6,200 Hindu and Sikh women who had been rescued from Pakistan and over 12,500 Muslim women who had been returned from India (Menon and Bhasin 1998: 69-70). The recovery act's guiding principle was to make sure that the women were restored to their male family members as well as to their homes. For instance, Stephen Morton writes "although... the recovery process might seem like a worthy cause that counteracts the abduction and violation of women, it is also complicit in the maintenance of national boundaries and discourses of ethnic purity" in his essay "Violence, Gender, and Partition in the Narration of the South Asian Nation" (2012: 48). As was already established, parenting was regarded as a woman's major job, and it was through motherhood that her sexuality was both affirmed and regulated. Because of this, it is possible to claim that a woman's "sexuality was no longer comprehensible, or acceptable" after she had been raped and/or kidnapped (Butalia 1998: 190). To get into greater detail, Butalia (1998: 190) says:

How could motherhood be thus defiled? How could families, the community, the nation — indeed, how could men allow this state of affairs to continue? The women had to be brought back, they had to be "purified" . . . and they had to be relocated into the family and the community.

Indians perceived the kidnapping of their women as a double blow. They simply could not allow their ladies to be taken away from them after already losing a part of their nation to Pakistan. This recovery act was therefore considered a means of reclaiming what seemed to be the "emasculated, weakened manhood" (Butalia 1998: 190) of the Indian males. Pakistan lost land that could not be reclaimed. As a result, Hindu men realized how crucial it was to save their Hindu womanhood by bringing her back in a last-ditch effort. Boundaries are not merely physical; they can also be imagined by males or drawn by women in their bodies (Mayer 2004: 166).



To demonstrate how the abducted women were treated by the rescue mission, one must refer to the Recovery Bill itself. The Recovery Bill stated that any Muslim woman found in India with a Hindu man after 1 March 1947 and before 1 January 1949 shall be considered abducted. One of the distinctive clauses of the bill states:

Conversions by persons abducted after March 1947 will not be recognized and all such persons **MUST** be restored to their respective Dominions. The wishes of the [abducted] persons concerned are irrelevant and consequently, no statements of such persons should be recorded before Magistrates. (Qt. in Butalia 1994: 140)

The clause ensured that the abducted women did not have a voice and were not given a chance to choose citizens because “the women were important only as objects, bodies to be recovered and returned to their ‘owners’ in the place where they ‘belonged’” (Mookerjee-Leonard 2015: 13). They were simply whisked away by the two governments to fulfill the demands of the religious community and patriarchal state<sup>4</sup>. The refusal to grant autonomy and decision-making power to abducted women is explained by Jisha Menon in the following lines:

The Bill disregarded the interests of these “abducted” women and had little interest in ascertaining whether these women had any desire to return to their original families. The Abducted Persons Act. Divested these women of any legal rights to choose where they wanted to stay and with whom, and violated their fundamental rights as citizens. (Qt. in Gangpadhyay 2015: 5)

Menon's description of how the governments considered these women as mute commodities to be traded between the two countries is accurate. A lot of women refused to be found and insisted on staying with their captors, it should be noted. The ladies who refused to rejoin their former families suffered twice as much abuse. These ladies were forcibly forced to return to their male relations after being first kidnapped by men affiliated with the competing religious sect. They had no freedom to choose in either situation. A woman's understanding of her newly altered social status, which would label her as unsuitable and exclude her from the community to which she would return, can also be inferred from an analysis of the reasons why she chooses to remain with her adductor. The simple fact that a woman would want to live with her rapist or abductor is a clear indicator of how strongly the patriarchal state emphasizes the management of women's sexuality and the harsh means the state employs to moderate it. For example, a rape victim will perceive her own body as being contaminated and her respectability in society as being neutralized. She will therefore more or less deliberately accept or surrender herself to a position of social exclusion.

Anis Kidwai, a social worker working on the Recovery Programme, provided an unusual viewpoint on the subject of abducted women who choose not to return to their families to further the case on abducted women. Kidwai presents a negative argument against the idea of abduction. She states: “Rescuing her from the horror this good man has brought her to his home. He is giving her respect, he offers to marry her. How can she not become his slave for life?” (Qt. in Butalia 1994: 144). According to Kidwai, it's possible that the claimed kidnapper saved the woman from becoming prey to other males. The last word of the aforementioned remark, however, contains sarcasm and illustrates how patriarchal ideologies lead women to believe that a male is essential to their life. As a result, many women who were kidnapped and separated from their families during communal uprisings started to view their captors as saviors. Because women's dependence on men for survival was so engrained in their psyche, an abductor could readily replace the husband or father in a woman's life. As we continue to discuss the return of abducted women to their families, whether voluntarily or forcibly, it is important to emphasize that the process did not just end with that. Instead, a lot of families

refused to accept their daughters and wives back, thinking that the saved women had been tainted by the religious other. In the patriarchal order of things, a woman had no place if she lacked chastity and purity. As a result, “the State, so quick to come forward with its recovery was at a loss about the reintegration of these women into the new nation” (Butalia 1994: 145). Many women were reluctantly brought back into their families since they merely required someone to handle the household duties (Menon and Bhasin 1998: 77). Social workers and other political figures used their clout to persuade the families to accept the retrieved ladies back. In response to numerous instances of mass suicides and honor killings, Gandhi (after the pre-partition Noakhali riots in 1946 and even during the early phases of violence following the partition) articulated opinions such as: “I have heard that many women who did not want to lose their honor chose to die. Many men killed their wives. I think that is great because I know that such things make India brave” (qt. in Mookerjee-Leonard 2015: 32). However, as thousands of rescued women were now being refused by their families, therefore making them the responsibility of the state, Gandhi radically changed his views and claimed:

It is being said that the families of the abducted women no longer want to receive them back. It would be a barbarian husband or a barbarian parent who would say that he would not take back his wife or daughter. They had been subjected to violence. To put a blot on them and to say that they are no longer fit to be accepted in society is unjust. (Qt. in Guha 2011: 275)

Gandhi's appeal echoes the humanitarian cause of offering help and consolation to women who experience physical and emotional pain, as do those of several other political figures and social professionals. The fact that many of these women were already pregnant or had already given birth to children of their captors by the time they were liberated is another issue that complicates matters even more following the recovery of the abducted ladies. The ladies had to leave what one may refer to as mixed-blood children behind when they were found by the government to be allowed back into their families. Again, it was unthinkable for Hindus to accept a woman with a Muslim man's child who would serve as a continual reminder of the lady's and the religion's humiliation and dishonor because they operated more rigidly on purity and segregation standards than Muslims. It was possible to reverse the conversion of a Hindu woman who had been coerced into becoming a Muslim. A child who was born half Muslim and half Hindu, however, had no place. This led to the state taking in thousands of abandoned youngsters as wards. Many were adopted merely to provide domestic assistance, and the prevailing gender bias reappeared when boys were favored over girls (Butalia 1998: 250). There was disagreement over who should get custody of the kids. Many politicians had the opinion that the child should be abandoned because, according to the guardianship regulations, it belonged to the father. Similarly to a wife, a kid was also seen as the man's property, even though the father was almost certainly the abductor and rapist of the mother. Many women feared leaving their kids behind. Therefore, the Recovery Bill in 1949 changed the definition of an abducted person to "a male kid under the age of sixteen years or a female of whatever age" to allow the mothers to keep their children (qt. in Menon and Bhasin 1998: 116). As a result, these kids were now considered to be abducted, and they were found along with their moms. Sadly, a lot of these saved kids ended up being abandoned at orphanages. Many pregnant women had illegal abortions. Because this was more than simply one instance of an unmarried pregnancy making a mockery of the sexual norms expected of women, these pregnancies were evidence of pollution by the holy Other, who had tainted the women's society and country by contaminating them with his unclean seed.

A rehabilitation program came after the treatment plan for addiction. To familiarise the reader with the underlying history, we will here briefly detail a few facts about the rehabilitation

program. To begin with, Butalia asserts that there were 75,000 single women after recovery in her essay "Questions of Sexuality and Citizenship during Partition" (1997: 97).

According to the state's definition, a woman was considered unattached if she did not have a partner to care for her and keep her safe. Widows without adult sons consequently become lifelong responsibilities. Additionally, unmarried single women were likewise seen as the duty of the state until they were married off or achieved financial independence through the use of jobs that were established by the government. Along with housing, rehabilitation centers also gave financial assistance to the mothers and took care of the education of small children. The main responsibilities of the centers are succinctly described by Menon and Bhasin (1998: 152):

Run production and training centers; organize the sale of articles produced in work centers; run schools; arrange for the adoption of orphaned children; give financial or other aid to women; assist in finding employment; and finally, arrange marriages for them wherever possible.

In addition to persistently seeking appropriate grooms for unmarried women, these rehabilitation centers also organized the dowry for weddings. A lone woman's sexuality was seen as being a threat to society and needed to be controlled through marriage, as was the obsession with reiterating that the preferred setting for women was the familial home. Though widowhood was viewed as "ritually unlucky, socially ostracised, and historically shunned," a positive result of the rehabilitation program was that these widows were permitted by the state to be self-sufficient (Menon and Bhasin 1998: 149). Additionally, the widows' separation from their families made sure that "ritual and customary sanctions against widows were temporarily postponed," giving them more control over their lives (Menon and Bhasin 1998: 153). The state assumed the role of the father while the nation was (and is now) referred to as Mother India. The obsessive urge of the state to be the paternalistic savior figure for these single women was a reflection of the engrained notion that a woman must always be under the tutelage of a male. So far, we've spoken about the problem of males from competing religious groups abusing women and the actions taken by the governments of Pakistan and India to aid in the victims' healing and rehabilitation. We will now discuss the second type of gendered violence, which is violence committed by male relatives of women. When discussing violence against women, it is important to recognize that many women were murdered by family members or forced to commit suicide to uphold religious and familial honor. As Menon and Bhasin state (1998: 45):

Poisoned, strangled or burnt to death, put to the sword, drowned. It was made abundantly clear to [women] that death was preferable to "dishonor", that in the absence of their men the only choice available to them was to take their own lives.

Death is the logical option over rape, conversion, or abduction for a religious community that strongly identifies its honor with the purity of its women since abandoning one's religion would entail a symbolic death, which is thought to be much worse than the fact of death itself. Furthermore, suicides by women were viewed as courageous acts of religious pride requiring fortitude and valor amid communal disturbances as women's bodies became the most potent and symbolic targets. The women were revered as martyrs who gave their lives to preserve the honor of their families and the community. Ninety Sikh women committed suicide by jumping into a well in the village of Thoa Khalsa, Rawalpindi, to avoid being raped and kidnapped by Muslims. This incident is well-documented. When men, generally family members, who had survived tell stories about these ladies, they always seem to assert that the



suicides were voluntary and necessary (Butalia 1998: 210). These women are now regarded as heroes for dying to preserve the purity of their religion. Butalia asserts that she discovered many women did actively participate in violence during her interviews with partition riot survivors. However, she explains (1994: 138):

For men, the potential for violence on the part of their women . . . has to be contained and circumscribed. They cannot be named as violent beings . . . This is why their actions are narrated as sanctified by the tones of heroic, even other-worldly, valor. Such narratives are meant to keep women within their *aukat* (their ordained boundary), which defines them as non-violent.

Even in their hostility, women are considered passive beings who passively accept their fates, as permitted by the religious community, as Butalia's statement about society's inability to see women as capable of any type of agency demonstrates. I don't contend that these women had a superior choice (it was either self-immolation or rape and abduction). It must be understood, however, that consenting to your death does not always imply open desire. We must examine a claim made by Fredric Jameson in his essay "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism" as we conclude. Since they tell "the story of the private individual destiny" that reflects "the besieged condition of the public third-world culture and society," Jameson asserts (1986: 69) that all literature from the Third World is fundamentally identical. Several postcolonial scholars have strongly criticized this uninformed generalization. One must realize that it is impossible to generalize about the Third World because doing so undermines the concerns of class, ethnicity, and gender (among many other elements) that determine a Third World person's identity. Therefore, this might be considered as a criticism of how men's behavior and experiences during the time of ethnic genocide between two Third World nations (India and Pakistan) were very different from those of women. Women's experiences during the partition of India varied according to a number of significant factors other than just their gender. However, it can be said that within the ideological framework, women were seldom ever treated as subjects during the partition riots. By manipulating their sexuality and bodies, these women were seen as objects through which a community's conception of purity and pride might be manipulated. Because of this, the topic of violence against women during partition not only sheds insight on gender inequalities in the Indian Subcontinent but also serves as a key illustration of how Jameson's theory that all Third World experiences may be lumped together is false. Even today, South Asian women's lives continue to develop considerably differently from South Asian men's.

## Conclusion

It might be argued that women's connection to the nation extends beyond their biological responsibility for giving birth to members of a nation or a religious group. Instead, women are considered symbols of religious and cultural respect, and their bodies serve as ethnic and national boundaries (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1989: 1480). In the aftermath of partition, much like the Indian Subcontinent, gender itself was territorialized, meaning that "women's bodies represented both the inner core of patriarchy — couched in the language of honor and prestige — as well as marking boundaries of social and national reproduction" (Abraham 2014: 42). The official history does not offer insight to the "myths about shame and honor, blood and belonging" (Menon and Bhasin 1998: 21). For that one must turn to women's histories, which "interrogate not only the history we know but how we know it" (Menon and Bhasin 1998: 21). In contrast to a single, officially sanctioned fact, understanding the ideology driving violence against women (followed by the abducted women's recovery and

rehabilitation by the paternal state) enables the revealing of numerous truths. Moreover, this alternate history also sheds light on the physical and psychological trauma of gender-specific torture. Women's experiences, writings, and testimony reveal precisely what the official history of the division seeks to suppress. In the patriarchal power struggle between two religious factions, these testimonies demonstrate how women were cruelly utilized as silent, dehumanized tools.

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