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TRAUMA OF WOMEN DURING PARTITION

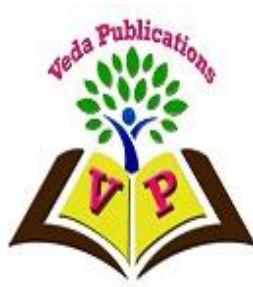
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ABSTRACT



The 1947 Partition of India had left indelible mark on the mind of all particularly women. The tragic event had fractured the live multitudes of families that there was absolutely no choice other than to labor. Women began to engage in work and did menial jobs to support their families. As a consequence, women could not pursue their desires, or engage themselves in activities like marriage. A period of political and emotional turmoil, Women's experiences during the partition of India reflects a time when their purity represented the honor of an entire community. The present paper showcases the trauma of women during partition.

Keywords: *Women, Partition, India.*

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Partition turned out to be a straining and exhaustive time for violations of women's rights. Women's identities were conformed only after male superiority. Women had to experience appalling and dreadful ordeals. These included rape, desecration and forceful marriages among other brutalities. Women became butt of violence through rape, genital damage and abortions. The true intent behind these acts was to scandalize the community which women belonged to. All these are credentials to the truth that partition was not just a battle for land, but also women's honor. Women were deeply traumatized by the ill effects of Partition physically, psychologically, morally, sexually and in terms of gender and caste and their stories are embodiment of breaking silence.

Partition was a liberating moment in history of India. The excitement of independence brought with it the tragedies of division. Women had to experience horrific ordeals-murder, forceful marriages among other mass atrocities, The horrors of India's partition left women as one of the biggest victims. Women became objects of corrupt female innocence. The true intention behind these acts was to disgrace the community women belonged to. Rape and mutilation were merely the means to achieving that goal. Satish Gulraj, an Indian painter, remembers a time when all the girls in schools were assaulted:

"A Muslim girls' school had been raided. All the girls had been brought out, stripped and taken in procession to this location where they were being systemically raped.

They would then be showcased, naked, in front of their village, being engraved with religious symbols of the 'other' side. The most common type of damage was the amputation of breasts and opening the womb with knife. Breasts symbolize a women's reproductive system, beauty, motherhood and vitality. Removing them desexualized them never to recover their dignity. Subsequently, the victim's family would send women to a purifying camp or kill them, hoping to reclaim the community's honour.

For many, partition came as a surprise because life before independence was harmonious between the different faiths. However, the partition was partly due to the tension between Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs. As religious-based violence eventually broke down communities, a culture of forced religious conversion arose. Non-Muslim women in Pakistan experienced abduction. In The National Archives, Mohammad, a survivor of the partition, recalls the inhumane acts of abduction women experienced: "There were young women – I can still remember – who were abducted from their houses and taken away by these



rascals, raped and some of them were returned, some of them probably killed or something. The severity of the abductions put the government on both sides under intense pressure to resolve the issue.

Countless women were forced to either abandon or abort their children. However, abductees were more likely to abort their babies once they returned to their home country. This is because the unborn children were thought to be polluted seeds. The process became familiar as 'cleansing'. The consequences of the partition are still visible, both psychologically and politically. The tragedies that took place undoubtedly left thousands of women deeply traumatised. The psychological strain, the partition had on these individuals is very important. However, this did not happen. In fact, most attempts to restore women's experiences were led by wrong intentions and, in turn, hurt them more.

It is not easy to forget witnessing the murder, rape, abortion, abduction, forced marriages of other women. The women that continue living with memories of such barbarity deserve help and relief. Women need humanitarian aid and support to undo all the historic and contemporary damage. This is the price they had to pay for freedom. Sadly, most of the women who experienced these atrocities have passed away. They endured their trauma till their very last breath. It would be wrong to

allow history to repeat itself. As the last remaining survivors of partition live, it is important to bring light to their stories and break years of silence. Though the journey may be difficult, a time will come when women will not bear burdens and trauma, but will rise to the occasion and speak audaciously.

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