

## Women Identity and Partition of 1947: A General Study of the Partition Novels

**Dr. Totawad Nagnath Ramrao**

Asst. Prof., Dept. of English,  
Vivekanand Arts, S. D.  
Commerce & Science College,  
Samarthnagar,  
Aurangabad, MS, India

### Abstract

Partition literatures have focused on the identity of women and the exploitation. Partition has faced many acts of brutality and all the memories are preserved in literature in various tones and ways. The writers who have contributed to the issue of Partition in literature they are Khushwant Singh; *Train to Pakistan*, Chaman Nahal; *Azadi*, Attia Hosain's; *Sunlight on a Broken Columns*, Anita Desai, *Clear of Day*, Shauna Singh Baldwin's, *What the Body Remembers*, Manju Kapoor's, *Difficult Daughters*, Mumtaz Shah Nawab's, *The Heart Divided*, Meher Nigar Masroor's, *Shadow of Time* and Sophia Mustafa's *Broken Reed*. Partition of Indian subcontinent in 1947 broke the communal harmony and bonds of friendship and brotherhood. It's the time of violence and the communities like Hindu, Muslim and Sikh making hate of each other and fighting with each other. The atmosphere was so silent like a bitten snake. According to Urvashi Butalia the women's bodies became the defining identity of nation during Partition. Women who are highly valued in a national representation and a spirit of nation crushed bitterly and largely in the partition. It is in the words of Krishna Sobti, 'difficult to forget and dangerous to remember'. The women in Partition were abducted as Hindus and converted as Muslims.

**Keywords:** Partition, Identity, Exploitation, Hatred, Jealous, Migration

The identity of women became as neither Hindu nor Muslim during Partition. As the result many women have made suicides, some has taken a support of Ashrams and some made invisible. All the dominant communities like Hindu, Muslim and Sikh suffered a lot. Hundreds of women were killed by their own husband in order to avoid humiliation and sexual abuse. Many women were also killed by their own fathers and brothers to avoid sexual abuse and violation. Partition in India has brought a permanent hatred among the

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communities and gave birth to the communal hatred. Women and her body treated as the territory of one's identity. Women became the symbol of exploitation of the communities.

The Partition uses largely 'sex' as a weapon of revenge of all community. It is the attempt of humiliation of the rival community. The Partition has also given birth to the forced marriages and conversions of women into other. Women's self sacrifice and murders are the courageous and inhuman actions. It is a continual process of suffering of women's sexuality. The constant exploitation and objection continues after the post-partition period. Women were restored and put their violated bodies aside but away from accepting in the society. Finally many experienced homelessness at home. Thus, patriarchal values and communal identity and the honor of nation have converted many women into murder & suicide. It is labeled in the words of women writers as -an act of 'heroism'.

The people, though they may be Hindu, Sikh and Muslim feel pride in taking revenge against the opposite religious women. It was such a worst time in which only women suffered a lot at both the sides. During these days if somehow they manage to run away and back to their families; family members have not accepted them. Some thinks that once the girl violated (Kidnapped) then who will marry with her. Puro somehow manages to run away from Rashid but her family members won't accept her. The people also think that if they allow her or accept, the Muslims will kill all the family members. Puro got no support at home, instead parents has closed the door. Finally Puro has no option except Rashid, the abductor, she returns to Rashid. Meanwhile Lajjo, Ramchand's sister and wife of Trilok, Puro's brother kidnapped by Muslims. Puro somehow manages to free Lajjo from the Muslims with the help of Rashid, her husband.

The novel also highlights the mentality of the parents, who were not ready to accept the kidnapped girl like Puro in the beginning, now are ready. The government orders every Hindus and Muslims to return the kidnapped girls. Trilok, Puro's brother requests her to come to home, Puro, in the beginning surprised by such nature of the parents and their dual policy. Puro observes the very selfish nature of parents and she refuses to return. Trilok also assures her that she can start a new life again with Ramchand but she accepts Rashid and says good bye to all Ramchand, Trilok and Lajjo.

*Pinjar* centers on Puro, the Hindu girl and her overall involvement throughout the novel. The novel is women centered and highlights the saga of women sufferings. Puro, a Hindu girl enjoying her happy life and dreaming of her future husband Ramchand with whom she has just betrothed. Before partition everyone was happy & all was well. Ramchand, the neighboring village boy was a young and promising from a wealthy background. As soon as the partition broke out after the independence, the communal hatred began and Hindu, Muslim and Sikhs became the enemy of each other. In the communal violence of both sides of women suffered a lot and finally they are considered *Pinjar or Skelton* like the title of the novel. During partition the people (Hindu & Muslim) remembered of their earlier enmity with each other. The same happened in the case of Rashid. Many years ago Puro's uncle has

kidnapped Rashid's aunt and as a result or vengeance (woman for woman or men for men) Rashid finally get succeed in kidnapping Puro. Puro at one side was a symbol of loss and the other is gain for Rashid.

*Pinjar*, a symbolic novel highly focuses on women and their status during partition. Puro is a symbol of scarification and support. She is an embodiment of endurance of physical and psychological levels. The partition has violated the nation a lot in general and nation's women in particular. According to the novelist, partition was used as a means of manipulation and consolidates political power over women. Women of both sides have no expression, and became mute and dumb. Symbolic in nature, the novel centers on the women and their loss, the forever loss.

Women writers like Bapsi Sidhwa, Attia Hosain, Meher Nigar Masroor and Shauna Singh Baldwin have very well portrayed the Partition saga of women through their novels. Being women and writers, they have highlighted the world of women and their sufferings. Being a Punjabi and a dominant voice of the time, Amrita Pritam is an only Punjabi writer far greater than that of any other women writer of the time. Being an eye-witness of the communal riot and women suffering, she wants to write on the dark episode. Being a woman, she wants to explore the great scarification of women as a tribute to their scarification. Known as a dominant voice of Punjab, Amrita Pritam experienced the trauma and sufferings of the women and loss during partition. All the partition writers and filmmaker's expects that it should not be repeated. After all it means the loss of everyone and everything - humanity and nation.

The novel also highlights the extreme violation of women. The people before partition were happy among each other, living unanimously and in humanity. The partition changed the minds of the people and in the fortnight became the enemies of each other. The people of both Hindu and Sikh at one side and Muslim on the other during these days the people abducts the women and force them to walk/ parade naked throughout the villages. Lajjo is the girl who has also experienced the same like Puro. Each opposite community abducts the women. Sometimes the people loots and kidnaps the group and women are in their journey to refugee camps. Women have no safety during partition and men were helpless. As a result these communities feel proud to violate opposite community women.

The novel highlights the large scale of women molestation during partition. During these days women were not safe at any places, even in refugee camps also. The refugee camps were called the safe places for women and it is said that they were fully protected by military guards. But there also women forcibly kidnapped and the very next day leaves them to refugee camp.

Puro is not the only girl became the victim of the bloody partition, she is the representative of all women who exploited by the hands of men. Like Puro, there are other girls like Lajjo, Kamoo, Taro and mad woman became the victim of it. Kamoo is the one who was living solitary life. Kamoo's father left the village by marrying another women and

leaving her back. Puro turned Hamida consoles her and both spends lot of time altogether. Taro's condition was much darker than Kamoo. She was the girl who was abducted by the Muslims during partition like Puro. She was fed up with the life and the worst experience. Taro's so called husband married with another women and he forces her to become a prostitute. The mad woman's condition was worst than Kamoo and Taroo. The mad woman comes to the village as half fed and half clad and lives in a shed outside the village. Puro get shocked when she came to know that the woman is impregnated during these days by someone. In the course of the time she gives birth to a child and dies. The orphan and supportless child of the mad woman finally support and cared by Rashida and Hamida. They bring him to their home for bringing it up.

The novel also focuses on the women's suffering during partition in general and throughout life in particular. The women like Jasbir, Liza, Rajjo, and Kamo and so on are courageous, bold and very sensitive but helpless in the male dominated world. Women since long suicide, kidnapped, molested and the men take pleasure in such worst and evil activity. Partition time was the worst time for women and people of opposite community (religion) takes pride in violating, abducting, marrying and eloping women. The people or male dominated societies consider women as inferior and secondary and treat them like slaves. The male dominated societies consider women as marginal and keep them away from education, decision making and so on. So they have to depend on men. The illiteracy of women means they have to depend on men at various levels - psychological, physical, and financial and so on.

Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man*, 1988, also scripted by Deepa Mehta in the Film, *Earth: 1947* is unique in its content. Partition in multicultural India has affected mostly three cultures- Hindu, Muslim and Sikh. It has faced migration, death, destruction, and loss. Before partition no one could have foreseen the ferocity of blood and enmity among the cultures. In partition women is the central issue in all cultures. The abduction of women, mass rape, women's abduction and marriage with other community members. Rape and molestation of women became a matter of pride to other community, but none could understand the harsh reality. The violation of women of every community by the opposite religious member means all community women were violating. Aya, the beautiful Hindu girl badly treated by her friend Ice Candy Man. She was brutally kidnapped and forced into prostitution at Hira Mandi. The so called friends became enemies of each other in a fortnight. Lenny, the narrator minutely observes the change in society, the past and present. Being a child, innocent and a Parsi she minutely observes the partition violence and deaths.

Partition is an example of extreme sexual brutality involves all patriarchal conception. The each community member involves in the rape of other community women. It is according to them is the only way to penetrate them. Rape, abduction, molestation, marriage, kidnapping of a young girl, these issues are the challenging to men and their manhood. The attack on honor and chastity of women is the only way of defiling them. Partition, of the

Indian subcontinent, thus has many ways made target to the women. Women who suffered a lot in the Partition to the maximum. The minute observation and study reports that women are the major victims of Partition comparing to men. Women in Partition have experienced many identities that none could imagine and think. The study lastly expresses their scarification as an act of heroism and martyrdom.

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