

Exploitation and Sufferings of Women in 21st-Century Partition Novels: A Study of Amit Majmudar's *Partitions* (2011) and Bhaswati Ghosh's *Victory Colony, 1950* (2020)**SONALI S. SHETE¹,**Ph. D. Research Scholar, Department of English and Languages,
Sandip University, Nashik. (MS) INDIA**DR. RANI SARODE²**Associate Professor & Research Guide, Department of English and Languages
Sandip University, Nashik. (MS) INDIA**Abstract:**

The female in the literary depictions of Partition can be easily pictured as not only passive victims of historical events but as the main actors of the drama where it is possible to see the emotional, moral, and cultural violence of Partition. In the 21st century Partition writing, this interest is even keener. The revisiting of the event by contemporary authors is not only meant to tell the story of political division but rather to regain the voices that were stifled, forgotten or buried under official histories.

This paper assumes *Partitions* and *Victory Colony, 1950* is about women as the most grievously injured subject of Partition not only due to physical violence but due to having the historical disaster that was catastrophe sustained in their body, feelings, work, and memory. The two novels show that women are exploited in various ways; physically, psychologically, socially, economically and symbolically. Meanwhile, the works make the non-theory of female victimhood more complicated as women appear as survivors, witnesses, and carriers of the world truths that continue their lives in the broken world. By using these writings, the Partition literature of the 21st century deepens feminist historical knowledge through the revelation of the central place of the suffering of women in the meaning of Partition itself.

Keywords: Partition, women, exploitation, trauma.**INTRODUCTION**

Having been created in 1947, the Partition of India is among the most traumatic and symbolic moments in the South Asian history. It brought not just the separation of land, nations and communities, but the separation of families, identities and human relations, as well. Women were particularly and significantly impacted by Partition and its catastrophic effects on any population. They were victimized to abduction, sex harassment, forced migration, domestic oppression, economic denudation, and social disgrace. *Partitions* by Amit Majmudar (2011) and *Victory Colony, 1950* by Bhaswati Ghosh (2020) are two notable works concerning the topic of the 21st century that renegotiate the legacy of the Partition in the most gendered terms. In their character and method of narration, these works are disparate; however, in the realization of the interwoven oppression of the female body, women in these cultures, the impact of such oppression, and its effect on their lives, both novels predict sites of oppression that women have to endure. Majmudar refers to the human cost of national division in *Partitions* using the intimate family and social experience to highlight the vulnerability of women in a world filled with masculine ideas about honor, power and religion. In *Victory Colony, 1950*, Ghosh shifts the focus to post-Partition years and to the aftermath of refugees and demonstrates that the sufferings did not end with the migration, instead it persisted in refugee colonies, in poverty, in fluctuating domestic places, and on reconstruction burdens.

PARTITION, GENDER, AND THE FEMINIST REWRITING OF HISTORY

The presence of partition literature has consistently placed strong emphasis on the elements of displacement, violence and communal hatred but as with any other form of critical and analysis, feministic criticism has demonstrated that these classifications would need to be re-evaluated based on the experiences of women. Women did not happen to be mere casualties of the change in politics. They were also specifically targeted since their bodies would be used as a symbol of family honour, religious purity and community ownership. Sexual violence at the Partition was not an accident; it was associated with the patriarchal framework that viewed women as the carriers of male prestige, as well as group identity. There is no way that one may comprehend the sufferings of women during Partition without the cultures of patriarchy that prevailed before, during, and after the year 1947.

The modern writers no longer dwell upon the theatre of riots and migration but explore the way in which women have to live with the consequences of Partition in the lives that they have after. This change is significant in the sense that it opposes the gestation towards enacting Partition as a single historical event. To women, Partition was not over with border drawing. Incorporating a feminist approach into *Partitions* and *Victory Colony, 1950*, it appears that exploitation is not exclusive to the taking of lives through a spectacular display of brutality. Exploitation is also found in emotional neglect, in restraints imposed on women by family and community, in the weight of respectability and the need to endure pain and find solace in silence so that social continuity can be ensured. Such novels thus oppose the traditional narrations on history because they focus on the lives of women as the most important tool of creating a real picture of the price that Partition paid.

WOMEN AND THE VIOLENCE OF PATRIARCHAL HONOUR IN PARTITIONS

In his *Partitions*, Amit Majmudar portrays Partition as a national and a personal catastrophe. The novel is immensely troubled with how the communal struggle finds its way into the family life and change human relationship. Women are specifically exposed in this world since they stand at a plane that brings about their gender oppression and political violence. Riots or migration are not the only things that make them suffer; their suffering is aggravated more by patriarchal attitudes that characterize women as far as the male power and the community values are concerned. The fact that the bodies of women are represented as a symbolic territory at the time of conflict is one of the most potent points of *Partitions*. Patriarchal societies tend to define women as carriers of family honor and in such a case, violence against women is a form of disgracing a whole community. This reason makes women particularly vulnerable in Partition. They are not seen as people having their own identity but are viewed as an extension of fathers, husbands, brothers, and religious organizations. Consequently, women are not only at risk of physical assault but also the destruction of her/his personal agency. The ways in which Majmudar addresses the issue of female suffering show that communal violence operates based on existing systems of gender inequality. Even during crisis times, women are bound by the pressure of obedience, chastity, and responsibility. They are supposed to maintain morality as the men take up their decision on migration, security, and fidelity. This disparity is a bitter reality: in situations when women are suffering most, they are usually not given a chance to make decisions concerning their destiny. They are thus exploited both externally and internally. Outside, they are threatened by the brutality of the mobs and political uncertainties. They are inferior in the household and community and their worth is based on honor and service as opposed to personhood. Fear is another significant aspect of the novel. Fear in *Partitions* is not only a short-term experience of emotion; it becomes a state of female being. Women exist in continual fear of predatory action, alienation, desertion or adaptability to new circumstances. The neighbors turn enemies, places once known, are now unsafe, and even home becomes devoid of its protective meaning. To women, this disintegration is particularly crushing since the domestic world, which has always been thought of as their major space, is no longer a unifying place of safety. As a matter of fact the home may be the other location of control, silence, and emotional suffocation. The psychological price of being treated as symbols, instead of human beings, is also portrayed through the female characters of Majmudar. Women lack freedom to express feelings because of the pressure of defending honor of family or community. To fit society, they have to repress feelings of sadness, lust, anger, and insecurity. By doing so, the novel reveals the inhumanness of patriarchal morale: it requires women to take trauma graciously, but lacks much empathy as an agency of torture. At the same time, *Partitions* does not portray women as empty vessels of sorrow. They are disruptive to the institutions that subjugate them thanks to their presence in the novel. Even when silenced, women embody memory, witness, and moral truth. The tragedy portrays the futility of nationalistic and patriarchal discourses as well. The novel indicates that, when history is narrated as based on boundaries, rulers, and mutual ownership, then history is not complete. The real history of Partition would have to take into consideration the lives of women whose lives had been shattered by the ambitions of men and violence of ideologies.

THE CONTINUITY OF SUFFERING IN VICTORY COLONY, 1950

Where *Partitions* deals with the women being jeopardized in the violence of parting, *Victory Colony, 1950* by Bhaswati Ghosh investigates what happens after. This change is essential. A lot of Partition literature has centered on trains, riots, and migration, yet Ghosh delves into the less pronounced persistence of suffering within refugee settlements, and unstable urban lives. Her novel shows that women were exploited not to stop when people crossed borders or sought shelter. Rather, the Partition resulted in new perversities of misery, particularly to women who were forced to cope with domestic survival amid poverty, insecurity, and displacement. The very title is indicative of an irony. Victory implies the resolution, triumph, or a new beginning, but the colony depicted in the novel is influenced by precarity and struggle. Life in the face of scarcity, overcrowding, uncertainty and the demand to reconstitute families out of ruins characterize the lives of refugee women under the post-Partition life. Exploitation here assumes a very economic and social nature. Women have the responsibility of taking care, housework and emotional support with little or no proper resources and appreciation. They have to support families, maintain dignity, negotiate social enmity, and

bear the burden of loss, and adapt to new social conditions. The characteristic of *Victory Colony, 1950* as the intermediary of women as working survivors, is one of the greatest advantages of this work. Instead of describing them solely through the prism of sexual violence or community attack, Ghosh makes the spectators focus on the daily exploitation that organizes the activities of refugees. Women labour all the time, either by paid labour, unpaid household service or emotional labour. They are working hard to keep families and communities alive but their contribution is not clearly visible. This invisibility is in itself a form of exploitation. The surviving refugee family is due to the fact that the women also ingest wear and tear, hunger, and shame and stress, yet the recognition of the same seldom corresponds to the loss. As also depicted in the novel, displacement transforms the gender relations. Theoretically, even crises can create a space to change, but, practically, refugee life only tends to strengthen patriarchal forces. Women can take on more roles but that does not necessarily make them more autonomous. Rather, they should do more and be obedient and respectable. Economic distress has the power to intensify male distress, and women often end up with the emotional fallout of such stress. In this way, this world as is created after the Partition recreates inequity despite requiring women to be strong.

The other important feature of the work by Ghosh is how memory and survival are related. This transforms them into historical custodians but at the same time increases their pain. Remembering is hurtful, forgetting may be another kind of dispossession. Thus, women exist in a paradoxical place of continuity and discontinuity. They are forced to live now with the dead burden of yesteryear. It manifests itself in fatigue, starvation, social marginalization and patient erosion of hope. This stands as one of the significant feminist interventions in this novel: it demands that history not only take note of dramatic violence but of years of long suffering. The domestic necessity normalizes their pain since it is entwined in it.

COMPARATIVE STUDY: FROM SPECTACULAR VIOLENCE TO EVERYDAY SURVIVAL

Combined, the *Partitions* and *Victory Colony, 1950* gives a comprehensive and impressive depiction of the elemeors of women in the Partition fiction of the 21 st century. Both readings demonstrate that women are the most disproportionately sufferers of uprising in history, and both texts focus on various stages and manifestations of that misery. *Partitions* more directly deal with the direct emotional and ethical violence of collective dismemberment, especially the vulnerabilities of women to patriarchal honour. *Victory Colony, 1950* continues the frame into the aftermath of refugee life, showing how women also remain victimized via material deprivation, household work and as social outcasts. It is the weighting down of women directed specifically at them in both novels, respectively, by their having symbolic and functional roles in the patriarchal society, which disallows the latter equal agency. The target during Partition is that of women as they are regarded as the pride of the community. They are left after Partition and become the working pillars of survival since their task will be to nurture, to endure and to rebuild without complaining. Via thus violence modify not form but structure. The patriarchal logic that subjects women to the danger of their bodies subjects them to sacrifice on post-migration. One more significant similarity is between what public history can tell and what is being experienced by a person. Both novels oppose the notion that Partition can be comprehended in terms of political happenings only. Instead, they demonstrate that the actual influence of history emerges at home, relationships, and within female inner worlds. In *Partitions*, social conflicts creep into the lives of families and pervert ties of kinship. In *Victory Colony, 1950*, the refugee colony turns into a continuation of political violence into daily human life. Women in both instances are victims of both social disaster and individual survivance. Silence is also very much concerned with the novels. Women are frequently the victims of social unspoken suffering, either due to a sense of shame or fear, or even espoused as part of the order of the day. *Partitions*, silence in *Partitions* is associated with honour and emotional oppression; *Victory Colony, 1950*, is associated with the daily routine of survival and invisibility of domestic work. Chasm in both, however, this is not a vacuum. There is fullness of memory, pain and unacknowledged truth. In putting these women into narrative focus, Majmudar and Ghosh disrupt the silences customarily safeguarded by traditional histories. Agency in *Partitions* is often constrained and burdened morally, it manifests itself in gestures of emotional perseverance or witness, not freedom. In *Victory Colony, 1950*, the agency is further linked to the survival labour, adaptability and capability to be bound together against insurmountable odds. They both are influenced by oppression. Not in Katie, however, only indicate that women are not passively acted upon by history, but also that they bear history, and make their interpretation of it, and hand over its implications to posterity.

WOMEN AS VICTIMS, WITNESSES, AND MEMORY-BEARERS

One of the significant successes of these 21st century novels is that they do not want to simply turn women into mere victims. Although the two texts vividly reveal the elements of exploitation and suffering, they portray women as both narrators of their experiences who show the moral truth that official histories are unable to unveil. This should be of particular concern to literature reviews based on feminism, which aims to not just enlist the oppression but also to reclaim subjectivity in the marginalized. Women bear memory differently in both *Partitions* and *Victory Colony, 1950*. They remember in an intimate, bodily, and relational manner, rather than in an abstract and national way. They recall homes lost, interfered with routines, family ties that have been broken and humiliations which are not always considered by the mourning masses. Via the female experiences, we see Partition not as a successful birth of the nations but a personal catastrophe, a catastrophe perpetuated through the generations. This position of memory-bearer is ductal. It makes women have a narrative meaning, yet it makes them suffer even more. Remembering means living again, because no one can fully preserve the emotional truth of the past, women preserve this truth in its entirety, but this preservation could put them into an unresolved trauma. The novels thus indicate that memory is a burden and resistance. The ethical demand made on the readers of these novels is also a commonality between these novels. They request that the pain that women are going through is not shaken and put on display. Rather, the reader is compelled to learn about how the mechanisms of exploitation works based on the social structures- through patriarchy, community ideology, marginalization of refugees and the invisibility of female labour in day-to-day life. The novels therefore, convert empathy into criticism.

CONCLUSION

Amit Majmudar *Partitions* and Bhaswati Ghosh *Victory Colony, 1950* are strong Partition novels of the 21 st century that puts the exploitation of women and their sufferings at the centre of the historical knowledge. Their combined efforts prove that no one can understand what the trauma of Partition is without considering gender. Women are oppressed not just in the sense that they endure violence, but in the sense that their societies are dominated by the patriarchy and shaped to act as a source of honor, objects of domination, working survivors and silent guardians of collective memory. They are exploited both physically, emotionally, socially and economically. It starts at the time of the political discontinuity and resettlement extends into the extended follow up of the dislocation.

Partitions display the mix of communal violence and patriarchal ideology to pose a threat to women in terms of their bodily and emotional survival. The *Victory Colony, 1950* reveals that the aftermath of refugees is another tier of exploitation where women live shaky lives by working invisibly, and sacrificing unacknowledged lives. The two novels thus fit into each other in following a continuum of plight: of instant fright to years in lasting anguish, of physical susceptibility to material and household weight, of community disruption to personal maintenance. But the two writings equally demand that women are more than mere victims of history. The Partition literature of the 21st century is a feminist recovery place through them. It also replenishes the dignity of the lives that have been turned off to silence and shows that the Partition historiography needs to be rewritten in the light of those whose lives have suffered the most.

That is why in this way these novels do not only show the pain of women but they also make the readers think about the meaning of historical violence in itself. Partition made nations as well as it made nations. It was also the unmaking of the safety, autonomy and normal existence of women. Majmudar and Ghosh work together to enrich and make South Asian literature and history more ethically accountable, by foregrounding such a reality. Their writings help us remember that once the women begin to have their voices heard, Partition does not seem to be a far-off backdrop of a political act but a human tragedy that is being dictated into memory, into labour, and into life itself.

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