

Body, Power and Gendered Identity: Inscribed Bodies of Men in Partition Fiction

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ABSTRACT: *A widely-held perception which has developed through and within the feminist literary as well as theoretical framework is to analogize the land ravaged by war to a female body raped by the aggressive attackers. The semblance qualifies the female body as an impetus for objectifying the interrelation of power and identity formation. During the partition of the sub-continent as well, the gendered coloration of the instances of violence has historically foregrounded the case of women more than any other gender. This research aims to study the possibility of viewing the invaded land as a male figure castrated, and the male body as an omphalos for relations of power and a site on which systems of discourse and power inscribe themselves. The investigation is supported by the work of Judith Butler (2004, 2005), a feminist who challenges the idea of the 'body' as a strong marker of identity and sees it instead as a surface for social inscriptions. This study digs into the insistent denial in Butler's work on being involved in any identity politics in order to make the following inquiries: Is Butler's belief in a shared identity in terms of ethnic, racial, and sexual existence equally valid for the other ethnic, racial or sexual groups? When Butler says that body is a site for cultural and political inscriptions, which violently imprint the body to give it a meaning, does she mean a specific gendered body, i.e. a female body, or can it also be the body of a man? As with women, can the bodies of men also be seen as vulnerable in the face of the violent markings engraved by the coercive power representations? Can the mutilation of a male body, as presented in novels such as Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India* and Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, be regarded as just as powerful a symbol of colonial and ethnic assertion of power and identity as that of the molestation of the female body?*

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Body has been the concern of many a rhetoricians and theorists starting from the classical times up to-date. It has acquired a special importance in the fields of philosophy, gender formation, and the social conception of meanings. The idea of 'Body' as a social construction is propagated by Michel Foucault, for whom a body is a space on which discursive and societal powers work to produce new systems. He views 'body' as a focal point or center for relations of power. An analysis of Foucault's critique on gender and power can be viewed as a ground for the feminist Judith Butler who challenges the idea of 'body' as a strong marker of identity in *Gender Trouble* (2010), a work by Butler which stands out as the most well-acknowledged and persistent challenge in her anti-epistemological accounts of body. An analysis of Butler's critique on the instability of the gendered identities reinforces a need for a revision of the rigid, fixed and strictly categorized binaries of gender. This analysis leads to the body being regarded as a surface for social inscriptions by Butler.

In this essay which is primarily an engagement with theoretical discourse on body, we will investigate accordingly dimensions of the way body configures in theoretical discourse from Foucault onwards. The first step may be to delve into the genealogy of the discourse and history of the discourse on body as it configures in various narratives before Butler took it up as a subject for further debates. The second step maybe to analyze Butler's work on the body (Michel Foucault 1975, being a major influence) as a social construct acquiring identity from the coercive power structures in a society. The third step may identify the appropriation, though not conscious, of Butler's critique on 'body' by the Indian feminist theorists theorizing the violence perpetuated during partition. The final stage may be an examination of Butler's theory of body and her concept of 're-signification' which can also be applied on the notion of the by applying it on the 'bodies' of men as they appear both in fictional and non-fictional narratives.

Specifically, we will employ Butler's concept of bodies on literary representation of men in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India* (1991) and Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (1956). The men in these fictional narratives are seen as holding bodies subjected to a violent and coercive power politics. Therefore, the history of body, gender and power may be developed thus to offer to elucidate and lead to the following findings: 1) Butler's affirmation of the fact that identity is constructed through social, cultural, historical and political inscriptions, stands true even when applied on a gender, a literary text and a theory

frame work markedly different from the context in which she originally launched her theory. 2) Both feminine as well as masculine mystiques are not always naturally or biologically produced but are constructed by the cultural, sociological and psychological conditions. 3) Keeping in view the fluidity of identities, the ideals of both the genders may be challenged and re-signified. 4) Partition fiction supports the fact that violence, perpetuated during partition, was not gender specific and men as a specific gender were as much a victim of violence as any other gender. 5) Partition fiction testifies that if the colonized homeland is regarded as a raped mother figure, it may also be represented as a castrated father figure.

In the early twentieth century, the Western Feminist Activists focused more on the women's right to vote. The publication of *The Second Sex* by Simone De Beauvoir (1949) shifted this focus to the discussion on body and the self. Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908 – 1961), Jean-Paul Charles Aymard Sartre (1905-1980), and Simone De Beauvoir (1908-1986) all focused on body as a material object. Beauvoir writes that the body “is at once a material thing in the world and a point of view towards the world” (1269). The seminal argument in her theory is that different genders experienced this bodily existence in different ways. This demarcation makes Beauvoir stand out as the first theorist who worked on the relationship between body and self. A common concern of the Feminist writers has been the process of prescription of norms through dominant discourses in a society. These norms prescribe the behavioral regulation of the bodies. Such disciplinary practices result in the production of appropriately gendered bodies as well as the appropriation of the other markers of the bodily identity which are inscribed by the society.

Judith Butler’s major work (1990, 1993, 2004), engages with female bodies subjected to a practice of normalization conducted by patriarchal players. This normalization results not only in the approximation of ideals by the bodies of both genders but also in the creation of a process of the production of gendered subjects. Feminine and masculine thus become two different bodily forms which one’s body acquires to produce a particular concept of gender. Butler's idea of gender as a performative act has gained much attention in the Feminist theoretical framework. This account of gender as a performative act appeared in her book *Gender Trouble* for the first time and has been a concern in her later works also. Butler, in this work, rejects the prospect that biological, sexual or natural differences can possibly be the reason

for the gender differences. She explores, instead, the secret of the 'naturalising trick'. She wonders how the process of gendered identification can in any way appear as natural. Like Foucault, Butler also sees discourses as production of the identities they describe. According to her, on the birth of a baby the family around her, consciously or unconsciously, denote a set of gendered ideals upon her (e.g. pink for girls, blue for boys), thereby consolidating not just the biological facts but also a conformation of the certain socially constructed norms. The repetitive nature of these acts results in the creation of an impression that there are two clearly cut human forms, i.e. male and female.

Butler's theory of gender as a performance is challenged by many Feminists for it fails to elaborate on the connection between the physical presence of the body and the sense of one's self. Butler writes about this problem in the preface to her book *Bodies that Matter* (1993): "What about the materiality of the body, Judy?" (Butler ix). Butler, however, counters these questions by "calling into question the model of construction whereby the social unilaterally acts on the natural and invests it ... with ... meaning" (4). She reinforces that what we count as material, natural, and the assigned is not something which may be regarded as an accessible truth. It itself is an outcome of a particular social formation. The fluidity of the concept of body renders it a certain unapproachability. It becomes difficult, then, to enquire into the limits set by something beyond one's conceptualization. One can, however, explore the possibilities of conceptualization in other ways. Discursive formations are not the only social formations. In Butler's view the body outruns all the efforts made to fix it in a discourse or in any of the other ways in which it can possibly be conceived. Therefore, the possibility of alternative formations of body are disallowed. But this too is a fact that one approaches the extra-discursive only by exploring discursive possibilities.

Judith Butler's writing has had a great influence in challenging the very ontological position of identity. Butler's non-belief in the fixity of the gendered identities and the idea that "gender norms are finally phantasmic, impossible to embody" (Butler 141) is significant. In an interview to Vasu Reddy, Butler insists that "We are interpreted by social means;" (Butler 121). In the light of this discussion, it may be inferred that terms such as masculine and feminine are socially constructed and are outcomes of a broader signifying system of meaning. In this system of signification, one term compliments the other through a randomly

selected set of differences. Butler discourages the usual social division of gender in which one set of behavior becomes the opposite of a second set of behaviours. So a male becomes all what is not female and vice versa. Butler further expostulates that 'being a man' and 'being a woman' is not a stable condition of being. The instability of meaning for both these terms discourages any set ideals for each of the gender groups.

For Butler, critical intellectualism means a continuous interrogation into our assumed facts and a constant inquiry into the nature of things. The real purpose would not necessarily be to do away with what is being questioned but, rather, to discover, for example, how terms might acquire new meanings in new contexts. She takes up Foucault's theory of 'docile body' and assigns new meanings to the term. Bodies, according to Foucault, are spatially embedded, categorized, and organized so as to maintain discipline as well as order. The body thus becomes inscribed with genderized ideals and is therefore socially and culturally malleable. As a political object, the body is not inert or fixed. It is manageable and is a plastic material, which is capable of being shaped, reshaped and organized and re-organized. The exposition of body to such changes renders it a quality of instability and fluidity.

Corporeal existence elicits vulnerability. There is an undeniable frailty of our body that pre-exists the life of man in this world as a self-conscious and self-reflective being. For Butler, in world cultures body holds out a contentious space. Though it is conceived differently in different environs, yet it can be seen as a place where power relations are determined. Though body seems to be 'personal' in all respects, yet it is guided by the principles which govern societal forces, class gender race etc. Consequently, the indeterminacy of gender leads to the destabilization of the binary relation between men and women. Butler brings binarized division of gender into question by referring to the instability and fluidity of gender identity. Taking Foucault and his study of power and body as a foundation, she defines the body as a site of vulnerability. Just like any boundary, the boundary of a body is threatened. Foucault says, "Why should bodily margins be thought to be specifically invested with power and danger?" (Foucault 2545). The boundaries therefore are receptive of change thus challenging the determinative concept of a body. In *Gender Trouble* Butler argues that trans people destabilize the concept of fixed gender identities. This line of inquiry encourages the idea of fluid gendered identity and help dissolving the gender boundaries created to categorize gender into different groups based on bodily differences.

Butler's views on body are both borrowed and re-invented by Indian feminists. Theorists namely Urvashi Butalia, Ritu Menon, Kamla Bhasin, Maithari Krishnaraj, Jisha Menon, and many others have talked about body as a means of subjugation. Though such instances of violence are rarely read by the critics from the perspectives of men, yet one can sense the inevitability of the presence of such examples in the literary narratives on Partition. The examination of such instances intends to rid the reading of these texts of the politics of gendered identity and the rigid significations in which the genders of men and women are imprisoned. The categories assigned to these two different genders are fixed and are equally tormenting for men as for women. There is a need to 're-signify' and revise this compartmentalization of genders as suggested by Butler.

It is a widely held perception that women had to bear the greater brunt of loss, suffering and violence during the Partition of India in 1947. Most of literary representations of Partition present women as the greatest of all victims of the violence perpetuated during and after partition. The men, on the other hand are seen as perpetrators of this violence in such texts. The portrayals of the male characters are interpreted in such a way so as to present men as nothing better than biologically programmed violent and rapacious beasts that were solely responsible for the epidemic of violence that spread in the sub-continent at the time of Partition. Resultant, the victimization of men is an aspect grossly ignored or under estimated in the critical body on Partition fiction. The lack of attention towards men's victimization aims to preserve the male honour which is tinged if seen as victims, a signifier qualifying the position of women and not of men. This is the kind of gender division / discrimination against which Butler reacts in *Gender Trouble* signifying at the same time a need for revision in assigning a set of attributes to a particular gender. In identifying different forms of violence practiced on the bodies of men i.e. physical, sexual, spiritual, psychological, emotional, mental, cultural, communal etc., it comes out that the stereotypes over simplify as well as exaggerate differences among groups and minimize differences within them.

The literary texts by different writers of the sub-continent are read with a focus on abduction, rape, mutilation and murder of women as the most horrific and terrifying events resulting in identifying their homeland with a female body which is raped and exploited. What remains neglected, in these many fictional stories and plots on horrors of partition are the gruesome and graphic incidents sexual or bodily dismemberment, castration, emasculation, and a manifold eccentric

treatment of men's bodies. The omission of story of men's bodies as site of violent reprisal evident in the critical discourse on partition literature removes attention from the victimized male body, thereby underlining the fixture of the categorized identities. The body can, therefore, be seen as a political construction created through violent acts actuated by contending as well as contriving masculinist discourses in a society. Jisha Menon asserts that "The fluidity of social practices is annexed in this violent appropriation of bodies that are then fixed as specifically gendered and ethnic." (Menon 32). The research attempts to explore the impact of the practice of violence on male bodies taken from selected literary texts in Partition fiction. In this backdrop of rereading the representation of men in Partition fiction, a lot of emphasis is registered to decode and deconstruct the binaries of the dichotomous gender identities. Partly, we will attempt to establish that presenting men as the only and mere perpetrators of violence is a serious anomaly and historical overstatement. The extreme generalization of the behavioral patterns of men as violent beings is also challenged here.

Urvashi Butalia, Ritu Menon, and Kamla Bhasin re-employ and re-contextualize Foucault and Butler in order to examine various paradigms and trajectories of gendered configurations of body in Indian discourse rooted in religion, culture, art and literature of the Indian sub-Continent. Though the Indian feminists discourse mainly includes women, the discussion is all about women, yet they all, in their writings, have reacted against the cultural ascriptions of identity as well as about the vulnerability (docility) of 'body' in the times of social stress. We intend to use these theories to establish that the bodies of men have also been treated as texts for inscription of the social, cultural, political and psychological beliefs and practices and are thus as vulnerable as the 'docile bodies' (Foucault 87) of women. The men thus are as vulnerable to the violence (murder, sexual harassment and mutilation of different body parts) as the women are. The biological, cultural, and psychological traumas to be faced by both were equally intense. Sexuality here takes on a symbolic value beyond its own significance.

Betty Friedan in her book *The Feminine Mystique* (1974) talks about fixed identities as deterring the genders from acknowledging each other. She says, "It seemed to me that men weren't really the enemy__ they were fellow victims, suffering from an outmoded masculine mystique that made them feel unnecessarily inadequate when there were no bears to kill."? (Friedan 56). Where Frieden includes "tears and fears" of women she also suggests that men are also effected by women's tears

and suffering therefore the need for ‘re-signification’ and reinvention of the gendered identity is effective from time to time. It seems that men were put in a larger-than-life paradigm of endurance while their natural tendency to crack and scatter in stress and suffering became a subject ingratiatingly silenced. In short, their fears and tears were consumed by a socially orchestrated patriarchal myth of masculine invulnerability in which women were partly complicit. Judith Butler identified this process of fixing or stereotyping gender in *Gender Trouble* as if “naturalized or essentialist gender identities” (Butler 2550) where being a man is identified with a position as bound up with masculine virility. In such settlements, any fact which may violate the male honour is avoided and excluded from the discursive as well as social formations. Friedan uses rhetorical expressions such as fears, tears and tenderness for both men and women and envisages the necessity of identifying and treating predicaments of gender on merit. This also suggests that the myth of male honor and men as protector of this myth has historically undermined the articulation of men’s victimization.

Body becomes a marker of stress and anxieties in the times of social distress. The bodies of men also become sites for the displaced social anger and turmoil in most of the Partition narratives. The masseur’s body in *Cracking India* by Bapsi Sidhwa (1991) receives a fatal mark and becomes a victim of the times of social stress. The masseur is reduced to a body at the end no matter what gender he once belonged to. “He has been reduced to a body. A thing” (Sidhwa 186). The train full of dead bodies reaching Mano Majra in *Train to Pakistan* is full of bodies such as that of the Masseur. Hukum Chand is unable to get rid of the images of destruction he has seen in one of those trains. He recalls, “There was a man holding his intestines,…” (Singh 75). In times of such stress gender does not matter and all are subject to the already raging violence irrespective of one’s gender identity. Hukum Chand recalls the bodies of young men who, desperate to save their lives, might have tried to escape death. The use of the word “muscled” (75) here is ironic in the sense that the men, who are usually considered to be muscular and powerful and therefore capable of finding their way out of violence, failed to do so.

Susan Bordo in *Unbearable Weight* (2010) refers to the historical forms which impinge upon the bodies in order to shape and train them according to their required forms. She says, “our bodies are trained, shaped and impressed with the stamp of prevailing historical forms of selfhood, desire, masculinity, femininity” (Bordo 2240). A

similar concern is shown by Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin in *Borders and boundaries: Women in India's Partition* (1998), who consider the mutilation of different parts of the body as marks of conquest by the ones who inscribe their norms and ideologies on these bodies. They say, "The particular violence against women during partition _ public parading of nude women, amputation of breasts, tattooing with religious symbols, rape _ shows that women's bodies served as territory to be claimed, conquered, and marked" (Menon, Ritu and Kamla Bhasin 71). The men also, in Partition fiction, became the representatives of their communities and religion. Their bodies were also seen as territories to be conquered. In *Train to Pakistan* by Khushwant Singh (1956), Masna Ram's story is told from his wife Sundari's perspective. They are stopped by a group of Muslim gang on their way to Gujranwala four days after their marriage. The ones who could easily be identified as Sikhs in men were "just hacked to death" (Singh 154). The others who were clean shaven and could not be identified as belonging to any religion, were stripped to show their genital organs to confirm their religious identity. "Those that were circumcised were forgiven. Those that were not, were circumcised. Not just the foreskin: the whole thing was cut off" (154). Here, the bodies are not just tattooed with religious symbols as described by Menon and Bhasin but receive deeper and even more fatal markings from the ones around them. Menon and Bhasin talk about the dismembering of the breasts of women and of parading them naked. In this story of Masna Ram, his body goes through an equally grim violence. "They held him by the arms and legs and one man cut off his penis and gave it to her (Sundari)" (154). All the forms of violence referred to in the above stated citation by Menon and Bhasin can be seen as being practiced on men in the example given from Singh's novel. So it is not the 'particular violence against the women' but violence specifically employed to victimize men. The emphasis, in the above stated example from the novel, is as much on Masna Ram's vulnerability and victimization as on Sundari's exposition to such a situation.

The violent markings upon the bodies deny the individuals an existence free of the threats of the coercive and violent forces around. The victims receive violent markings not just on their bodies but also on their psyche. In Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *Cracking India* (1991) Hari is subjected to sexual harassment by a Muslim group which is representative of coercion and violence in this case. As they advance towards this poor man, who has already been circumcised and thus 'pathologized' according to the religion in power, he experiences the worst of the psychological trauma at the hands of the threatening

majority around. His face twitches and he becomes very nervous as they approach to undress him to confirm his faith. “Undo your shalwar, Himat Ali. Let’s see if you are a proper Muslim” (Sidhwa 192)

The emotional trauma resulting from this kind of harassment was commonly found among the men during Partition. Since body was treated as the ultimate signifier of gender and communal affiliation, the Muslims used to murder the man if he was not circumcised and the Hindus and Sikhs used to kill him if he was. The bodies of men in *Train to Pakistan* by Khushwant Singh (1956) can be seen as becoming critical sites thus becoming a metaphor of their national and religious identity. The cross communal nature of Iqbal’s name, for instance, lands him in trouble and the problem gets multiplied by the fact that he is circumcised. Circumcision which is a body marker for Muslims acquired a strange significant position during Partition. Iqbal curses his fate for having opted to circumcise himself. He reflects, “Where on earth except in India would a man’s life depend on whether or not his foreskin had been removed?” (Singh 143). The lives of the men depended on this one body mark. Beside humiliation, it was used to identify a man’s ethnic and religious affiliation before he is finally killed, castrated or converted through circumcision. Iqbal’s circumcision is, for instance, deployed differently in different political scenarios in the novel. The sub-inspector in *Train to Pakistan* tells Iqbal, a circumcised Sikh radical, “They would have stripped you to find out whether or not you were circumcised. That is the only test they have these days for a person who has not got long hair and a beard. Then they kill” (141). It is ironic that this sub-inspector himself applied the same proof test on Iqbal when he, initially, brought him to the police station. Iqbal is stripped to get the ultimate foolproof identity test. Iqbal is shocked to have to pass through this test. “Iqbal’s planned speech remained undelivered. The constable almost dragged him by the handcuffs into a room” (57). His humiliation is made complete when the sub-inspector says, “Take off your pajamas!...Take them off and do not argue” (57). His humiliation in this scene is the same as that experienced by Hari in the foregoing example given from *Cracking India*. These two men, Iqbal in *Train to Pakistan* and Hari in *Cracking India*, belong to different intellectual, social, and religious backgrounds, yet are victimized in the same way. It is in their gender in which they find an affinity and a reason enough to meet such a fate. The shame to which they were put affected their nerves badly. Whereas Hari’s “face begins to twitch nervously” (Sidwah 192), Iqbal “had a look of injured dignity” (Singh 57). Iqbal’s noble and sublime ideas and ideals left him unguarded against this shameful examination. “There was no fight left in

him” (Singh 57). The helplessness and the utter shame of the sexual harassment they counter in such cases is even more poignant than those of women. The pain, in their case, exceeds beyond the usual examples of victimization because they were men and were supposed to be powerful enough to protect not only their own selves but also their families. They are hurt, therefore, in more than one ways. One body mark, therefore, or its absence, ruins their status as a member of a particular social or religious group but also as a *man*.

Iqbal’s circumcision is used also to further Hukum Chand’s ends in the novel. Initially, it testifies his being a Muslim to help the Muslim exodus planned by Hukum Chand. Towards the end, he is re-identified as a Sikh by the same Hukum Chand so that he, as one of them, can tell his Sikh fellows to avoid the massacre of Muslims in the train going to Pakistan. Finally, when he is weighing the pros and cons of offering himself to be sacrificed for the safety of thousands of Muslims, he abstains from doing so because of his circumcision. He reflects that the sacrifice would not win him the glory he has always been wishing for because on finding his dead body, people would consider him as one of the many Muslims killed and not as a Sikh who gave away his life to save a train full of Muslims. His sacrifice would be wasted in this way. His bodily mark, therefore, divests him of the opportunity to be glorified as a hero. In other words, his circumcision emasculates him as a male Sikh who remains unable to take any action. A somatic mark of one religion takes away from him his identity as another.

Juggat Singh aka Jugga appears as one man in *Train to Pakistan* who proves himself to be potent and virile in a number of ways. He is fair, brave and has the courage to take action. His love affair with Nooran exemplifies his manliness. He is assertive, fearless and bold in his dealings in this relationship. The fact that he impregnates Nooran is brought in contrast with the fruitless relationship between Haseena and the Magistrate, Hukum Chand. The contrast brings out the sham of the virility of Hukum Chand who was initially referred to as a ‘nar admī’. His impotence is the same as that of many other men mentioned by the sub-inspector in his talk with Hukum Chand. The sub-inspector says, “The Sikhs are not doing their share. They have lost their manliness.” (Singh 19). Their view of manliness is a distorted one. Jugga, however, retains this manliness and uses it in a brave way. He gets killed in trying to save the Muslims which Iqbal Singh refused to save. His body, however, becomes a victim of a violence for which he was not in the least responsible. Jugga’s hacked body can be seen as a representative of

the bodies of all masculine men of India who become a victim of the violence prevalent in India during the Partition of 1947.

It is interesting to note that the *hijras* (hermaphrodites), as they appear in the novel seem to be exempted of any violence because they lacked any corporeal or communal signifiers. Haseena tells Hukum Chand that the *hijras* in her village were not harmed by any of the ethnic group. The literary representations of these non-sexed beings establish the fact that the idea of gender is closely associated with religious affiliation. It is easy, therefore, for a non-signified body, to get rid of religious afflictions. When a group of Sikhs tried to kill some of the *hijras*, they sang and danced and asked the leaders of the mob, "Now you have seen us, tell us, are we Hindus or Muslims?" (Singh 91). The mob could not say anything to them because they were the only ones whose bodies did not bear any signs of a religious or ethnic affiliation. Men, in this way, were the most vulnerable of all the other sex groups for their bodies signified their ethnic and religious status. The process involved was not just humiliating but also bloody and fatal in most of the cases for men.

The vulnerability of men's bodies is also emphasized in the case of some other male characters in *Train to Pakistan*. Hukum Chand feels frightened and cold on seeing so much violence around him. Though, he is a man enjoying powerful position in the society and is described as a "nar admi" (Singh 39) (a real virile man) by the villagers, he is so much influenced by the violence and aggression around him. He was frightened to such an extent that he "felt weak and foolish" (77). Later on when he cannot do anything to save his beloved Haseena's life, he "... covered his face with his arms and started to cry." (155). The use of the words such as terror, fear, agony, tears, cry, sweat, moan, shriek, frightened etc. for men seems misplaced for such words are usually used in the cases of victimization of women. The paralytic condition of these men who experienced violence reinforces the fact that men had a great impact of violence on their mental as well as physical existence. In Bapsi Sidwah's *Cracking India* (1991), one finds a replica of the train incident quoted above from Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (1956). A similar train incident involving mutilating of men's bodies on the basis of their religious identity also appears in *Cracking India*. The only difference being that this train is received in Lahore, Pakistan and is loaded with the dead bodies of Muslim men and women. In this case also, the violence inflicted on men's bodies in the train coming from Gurdaspur has devastating impact upon the men who saw violence in its most naked

form in the train. For instance, it transforms the mental make up of the Ice candy man. The psychological change in his person can be marked through his facial and bodily gestures in the scene where he relates the whole incident to his diverse group of friends.

He can be seen in this scene as panting because of the ferocity and inhumanness of the incident which is unspeakable as well as unbelievable. The words fail to describe the full scope of the incident and the real horror has to be read from the bodily reactions of the Ice Candy Man. His tight hold on the handlebars of his bicycle and the perspiration crawling down his face are reflective of the feelings of helplessness and misery gnawing deep at his heart. The hollow and skull-like shadows of the kohl in his eyes define the horror of the scene, the horror which he might have experienced on seeing the dead bodies of his sister and her family. His glance flitting over Sher Singh signifies not only the disbelief of the possibility of such a thing to have happened but also the unspent anger against a race which was responsible for the mass massacre on train. The emphasis, in this scene, is not just on the psychological turmoil of the Ice candy man but also on the vulnerability of different body parts of Sher Singh. Lenny Baby records Sher Singh's expressions in this scene. Though the name Sher Singh culturally signifies a broad-chested man, yet his chest is referred to as 'pigeon-chest' in these lines. It is ironically significant that the one who is supposed to be a 'Sher' (Lion), has a pigeon-chest. Whereas lion is a symbol of bravery, power, magnanimity, and strength, the pigeons are known to be innocent, vulnerable, soft creatures in an Indian context. Sher Singh's shirt, *open* at the throat, revealing his *narrow* chest, increases the margin of the vulnerability. The details of his chest being *narrow* and his shirt being *open* at the throat refer to the powerless and helpless position of Sher Singh. The feelings of fear and threat felt by him are further intensified by his visibly heaving chest which goes 'up and down, up and down'. The trauma read through the bodies of both the Ice Candy Man and Sher Singh testify the victimization of men who were as susceptible to violence as any other gender. Such bodies, subject to the violent markings from the society around, can be the one Judith Butler refers to in her book *Gender Trouble*.

It is significant to note how names and bodies contribute to one's physical vulnerability. For instance, the names given to Sikh men / boys are quite meaningful. The Sikh are a marshal race. The men, especially, are regarded as fearless and daring, the ones who cannot be subdued under any circumstances. The violence presented in Partition fiction

challenged this concept by presenting Sikh male characters whose identity as Sikhs requires a lot of strength from them but who are actually broken down in the face of the violence around them. The fear and fright in the eyes of Sher Singh, in *Cracking India* (1991), testifies that physical violence which men both committed and were subjected to too expose cultural clichés, stereotypes, and myths about men's physical invulnerability.

Moreover, Loot, rape and arson, the major outcomes of partition, resulted in displacing and dislocating people and their families from India. Bapsi Sidhwa in her novel *Cracking India* presents the reader with the character of Hari, the Gardener, who undergoes such disruption of relationships and the dislocation of identities. He has to convert to Islam to save his life. His body and the violent conversion it goes through can be taken as good examples of the political inscriptions on a body. His body goes through four major changes which are all disruptive and destructive to his identity. His Bodhi, a sign of his religious existence, is removed. His dhoti, a sign of his ethnic and cultural existence, is changed according to another set of signifiers i.e., a drawstring shalwar. His name, another marker of his identity undergoes a transformation denoting forcible conversion to another religion. Finally, the greatest of all these violent marks, is the circumcision of his penis. So his body, soul, identity all get transformed by these coercive political inscriptions on his body.

Urvashi Butalia in *The Other Side of Silence* (2000) refers to the conversion of religion as an indelible mark on the bodies. It signified the loss of honour for the people. She says, "The greatest danger that families, and indeed entire communities, perceived was the loss of honour through conversion to the other religion (Butalia 76). Honour and shame were seen as encoded in the parts of the body. Jürgen W. Frembgen in "Honour, Shame, and Bodily Mutilation" says, "...Cultural categories, such as 'honour' and 'shame', are encoded in body morphology and affect behaviour" (Frembgen 253). Dishonouring different parts of the body of certain particular communal representatives could be explained symbolically. The bodhi of a Hindu, the hair knot of a Sikh, or the beard of a Muslim were read as signs of vulnerability through which their religions are shamed, and disrespected. The concept of this shame was so deeply engraved in the bodies of people that a threat to these meant much more than death itself. Conversion to another religion during the Partition was such another form of dishonouring and was seen as a violent subjection not only of body but of soul.

Conversion thus means much more than death. The signs of a particular religion mean much more in the times of stress. This is the reason that made a Sikh more a Sikh, a Hindu more a Hindu and a Muslim more of a Muslim during Partition. The signs acquired a new meaning and became more precious than the lives of the people so that they were ready to give away their lives but not ready to be separated from these signs. Lenny baby in Sidhwa's *Cracking India* is surprised to see these sudden changes erupting in the behaviours of the people around her. She notices the sudden aggressive assertions of the religious identities in the people. Symbols thus became more important than any other thing for the people who not only now worshipped them more vehemently but also protected them with their lives.

The instances of shaming and dishonoring the bodies of different communal groups are usually read from the perspective of women. It is most commonly assumed that the idea of shame can only be encoded in the different parts of the bodies of women. It is ironically true, however, that such notions are more tangibly engraved on the bodies of men. For instance, for a Sikh man, conversion means much more than just reading the *kalma*, for him it would mean cutting off of his hair, slashing down of his beard and circumcision of his organ. The bodies of men, in such cases of victimization, are engraved much more deeply with the signs of another religion as compared to any other gender and the forced acts of conversion are the most fatal form of violence practiced on a body. The result is not just the loss of one identity but also the acquisition of an identity which creates a split in the mind as well as the person of the converted individuals. Hari, when he recites the *kalma* in *Cracking India*, responds according to his newly acquired social and religious identity. He, however, at the same time gives way to the fact that this newly given identity has not penetrated beneath the surface. The discourse defining him as a Muslim in this case fails to encompass his whole person giving way to the original Hindu identity underneath the Muslim get up. Hari's Hindu accent testifies the violence inflicted upon him. He is forced to change something which has become a part of his body as well as soul. The forcible change, therefore, is not skin deep. It is through and on the bodies then that the power games are played out. Just as the removing of uterus of women is a political pronouncement made by a community, in the same way, converting men by circumcising their male organ too is a political engraving. Just as the removal of the uterus of women conveys the message of extinction of a community by another, the removal of the foreskin of men is an equally strong message of total destruction of the

followers of one religion by the other. In both cases humiliation and shame synchronize with the violent markings upon the bodies.

Different forms of violence i.e. physical, sexual, spiritual, psychological, emotional, mental, cultural, communal etc. practiced on male bodies focusing on violence and victimization as outcomes of Partition can be identified in Partition Fiction. These forms of violence, such as mutilation of body parts, murder, martyrdom and conversion of religion emphasize that the bodies of men were as vulnerable to the violence to which women were subjected. Bodies of men and women become a ground for the social, cultural, communal, religious and political warfare. Judith Butler's theory of bodily inscriptions as a historical process of political and cultural normalisations stands its ground when applied on the male bodies as represented in the narratives on partition of India 1947 signifying a revision in the masculine mystique as a stable and fixed gendered identity.

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