

ZEITGEIST

An Interdisciplinary Journal in Humanities and Social Sciences

(Peer-Reviewed | Gold Open Access | Multidisciplinary | Humanities and Social Sciences)

Beyond the Divide: Women’s Experiences of Physical and Psychological Trauma and Resilience During Partition

Sugandhi Baruah¹

Student, Dept of English

The Assam Royal Global University

Guwahati, Assam, India

ORCID ID:

Email: sugandhibaruah@gmail.com

Corresponding Author

Name: Sugandhi Baruah

Email: sugandhibaruah@gmail.com

Citation Information

Baruah, Sugandhi . "Women’s Experiences of Physical and Psychological Trauma and Resilience During Partition." ZEITGEIST: An Interdisciplinary Journal in Humanities and Social Sciences Vol. I, No. 1 (Dec, 2025- May, 2026): 09-15.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20291503>

Journal Information

Particulars	Details
Journal Title	ZEITGEIST: An Interdisciplinary Journal in Humanities and Social Sciences
Publisher	Name of Person Responsible: Dr Sumbit Chaliha, Principal and Chairperson, Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC), Bahona College, Jorhat – 785101, Assam, India Name of Issuing / Publishing Body: Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC), Bahona College (on behalf of Bahona College, Jorhat – 785101, Assam, India) E-mail: report.iqac@bahonacollege.edu.in Address: Bahona College, Jorhat, Pin Code: 785101, Assam
Publication Type	Peer-Reviewed Academic Journal
Publication Mode	Online
Frequency	Bi-annual
Language	English
ISSN	
Website	https://journals.bahonacollege.edu.in/index.php/zeit
Volume	Vol. I

Issue	No. 1
Year	December,2025 - May,2026
Page Range	09-15
Article Type	Research Article

ABSTRACT

The twentieth century is an intense and twisted tapestry of historical events, marked by significant shifts in political power, collective human experiences and social construct. Central to this narrative are the major wars that shaped nations. The 1947 war of partition between India and Pakistan following the 1971 war of liberation were the major events of the century that was rooted in a crucial interplay of historical offence, religious sentiments, and nationalist aspirations. This analysis employs partition literature, gender distinction and alternative realities to examine how writers like Nighat M. Gandhi and Melody Razak depicted psychological struggle of the second gender as well as identity crisis, forced hatred and the tendency of revenge through *Alternative Realities: Love in the Lives of Muslim Women* (2013) and *Moth* (2021). It begins by providing a brief description of the 1947 partition and 1971 Bangladesh war of liberation, highlighting crucial changes in the lives of sufferers and struggles of accepting the reality.

The analysis investigates literary works to observe how authors engage with themes of exploitation, abduction, rape, identity crisis, love, resilience, acceptance and trauma and their psychological disturbance. Furthermore, the study investigates the way these authors bring forward the emotional atrocities and psychological status of women and how they fought with the society to establish their own identity, using Cathy Caruth's Trauma Theory, Urvashi Butalia's concept of silence and Radical Feminist Theory. Through a close examination of selected works, the analysis aims to illuminate the nuanced ways in which literature functioned as a mirror to alternative realities. The study contributes to a deeper understanding of the crucial mental condition of women who became victims of two nations and the interplay between literature and history by shedding light on the complexities of survival and alternative realities.

Keywords

Partition, Patriarchy, Women, Psychological Trauma, Victim.

Dates and Publication History

Stage	Date
Received	01-07-2025
Revised	14-09-2025
Accepted	10-10-2025
Published Online	25-12-2025

Author Declaration

The author(s) hereby declare that:

- The manuscript is original and unpublished.
- The manuscript has not been submitted simultaneously to any other journal.
- All sources used have been duly acknowledged.
- The article does not infringe any copyright or ethical principle.
- The research complies with accepted academic and ethical standards.

Funding Statement

The author(s) declare that no financial support or funding was received for this research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author(s) declare no conflict of interest.

Ethical Compliance Statement

Where applicable, the research complies with institutional ethical guidelines and standards concerning human participants, archival material, interviews, oral histories, or fieldwork.

AI Use Disclosure

The author(s) declare that generative AI tools, if used, were employed solely for linguistic assistance and not for generating original scholarly arguments, interpretations, data, or conclusions.

Copyright and Licensing

© 2025 Bahona College

This article is licensed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0).

To view a copy of this license, visit: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Peer Review Statement

This article has undergone a rigorous double-blind peer-review process in accordance with the editorial policies of ZEITGEIST: An Interdisciplinary Journal in Humanities and Social Sciences.

Bibliographic Address

ZEITGEIST: An Interdisciplinary Journal in Humanities and Social Sciences

Vol. I, No. 1, December 2025 - May 2026

Published by Internal Quality Assurance Cell, Bahona College

Jorhat, PIN: 785101, Assam, India

Journal Website: <https://journals.bahonacollege.edu.in/index.php/zeit>

Email: editor.zeitgeist@bahonacollege.edu.in

Beyond the Divide: Women's Experiences of Physical and Psychological Trauma and Resilience During Partition

Sugandhi Baruah

Abstract— The twentieth century is an intense and twisted tapestry of historical events, marked by significant shifts in political power, collective human experiences and social construct. Central to this narrative are the major wars that shaped nations. The 1947 war of partition between India and Pakistan following the 1971 war of liberation were the major events of the century that was rooted in a crucial interplay of historical offence, religious sentiments, and nationalist aspirations. This analysis employs partition literature, gender distinction and alternative realities to examine how writers like Nighat M. Gandhi and Melody Razak depicted psychological struggle of the second gender as well as identity crisis, forced hatred and the tendency of revenge through *Alternative Realities: Love in the Lives of Muslim Women* (2013) and *Moth* (2021). It begins by providing a brief description of the 1947 partition and 1971 Bangladesh war of liberation, highlighting crucial changes in the lives of sufferers and struggles of accepting the reality.

The analysis investigates literary works to observe how authors engage with themes of exploitation, abduction, rape, identity crisis, love, resilience, acceptance and trauma and their psychological disturbance. Furthermore, the study investigates the way these authors bring forward the emotional atrocities and psychological status of women and how they fought with the society to establish their own identity, using Cathy Caruth's Trauma Theory, Urvashi Butalia's concept of silence and Radical Feminist Theory. Through a close examination of selected works, the analysis aims to illuminate the nuanced ways in which literature functioned as a mirror to alternative realities. The study contributes to a deeper understanding of the crucial mental condition of women who became victims of two nations and the interplay between literature and history by shedding light on the complexities of survival and alternative realities.

Keywords: *Partition, Patriarchy, Women, Psychological Trauma, Victim.*

XI. INTRODUCTION

Melody Razak is a British Iranian writer from London. Razak spent a remarkable year analyzing and traveling through India while writing her debut novel *Moth*. The fictional novel *Moth* explores the impact of disproportionate violence on the lives of women and the structures of a fractious society. *Moth* by Razak is a historical fiction set in 1940s Delhi, during India's Independence and subsequent

Sugandhi Baruah is a student of English, in Department of English, The Assam Royal Global University, Guwahati Assam (corresponding author e-mail: sugandhibaruah@gmail.com).

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20291503>

partition. Through the protagonist, Alma, Razak sheds light on the often-overlooked experiences of women during partition and highlights their resilience, strength and struggles. The partition led to the displacement of millions of people and the death of more than a million. Many of the victims of this partition were women who were raped, abducted and killed in the name of freedom. Razak sets the novel in old Delhi on the eve of independence and Alma is one of the victims.

Gandhi is a Pakistani author, whose focus of writing is often based on the untouched realities of women. In *Alternative Realities: Love in the Life of Muslim Women*, Gandhi shares her experience of meeting different women in different scenarios of their lives. She shares her memories with Mahmuda Haque, the first woman Ambassador of Bangladesh. Mahmuda Haque challenges the social stereotype set for war widows. She admits her strong zeal to introduce herself as a strong independent woman rather than having the tag 'war widow'. Mahmuda expresses how society treats a woman who does not have a husband. Even her own family supports the set gendered perspective. The status of a married woman is always considered higher as compared to a widow. In Chapter 11 titled "Love, War and Widow", Mahmuda remembers the treatment meted out to her by her very own father, the man she would otherwise trust to see to her interests. His disdain at her misfortune amounted to the disparity and the discrimination she experienced in simple matters that left an impact on her outlook on life and the value of women and children in comparison to men.

Butalia in her work *The Other Side of Silence*, discusses about different layers of partition as narrated to her especially by women. She brought back the horrible memories of partition through close conversations. Butalia thoroughly captures the history of victimization, displacement and the hideous shattering of the body and soul of women. She says, history and politics always structures human existence but at the cost of women's dignity.

Butalia through her conversations with the victims reveals that thousands of women were abducted, forced to convert into opposite religion, raped brutally, sold into prostitution, and also were forced to marry out of their religion. They were even forced to marry their rapists and even their abductors and even the rapists.

In *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, Caruth explains the term trauma, "In its most general

definition, trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena” (79). Those women who survived after having the terrible experiences of partition were haunted by the memories for the rest of their life. Alma was forced to give birth to a rapist’s child. She was just a fourteen years old girl who hardly knew about life. Her body became just an object of someone’s dirty desires. Nobody took her permission to touch her body, nobody took her consent before forcing her to give birth. Alma is found by a rescue group and at the end of the novel she headed to an uncertain future on a train bound for India. Though she was rescued, the traumatic memory of her abduction never let her to live a normal life. Alma’s story can be related to Amrita Pritam’s protagonist, Puro. In Pinjar, Amrita Pritam tells the story of puro, who was raped by a Muslim man named Rashid, to take revenge.

XII. LITERATURE REVIEW

Amrita Pritam in her work Pinjar published in 1950, powerfully portrays the extreme violence women faced during partition. Through its protagonist Puro, Pritam highlights how women’s bodies were often politicized and used as tools of honor for communities. The novel also emphasizes the communal tensions between Hindus and Muslims and how these conflicts disrupt the lives of ordinary people. The narrative captures the haunting memories of Partition, illustrating how the trauma continues to affect the survivors.

Ritu Menon and Kamala Bhasin in their work *Boarders and Boundaries: Women in India’s Partition* published in 1998, examines how the division of the subcontinent not only created political and geographical boundaries but also exacerbated gender-based violence and discrimination. The work highlights the sexual violence faced by women were often viewed as symbols of honor and territory. They incorporated personal testimonies and stories from women, providing a nuanced understanding of their experiences.

Judith Lewis Herman’s in her work *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*, published in 1992, defines trauma as a psychological response to events that overwhelm an individual’s coping mechanisms. She emphasizes that trauma is often rooted in interpersonal violence, including domestic abuse, sexual assault and political terror. She differentiated between two main types of traumas. The first one is a single, acute event that can cause intense fear and anxiety but may not lead to long-term psychological events. The second one refers to chronic, repeated exposure to traumatic events, such as ongoing abuse, which can lead to deep-seated psychological issues.

Anjali Bharadwaj in her work “Partition of India and Women Experiences: A Study of Women as Sustainers of Their Families in Post -Partition Delhi” published by *Social Scientist* in 2004 highlights its profound engagement with atrocities imposed on women. Using the term ordinary, she focuses on the experiences of women. She states that, the history of partition was read essentially as history, with emphasis on men’s bravery and sacrifices. Women were considered as less important figures who did not seem to have any discrete experiences of their own and who simply followed the commands of their men., in order to save the ‘honor’ of their communities. Partition changed the course of many lives, especially women who were considered as puppets for the society full of lust. They were treated as animals in the name of patriotism. Women became prime subject for revenge; their bodies were touched to save the flag of one’s nation. that’s the untold truth of partition and Butalia through her work discusses about such horrible atrocities.

Manjinder Kaur Wratch in her work “Of Uprootedness, Madness and the Unclaimed Experiences of Trauma in Selected Partition Narratives” published in *Sahitya Academy* in 2023 highlights its profound engagement with trauma and psychological impact. This article studies the condition of mental health during and after partition. The study states that the partition of 1947 was as much a partitioning of mind as that of land and brought with it an accompanying sense of anguish and turmoil. The study uses Cathy Caruth’s ‘trauma theory’ to examine the mental condition of the sufferers. The article states that the understanding of what effects such events have on the mental health of an individual and a society are not acceptable subjects of discussion, discourse or action in our part of the world.

Tarun K. Saint in his work “The Long Shadowing of Manto’s Partition Narratives ‘Fictive’ Testimony to Historical Trauma” published in *Social Scientist* in 2012, shows the intensity of the theme of psychological trauma in Sadat Hasan Manto’s narratives. He focuses on Sadat Hasan Manto and Amrita Pritam’s works to study psychological trauma during war or partition. He finds that the extreme and near genocidal violence during the partition of the subcontinent in 1947 had led to unprecedented psychological trauma, which had a differentiated impact on survivors”. Through the work of Sadat Hasan Manto’s “Toba Tek Singh” and Amrita Pritam’s “Pinjar” (The Skeleton), this article focuses on the different mental atrocities of the survivors.

Umar Rabina Ali in her work titled “Muslim Women and the Partition of India: A Historiographical silence” published in *Islamic Studies* in 2009 uses Joan Kelly’s famous formulation, ‘to restore women to history and to restore history to women’ not only to challenge conventional historical writing but also to emphasize that history cannot be

written without taking into account the experiences of the second gender. History is created by accounts of humankind regardless of any gender prejudices. The study primarily aimed to incite the need for highlighting the impact of partition on Muslim women as well. Muslim women were also used to take revenge. The motto of partition at one point of time was 'rape for rape', women as a community was considered as a subject.

Partition is a broad area to discuss on. Often the bravery of war heroes and sacrifice of victims takes the spotlight. Numerous studies have been done on women's suffering, abduction and atrocities in Partition Literature but there remains a paucity of research in examining how such events affect the psychological area of the victims specially women creating a space for long lasting trauma and mental disturbances. There also remains a gap in focusing on the contributions of underrated authors like Gandhi and Razak towards the study of women sufferings. Gandhi's autobiographical work and Razak's debut novel mirror the hidden atrocities, limitations, challenges and patriarchal domination on women focusing on the often neglected or forgotten psychological areas.

XIII. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How did women's bodies become a tool for communal strife during partition?
2. In what ways trauma experienced during partition alter women's perception of their identity and role in society?

XIV. A FEMININE PERSPECTIVE OF WOMEN'S SOCIAL VICTIMIZATION

Feminist historians often point out the dissatisfaction regarding how the pages of women were torn apart from history. Partition was always about two nations, their dignity and the sacrifices of those brave soldiers at war. But the silent sufferings of those staying behind the triumph of victory is always considered as less important. There is no concerned accounts of the atrocities that almost every woman had experienced in the name of partition. Their bodies were the least concerned matter for the society as their wounds were not visible enough. Women were sacrificed for nation, their bodies were mere subjects of entertainment for the culprits, even girls below adulthood were unable to escape from such horrible experiences. There were many incidents where women were burned alive, they were forced to walk on the streets naked, raped brutally without a second thought about the souls. Such incidents were not only blood-chilling but also raise a strong question about the cost of freedom. The word partition represents thousands of such stories which were buried under the joy of victory.

The most neglected area of such atrocities is the concern for the psychological trauma of the victims. Cathy Caruth argues that such terrifying experiences makes the survivor see

how death looks like. Razak's protagonist Alma was abducted by group of Muslim men, was brutally tortured, raped, was forced to give birth to her rapist's child, also she was forced to change her religion. She experienced death several times, her body was murdered several times her identity was killed and she was left with heavy memories which will kill her every day. Veena Das. (2013) noted that "Decrepit old men, defenseless women, helpless children, infants in arms by thousands were done to death by Muslim, Hindu and Sikh fanatics" (p. 76). The helpless weaker section of the society was targeted. In *Moth*, there was an incident in Amritsar, where a group of hijab-wearing women are stripped naked and paraded through the street. They were lined up, gang-raped and set on fire. It was hardest of all for the girl at the end, a ten years old little girl. That ten-year-old girl is just an example of those millions of women who watched their own horrifying murder. There were countless records when women took their own lives to save themselves from such terrible experience. Razak's protagonist mirrors such atrocities on women. Alma was forced to change her religious identity, "She is converted. She is a Muslim now" (Razak, 289).

In 'Toba Tek Singh' Sadat Hassan Manto represents a picture of psychological trauma of the already mentally disturbed people. After the 1947 partition, it was decided by the government of both the sides to exchange their lunatics in the same manner as they had exchanged their criminals. All the lunatics underwent through a horror of losing something. There was a turmoil of thoughts, adding trauma to the existing trauma. Their minds were tortured by dividing them in two Nations. At least their bodies were forgiven but their minds were tortured. Razak tremendously explores the area of using female bodies for the satisfaction of such criminals:

"She has not moved for days. She can't move. Has tried to lift an arm or leg but is pinned by an invisible vein to the bed. Every morning, a fissure inside her leaks hot blood on the mattress. The four kind women move her and change the sheets. They use damp towels to clean in between her legs. (p. 287)."

Alma was left in a position where she was fighting with her inner turmoil. She knew her body has been sacrificed in the name of a nation. Alma tried to escape by taking her own life but she was not allowed to do so. Her identity changed, within a night her religion changed, Alma couldn't accept the fact that it was that easy for the criminals to change someone's religion. "Is that it? Is that all it takes to switch allegiance from one faith to Another? All that effort, all that blood, for this: a human hand on a sheaf of holy paper and a line of man-penned verse" (Razak, 2021, p. 202). Her whole identity was changed within a few hours. Nobody took her consent nobody was bothered about her inner turmoil.

When her rescuers arrived, she was confused she doesn't know how to react. "When they came to take her, she is not totally willing at first. For a whole minute, as her rescuers, one man, one woman stand expectantly, the jeep door open, she does not know how she feels" (Razak, 2021, p. 357). After all those horrible experiences there was no way that she can led a normal life. Since such violence during partition was swayed by the religious identities of women, they came to be considered as symbols representing their religious communities. Therefore, it was common reasons for their refusal to get back to their homes because the religious believe of society is so strong that it can sacrifice uncountable number of women to save their religious dignity. Thus, accepting them back would indicate backstabbing their religious believes. Because Hindu tradition and religion is often considered to be purest form of worshiping god. Therefore, it was stated that it was easier for Muslim women to return to their homes after such horrible experiences as compared to Hindu women. Because it was already expected by the Hindu society that if a woman loses her dignity, then she should kill herself as soon as possible.

"I want to stand by the open door" (Razak, 2021, p. 344), Alma says to the lady rescuer on her journey back to her real home. This train journey was the most uncomfortable journey of her life because the destination was unknown. She was uncertain about her family's reaction, whether they will accept this impure Alma or not was her question. Menon and Kamala Bhasin in their work *Boarders and Boundaries* (1998) wrote about the horrible responses of those whose daughters came back after getting raped by the opposite community. "In the villages of Head Junu, Hindus threw their young daughters into wells, dug trenches and buried them alive. Some were burnt to death; some were made to touch electric wires to prevent the Muslims from touching them" (p. 32). This is how Hindus stigmatize sexual violence, anything that hampers their izzat will be erased from society. After the horrible experiences women expect their families to at least console them, to show some sympathy and most importantly to accept them, but for the society they were impure. "We saw many who had been raped and disfigured, their faces and breast scarred, and then abandoned. They had tooth-marks all over them. Their families said, how can we keep them now? Better that they are dead" (Menon & Bhasin,32). This harsh reality creates another level of psychological disturbance within victims. The fear of getting murdered by their own family is way more disturbing than getting killed by rapist, at least they will kill them for the sake of a nation. Therefor Alma was confused, whether her family will accept her or she will be killed by her own family. This rescue will not rescue her from the atrocities she faced for being a woman. As Cathy Caruth wrote in her work, such memories reciprocate haunting the

victim for the rest of the life. Alma's life is the hidden portrait of all the women who sacrificed their life or to be very precise their body as an object in the name of nation. Such atrocities on female body by the first sex is very ordinary for the male centered society. Thousands of stories were buried under the bravery of those who died in battlegrounds.

Gandhi writes on behalf of women, her works often represents victim hood and resilience of women. Gandhi focuses on the power dynamics of society, how the second gender gets exploited by the male centered society and societal pressure. Gandhi's autobiographical work "Alternative Realities: Love in the life of Muslim Women" is a voyage of womanhood towards identity, identity of their own. Gandhi was originally a Muslim but she got married to a Hindu, going against her parents, her community and her religion. "Mine was neither legitimate nor okay because I was marrying a non-Muslim. I was going against divine law, the Sharia, the Islamic code of conduct" (Gandhi, 2021, p. 23). Her father, specially was not in favor of this marriage. But he has his own reason, "As a Muslim youth, he had lived through the hate-filled partition. He had to leave the beloved city of his birth, Calcutta, and seek his livelihood in a new Muslim nation. How could he now allow his daughter to marry a Hindu, and return to the enemy's fold?" (Gandhi, 2013, p. 21). Nighat fell in love with a Hindu man, Raj. She went against her family and got married to her. Nighat's mother is the perfect example of so call traditional housewives. "Her izzat lay in serving her husband in a society in which marriage was the only respectable career for women like her" (Gandhi, 2013, p. 24). Her mother never took a stand for herself, for her serving her husband is the only goal. Because she never had the courage to question the so conventional authority, as radical feminists argue. The root cause for women negligence and the audacity to out caste them is patriarchy, a system where men hold primary power and dominate in all aspects of society, but Nighat was rebellious, she rejected the traditional setup of the society. Gandhi's work holds many stories of women sacrificing their lives for the patriarchal society Gandhi shares her experience of meeting the first women ambassador of Bangladesh, Mahmuda Haque Choudhury. She lost her husband during the Bangladesh war of liberation; the Pakistani army took her husband and never returned him. Mahmuda was left with the tag of war widow, but she rebelliously refused that identity. Her journey from a typical housewife to Bangladesh's first women ambassador was full of sacrifices and resilience. She stood against the conservative patriarchal society and refused to be a war widow. She tried every possible way to find her husband, "I went searching for my husband in the mass graves. I thought I'd recognize him from the ring on his finger. But where was I to find his hand among all those rotting bodies?" (Gandhi, 2013, p. 340).

During the war the Pakistani army abducted many people living their known ones in disbelief. People were brutally killed and were thrown into the mass grave, like people throw waste materials in dustbin. When Mahmuda went to a holy man name, Pagla Pir, to trace her husband's location like many other women whose husbands were lost, he referred them as rotten bodies, "All you'll ever find are his sara gulla bones, if you find anything" (Gandhi, 2013, p. 342). she couldn't accept the fact that she has to reconstruct her identity and live her life as a war widow. In a patriarchal society it is quite difficult for a woman to survive without a husband. Even Mahmuda's own family neglected her because she was a single mother. The reason is that the society is constructed in such a manner, where they cannot offer an open sky for the women to live according to their convenience. If a woman is married her status is always higher than the unmarried one. "Even my own parents didn't respect me when I showed up at their doorstep as a widow. I came back to live with them after my husband disappeared, and they welcomed me. But my sister, who had a husband, was always more welcome" (Gandhi, 2013, p. 348). She experienced the harsh reality of the prevailing social norms and patriarchal domain of the society. Mahmuda was madly in love with her lost husband, but when she realized the societal norms prevalent for women of her society will never allow her to live her life, she thought to marry once again. But this time only to survive in a male dominated society, her past traumas never allowed her to forget about her first husband. As Caruth stated in her (1996) work "Trauma is never simply a story of the past; It is also a story of the future, of what it means to bear witness to the unclaimed experiences of the past" (p. 16). Mahmuda's past experiences of searching her husband in the mass grave, going to the holy man, and struggling to accept the tittle of war widow, always hampered her life. She sacrificed her beloved for a nation, and then she compromised her life with a man for whom she never had feelings. "I had to give up waiting for my husband. I didn't know when I could start calling myself a war widow" (Gandhi, 2013, p. 341). Mahmuda was uncertain about her future, but she was able to overcome the barriers with bravery and resilience. Gandhi's work is a travelogue, during her journey she meets several women, each women had a story to tell. Mahmuda's destiny was to lose her beloved and marry someone else. War took her husband, like hundred other victims she also became a social concept. She was so in love with her first husband that she never allowed her second husband to come closer.

To prove her love for her first husband she created a barrier between her and her second husband. There were times when her second husband desired to have an intimate moment with her, but she resists herself and never allowed him to make her his forever. She never polluted her womb because her second

husband was cheating on her. She married him so that she could survive in a patriarchal society, but got under the trap of patriarchal domain when she found out about her husband's illicit affairs. She married because a woman without a husband is a second-class citizen for this society.

History proves women bodies were being targeted to satisfy needs of the patriarchal system. They always become victims either in patriarchal domain or within the set gender ruled society.

XV. UNDERSTANDING THE DEPTH OF TRAUMA AND RESILIENCE

The experiences of women during the partition illustrate a complex intertwining of trauma and resilience. The experience of loss and trauma during the partition was acute and multifaceted for women, intricately woven in the social fabric of the time. The trauma endured by women extended beyond the immediate and visible losses; it infiltrated their psychological and emotional landscapes. Many women, in the course of this turbulent period, were subjected to horrific acts of sexual violence during communal riot, experienced that instilled deep-seated fear and shame. This violation were not only assaults on individual bodies but also acts that sought to undermine communal identities and restore patriarchal control amid chaos. As such, the scars borne by these women often transcended the corporeal, embedding themselves in the psyche and manifesting as enduring mental health challenges. The existential threat to their dignity and humanity lead to a pervasive sense of dislocation, creating an intricate web of trauma inter-wind with guilt, stigma, and the struggle for survival.

Manjinder Kaur Wretch in one of his articles studied about Caruth's representation of trauma. He says, "Cathy Caruth explains that extreme trauma alters an individual's true self leading to the creation of a traumatized self, and this traumatized self of the individual is not entirely a new self but the old self affected badly by trauma". Both Freud and Caruth after long deliberations found that the wound of the mind is 'not like wound of the body, a simple and healable event.' Wounds can be treated but the chances of healing the inner is quite not certain. Violence was commemorated on the bodies of the second gender in a major way during the partition, when women bodies became the matter of conflict between the two communities. Butalia points out the invisibility of such communal behaviour in history, she argues that history often records bravery, the brutal reality is often over shadowed by the structured truth. Writers like Menon and Bhasin came forward to write about such hidden incidents of partition. Women were killed, naked parade became the common way of protesting, and rape became a common thing.

Alma was only fourteen years old when she got abducted by a group of Muslim men. She was brutally raped and got

impregnated by her rapist. Most shockingly in Alma's case, four women were involved behind the torture that she experienced. "They spit on her now as though she has taken the name of God in vain. They kick and slap, crawl and scratch her. They scream in her face" (Razak, 2021, p. 339). Alma used to call them 'kind women', but the irony is they had no kindness for Alma. The dreadfulness of such experiences affected her subconscious mind. She was so frightened by the tortures that her actions went out of control. She was unable to control her emotion and the memory of those horrible experiences completely destroyed her state of mind. The trauma created by such events affected her psychological side. The memories use to revive in her mind in continuation hampering the ability of healing. "She sleeps. She dreams of ninety-three dead babies, mottled, blue-green-purple, bloated like toads and risen to the top of a village well. She pokes each one with her toe. When she wakes up, she has wet the bed" (Razak, 2021, p. 323). Her dream is the representation of her fear and trauma. She was impregnated by her rapist, her baby was growing, she knew her womb has been polluted and she is impure now. The act of poking every baby with her toe represents her inner zeal for revenge. In the last scene when the rescue team arrive, she didn't know how to react or what to do.

The mangoes are not ready yet, she says, not knowing what else to say" (Razak, 2021, p. 341). Another scene is when the rescue team was taking her back home by train. The train skidded to a halt. There was screaming and gunshots, high pitched sounds tore at her ears. Alma thought she is dreaming, "curled into a tight ball and tried to go back to sleep. Go away, go away, she whispered to the dream" (Razak, 2021, p. 343).

In *Alternative Realities: Love in the lives of Muslim Women* Gandhi, shows similar abnormal activities. The act of Mahmuda searching for her husband in the mass grave is itself a horrible depiction of psychological trauma, "The Pakistani army picked him up, and never returned him to us. Afterwards, I went searching for my husband in the mass graves. I thought I'd recognize him from the ring on his finger. But where was I to find his hand among all those rotten bodies?" (Gandhi, 2021, p. 340). The scene of the mass grave has created a long-term memory of horror in her mind. She is educated to an extent that for her believing in superstitious activities is something out of context. But the trauma of losing her husband made her believe in such nonsensical practices. She went to a holy man name, Pagla Pir, who claims to detect locations of dead bodies. She knew that the holy man can only act to locate a dead body, but instead of accepting the reality she decided to remain in her world of imagination. Any kind of disturbance in the context of history creates a sense of intense fear and helplessness. Women who were victims of sexual violence were mostly traumatized for the societal stigma, but in cases

like Mahmuda it's the trauma losing a loved one and the imposed societal pressure afterwards. Butalia in her work employed oral history as a primary method to collect firsthand accounts from survivors who lived through the partition. Many of the survivors broke their silence and described about the horrible incidents of the partition. The trauma of such blood-chilling experiences can linger over generations. Butalia examines how individuals process and remember their experiences, as well as the collective process memory of community affected by partition. The description of such events is kind of Gothic for the listeners in the sense that nobody can imagine such level of atrocities.

After such horrible experiences it was nearly impossible for the victims to even think to restart their lives. According to Balaev, Literary trauma theory is a burgeoning discipline that examines extreme emotional states and profound changes of perception with the help of psychological theories of trauma and memory. The ill-treatment towards women during and after partition can be traced through the works of Amrita Pritom, Attia Hosain and many more female writers. There are two stages of trauma for those who became victims. First, their bodies get tortured and second their soul gets murdered. Because to cure the outer wounds it is necessary for the soul to be strong enough to defend herself in front of the already conventional society. Women asked for death over humiliation because they were aware of the consequences of surviving after getting raped by the opposite community. For many women it was a curse to get rescued after such ill-treatments, their impure body got more humiliated within their native regions. When Alma got rescued, for a moment she holds herself back, there remained a question of acceptance, will her family accept her after getting raped? will she be able to continue her life again in such a society? will they keep her alive, all these thoughts created a turmoil of confusion in her mind? Agreeing to get rescued was itself an act of resilience for many victims like her, it took a lot of guts and confidence to return back to their native places after such impure experiences.

On the other hand, Mahmuda fought with the conservative rules of the society. After her husband got abducted by the Pakistani army in the backdrop of the Bangladesh war of liberation, the societal expectations forced her to get married once again despite of her willingness. To survive in a male dominated society, she had to have a male support so that she can live her life peacefully. She got neglected by her own family because she was a widow, her colleague insisted her for personal favor because a woman without a husband is an easy target for them. After such experiences she decided to get married only to save herself and her two children from the eyes of those chance seekers.

According to radical feminist theory, women should have right over her body. Mahmuda never planned to have child with her second husband, "I polluted my body with his touch but I vowed never to let him pollute my womb, so I never had children with him" (Razak, 2021, p. 350). Because she still loves her first husband with whom she dreamed to spend her whole life. she made herself economically stronger so that she can hold an equal position with man at least in terms of finance. She showed great resilience of survival in a male dominated society by refusing to adjust herself in the set gender biased society. Though she got married for the second time, but she holds complete rights over her body and mind, challenging the set gender rules. Both Alma and Mahmuda showed great resilience by accepting their realities and by fighting against their fate. Both went through different levels of mental trauma and psychological disturbances but somehow, they were able to come out of the atrocities, though the memories of their experiences will never allow them to come out of their mental trauma, still they saved their lives by standing stronger against the society

XVI. CONCLUSION

Women were disproportionately affected by the violence and chaos that erupted during partition. There are harrowing accounts of abduction, sexual violence, and murder as communities were torn apart along religious lines. Reports indicate that thousands of women were raped, forced into sexual slavery, forced marriages and many were killed as a means of ethnic cleansing. This violence was not merely an incidental consequence of the conflict but was often strategically employed to humiliate and degrade entire communities. The trauma experienced by women during this time was compounded by the societal expectations placed upon them. Women were frequently viewed as bearers of community honor, and their victimization was often seen as a reflection of communal shame. This burden intensified the psychological impacts of their experiences, leading to feelings of guilt, shame, and despair. The mental health ramifications for women were profound and long-lasting. Additionally, the partition led to the disruption of social support systems. Women who lost family members or were displaced often faced isolation, lack of resources, and a lack of access to mental health services. Traditional support networks, including family and community, were severely fractured, exacerbating feelings of loneliness and despair. In the aftermath of partition, many women found themselves navigating new realities in refugee camps or unfamiliar lands. The struggle for survival coupled with the emotional scars of trauma, created a complex landscape for their mental health.

Some women managed to rebuild their lives through resilience and determination, becoming active agents of change within their communities despite the overwhelming

challenges they faced. Women like Mahmuda made themselves economically and philosophically independent to adjust in the society. On the other hand, Alma after facing the horrible reality of partition showed great resilience by showing her will to stay alive. The negligence of women trauma and psychological disturbance is an area of concern. People give importance on the outer scars but the inner wound that takes forever to heal often remain unnoticed. This study focuses on those neglected areas to understand the inner turmoil of women victims and their resilience to fight against their trauma and the communal atrocities.

REFERENCES

- [1] Ali, U. R. (2009, Autumn). Muslim women and the partition of India: A historiographical silence. *Islamic Studies*. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/0839174>
- [2] Busschbach, V. J. (2012). Negative body experiences in women with early childhood trauma: Associated with trauma severity and dissociation. *European Journal of Psychotraumatology*. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/08723876>
- [3] Das, V. (1996). Language and body: Transactions in the construction of pain. In *Social suffering*. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20027354>
- [4] Das, V. (2008). Violence, gender, and subjectivity. *Annual Review*. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20027354>
- [5] Dhall, T. (2023). *Delineating resilience through the autobiographies of women partition survivors*. Sahitya Akademi. <http://www.jstor.org/?27291931>
- [6] Kabeer, N. (1991). *The quest for national identity: Women, Islam and the state in Bangladesh*. Sage Publications. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20045678>
- [7] Kumari, A. (2013). Delhi as refuge: Resettlement and assimilation of partition refugees. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 60–67.
- [8] Nitali, K. (2019). Partition trauma and women: Unending lament in Shoba Rao's *An Unrestored Women and Other Stories*. Aesthetic Media Service. <http://www.jstore.org/stable/200675478>
- [9] Pritam, A. (1950). *Pinjar*. (Original work published 1950).
- [10] Saxena, C. (2014, August 17). On religion and its implications on women during partition of India. *Indian History Congress*. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20056749>
- [11] Singh, P. (2013). Sacks of mutilated breasts: Violence against women and body politics in partition literature. *The Creative Launcher*. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/0463577>
- [12] Virdee, P. (2013, January 12). Remembering partition: Women, oral histories and the partition. *Annual Review*. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/087635436>