



Shivaji University
Kolhapur, Maharashtra

Centre For Distance Education



B. A. Part-II (Optional English)
Discipline Specific Core (DSC-CE & DSC-CH)
(Paper IV Semester III & Paper VI Semester IV)

Partition Literature

(Enrollment No. 2020-21 onwards)



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(Optional English : Paper IV Semester III & Paper VI Semester IV)
(Discipline Specific Core (DSC-C6 & DSC-C30))

Partition Literature

(Academic Year 2020-21 onwards)

For

B. A. Part II

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Impact of Partition on Women

Unit 1

1.1 Objective

1.2 Introduction

1.3 Content: Impact of Partition on Women

1.3.1 Partition: Familial Consequences

1.3.2 Partition: Religious Consequences

Check Your Progress

1.4 Content: Impact of Partition on Women

1.4.1 Partition: Psychological Consequences

1.4.2 Partition: Social Implications

1.4.3 Partition: Literary Consequences

Check Your Progress

1.5 Content: Impact of Partition on Women

1.5.1 Partition: Political Consequences

1.5.2 Partition: Economic Consequences

Check Your Progress

2.1 Objective

2.2 Unit 2: Introduction

2.3 Summary for Check Your Progress

2.4 Exercise

2.5 Guide for Further Reading

5.0 Objectives:

- To examine the socio-cultural and psychological issues of women experienced partition.
- To understand and analyze these socio-cultural and emotional issues experienced by these women.
- To understand women across the cultures, irrespective of their creed, religion, community, nationality and on the other, it looks social, cultural, emotional and physical experiences of these women.
- To sketch/ create a wholesome picture of woman during the partition.

5.1 Introduction:

In August 1947, the British left India, and the subcontinent was partitioned into two independent nations: Hindu-majority India and Muslim-majority Pakistan. This led to one of the greatest migrations in human history, as millions of people trekked to West and East Pakistan and millions of Hindus and Sikhs moved in the opposite direction. Most part of the recorded history of India's Partition is the suffering of men, women, children, of how the event shook the lives of all who lived through it. But Partition, like wars and other forms of violence, affected women differently than it affected men—mostly because of the specific responsibilities attached with the specific gender.

Women faced violence at various levels; communal, at family level, and at macro level. They were being abducted, kidnapped, raped, and killed. They were forced to commit suicide in order to protect the family honour. Furthermore, in the name of recovery, they were disowned by their families; their children were considered illegal and wrong. The voices of women during partition were lost under the dominant ideologies of purity and nationhood.

5.2 Content: Impact of Partition on Women:

The Partition of India had a huge impact on millions of people living in the 1940s. In August 1947, British India won its independence from the British and was split into two new states that would rule themselves. This forced millions

to leave their homes to move to the other state. This was the largest forced migration of people that has ever happened.

Women of all ages, ethnic groups and social classes were victimized, tortured and raped -- some even were stripped naked and paraded down streets to intensify their trauma and humiliation. In many even more tragic cases, fathers, fearing that their daughters would soon be raped (and converted to another faith), pressured and coerced the girls to commit suicide lest such an event "taint" their family's "honour" and standing in the community -- or they killed their own female relatives themselves.

Several women had completely detached themselves from their pasts and formed new bonds in their present situations. A few were even married legitimately. Some women had married their abductors and were pregnant. Who would care for these children? After all, they were products of a mixed union!

Women remain a voiceless entity, pushed into the shadows and confines of their homes. One of the main reasons women faced uncountable hardships during this time was a skewed sense of "manliness" and "honour" that prevailed. It was believed that women, being the reproductive force, were instruments to maintain "purity" of blood and race.

The fastest and perhaps most effective way to sully the honour of the other religion was to sully the honour of its women to assault, rape, and impregnate women. Women became easy targets of violence and got drawn into a war that was most definitely not their own.

5.2.1 Partition: Familial Consequences

Sunny Hundal, a Sikh columnist, wrote in Britain's Guardian newspaper that womens' bodies become highly coveted and treasured symbols of political and familial power in India and Pakistan. "In patriarchal and feudal societies, women are almost always seen as the bearers of culture and 'honor,'" he wrote. "Traditional, conservative South Asian culture fetishizes women to such an extent that, while the official line says they are held in high esteem and regard, in actual fact, they are treated simply as vessels of that honor, and their lives are forced to be structured around preserving that. They are not allowed to do anything that compromises those ideals, while men have much freer [rein] without the same burden."

These deeply ingrained attitudes manifested themselves in the violence during Partition. "When Muslim, Hindu and Sikh men wanted revenge for their peers being killed by the other, they deliberately went on for women of other religions to rape and kidnap," Hundal added. "When women were confronted with angry baying mobs, the women were told to commit jumping in the well for their own benefit rather than fall in the clutches of the mob. It intensified bigotry on all sides, and this was frequently expressed in besmirching women's honor."

Violence against women included the violence inflicted on women by their family members. This could vary from honour killings to the insistence that their mothers, daughters, or wives commit suicide in order to save the purity and chastity of the community. Both forms of violence substantiated that women were not treated as humans but rather as markers of communal national pride.

5.2.2 Partition: Religious Consequences:

As the partition was primarily based on religion, peoples' identities as Hindu, Muslim or Sikh became a major ground of opposition. Religious minorities in several regions were hunted down and killed. Faced with the immediate loss of their homes and livelihood, and with their security at risk, people fled the streets as wanton killings and violence escalated along communal lines. Senseless communal slaughter and a fratricidal war of unprecedented proportions. Unspeakable atrocities were perpetrated on the minorities in both India and Pakistan. In the span of a few months, nearly 500,000 people were killed and property worth thousands of millions of rupees was looted and destroyed. Communal violence threatened the very fabric of society.

Pakistan's population ended up more religiously homogeneous than anticipated. The Muslim League's leaders had assumed that Pakistan would have a sizeable non-Muslim population, whose presence would safeguard the rights of Muslims remaining in India – but in West Pakistan, non-Muslims comprised only 1.6% of the population by 1951, compared with 22% in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). These transitions affected the physical and emotional well-being of those who underwent these experiences.

This ethnic genocide witnessed two kinds of gender-based violence. Firstly, the violence inflicted on women by men of the opposite religious group that involved kidnapping, rape, and mutilation of the genitalia or public humiliation. The supposed aim of this kind of violence was to abase the men of the rival religion to which the women belonged.

Aside from the sheer horror of sexual violation, some rape survivors had to literally wear physical signs of their shame -- rapists frequently mutilated and disfigured the girls' skins with markings and graffiti that reflected the violators' political or religious affinities, including tattooed phrases like "Pakistan Zindabad" (Long Live Pakistan") or "Jai Hind" ("Long Live India") or symbols like the Hindu trident or Islamic crescent moon.

The partition did not solve the Hindu-Muslim problems; it caused the situation of the Muslims in India to deteriorate. They were blamed for the division of the country, their leadership had left and their power was further weakened by the removal of all Muslim-majority areas except Kashmir.

Check Your Progress

1. Women, being the reproductive force, were instruments to maintain "purity" of blood and
a) Race b) creed c) sect d) class
2. ----- were not treated as humans but rather as markers of communal and national pride.
a) farmers b) freedom fighters c) men d) women
3. ----- violence threatened the very fabric of society.
a) familial b) Communal c) political d) economical
4. The Muslim League's leaders had assumed that ----- would contain a sizeable non-Muslim population.
a) Baluchistan b) India c) Pakistan d) Bangladesh
5. The violence inflicted on women by men of the opposite----- group that involved kidnapping, rape, and mutilation of the genitalia.
a) political b) religious c) rational d) cultural