
Echoes of Separation: Juxtaposing 'Pinjar' by Amrita Pritam and 'The Other Side of Silence' by Urvashi Butalia in Unveiling Partition's Palimpsest

Dr. Bhujendra Singh Rathod L.R, MA.,M.Phil.,Ph D, Assistant Professor of English, and HOD Department of Journalism and Mass Communication
Government First Grade College, Yelahanka, Bengaluru-560064

Paper Received on 25-05-2024, Accepted on 28-06-2024
Published on 29-06-24; DOI:10.36993/ RJOE.2024.9.2.398

Abstract:

This research paper examines India's partition's complex relationship between history, literature, and gender. Based on Smita Tewari Jassal and Eyal Ben-Ari's seminal "Listening for Echoes: Partition in Three Contexts," the research shows how history simultaneously reveals and conceals partition's murderous violence. This contradiction sets the stage for examining its complex effects on identities and lives.

Literature, a symbol-rich area that reflects social complexity, validates and challenges partitioned cultural identities. History supports such identities, but literature questions and challenges them, changing societal attitudes. Post-partition identities were scrutinized, breaking self-perceptions beyond physical displacement and pre-partition relationships.

During this turmoil, gender's political marginalization became one of many oppressions. The study explores women's experiences during and after partition via the 'voices of silence' Through gender theory and women's lived experiences, this study uncovers their muted pain, frequently masked by political power relations. At a time when minority voices need attention, this piece highlights the psychological problems of these 'silent voices,' hidden behind political leaders' power conflicts. Based on gender theory, this article emphasizes women in partition discourse. The abstract harmonizes history with literature, intertwining the tales of underrepresented women to explain partition's lasting influence on identities, gender, and society. This study exposes post-India partition history's hidden anguish and political power struggles. Literature depicts fragmented identities, especially disadvantaged women, embodying their suppressed sorrow. This research connects history and gender to better understand partition's social effects.

Keywords: violence, displacement, oppression, power, women, partition, gender, identity

Research Journal Of English(RJOE)

An International Peer-Reviewed and Refereed Journal

Impact Factor:8.16 (SJIF) ISSN:2456-2696

Indexed in: Cosmos, Google &International Scientific Indexing (ISI) etc

Introduction:

The human element, which is often lost in the shuffle of political power, is given new life in Urvashi Butalia's "The Other Side of Silence, Voices from India's Partition" (2017). Magnificently, this book brings together the official, power-centric narrative of Partition with the silent suffering of the ruled. Butalia uses a mnemonic mechanism to bring to life the voices that have been pushed to the historical margins, revealing the far-reaching impacts of the revolutionary upheaval that are seldom acknowledged. Butalia's effort goes beyond simple recording in its attempt to provide light on the complex ways in which "caste," "gender," and "religion" contributed to the emergence of Pakistan and India. She zeroes attention on the embedded in the fabric of the divide. By analyzing how they contributed to a historic turning point, she provides a fresh perspective on the causes of the upheaval. Butalia explores how gender roles are established and maintained within this narrative framework. Butalia investigates the originators and upkeep mechanisms of gender norms in light of Simone de Beauvoir's idea that they are social constructions. This research illuminates the intertwined nature of power and gender by revealing how a small number of minds and discourses are responsible for shaping and maintaining these constructions.

The dynamics of power, a crucial factor in the formation of human civilizations, are explored at the heart of this study. Butalia's investigation confirms Michel Foucault's contention that "power produces," illuminating the complex relationship between authority and other factors such as sexual orientation, social class, and ethnicity. Because of this dynamic, a mosaic of cultural differences is produced, each contributing to the rich tapestry that is the human experience. Butalia's investigation goes further, focusing on gender roles and society standards, to reveal how power dynamics influence both. The binary identities that support society structures are created with significant input from those in positions of power. The 'Quit India Movement' and other historical examples of power sharing provide additional evidence of the interdependence of different identities in the service of a common goal. Yet the story also explores the complications that emerge when greater cultural and political factors intersect, as in the case of division. This juncture sheds light on the invisible forces at work underlying historical upheavals, exposing the full scope of power's influence. The book "The Other Side of Silence, Voices from India's Partition" is a powerful example of how silenced stories may spark revolutionary change. Butalia uses the themes of silence, authority, and identity to reveal the lives

Research Journal Of English(RJOE)

An International Peer-Reviewed and Refereed Journal

Impact Factor:8.16 (SJIF) ISSN:2456-2696

Indexed in: Cosmos, Google &International Scientific Indexing (ISI) etc

lived underneath the historical monuments. Her research sheds new light on the complex interplay of gender, sexuality, and national identity in shaping historical events.

Theoretical Constructive Insights

Stevie Jackson and Jackie Jones explore the complicated dynamics of gender and sexuality in their book "Contemporary Feminist Theory," drawing attention to the ambiguity and social significance of these categories (Jackson, 131). The complexities of sex, gender, and sexuality stem from the fact that they are not only socially created but also deeply intertwined with discursive power systems.

'Culture' becomes a mask for upholding power, adding another layer of intricacy to the cultural portrayal of these systems. As a complex system, culture relies on a web of interdependent social institutions to guarantee its survival. Religion's impact on gender roles, sexuality, and civil law, as regulated by medical advice, is included. It includes altering appearances to meet social standards. The 'hidden' wounds buried by the translated and incomplete 'mainstream' historical narratives are resurrected when history is freed from the limits of academic disciplines.

It becomes clear that cultural norms have a hand in controlling sexual behavior by specifying the roles that men and women should play in society. As a result of Partition, a veil of secrecy has descended around stories of kidnappings, rapes, prostitution, and arranged marriages. The Indian culture elevated the female body to a place of authority and control. After the partition, women were classified as either "your woman" or "our woman," according on which side they identified with. Women's femininity was reconceived in light of religious and chaste ideals. Amrita Pritam's touching remarks echo the quiet that surrounded the mass rape and abduction of thousands of women that occurred during Partition, an event that Urvashi Butalia alludes to (Butalia, xiv).

During Partition, women were abducted, sexually assaulted, and married against their will because of a power dynamic based on religion, gender, and sexuality. Many women's terrible endings may be traced back to these junctures. Religion's sway, mixed with ideas about gender and sexuality, led to political forces that affected people's lives in irrevocable ways. The consequences of Partition are a sobering reminder of the complex relationship between gender, culture, and authority. The hush that has surrounded accounts of women being kidnapped and abused is emblematic of a larger trend in which social norms set limits on what people are

Research Journal Of English(RJOE)

An International Peer-Reviewed and Refereed Journal

Impact Factor:8.16 (SJIF) ISSN:2456-2696

Indexed in: Cosmos, Google & International Scientific Indexing (ISI) etc

capable of experiencing. There was a dark underbelly to a historical event that exposed the intersection of religion, gender, and sexuality that altered the destiny of women.

In patriarchal society, the idea of a "woman" is a shifting identity, like a chameleon. She takes on her father's legacy before being married, marking her very "body," and then she completely takes on her husband's persona after they're wed. Judith Butler's "Gender Trouble" (1990) premise that "Women are the sex which is not 'one'" (Butler, 13) leads to a remarkable insight when extrapolated.

Women find themselves in a mysterious, opaque, and unrepresentable space inside this language blank. As Butler's argument progresses, it becomes clear that 'women' are not properly represented in politics. At its foundation, religious politics is the process through which the present is reimagined as the future's past. As both religion and anatomy are man-made, the analogy between the two spheres (a movable entity, a hidden identity determined by core marks) rings true. During the time of partition, women's bodies were transformed into tools for asserting dominance and authority, with this transformation entangled in the complex web of virginity and religious purity. Because of the delicate balance between religion and the female body, a Hindu woman's sacredness was violated by a Muslim man's touch, and vice versa.

Butalia's study highlights the 'absences' that define women's mnemonic memory. Taking "History" apart into "His" and "Story" reveals deep political undertones. When the male pronoun "His" combines with the phrase "a created piece," a story that focuses on the male protagonist "He" is mathematically born. She, feminine, and Her are not clearly defined in this context. Feminism, Gender Theory, and Queer Theory are three examples of hermeneutical approaches that are necessary for revealing the hidden 'Herstory' inside 'History.'

Simone de Beauvoir's "The Second Sex" (1949) provides greater clarification of how women are differentiated from males. Therefore, since women are stereotyped as being "all body," they must accept less autonomy. It is unfortunate that women's history, and especially their unspoken experiences, are increasingly being forgotten. Women's relationships with men of other religions created 'absences' in their families and contributed to the perpetuation of schisms in family lore (Butalia, xxvi). The idea that women are nothing more than property is something Butalia brings to light powerfully. Under the guise of safety, dignity, and chastity, the rights of women were routinely violated during the Partition. Assault is grounded in the idea that women

are 'property,' held by their male relatives, neighbors, and society at large.

This 'propertization' of bodies and identities provides a stage for enacting retribution, which in turn reinforces supremacy in certain spheres. Women are a symbol of not just countries, but also of man's strength and power. Abduction, rape, and subsequent marriage of a Hindu man by a Muslim lady are celebrated on social media, demonstrating the 'power of phallus' in action. Butalia argues that this notion is at the root of the phenomena she calls "sexual violence" towards women.

The history of 'sexual violence' is more than an instinct; it's an imaginative process through which these divided countries fought their conflicts on the bodies of women. While remembering those who defended boundaries, the unheard screams of those who were marginalized from society's centers of power should not be forgotten. Our limited understanding prevents us from fully appreciating why highlighting these identities is so crucial. Our consciousness lacks the skeletons necessary to carry the wounds of what may be called a "unrepresentable and imperfectly inscribed gender identity." Narratives of sexual assault against women predominate in the history of women as seen through the lens of segregation. When we don't talk about the "sexually violent histories of women," we're whispering about the lives we've hidden away. "...that awkward silence, that hesitant phrase was perhaps where the disappearance of two sisters lay hidden..." (Butalia, 134). By deciphering these tales, we release the chains of history and provide the voiceless a platform to be heard across the ages.

Indians' passionate desire to stop the partition and their pursuit of a secular paradise welcoming people of all faiths obscured a terrible reality: a chapter in which kidnapped women endured not only the trauma of captivity but also the disappointment of their own relatives. Women of Indian descent who were pregnant or raising children by their Muslim captives were nonetheless ostracized by their own families. Their loss of 'body and religion' purity is a striking illustration of the power of religious identification in the context of Partition. Despite their physical purity, the stolen women were rejected by both societies, providing a vivid illustration of the gendered intricacies written into history.

The terrible irony of Pooro's escape after being trapped by Rashida is chilling. The harsh decree that a man of a different religion had claimed her was the only consolation she felt when she was reunited with her parents. Her "bodily chastity," albeit "pure," was tainted by an abduction that happened one night. The despair in his voice as he told his daughter, "Daughter, this fate was ordained," reflected a culture

in which women's futures were predetermined by factors outside of their control. Like many other women, Pooro is suffering because she is a woman in a culture that does not recognize her for who she really is.

Butalia's reflections, "Even if the women wanted to remember, what would they remember?" highlight the cognitive challenges these women experienced while trying to recall information. Their travels were not celebrated as Hamida's were, nor were the grueling treks made by so many others during Partition. Their identities and histories were too hidden to be memorialized. When there are no living people to corroborate a person's recollection of an event, the veracity of that person's recollection wanes.

Memory, a conscious product of the present, permeates all levels of life, from molecules to people. Because it is both the product of conscious thought and a separate entity, it has a complex life that weaves in and out of the domain of the unconscious. An interdisciplinary canvas unfolds as psychology and literature meet, providing insight into the 'migration of bodies' and the 'histories of division' from the viewpoint of identities that are frequently suppressed, such as women, misfits, and prostitutes.

Memory's dance often relegates reflections of violence to the depths of forgetfulness, but this asks the question "why." The answer comes in the desire of safety, consolation, pleasure, and an equal footing in representation—an identity woven with respect. Partition shattered lives like a broken bottle, a metaphor encapsulating the sharp, uneven forces that marred lives, as expressed by the common people in Suranjana Choudhury's "A Reading of Violence in Partition Stories from Bengal": "For breaking a bottle of oil/ you snub the little girl/ All you old boys/ you have partitioned Bharat/ What about that?"

The character of Pooro in Pinjar exemplifies this anguish; she longs to be reunited with her family, but is greeted with the harsh truth of her 'impurity.' Rashida's unwillingness to let her leave says volumes; it is a terrible reminder of women who are caught between two cultures and are not accepted by either. The echoing void that swallowed the screams of countless unheard voices reverberates in Rashida's rejoinder, "Who will believe it?"

Partition, a chapter marked by wounds, ripped people's lives apart. The tales of kidnapped women show that behind the political rhetoric are real people whose identities have been smashed beneath the weight of power relations. These stories echo across the ages, revealing the hidden experiences of women caught in the

Research Journal Of English(RJOE)

An International Peer-Reviewed and Refereed Journal

Impact Factor:8.16 (SJIF) ISSN:2456-2696

Indexed in: Cosmos, Google &International Scientific Indexing (ISI) etc

crossfire of history. As a testimonial to the suffocating grasp of society judgment, Pooro, a 19-year-old, let his silence speak more than his words. The difficulty she had expressing her feelings reflected the long-held belief that women are powerless because they are women. This awful legacy, forever written in the books of "histories/partition," continues to have an impact today.

Pooro's sense of self-identity weakened in the absence of sound. She was silenced by Rashida's domination and it served as a powerful symbol of the enslavement of women everywhere. Her name was changed to Hamida, and her identity was completely remade to hide any indication of her mixed Hindu and Muslim ancestry. Like oil, she was shaped by this metamorphosis against her will. For decades of resentment and animosity, Partition served as a stage upon which language, nomenclature, and power danced. By tracing the history of English in India, we can see how the country has dealt with issues of identity and authority. The trinity of land, women, and offspring fed the phallic need for power as the "power of production" rose.

Language was a weapon of privilege that was used to relegate "silent identities" to the background. The process of naming, of redefining lives to match with religious constraints, is crucial; the tales of the subjugated, stripped down and abridged, remained hidden from "readers'" sight, protecting the integrity of the existing "History." The cultural relevance of marriage is highlighted within this context. However, their transformative effects are not shared equally; they are limited to the vaginal bodies and not the penises. The symbolic admission of women and men into the political arena is shown by Helene Cixous in her work "Laugh of the Medusa," two very different paths given the phallogocentric symbolic order. In India, marriage is a symbol of this inequality. As defined by law and custom, women are commodities to be bought and sold, their individuality fading under the protection of the family home. This inequality affects how they are represented in government.

This idea is also included in "Seeing Like a Feminist" by Nivedita Menon. Marriage is both the pinnacle and the nadir of a woman's life, and the years leading up to it are the most important. There's a prevalent story that goes something like this: "I can't do that now, I'm married." This begs the question, how can marriage be both the end and reverberates across the ages, representing the voices of muted. Fighting this stillness is a never-ending battle. By deciphering these stories, we get insight into the strength of the human voice and the fortitude of people who defied repression, their words echoing through the years.

Within the larger narrative tapestry of Pinjar, Pooro stands out as a touching illustration of the unsaid sufferings carved by separation. Her childhood abduction crushed her hopes of ever finding love and settling down. Her abduction has mingled the colors of her carefree youth with the pain of captivity, highlighting the schism between the two states. Rashida's assertion of ownership over her body after marriage highlighted a lopsided power dynamic, since the victor is given more prestige in Islam. Tattooing a new name upon her body represented a change from freedom to slavery, from ownership to servitude. The word "Hamida" rang louder than her own stolen voice, dooming her to a life under Rashida's tyranny.

The tragedy of Pooro, however, is not the only one to echo through the years. What were previously safe havens have become sources of disapproval for its members. Family-oriented culture rejected the abducted mothers, sisters, and spouses because they didn't fit the mold. A frightening message is being birthed inside this metamorphosis: kidnapped women are not welcome here. The memories inscribed in this family "space" function as both whispers and echoes, with some stories passing into oblivion while others altering history at the price of unsaid lives. This is encapsulated in Kamlaben's silence, which begs the issue of why certain details were left out of the stories told about division in the first place.

Sanchali Sarkar's investigation of mnemonic storytelling in "Fireflies in the Mist" adds to the rich texture of the whole work. She argues that in order to fully understand the partition, one must do an in-depth psychological excavation into a past where several "histories" entangle and are disguised by more common ones. The importance of unearthing these "herstories" cannot be overstated; these stories, although being buried behind layers of family veneer, yet contain profound, unseen truths. The absence of words is more eloquent than words in this tapestry of recollections. The hardships endured by Pooro and the unspoken accounts of many others shed insight on the multifaceted effects of division. The hushed echoes of long-lost histories call to us as we dive into these tales, urging us to bring those voices out of the shadows and rewrite history in a way that is more true to what really happened.

Conclusion

As we go through the halls of partition's history, we come face to face with a powerful triad of power dynamics: silence, gender, and memory. Bodies became puppets in the turbulent interaction between religion and identity ownership as geographical barriers were created. India's early opposition to Partition was based on a secular and intellectual self-image, which stands in stark contrast to the fact that

Research Journal Of English(RJOE)

An International Peer-Reviewed and Refereed Journal

Impact Factor:8.16 (SJIF) ISSN:2456-2696

Indexed in: Cosmos, Google &International Scientific Indexing (ISI) etc

religion was the primary motivating factor in abductions of women. The complex web of incentives that motivated the partition story is shown by the discord between the professed values and the treatment of women.

Gender, as R.W. Connell so astutely observes, functions within a shifting context of social relationships. This dynamic goes beyond binary gender roles to affect women's and men's social standings. Behind the stories of the kidnapped ladies are the hidden tales of men who were falsely accused and made to carry the weight of religious vendettas. In the records of Partition's history, a stark contrast emerges: although the 'man' occupies a place of active building and reconstruction of historical narratives, the 'woman' remains a subdued figure. This multilayered representation highlights the unequal distribution of power, which is inextricably linked to other factors such as silence, gender norms, and the selective reverberations of memory.

The only way to unravel these knots is to be unyielding in your pursuit of historical truth. Partition's events were spurred by a trinity of factors, including suppressed speech, rigid gender roles, and fraying recollections, all of which need to be explored and understood together. Like boundaries define territory, these elements define people, and the effects are frequently permanent. Our mission of discovery includes more than just unearthing long-lost tales. In order to combat the silencing of people, we must bring attention to their stories that have been overlooked. As we patch up the story, we reveal the ways in which silence, gender norms, and memory are all intertwined and contribute to creating a vivid tapestry of the hardships of Partition.

The events of Partition cannot be reduced to simple black and white categories, but rather are better understood as a complex mosaic. We give the historical canvas new life by illuminating the 'woman' who had been hidden for so long by recognizing the complex relationship between silence, gender, and memory. By doing so, we shed light on previously unnoticed parts of our past and guarantee that every person's perspective and experience will be included in future accounts of our collective history.

References:

Beauvoir, De Simone. *The Second Sex*. Vintage, 2011.

Butalia, Urvashi. *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from Partition of India*. Duke University Press, 2017.

-
- Menon, Ritu and Bhasin, Kamla. *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India's Partition*. New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1998.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble*. Routledge, 1990.
- Choudhury, Suranjana. *A Reading of Violence in Partition Stories from Bengal*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020.
- Connell, R.W. *Understanding Men: Gender Sociology and the New International Research on Masculinities*. *Social Thought & Research*, 2002, Vol.24, 1&2. file:///H:/Understanding%20Men_Connell.pdf.
- Foucault, Michel. *History of Sexuality*. Penguin, 1976.
- Jackson, Stevie, and Jackie Jones. *Contemporary Feminist Theories*, Routledge, 1998.
- Chopra, P. N., ed. *Towards Freedom: Documents on the Movement for Independence in India, 1937*. Delhi: Oxford UP, 1986.
- Gupta, P. S., ed. *Towards Freedom: Documents on the Movement for Independence in India, 1942-1944*. Delhi: Oxford UP, 1997.
- Menon, V. P. *The Transfer of Power in India*. Bombay: Orient Longman, 1957.
- Singh, Kirpal, ed. *Select Documents on Partition of Punjab -1947, India and Pakistan*. Delhi: National Bookshop, 1991.
- Talib, G. S., ed. *Muslim League Attack on Sikhs and Hindus in the Punjab 1947*. New Delhi: SGPC, reprinted 1991.

How to cite this article?

Dr. Bhujendra Singh Rathod L.R., "Echoes of Separation: Juxtaposing 'Pinjar' by Amrita Pritam and 'The Other Side of Silence' by Urvashi Butalia in Unveiling Partition's Palimpsest" *Research Journal Of English (RJOE)*9(2),PP:389-398,2024, DOI:10.36993/RJOE.2024.9.2.398