

Chapter 3

***Ice-Candy-Man* and Other Partition Narratives: India's Vivisection and the Marginalisation of Women**

Introduction

India was a British colony for a long time. This Asian country was yoked to foreign rule for a long period of two hundred years. The journey of free India does not only recount the events of loss and tragedy for the freedom struggle but also for something that came hounding the steps of that freedom. After losing the freedom fighters and many of the keen supporters of nationalist altruism, there still remained an event that would spiral the civilians through valleys of hatred and bloodbath in the name of religion and ethnographic bifurcation. The Partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 was the tragic and politically devised conclusion to a long battle for freedom. The poets of the nation were confused about whether they should celebrate independence or mourn the loss of a metamorphosed nation. Prem Dhavan, in a bid to celebrate India's freedom, described it as "the arrival of spring," to which Ali Sardar Jafri, understanding the implications of the impending partition, lamented, "What shall we call autumn if this is spring?" (Chugtai).

The division was rushed and desperate. Cyril Radcliffe admitted to being forced by the three biggest political influences of the time, Jinnah, Nehru and Patel, to give a border line that would divide India and Pakistan before 15th August without him having the proper data or scheme (Butalia ch. 3). This is evident even in W.H. Auden's poem "Partition".

The maps at his disposal were out of date

And the Census Returns almost certainly incorrect,
 But there was no time to check them, no time to inspect
 Contested areas [...] (Auden)

According to Auden, Radcliffe divided the regions and never came back, for he feared for his life. And rightly so. Partition became the ground for severe contentions among the population of the newly formed Pakistan and India. The result was such that the partition took as many as a million lives, and it is widely accepted that around 75,000 women were abducted and raped (Butalia ch. 1). The tragedy was not of the separation of a beloved part, but of man's expulsion of morality in the face of uncertainty and fear which then led to a human pandemonium.

Poisoned Souls: Honour and Death

In such chaotic events, like war, riots, and pogroms, women become a liability. Their bodies, sexualised and gendered, can become a ground for other men where the battles of ethnic hatred can be enacted. In the name of honour women were murdered during the riots, some even beseeched for death, and then there were some who had it arranged for themselves. For women who have been fed the idea of sexual coyness all their lives, rape must be prevented even at the cost of their deaths. The lands of India and Pakistan are heavy with the weight of such deaths and murders.

Thoa Khalsa's Basant Kaur narrated to Urvasi Butalia how "more than ninety women" chose to drown themselves in a well which, by the time the former had jumped in, was too full to drown her, and it was because of this twist in fate that she survived to tell her tale (Butalia ch. 2). Her son further substantiated the tale of these honour killings by recounting how his father had killed his own sister. His pride in seeing the

blatant murder as a “martyrdom” of the woman is shocking to the modern minds. But this is how many saw those deaths committed by their own hands or by someone who had decided to take up a weapon against these women. Another narrative by Mangal Singh enlightens us about the same twisted concept of morality where he, along with his brothers, murdered 17 of his family members (children and women) so that they could be saved from the plight of conversion, sexual mutilation, and the very rampant raping that was going on (ch. 5). This account is not of shame or guilt but of proud desolation overwrought with the idea of honour, martyrdom, and duty in the face of love, for this is how many see those lost lives and their participation in the murders.

Civilians, especially women, became collateral casualties in the partition and other wars and battles. Butalia explains how the men who had voiced their stories were reluctant to talk about their women, and women refused to speak because they believed they had nothing ‘worthwhile’ to add or say (ch. 4). In these testimonies, proud men came out to speak of the martyrs of the family and those who were too late to save their women and thus decided to remain silent. Even with their lingering silences, there were whispers from someone in the neighbourhood: "Talk to them; their sister was abducted". These whispers can only be read as shame, which the neighbours believe has befallen that family; they whisper so that these men are not embarrassed by something they failed to do—to either kill this abducted woman or to save her. These men had only two choices—either to face the shame of their ‘impotency’ or to become the unconventional ‘heroes’ by murdering the women. These tales are filled with confounding whispers, screaming silences, pauses, and stutters that have their own sub-texts. Allusive-elusive tales have an invisible narrative under the folds of the visible one.

The dichotomous behaviour towards honour and shame had been a subject of study by the leading anthropologist, Ruth Benedict. Ruth Benedict, in her work, *The*

Chrysanthemum and the Sword, described the Japanese way of dealing with the ideals of victory and defeat as a part of shame-culture. One such example is the Japanese ceremony of *seppuku*, roughly translated as belly cutting. More often observed in historical times by Japanese samurai groups, *seppuku* is a form of suicide in which the defeated warrior, in order to save his honour or to save himself from humiliation by torture, would plunge a sharp-short blade into his stomach moving it from one end to another, thereby, resulting in death (Benedict Ch. 10). *Junshi* is another form of honour-death which means following the lord in death. This suicide is observed as a result of fidelity to one's owner, sometimes observed by the vanquished lord's vassals and relatives and many times by the wives of the vanquished lords. A more modern example is of the Kamikaze fighter troops which were developed as a special unit of the Japanese military that served to destroy the warships of the US more efficiently by crashing, thereby committing suicide missions, into the naval vessels owned by the Allies during the Second World War (Zaloga 4). Such sacrifices that are deemed heroic are not limited to the Japanese *seppuku* or *Junshi*, but practices like these have been observed by other communities as well. A similar kind of ceremony, *Jauhar*, used to be observed by the Rajput women in India. After the king was vanquished, *Jauhar* was committed, an act of self-immolation by women in great numbers. Padmavati's story, though debated because of its stature as a folk tale, has at least a true representation of the *Jauhar*. The tale of this controversial queen was known to many in the subcontinent, but the few that had yet to hear about the queen did learn of her through the infamous film, earlier to be released under the name of *Padmavati*, but later, after the director got into some conflicts with several Rajput groups, as *Padmavat*. The last scene of the film is a visually stunning and a heart-rending representation of *Jauhar*. The aura that the scene creates is not abhorrent. Though not unthinkable, it still inspires a feeling of awe.

The purpose of the scene is not to show the vulnerability of the women who find themselves in a position where they are left with only two choices— death by self-immolation or a life of sexual slavery— but to instil a feeling of pride in the eventual suicide. A pride that resonates in the minds of many belonging to the same culture irrespective of the gender. Many men, even today, take pride in this heritage of women's sacrifices.

In the Sanjay Leela Bhansali film, towards the end, the usurper Khilji can be seen running towards Padmavati while the great warrior queen draped in red is walking towards the great fire. She is holding a white cloth in her hand on which are the red hand prints of the King (her husband), representing a permission for the act of self-immolation. Never faltering, keeping pace to the sound of music that starts with a resounding conch shell (commonly used in historical warfare as a declaration of war and in Hindu religious ceremonies), the queen is approaching the lit pyre. And then the chorus of women humming ensues, disturbed by an uncanny pause, and then the tempo of music rises to a woman's almost wailing-like sound in which she says "Jai Rani" (Long live the queen). After this point, the choir's refrains of

Rani sa jo aag sa bhadkya,

Rani sa badal sa garjaya,

rani sa rajputi shan hai,

rani sa mahri aan baan hai (Bhansali 6:20-6:59)

(The queen rages like fire,

the queen thunders like cloud,

the queen is the glory of Rajputs,

the queen is our pride)

takes over, with this the queen takes her first step into the fire with all the other women running after her to go into it too. With the issuing of words like glory and pride, the lyricist has transformed the tale into a brave suicide as opposed to the usual image of a cowardly one. The queen— representative of the glory of the empire— to save herself from the lasciviousness of Khilji, willingly walks into the fire. The added aspect to this is the idea of love. The tale abounds with the idea of love between Padmavati and the king. Her decision to choose her death after the king's death emerges from both her predicament of saving her glorious status and a respectful tribute to her love. But what about the other women, what propels their feet in this rush?

A four-minute scene without much of a dialogue. There were many outrageous cries that called it a glorification of an inhuman ritualistic sacrifice. *Jauhar* can be seen as just another form of *Sati* ritual as both result in similar kinds of suicides. The difference is that they are committed with a completely different mindset. During *Sati*, a widowed woman after the death of her husband would seat herself on a pyre to join him in the afterlife, whereas *Jauhar* is mostly recorded or seen as an act of saving of honour threatened by the hands of the other men. In the film, Padmavati walks into the fire with a peaceful smile on her face; it is not a rendering of Bhansali's Padmavati, but an image that has been imposed on many minds— erring on the side of calling it true, believable, and most gloriously attainable— because of the many accounts of *sati* observed by British officials or historians or even as represented by painters. An account given by Nicholas Withington presents one such woman as a “hero”. He describes how a woman will sit down on a raw wood pyre with her husband's head in her lap and wills her relatives/friends to light it up, “she indures the Fyre with such Patience, that it is to be admired, being loose, not bound” (Banerjee 118). Amir Khusro described the *sati* ritual as magical and superstitious, but the woman who went through

it nevertheless “heroic”. Would it be too far-fetched to say that this cultural aspect had moved in time and space, and had transformed into the hideous reality of many honour killings/deaths that happened during the riots? Were these women and men not brought up with similar kinds of tales? In her other work, *Patterns of Culture*, Ruth Benedict, argues that the individual and culture are not diverse or antagonistic to each other; on the other hand, “culture provides the raw material of which the individual makes his life,” she adds (Ch. 8).

This idea of preserving honour at all cost was subconsciously already present in the women of 1947 India. Survival was secondary to these women, whose first fear had always been the loss of ‘honour’. Both sides were aware that the women were in danger not only because the streets were swarming with men who had murderous intentions but also because they were abducting and raping them. During the riots, women were usually first molested and raped, and then the question of their subsequent murder would arise, which was mostly dependent on the needs of the man whose victims they ended up being. Some were killed after the rape, some were sold, and many were forcibly converted and then yoked into unwanted marriages with their rapists. The families that had women in them rarely liked the odds they were placed in, and the one solution to it all was suicides and murders disguised as “honourable” deaths. Most men were hardly affected by the traumas a woman might suffer; their main concern was the honour associated with the body. Honour was eternal, and an honour preserved by death almost always had a quality of veneration attached to it. It comes as no surprise that many northern regions and families have *sati* temples built to immortalise the women who committed suicide by self-immolation. A woman’s decision to end her life in order to save her honour is a pattern in social order that the subcontinent is too familiar with.

An example of such honour-based suicides during partition was depicted in the Hindi motion picture *Gaddar*. The movie opens with a scene in which a mother is reluctant to hand her two daughters paper parcels which are then taken by the father and placed in the hands of the daughters, telling them that they contain poison. They are told to choose death rather than survival with a tarnished honour. The father of the two daughters tells them, “*raste mai koi musibat aaye to ise (zeher) kha lena, per kisi musulman ko apni asmat mat lutne dena*” (On the way, if a problem arises, have it (poison), but do not let a Muslim to dishonour/rape you) (Sharma 2.40-3.30). This family migrating from Pakistan to India deems it right for their daughters to die before they allow anyone to rape them. Such incidents are not limited to the fictional depiction; many such events were voiced in Urvashi Butalia’s *The Other Side of Silence*: a girl, out of her fear of sexual assault, asked to be strangled by another person; two other girls used quilts and the traditional bed made of rope and wood to prepare a pyre, lest they be raped; a Sikh man was told to get his daughters married to the Muslims in the village in order for them to survive, the man later murdered all his family members (ch. 5). He decapitated all the thirteen people in his family and then shouted from the roof in Punjabi, “Bring in the wedding procession! Bring them now! My daughters are ready for their marriage, take them!” and then ended his own life too (ch. 5). Such was the desperation to escape dishonour in the form of conversion or rape. The Sikh man decided to choose death not only for himself but for his whole family, which could have survived by possible conversion or marriage into the other community. Suicides were chosen and considered a better choice by these men and women. In the case mentioned above, the Sikh man was alienated from his agency and his only way to acquire it was by the ultimate defiance; he acquired the agency through the bodies of the others in his

family, who were already devoid of any agency whatsoever. And then reduced to the same position as that of a woman in partition, the man chose self-destruction.

Religious values form an important aspect in this whole concept of choosing death over 'ruined honour'. Where there are many accounts of Hindu and Sikh women at the centre of this death-over-honour debate. Muslim women become conspicuous because of their inconspicuousness in these narratives and testimonies. The two fictional tales, "Khuda Ki Kasam" and "Khol Do", chosen to depict certain aspects of the partition directly address the Muslim Community. In the former story, a Pakistani woman, aged and ragged, is trying to find her daughter she lost during the riots; and in the other we have a Muslim father trying to relocate his daughter after she gets separated from him on a train station. This kind of depiction certainly has a magnitude to it. In the absence of proper evidence, it can be inferred that either the Muslim community was more accepting of the abducted women (if they were unmarried before the abduction) or the silence was more prominent in their household. In an interview, Butalia, when prompted to discuss the not-so-pervasive honour deaths in Muslim families, replied, "although it might sound far-fetched, marriage in Islam is a contract. In Hinduism, it is a sacrament. So, if your wife is violated, the sacrament is violated. Islam has a far more practical point of view on this issue" (Ashraf). Even far-fetched, it offers a way to look into these absent deaths. As a contract that could end easily, a man could easily rid himself of a woman who had been violated (as was the case with many Muslim women), but in Indian Hinduism, marriages were seen as an event for life, and no contract could help the Hindu man to divorce 'his' woman. In addition to that, this martyr woman gave the man satisfaction and almost an orgasmic boost to his manhood when she died, choosing to remain only 'his'. Men were as deeply affected as women during the rehabilitation of the lost and the abducted. They thought of these

women as a blot on their sacramental marriage; their chosen survival made them lesser in the eyes of the husbands. They did not feel the pride that the image of Sita had tried to evoke in the minds of the general population—these women were not the Sitas they were declared to be; their ability to have survived the attacks on their bodies made them ‘different’ and ‘abject’. Their bodies and survival were a constant reminder of their Sitaless state.

Manto does not shy away from hitting at the nakedness of society and he has time and again uttered this sentiment in spite of all the obscenity charges he had faced. In relation to the idea of preserving honour at all costs, Manto, in all his subtlety, lets the readers read the unmentioned and the open endings at their own discretion. It is impossible to miss the weight of the *dupatta* in Sakina’s father’s pocket when he wakes up at the train station in the story “Khol Do”. It is a loud declaration of how, along with the circumstances, he also became the reason for his daughter’s plight. When her daughter’s drape had fallen, he had stopped to pick it up, even upon her insistence to leave it there. Too late, he realises “*Sakina ka vahi Dupatta tha ... lekin Sakina kahan thi?*” (Sakina’s drape is here ... but where was Sakina?) (Manto “Khol Do”; transliteration, my translation). Many believe pieces of clothing to be an extension to women, but they are not, and it becomes more pronounced in the image of the mother in “Khuda ki Kasam” who by the end of story is mostly naked and still obsessively searches for her daughter. The unusual show of strength in this old woman who uncaring of her nakedness relentlessly searches for her daughter is strained by a male’s perspective, a *hawaldar*, who sees her as vulnerable. Sakina’s honour is provided tangibility in the *dupatta* that the father tries to save and later through the jacket that one of her future rapists offers her. Women are made more vulnerable by such crude objects of faux honour; weapons are denied to them and their sole protection comes

from these flimsy *dupattas* and veils. Sirajjudin's insistence to preserve her daughter's modesty had cost him his daughter. Sakina's vulnerability around the men who had found her when she tried to cover her bosom with her hand throws the light on the same idea of modest dressing which has become sociologically ingrained in a woman. Even today, it is not uncommon to see in Hindi television shows, a woman's *dupatta* tossed wildly around before she is sexually assaulted. Such representations in the modern world further substantiate a woman's vulnerability based on the article of the clothing covering her. A man, mostly a hero, would sweep in to save this woman and then will use his own shirt or jacket to cover her cowering figure. It is ironical that this hero, who offers his clothing, in Sakina's case is also her rapist. In an article published in *LA Times*, Rizwan Beyg, a designer from Pakistan explained that a *dupatta* has many uses but the "main use is to cover the boobs" (Magnier). *Dupatta* is not a mere piece of clothing in northern India and Pakistan, it is a symbol of honour. Without it, a woman might be seen as naked or wanton. Manto's story and the motif of *dupatta* plays directly in the writer's hand; he was extremely aware of such cultural nuances.

Another depiction of a Muslim woman who was abducted during riots is in the novel *Ice-Candy-Man*. Hamida becomes the new caretaker of Lenny. Rejected by her husband, she accepts her fate. Upon Lenny's inquiry into her life, she tells her that her husband is a nice man and the only thing that is worth repenting about is her fate. Hamida does not blame even the men responsible for her abduction; she placidly drapes the whole affair as 'fate' or something which no one could have fought. She enforces this point by her retelling of the story of the tiger and the prince where the king worries about the prophecy of his son's death by a tiger, only belatedly realising that the tiger that was to kill his son was a ceiling mural of a painted tiger (Sidhwa 222-224). Such sub-text in the novel fills in a more important part of these stories. In one such part,

Lenny discusses Hamida's abduction with the Godmother who tells her that Hamida will not be accepted by her husband or his family because she has been touched by other hands. This unfair treatment made her think of the sparrow that she once wanted to rescue and put back in its nest, but Hari had told her how the sparrow would be pecked to death if other sparrows realise it had been touched by someone else (216). Innocently, she asks him, "Even the mother?" to which Hari's reply is a simple affirmation (216). Lenny, a child unaware of society's mechanics, a model noble savage, understands even as a simple observer to her Ayah's abduction that these atrocities were less to do with "fate than with the will of men" as is believed by Hamida (214).

In all these fictional and non-fictional accounts, one tale is worth mentioning. Told to the writer of *The Other Side of Silence* is Prakashvanti's narrative. She tells her that when the attack by the Muslim hordes became inevitable, her husband had insisted that she should kill herself to save herself from the sexual invasion that he felt was bound to happen. When she refused, the husband tried to kill her himself. Because of the blow to her head, given by her husband, she dropped on the floor, unconscious. Upon waking up, she saw that both her child and husband were dead. Later, she went to live in an *ashram*. What choice does a woman widowed in the partition had—brothel or ashram. The two limited spaces of extremes, both representing a stripping of sexual choice— in one it is the excess and in the other it is devoid of it.

The women, it appears, are offered with and made to understand only the destructive and the reproductive. Their powers of retribution (albeit misplaced) is in their self-destruction, an annihilation of self. In the acclaimed feminist work *The Awakening* by Kate Chopin, a woman is so caught up in her own liberation that, in order to remain free, she commits suicide. Even in a powerful feminist work, the only solution to her predicament is self-destruction.

Forced Marriages

Marriages are historically as old as civilisation. Establishment of marriage as an institution is seen as a preamble to the idea of civilisation. It is almost impossible to imagine a civilised world without marriage. What would a hypothetical image of a world without marriage be like? Or a better question could be, how have the people around us (especially people living in the Asiatic belt) described the savagery, not only in the fundamental act of sex done outside the 'sanctity' of marriage but also in the western or modern-day ideas like "live-in relations"? It would be best to leave this question hanging for future references.

What could be the beginning of marriage? Who invented the methods? Different systems to go through till one claims other as their own husband or wife? Evolution is the answer to most of the scientific inquiries one sets in reference to humans. What could be the answers to the questions to these cultural nuances? Civilisation. Matrimony, generally, is a sacred ceremony, and therefore, by default, a religious ceremony. If one tries to examine marriage, two types emerge: arranged (a prominent method of matrimony in India and other eastern countries) and love (defined as such because of Indian standards, for in the west, arranged marriage is not a common practice). Marriage is seen by many people as the ultimate destiny to love, and even if one never experiences or is not allowed to act on the feelings of love, marriage still seems an important phenomenon in our society. Love, if one removes the poetic elements from it, is a mere act of courtship; still there remains a positive in such marriages that both the parties are aware of their conscious decision making which has led them to commit to each other in accordance with law or the marriage ceremonies.

This power of deciding for oneself is missing in arranged marriages. Would then the act of sex between two such partners be seen as romantic? If anything, it would be nothing more than an act of rape. It is no surprise that a reading of Susan Brownmiller's work *Against Our Will* reveals that marriages, according to her, started as a measure for protection. She calls man a natural predator who in a bid to conquest a woman would rape her:

But among those creatures who were her predators, some might serve as her chosen protectors [...] female fear of an open season of rape, and not a natural inclination toward monogamy, motherhood or love, was probably the single causative factor in the original subjugation of woman by man, the most important key to her historic dependence, her domestication by protective mating. (16)

In the ancient system of Indian marriage, a ritual known as *Kanyadaan* is held in utmost regard. A commonly accepted and favourable practise where the parents offer blessings to the daughter and give away the girl in a marriage ceremony to her future husband. Her reproductive calibre is one of the gifts along with her sexuality that are offered (Chowdhry 44-45).

Many countries have been torn apart to form new nations or independent states, and every partition has yielded different kinds of results. A case in point is the 1947 division of the Indian subcontinent along the lines of the north-western and eastern borders to form west and east Pakistan, and not more than two decades later, in 1971, the tearing of Pakistan to form Bangladesh. Rapes and murders were a reality of both events, but where many forced matrimony cases had been a consequence of the '47 riots, this aspect had been missing in the eventual partition of Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The only other event that comes to mind is the foundation of Rome, where women were abducted, raped, and then forced into marriages, as accounted for by Livy and Cicero in their histories. Rome's foundation, though based on forced marriages, was an act of establishment, and in India-Pakistan's case, it was one of differentiation. In Rome's foundation tale, the historians have provided a reason for this. It is said that Romulus and his followers had no women in their clan, and realising the need for future progeny, they sent a proposal to the neighbouring village of Sabine. Based on the subsequent denial, the villagers were tricked and their women were abducted. Romulus had only wanted his men to have wives to keep the community going. But in India's case, no conclusive or evidential reasons have been uncovered.

Writings about the 1947 riots have this common theme of forced marriage running through them. Even as a common theme in partition literature, it has been ignored as a cultural aspect by the researchers and mostly seen as a mere consequence of the events that lead to the plot development in most of the narratives. The emphasis here is not only on the traumas that the characters in these narratives suffered because of these marriages but also on the socially established norms that led to such an eventuality in riot-stricken India. The aim is to expose the nature of marriages as forms of physical and psychological violence in riot-ridden nations.

For the majority of Indian women, marriages are like an abduction anyway, a violation, an assault, usually by an unknown man. Why then should this assault be any different? Simply because the man belonged to a different religion? 'Why should I return' said an abducted woman, 'Why are you particular to take me to India? What is left in me now of religion or chastity? And another said:

‘I have lost my husband and have gone in for another [...] You do not expect me to change husbands every day.’” (Butalia ch. 4)

Just like the arranged marriages in India, were these forced marriages not an act of sexual compliance so that the women could save themselves from further assaults, just like Brownmiller’s early women who had initiated a system of monogamy?

Arranged to marry a person that the guardians had picked, Indian men and especially women had little choice. In the undivided India, tales of sexual openness were as old as *Kamasutra* and Khajuraho. The cultural nuances of Indian society did not permit a woman to choose her partner on her own. Sex before marriage was almost unheard of a decade back. So, it can be assumed that a woman’s first interaction with her husband was on the unclear margins of copulation and knowing each other. Tales like *Gadar* might be romanticized, but the realities of most of the marriages would be an unceremonious initiation into a painful first night (suhaagrat) of the virgin brides who were seldom told about the nuances of the process of intimate nights. A glimpse of this is provided to the readers by Bapsi Sidhwa after Papoo’s marriage, a girl child who is but a fodder to the Indian social custom of marriage: “The women from the groom’s family lift her ghoochat [veil] and comment indulgently on the innocence that permits the child-bride to sleep through her marriage” (Sidhwa 187). Papoo, a girl of twelve years age, is unaware to the “grotesque possibilities” that await her in the form of the middle-aged man she is married-off to (187). Through Lenny’s keen eyes Sidhwa clearly offers this twisted picture of the mother-guardian, who would beat her daughter relentlessly for acting her age but has a “contented smile on her lips- smug and vindicated” during the marriage ceremony of her daughter after making her comatose by drugging her with opium.

Parsis had always been more advanced and accepting of the new developments. Lenny, a girl-child suffering from polio, is loved and cherished. She talks openly about her marriage choices at a young age. Lenny's parents' relation follows a 'common' trajectory for most part, but the reader gets hints of how Lenny's mother who lovingly calls her husband "*jaan*" (life) is being mistreated and has bruises on her body. The mother is heard telling her husband that she would not let him go to the other woman. A man with an adulterous relationship is accepted by a woman who is fighting a war with the riotous crowd by confiscating and stealing cans of petrol so that the city and the people in it can survive. She offers her support for the rehabilitation programme but turns into a meek woman, forlorn, and in love with her '*jaan*'. When one thinks of Jewish women in narratives related to partition, Mozail, a character devised by Sadat Hasan Manto comes to mind. Her character establishes how open-minded the Jews were in the 1940s. She blatantly asserts her sexuality and understands independence of will as a factor to human life and not just a token provided to males. Mozail, in comparison to Lenny's mother, is an exception (or she is an exception because she is unmarried?). She is not burdened with the idea of love, not tied to children of her own, not overwhelmed by the definitions of womanhood provided by Indian society irrespective of religion, class, caste or community. In this respect, is Lenny's mother not just like many other women in the *Other Side of Silence* who refused to return to a different man when they had already established normalcy in life? Are these women and Lenny's mother not at fault, or are they mere puppets in the hands of a society that runs on social norms of repetition of the same performances of the ideals of sacrifice, monogamy, and dependence on men?

Abductions were a tragic consequence of the partition. Almost all the narratives discussed in this paper have an abducted, "fallen" woman at the centre or brought to the

centre from the peripheries of the plots in these narratives. Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man* has one such character, described and told through the words of Lenny, a child in a Parsee family in Lahore: Ayah. Lenny's Ayah (motherly caretaker) is represented as a woman who attracts attention and enjoys being at the centre of all the wandering eyes. A woman who is assertive about her sexuality emerges as a carnal being. A Hindu woman working in a Parsee family with a plethora of suitor-friends, ranging from the Ice-Candy-Man to the English Man, she is almost like a modern woman who understands her independent will. When one reflects on the attitude of women in this era, it would be difficult to align the image of Ayah with her. Even today, women in India lead an unremarkable and uneventful life, common in theme and monotonous in form. Norms and routines are formed by the continual performance of them over a given period of time. In the first ever autobiography of an Indian woman, *Amar Jiban*, the writer, who is obedient to her core, is seen to question such norms, loathing the "the coarse clothes, the heavy cumbrous jewelry, the conch shell bangles, the vermilion mark" that were mindlessly loaded on the bride. Written in the 1860s, the work critically observes the restricted role of a domesticated woman. Rashsundari compares her life to that of "modern" women who had educational liberties: "In her day, everyone believed that women were fit for nothing except domestic drudgery" (Sarkar 120). It would not be a mistake to assume that this situation had changed in the early twentieth century; this 'drudgery' still remains a reality for many women in India today.

Ayah breaks these boundaries through her self-assertion. She courts lovers, establishes friendships with males around her, has a bite to her character that keeps the over-enthusiastic men at bay and ultimately experiences the keen touch of love, both literally and figuratively, through the Masseur. She is left broken, a mere shade of her character by the time she is rescued after her abduction. All that happens to her seems

like a society's punishment to an errant woman whose courage needs to be broken. Ironically, all her suitors/friends play a part in it.

Suddenly, erected national boundaries put Lenny's house in Pakistan, where Hindus and Sikhs are being persecuted. While many in the household have changed their religion, Ayah lives in hopes of security that comes in form of her many friends. Betrayed by the innocent trust that Lenny places in the Ice-Candy-Man by telling him Ayah's hiding place, Ayah is abducted: "her violet saree slips off her shoulder, and her breast strain at her sari-blouse stretching the cloth [...] a sleeve tears under her arm [...] The men drag her [...] their harsh hands, supporting her with careless intimacy, lift her into [the cart]" (Sidhwa 183). Such unwanted hands had been warded off my Ayah in different parts of the novel. The only hands that she had allowed to touch her were of her lover, the Masseur. Defeated by the physical strengths of many and by the lawlessness of a society, she is touched by the unwanted hands during her abduction and later when she is turned into a prostitute by Ice-Candy-Man.

From a dancing-girl to a married woman, Ayah is painted in colours according to her handler's will, the Ice-Candy-Man. This man's betrayal is more hurtful to the readers (even if one is ready for the inevitable that happens) for Ayah had never seen him as a potential threat, nor had Lenny. A friend turned abductor-pimp-husband, he appears to have assumed the position of a patriarchal villain who wishes to punish Ayah's transgressions that he takes as betrayal to himself. Her marriage comes only as a measure to ensure her stay in Hira Mandi. Unlike many who were saved by other rapes through their marriage to one of the perpetrators, her marriage cannot save her from the men that horde Hira Mandi, it binds her further, preventing her return to Amritsar, arranged by Lenny's mother. Here, her marital bond transformed into bondage with no leeway in form of social security, which is speculated by Brownmiller

as one of the reasons for the birth of monogamy. With the help of Godmother and Lenny's mother, Ayah is freed from the clutches of her 'husband' and is sent back to Amritsar. Readers are never told if her family accepted her or not.

This kind of rejection from families of the victims has become a very big reason for popular programs by the government for their easy acceptance:

“Forcible evacuation was one thing. The women's acceptance into their families was another. [Because of families' reluctance] Gandhi and Nehru had to issue repeated appeals to people [telling] them that abducted women still remained 'pure'”. (Butalia ch. 4)

Many pamphlets were printed in which these women were compared to Sita, who was abducted by Ravanna (ch. 4). It was a way to assure the fellow-men that these women were as pure as Sita. But the irony lies in the very image used for the pamphlet. Sita had had no physical contact with Ravanna, she had managed to keep him away with her powers of chastity and, even after continuously looking over her shoulder and preventing herself from the leering Ravanna, she was asked to sit on the pyre to prove her 'purity'. Everyone who is familiar with the tale would know that her acceptance was limited to a number of days, after which she was respectfully asked by her husband, Rama, to leave the palace to go on on another exile.

A pamphlet carrying Ahilya's image would have been a better choice. After all, she was violated by Indra and later on cursed by her husband to turn into stone for not recognising that it was not her husband but Indra in disguise. She is a perfect figure to represent the “fallen” one. For what happened to the unsuspecting Ahilya, was indeed rape, and because she had been wronged by her husband, who did not take her account into consideration, cursed her, and had abandoned her. Such tales from Hindu

mythologies offer us a glimpse into the marital world of mortals who were deemed men of power. A society cannot help but follow in the footsteps of its models.

Men in many of these narratives accept the women abducted by the other communities; many do not. Just like these men, there are women on both sides who wish to go back and some who would rather stay in the same place. The daughter in "Khuda ki Ksam", Jamila Hashmi's 'Biwi' in "Exile" and Sakina in *Gadar* all wish to stay with their abductor and rescuer, respectively, whereas Ayah (*Ice-Candy-Man*) wishes to return to her family. Just like when they were abducted, their rehabilitation is forced on them, assuming that they all wanted what the state had ordered.

Sidhwa's book is divided into many chapters. Just after the abduction of Ayah, the next chapter abruptly announces Papoo's marriage. It might be the author's idea to shock the audience into another event soon after Ayah's abduction. This was a way to acknowledge that women irrespective of age or community suffered from a setup that was deeply and significantly patriarchal. Ayah's tragedy climaxes with her wide-eyed countenance and her gaping mouth under the assault that she knows has to come her way. Soon after this, the reader is initiated into Chapter 24 with two simple sentences: "The evening resound to the beat of drums. Papoo is getting married" (Sidhwa 184). A case of child marriage to a middle-aged man seems apt as a sub-plot to a novel set partially in colonised and non-colonised India. Papoo's denials based on her childish tantrums are subdued with opium. Comatose and drugged, she is led into a marriage in her early teens to a man whose impression of cruelty is visible to the child-narrator, Lenny. Apart from child marriages, buying and selling of women for special purposes of marriage is a common practice in India. In the tragic tale of Boota Singh's, we learn

that he had bought his future wife, Zainab, who had changed many hands before he had found her.

Rehabilitation

Among the abducted women, some were those whose husbands, parents, sisters, and brothers had refused to recognise them as theirs. Why is she still alive? Why didn't they drink poison to save their honour? Why didn't they drown in a well? They were cowards; that's why they were clinging to life so desperately. (Bedi "Lajwanti"; my trans.)

This was a popular sentiment that made the rounds during the rehabilitation of women. Women have been used as a figure for the nation-mother to garner the support of male freedom fighters, who see her as weak and will themselves to sacrifice their lives and blood for her. She becomes a sacrificial lamb in the fights between two communities for the purpose of ethnic cleansing. And her role as a wife, daughter or sister triggers Pandora's box open all the time. Especially for a woman returning from another man's house to her husband's after her abduction.

Lajwanti is a woman re-situated from Pakistan under the scheme of Jinnah-Nehru program to bring back the abducted women. Rajender Singh Bedi's "Lajwanti" traces the narrative surrounding these movements across the border. He gives us a glimpse into the life of one such family of a husband and wife. There are many tales about the abduction and the rehabilitation of women which was often seen as a grey area. Not many writers hailed the decision of the two new prime ministers of the two very new democratic nations. The tale is a study in the subtlety in human pretensions and self-deception. In Bedi's small village, people were busy with their own program

to make others aware of the plight of these women. The slogan was ‘Dil main Basao’ (Place them in the heart). The leaders of the program had this awareness that the Indian families needed to be fed with this kind of axiom to propel them in the right direction. However, even after such initiatives, these women were not readily accepted by the families. It is for this reason the analogy of Sita was created. The story portrays the same idea. Sunder Lal, who is actively involved in this movement, upon his wife’s return, is unable to give her a space in his heart. Instead, he places her on a pedestal, carving a goddess in a place where the woman starves for the earthly relationship that they had shared earlier. Even as a precursor of the movement in the village, the man falters and falls in his own marital bonds. In the beginning, when he sings the songs, calling out slogans, one can hear a catch in his voice over his own loss. In the fantastical imagery, Sunderlal’s subconscious is dejected over a loss that it associates more closely with death than abduction; his thoughts are only confounded with the sense of not knowing: “While walking, he would think of Lajwanti [...] where might she be, in what conditions, does she think of me, will she ever come or not?” (Bedi; my trans.). His reaction to news of Lajwanti’s arrival is not of happiness but of fear and sadness:

As Sunderlal was preparing to leave for Amritsar, he received the news of Lajjo’s arrival. On suddenly receiving such a news, Sunderlal felt unhinged. He moved one step towards the door with agility, but then came back. His heart wanted to be upset and he wanted to lay down all the placards of the committee and then wanted to cry sitting over them. (Bedi; my trans.).

His thought of putting down the cards, reflects his deep repression towards his own feelings. He knows that he cannot reject his wife when he is working for the same cause and become a hypocrite. He is cleaved in two different directions, one where he wants to reject his wife, who seems healthier and fairer than she had been in his care, and the

other in which he has to accept her in order to set an example and stick to his words (after all, after a woman's honour, a man's own honour, usually described through his *zabaan* (given words), comes next). On listening to the tale of Rama's decision to give Sita exile, he exclaims, "We don't want such a Rama", unaware that he is soon going to be put in the position of Rama. His solution comes through the same movement he is a part of; he converts his naive wife into a goddess, just like they were being portrayed, completely forgetting that the real motto for the party had been "place them in your hearts". Sunderlal, though he calls her a *devi*, believes himself to be better than the Rama of the village tales. Sunderlal has an image concocted in his mind of the abducted women; these women who did not choose death, according to his perception, have "stoned eyes with which they are staring at death". In other words, these women, though alive, are more similar to the dead or are still on the lookout for death. But his idea is challenged by his wife's return, who does not have stony eyes but a wish to live again with her husband—a woman who does not match his imaginative wife (starved and thin). He limits Lajwanti's voice about her ordeal lest it mar the pure image of the goddess Lajjo in his heart. Dejected, Lajwanti realises that she has lost her identity under the weight of her status as a *devi*. She has been exiled to a stony existence that Sunderlal could not see in her eyes when she returned from Pakistan. Sunderlal's conversion of Lajwanti offers him a way out of forming any kind of sexual relationship with a woman who has been touched by another. Garbing his change in behaviour based on her traumatised state, Sunderlal further elevates his own status in his mind; he considers himself better than the rest of the people. He tells her profoundly that she is not at fault but the world, which does not understand the nature of goddesses like herself, never realising that he too is part of the same generic society. Lajwanti's future comes hounding at the reader in her simple statement of belief, "she was settled but got ruined"

(Bedi; my trans.). A paradox that does not only apply to Lajwanti but to many other women who were a part of this game between men of the house and men of the thrones.

Rehabilitation turned into an objectionable bartering system in which women were exchanged. The exchange is not only forced but humiliating too. To prove his point, a volunteer showed Lajjo to the men on the other side and objectified her: “You call this old? See, see, the women that you have given. Can anyone compare to her?”. Another man says, “We do not want Mussalman’s (Muslim’s) leftovers”, in relation to the abducted women (Bedi; my trans.). This man sees these women now as nothing more than the refuse of a man from another community. It also indicates a man’s love for something ‘whole’—a virgin.

Where on the one hand Sunderlal is one such man who, in order to avoid a true relationship with his wife, starts seeing her as a *devi* (goddess), we have on the other hand men who reject the woman, banishing them from their families, thinking them as fallen like Hamida and other nameless women rescued by Lenny’s mother in the novel *Ice-Candy-Man*.

Godmother and Lenny visit Ayah in Hira Mandi where she is now living with her pimp-husband, the Ice-Candy-Man. As soon as she is alone with them, she pronounces, “I will not live with him,” to which the Godmother inquires, “What if your family won’t take you back?” (261-262). It is tragic that her future hangs in the balance because of her family’s reaction. Just like the sparrow in the novel that had fallen from its nest, no one is sure if Ayah will be pecked to death or accepted. This kind of inquiry from Godmother shows that a woman’s life decisions are not her own but the family’s, even if it is somebody like Ayah who had been living independently by working at Lenny’s house. In this case, an independent Ayah, traumatised and metamorphosed, still decides to go back.

Another character from *Ice-Candy-Man* is Hamida, a woman who is one among the many rescued. Hamida believes that her status as a fallen woman was fated and her husband's decision not to live with her is also seen as right. She answers Lenny's questions about her previous life and her children by saying, "Their father won't like it" (221). When Lenny tells her that she does not like her husband, Hamida says, "He's a good man. It's my *kismet* [fate] that's no good" (221). This attitude of seeing a woman as something lesser after she has been taken away against her will is a common motif in many of the partition narratives. Hamida believes in her 'fallen status' and this status is expansive and can fit all the other women like her (214).

Zianab and Buta Singh's story is a romance with all the necessary elements, a story on par with the tales of Laila and Majnu. Zianab's abduction is described as a vague event, "a changing of hands" (men) until she ended up with Buta Singh, a man who had bought her and then married her. It was accounted that they were soon in love and had two daughters, but then the recovery and rehabilitation team reached Buta Singh's house and Zainab was snatched away and sent back to Pakistan. Buta Singh, in order to reach his wife, changed his religion and went to Pakistan, but Zainab who was now married to another man, asked him to take his other daughter she had brought with her and refused to go back. What bothers the writer is her inability to find the 'voice' of Zainab. Where there were many accounts of Buta Singh's turmoil, Zainab's silence screams and culminates in whimper when she declares to Buta Singh, "I am a married woman. Now I have nothing to do with this man" (Butalia ch. 4). Zainab's side of the story is never told. From suppressing her voice by the romanticised narratives of her tale of rape and abduction to her carefully construed entry in the Pakistan's court, with her many relatives surrounding her, she is never given the space for self-expression (ch. 4). In these varying accounts, it was said that Zainab's untimely recovery was due to

the pressure of one of her uncles. Her uncle, who had been allotted land in Pakistan, wanted the adjoining property that was left by Zainab's father under her name. The easiest way to achieve that was through her marriage to his reluctant son. The son had his own problems with the arranged system; allegedly the man did not want a woman who had lived for such a long time with a Sikh. This account helps us acknowledge the situation of women during the partition era. This system of making women dependent on men is drilled into our minds even today. And as soon as she becomes the independent Shanta, she is pulled back in the garbs and disguise of Mumtaz, uncomfortably stifled under a veil.

Not Just a Woman: A Beautiful Victim, Sexual Transgressor, or the Mother

"The house that I attacked... It had seven men... Six I killed... leave it... listen.. there was a girl, exquisite... I abducted her" (Manto "Thanda Gosht"; my trans.). These words are stuttered by a man, a dacoit, traumatized by his own act of sexual violence tried towards a dead woman, a corpse, in the story "Thanda Gosht" (Cold Meat). This sentiment of whisking away beautiful women is not unheard of during the riot tales. The men abducted and raped women many times because of the way they looked. Manto in his another tale, "Khol do" has another beautiful girl at the centre of the narrative. Sakina's father describes her to the eight young men who are working to find lost and abducted women: "Fair and very beautiful... takes after her mother, not me... around seventeen years of age... big eyes... raven hair, a big mole on the right cheek... She is my only daughter" (Manto "Khol Do"; my trans.).

The men find this girl later and brutally rape her, only to leave her to die on a railway track, where she is found and taken to the hospital. The introduction of this very

idea of a man's intent to rape based on the beauty of a woman is not to disregard other rapes but to bring in a point where the looks of a woman becomes an added aspect to her allure. A woman who was traditionally seen as beautiful was in greater danger of abduction and rape. A cross-reference to one of the sentiments, blatantly and unrepentantly, given in *A Woman in Berlin* becomes important here. In the beginning, the men in the Red Army "selected the women carefully, shining torches in the faces of women [...] to find the most attractive" (Anonymous 10). Building on this, the argument given by many that a rapist does not differentiate in a situation where he is given the choice to gratify his libidinal desires proves to be wrong and the idea of conventional sex appeal does come into play. Women in situations of war are more likely to hide their faces under veils or with make-up, so that if the situation ever arises, they remain either inconspicuous or are seen as undesirable. A woman's vulnerability and her status as a fragile being are seen as part of the allure that she exerts. It is for this reason that many times, the image of *Bharat Mata* (Indian mother-nation) was used to propel these protectors, lover-sons in the fight for a free country. Beauty and vulnerability combine to give an Oedipal zone of action to these men: "Mother, once resplendent in wealth and beauty, now in tatters" (Bose 10). This was not the only image of the mother-nation; sometimes she was brave *Durga* wielding ten weapons—the only time women are trusted with weapons i.e. in an inanimate form or have been given a fearless disposition—but the most popular image was when she was shown in chains under British tyranny (6).

Ayah, the abducted woman of the novel *Ice-Candy-Man*, is blatantly sexual and beautiful; unconcerned, she passes the men who ogle her. This premise is supported at the very beginning of the novel. Lenny, the child, learns about the attraction of men towards beautiful and sexual women through Ayah's admirers and their "covetous

glances". The image presented by the child-narrator is nothing short of a depiction of beautiful women in songs, where men fall on their faces, disregard the surroundings, and stare with lust-filled eyes. The novel is a fictional account where a woman is dragged into the grime of partition violence not because she was unfortunate, like Biwi in Jamila Hashmi's story or like Sakina in the very famous Indian motion picture *Gadar*, who is pursued because the men want revenge, but for her beauty.

Ayah is abducted and sold in the market later to become wife to her friend turned abductor-pimp. Ayah (child caretaker) is called throughout the novel with her designation, and only twice in the text does Lenny mention that her name is Shanta. Later, when Ayah is found, her identity has morphed into that of a Muslim woman; her name is now Mumtaz. Ayah and Lenny are close accomplices. Lenny hides the details of Ayah's visits to her suitors, friends, and relatives. Observing these secret meetings, Lenny learns about the kind of tyrannical magnetic power Ayah yields over men (Sidhwa 20). From a sexually charged and positively independent woman, Ayah soon became a symbolic representation of India, claimed by many men through the force of power.

Ice-Candy-Man is a nameless entity. The ever-changing profession of Ice-Candy-Man transforms according to the weather and the circumstances. In summers, he is the seller of popsicles and therefore called the eponymous Ice-Candy-Man; he then becomes the bird man, brings sparrows in a cage, and makes a show of his cruelty towards the bird in order to evoke heart-warming feelings in the English women who then buy them; later around the partition, when religious feelings are fervently cradled, he becomes a god-caller; at last he transforms into a pimp-poet, a proud bastard child of the late Moguls. His professional leap from a bird-man to a pimp only changes the victim he uses to make money—in the former case, sparrows, and in the latter, Ayah.

Ayah becomes the metaphorical sparrow that, earlier in the novel, Ice-Candy-Man threatened to break the necks off as a show for English women. When Lenny, after the shameful act done towards Gardner, embraces Ayah, whose heart she says flutters like that of Ice-Candy-Man's sparrow is probably a foreshadowing of what later happens to her (118).

Lenny's foray into nightmares, unconscious thoughts, and daydreams are a tenor to lead the reader to a metaphorical reading and to get to the symbolic. Lenny's nightmare about adults keeping quiet about the dismemberment of children by uniformed men is a precursor to what was to happen in India. Lenny mentions that she did not feel any pain, but the feelings are described as "abysmal sense of loss" (Sidhwa 22). "Godmother sits by me, looking composed, as competent soldiers move about hammering nails into our hands and feet [... crucifying] children" (132). Not only this, her nightmares often feature women's wailing voices.

Lenny is not the only one who figures as a symbolic representation of the cracking India (as the novel was later called). Her Ayah, too, transformed into the bifurcated nation in the event of her abduction. India, which has been represented as a woman from the very beginning of the freedom struggle, is seen as an avatar in Ayah's body, where men are snatching at different parts of her body while she is carried off.

Ayah in that forced movements become the India, donned in a saree, she is dragged out her arms stretched taut, and her bare feet - that want to move backwards - are forced forward instead [...] her mouth like the dead child's screamless mouth [...] sari-blouse stretching the cloth so that the white stitching at the seam shows. A sleeve tears under her arm [...] their [the abductors] harsh hands, supporting her with careless intimacy. (183)

Because of how the story is written and our knowledge of the grand and tragic freedom struggle which had a slogan of ‘*vande matram*’ (I praise you, Motherland) at its centre and an image of *Bharat Mata*, it is unlikely for one not to see the representation of Mother-India in the saree clad Ayah being claimed by men. One cannot forget the cries of the great poets and leaders during the freedom struggle who had declared the British as violent rapists/ravagers of the beloved India. The landscape has been feminized many times by the males and in direct contrast with the later prevalent array of works and concepts that deal in eco-feminism. The image of *Bharatmata* was not devised by a female to empower themselves but re-conceived through the idea of *Bangamata* devised by Abanindranath Tagore who later graciously agreed to share his image of the Bengal goddess as the greater entity of national identity and inspiration in the form of *Bharatmata* (Bose 5). This great figure of a saffron clad woman who “carries food, clothing, learning and spiritual salvation” is not different from the American one created by the Europeans who had first landed there. They had called it a “[p]aradise with all her [v]irgin [b]eauties” (Kolodny 4). Equating the colonised land to female body was declared as an “alteritist fallacy” by Sara Suleri, she argues that this hammers and demolishes powerful feminist and postcolonial discourses. According to her, “no intelligent feminism [...] should be prepared to serve as the landscape upon which the intimacy of homoerotic invitation and rejection can be enacted” (qtd. in Bose 5).

In the face of riots, men not only maim, kill, and rape, but their deep-seated hatred for the Other also comes into play. Women became victims of rape and abduction, while men’s bodies were sexualised based on their altered physical attributes. Many men were asked to bare their penises to check if they were Muslims (who are usually circumcised). There were many cases where men were castrated and then killed if they

belonged to the wrong side. In a story by Manto titled "Sorry", a man tries to open a man's pants using his sharp weapon. Along with the pants, the other man's stomach is also sliced open. But as soon as the pant falls, the man with the sword realises that he has made a 'mishtake' (mistake). This man had killed a person from his own community. In this simple assessment, the readers realise the depravity and apathy men suffered during riots. Men's penises became a religious scepter, and women's bodies became points of sexual and gender-based challenges. The sacks of breasts that arrive in the Gurdaspur train in the novel, *Ice-Candy-Man* are just that: "No young woman among the dead! Only two gunny bags full of women's breasts" (Sidhwa 149). This sack of female breasts is not only a way to portray the power of one community but also a challenge to do something as inhuman and unbelievable. This is more than revenge; it is a way to carry on with the violence that assured men on both sides of their masculinity. This 'gunny bag' is just as formless and bland as a woman's presence in the riots, but as important—it is an object to ensue challenge; the same way, women's only roles were as inanimate vulnerable objects. The sack is not to hide the mutilation, the barbarity, but to ensure the element of surprise, to transform the gore into something more, a challenge. Breasts are associated with elements that are both sexual and nurturing; they are seen as both an erogenous zone and a way to feed a newborn, thereby becoming a symbol of a woman's femininity. Apart from the vagina, it is responsible for a woman's biological construction as a woman. Mutilation of a specific body part is an attack on femininity and a blatant disregard for a man's own masculinity. Women are expected to avoid confrontation and to always defer to the man and men are expected to not shame a household by not engaging in a challenge or confrontation.

The sack of of women's breasts spurs the Ice-Candy-Man; his anger is not righteous but a result of a challenge to his manhood. And the easiest assertion of

manhood has come from excess. Men's appetites have been defined as ravenous; women's have barely been mentioned. A woman nibbles and fasts, and a man "eats like a horse". This gluttonous behaviour is not limited to food but also extends to other aspects of a man's life and is appropriated by society. The lines between things of consumption blur, and a woman's consumption also becomes a part of them. This consumption happens when a prey is struggling or made comatose. This issue in modern feminism has been raised again and again through works like *Edible Woman* by Margaret Atwood, *The Vegetarian* by Han Kang etc.

Language offers us a limitless window into the minds of men. In his retelling of his ordeal to Kulwant, Ishar Singh tells her the reason for abducting the beautiful woman: "You enjoy Kulwant Kaur every day, let's taste a different fruit" (Manto "Thanda Gosht"; my trans.). The actual translation of the word '*mewa*' is dry fruit. In India, during those times, when people were already suffering from poverty the British had left them in, procuring food to assuage hunger was difficult. Dry fruits were a delicacy. Desirable, rare, and expensive. To compare a woman to that directly reflects a man's need for a diverse appetite. Even in the end, the comparison of the dead woman is made to a piece of meat, albeit cold, but still with an edible object. From a luxurious item to distasteful uncooked cold meat, she remains a thing of consumption. At first, it offers enticement and later arouses a feeling of detachment and disgust.

A weapon in a woman's hand is a thrilling experience for the observers. Either she is not trusted with it or it is seen as a man's prerogative. When a woman picks a weapon to defend or to attack, she is seen as something more, an engulfing sea that rages and floods the civilisation the way we know it. Not only this, any aspect of human reaction and nature that is not set in monotones is feared, fantasised by the patriarchs-

homosexuality, Bi-sexuality, transvestites, metro-sexuality and a woman- always seen through the fragile lens of vulnerability- who has picked a weapon. A woman with a weapon is a castrating woman. In his study of Freikorps, a German soldiers' group, Klaus Theweleit deduces that the Russian woman who kept weapons on their bodies and brandished them at the enemy were seen as castrating women. These "women present an image of terrifying sexual potency. It is a phallic, not a vaginal potency that is fantasised and feared" (Theweleit 73). There is an odd relation between men and weapons. The weapons become lovers, fondly caressed, taken care of at all times. The image of a man who has a penis with another weapon which resembles a phallic shaped object is almost always presented with a homoerotic view in Mafia movies. This same weapon in the hand of a woman is seen as a double betrayal by both, a homoerotic partner and a feminine partner. It does not seem odd that in the novel *Ice-Candy-Man*, when Sharbat Khan arrives with his knife-sharpening device, it is only men who go out to get their knives sharpened. Where men used weapons in the face of riots and war, the 'vulnerable' ones, women, who might slow them down or compromise their honour, were killed before the violence even started. Mangal Singh's decision in his interview with Urvashi Butalia corresponds to that belief. The man is a warrior and not a martyr; the role of martyrdom in the partition of India was forced upon the woman. Where these warriors sharpened the knives for later use to murder or defend, the women were handed poison to die before their honour was tarnished. In all this we have a writer like Sadat Hasan Manto, who does not shy away from giving his women characters a fear-inducing image. Kulwant Kaur, in the story "Thanda Gosht" wields a knife. The man, Ishar Singh, who has already lost his sexual prowess to a dead woman's corpse, reaches his lover, Kulwant, and realises his level of castrated self when he is unable to have sex with her. Kulwant takes a knife to his throat to ask about his betrayal by taking another

woman to bed. Assuming the role of the perpetrator, she transforms the traumatized tormentor into a complete victim. Castrating the already castrated, killing the already dead.

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