

# **Honourably Dead**

Permissible Violence Against Women

*In the villages of Head Junu, Hindus threw their young daughters into wells, dug trenches and buried them alive. Some were burnt to death, some were made to touch electric wires to prevent the Muslims from touching them. We heard of such happenings all the time after August 16. We heard all this.*

*The Muslims used to announce that they would take away our daughters. They would force their way into homes and pick up young girls and women. Ten or twenty of them would enter, tie up the menfolk and take the women. We saw many who had been raped and disfigured, their faces and breasts scarred, and then abandoned. They had tooth-marks all over them. Their families said, "How can we keep them now? Better that they are dead." Many of them were so young—18, 15, 14 years old—what remained of them now? Their "character" was now spoilt. One had been raped by ten or more men—her father burnt her, refused to take her back. There was one village, Makhtampura, where all night they plundered and raped, they dragged away all the young girls who were fleeing in kafilas. No one could do anything—if they did, they would be killed. Everyone was running for their lives. I saw it all—mothers telling their daughters they were ruined, bemoaning their fate, saying it would have been better if they hadn't been born. . . .*

Durga Rani

*. . . That day, my brother had his lunch and went out—it was namaaz time. He had taken two servants and a gun with him but some of the labourers saw him and shouted, "Catch him, get him!" My brother ran into the mosque. Maulvi Sahib was there. He said, not one hair on your head will be harmed as long as I am here. His wife said, "Beta, don't be afraid, they'll have to come for my son Noor Muhammad and Miyan before they hurt you. Don't worry." The attackers couldn't do a thing. They fought with the Maulvi but he said to them, "Come in, if you dare. You have eaten their salt and now you want to kill them!" They said, "Why did they harvest the rice?" He replied, "It was theirs, they harvested it. You will get your share."*

*There were other attacks, but God was kind, he saved us each time. There was a notorious gang in a neighbouring village who went and, looted people, attacked them. We were afraid they would come for us. We put sandbags on the roof of our house, some people put stones. We also had guns and sticks. . . . Our work was such that our men had to go out at odd times, so they always had guns with them. The leader of that gang tried to attack us three times but something or the other stopped them. Once, the river swelled so they couldn't cross over, another time he was on his way to our village when he got the news that the roof of his house had collapsed. He had to turn back. So we escaped, God was kind to us ...*

Gyan Deyi

### "August Anarchy"

The Hindustan-Pakistan Plan was announced on June 3, 1947 whereby a new entity called Pakistan was Created, of which West Pakistan was to comprise the Muslim-majority provinces of Sind, the North-West Frontier Province, and 16 districts of Punjab; the remaining 13 districts of undivided Punjab were to be part of India. Although the exact boundary line between the two countries had still to be determined by the Boundary Commission, the exchange of populations started taking place much before August 15.

Even earlier, however, in November 1946 in fact, Jinnah had suggested such an exchange, referring to the exodus of Hindus from Noakhali after the riots there in August. People were already on the move, he said, and it would be prudent to devise some mechanism for their smooth and safe transit.<sup>1</sup> In December 1946, Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan referred to increasing communal unrest and said the transfer of populations was a necessary corollary to the establishment of a Muslim state. Even Akali leaders changed their minds after the Noakhali riots, and Sardar Swaran Singh, leader of the Panthic Assembly Party, said in July 1947 that such an exchange was the only solution to the problem of violence against minority communities on either side of the redrawn

borders.<sup>2</sup> Only the Congress thought that the sporadic violence that had occurred was temporary; and Mahatma Gandhi unequivocally rejected the very idea:

It is unthinkable and impracticable. Every province is of every Indian, be he Hindu, Muslim or of any other faith. It won't be otherwise, even if Pakistan came in full. For me any such thing will spell bankruptcy of Indian wisdom or statesmanship, or both. The logical consequence of any such step is too dreadful to contemplate. Is it not bad enough that India should be artificially divided into so many religious zones?<sup>3</sup>

To give Congress leaders their due, however, the unworkability of the idea was apparent: religious minorities were scattered all over the country, there were towns and villages even in Muslim majority provinces that had very large numbers of Hindus and Sikhs, those left behind would be more vulnerable than ever, and in any case, transfer of power was what had been agreed to, not transfer of populations. So, although people had begun moving out of villages as early as March 1947, much before the announcement of the Plan, the Partition Council nevertheless passed a resolution on August 2, 1947 to "arrest further exodus and encourage the return of people to their homes".<sup>4</sup>

The Boundary Commission announced its awards on August 16. Within a week, about one million Hindus and Sikhs had crossed over from West to East Punjab, and in the week following, another two and a half million had collected in refugee camps in West Punjab.<sup>5</sup> By November 6, 1947, nearly 29,000 refugees had been flown in both directions; about 673 refugee trains were run between August 27 and November 6, transporting more than two million refugees inside India and across the border. Of these 1,362,000 were non-Muslims and 939,000 were Muslims. Huge foot convoys, each 30-40,000 strong, were organized by the Military Evacuation Organization and the East Punjab Liaison Agency to move the bulk of the rural population, especially those who still had their cattle and bullock-carts with them. The estimate is that in 42 days (September 18 to October 29) 24 non-Muslim foot-columns, 849,000 strong, had crossed into

India.<sup>6</sup> Migrations varied in size and composition as well as in mode of transit. Some people moved in stages, first from small hamlets to larger communities, and thence to local transit camps; others travelled directly from the big cities by rail or air to the other side of the border. Families might leave together or in batches, depending on how permanent they thought the move was going to be. Many simply locked up their houses, entrusted their neighbours with the keys, and left with the assurance of returning. Others knew there would be no going back; and still others made the move, stayed for a while, and then returned.

As the violence increased, however, the migrations took on an urgent and treacherous character: convoys were ambushed, families separated, children orphaned, women kidnapped—and whole trainloads massacred. By the time the exodus was finally over, about eight to ten million people had crossed over from Punjab and Bengal—the largest peace-time mass migration in history—and about 500,000-1,000,000 had perished. The exchange, at least as far as Punjab was concerned, was as nearly equal as can be imagined: the total non-Muslim population of Punjab in 1941 was 4,357,477, the total Muslim population, 4,286,755.<sup>7</sup>

No one, they say, foresaw either the rivers of people that would flow from one part of Punjab to the other, or the blood that would be shed as they were killed in their tens of thousands. By the first week of March 1947 rioting, arson and looting had broken out in Punjab, beginning with the central districts of Lahore, Amritsar, Ferozepur, Ludhiana, Sheikhpura, Gurdaspur, Sialkot, Montgomery, Lyallpur, Gujranwala and the Jullundur Doab, and fanning out into the countryside. The violence was, by most reckonings, organized and systematic: Hindu and Sikh shops and businesses were singled out for burning and looting in West Punjab, Muslim property and homes in East Punjab. Allegations were made by both sides of the active involvement of political leaders, the Muslim League and the Jamaat, the National Guards, demobilised soldiers of the Indian National Army (INA), the Hindu Mahasabha and the Rashtriya

Swayam Sewak Sangh (RSS), with all claiming only to be acting in self-defence. Muslim leaders complained to Evan Jenkins, then Governor of Punjab, that Dr. Gopi Chand Bhargava and Lala Bhimsen Sachar were encouraging communal violence in Amritsar. They said the Muslim League had been non-violent for 34 days while the non-Muslims became violent on the first day of their agitation. Evan Jenkins replied that the Muslim League's agitation had been intensely provocative. "I did not know anything about Gopi Chand Bhargava/' he continued, "but I did not believe that Lala Bhimsen Sachar was actively encouraging violence."<sup>8</sup>

The same day, March 4, non-Muslims in Lahore complained that a peaceful demonstration by non-Muslim students was fired at by the police at the behest of the Principal of Government College, Mr. Bukhari, and that another procession later that day was attacked by the Muslim National Guards.<sup>9</sup> In Rawalpindi and Lahore, Sikhs bore the brunt of the attacks, in Multan it was mainly Hindus, in Amritsar, Muslims. In a discussion between Governor Jenkins, Khan Ifthikar Khan of Mamdot, Malik Feroz Khan Noon and Mumtaz Mohammed Khan Daulatana on March 10, the Muslim leaders said they had heard that

trouble was imminent in Ludhiana and Kartarpur. They also said there were large stockpiles of arms in the gurudwaras and that they would be quite prepared to agree to mosques being searched if we would search gurudwaras as well.<sup>10</sup>

Suspicion and mistrust ran deep, exacerbated by inflammatory pamphlets put out by both sides. One, with a picture of Jinnah, sword in hand, declared:

Be ready and take your swords! Think you, Muslims, why we are under the Kafirs today. The result of loving the Kafirs is not good. O, Kafir ! Your doom is not far and the general massacre will come.<sup>11</sup>

Meanwhile, in a secret letter to Mountbatten dated April 9, 1947, Evan Jenkins warned of an organized attack by Sikhs against Muslims, and an appeal made by Giani Kartar Singh and Master Tara Singh for Rs. 50 lakhs towards a "War Fund". A pamphlet in Gurmukhi exhorted:

Oh, Sikhs! Read this and think yourself, what have you to do under the circumstances? In your veins there is yet the blood of your beloved Guru Gobind Singhji. Do your duty!<sup>12</sup>

Calls to take up arms had their predictable consequences. Between March 1947 and May 1947 the official figures for deaths in disturbances in Punjab were 3,410-3,600, and the loss of property, Rs.15 crores.<sup>13</sup>

Official versions of the violence in Punjab put out by India and Pakistan, post-Partition,<sup>14</sup> detail its occurrence district by district, village by village, mohalla by mohalla, and trace its progress towards the "August Anarchy" which marked the announcement of the Boundary Commission awards. Swarna Aiyar<sup>15</sup> has given us an almost bogey by bogey account of the great train massacres that were a feature of every train that carried fleeing refugees from one side of Punjab to the other in the weeks between August 9 and September 30, until the Refugee Specials were arranged. By August 13 it became impossible for passengers to reach Lahore station because they were attacked en route; between August 12-18, it became a veritable death-trap, and in the rural areas, by August 15, nearly every east-bound train passing through Montgomery and Lahore was stopped and attacked. The North West Railway stopped running all trains except mails, expresses and military mails. Train travel from east to west was equally harrowing and hazardous, especially for those trains originating in or passing through Patiala and Amritsar. Stoppages and derailment interrupted each journey during which passengers were looted, slaughtered and unceremoniously pitched out. The dead and dying littered berths and platforms, and those who escaped murder, died of thirst or starvation.<sup>16</sup> These "trains of death" only repeated the savagery taking place all over the Punjab. Foot convoys were ambushed, with escorts sometimes joining the mobs and shooting indiscriminately; one such convoy, nearly six miles long, which left Lyallpur on September 11, 1947 was attacked several times during its journey, and of the five thousand refugees, one thousand perished.<sup>17</sup> Kidnappings and abductions were widespread; one account

has it that in Narnaul in Patiala State, 16,000 Muslims were killed and 1,500 women abducted.<sup>18</sup> Lorries and trucks were not spared either, and as late as July 1948, travelling by road in West Punjab was wholly unsafe. G.D. Khosla, who was in charge of the Government of India's Fact Finding Organization set up to enquire into the violence and the exodus, says:

Day after day, week after week, non-Muslims from West Punjab continued to pour across the border in trains, lorries, aeroplanes, bullock-carts and on foot till, by the end of December 1947, four million of them had come into India. All of them had left behind their property and valuables, the majority of them had suffered bereavement; their bodies sick and wounded, their souls bruised with the shock of horror [sic], they came to a new home.<sup>19</sup>

The scale and intensity of the violence in Punjab continue to horrify us even today, virtually paralysing any effort to fully comprehend its meaning. The extreme difficulty experienced by all those who have attempted to "write" Partition violence finds its mirror-image in the difficulty which most commentators have in offering an adequate explanation for it. Nor is there any agreement on its primary causes. Early writing generally accepts that much of it was organized and orchestrated by law enforcement agencies and their functionaries, by willing henchmen of various quasi-political organizations, and a communalised bureaucracy. There was not so much a breakdown of law and order, as a suspension of it: brutality was allowed.<sup>20</sup> Had this not been the case, few would have been motivated enough to leave their homes and lands and livelihoods, and resettle in a new country. Time and again, in the course of our interviews we were told, "governments change, even rulers may change, but people are never exchanged". They were forced out of villages and towns by the ferocity of attacks on them, creating enough terror to banish any doubt or possibility of reconciliation. Why else would thousands from Patiala have resettled in faraway Sind? From faraway Peshawar in Dehradun?

The economic factor has also been considered a powerful motivator; so, agricultural labour was amenable to violently dealing with land-owners, debtors with moneylenders and traders, and assorted adventurers and opportunists who quickly saw a short-cut to betterment. Forty years later in Karnal Gyan Deyi said, "It was our own labour, people who worked on our land, they attacked us. Our own people did this." Economic considerations persuaded many who were propertied to accept conversion to one or other religion in order to retain their assets. Yet, according to other analyses, organized violence and economic factors, though important, cannot sufficiently account for the brutality; for them a good part of the explanation lies in cultural and psychological factors, and in the abiding nature of prejudice and deep-seated antagonism.<sup>21</sup> Latent in "normal" times, it erupts with extreme virulence during communal conflict and remains lodged in collective memory, to surface with renewed intensity in the next round. "Cultural memory," says Sudhir Kakar, "is a group's history freed from rootedness in time—it is as much imagination as the actual events that go into its construction." In his view, the retelling of Partition violence is the primary channel through which historical enmity is transmitted; the "truth" of these accounts lies not in their veracity but in the "archetypal material they contain".<sup>22</sup> The particular forms this violence takes—disfigurement, mutilation, disembowelment, castration, branding—are part of its pathology and must be recognized for their symbolic meaning. The brutal logic of reprisal thus realizes its full potential, with all parties to it fully cognizant of their role. In its own way this theory seeks to restore volition and "agency" to the actors and resists the passivity that more instrumentalist explanations assign to them, although, as Veena Das has noted, "there is no contradiction between the fact that, on the one hand, mob violence may be highly organized and crowds provided with such instruments as voters' lists or combustible powders, and on the other, that crowds draw upon repositories of unconscious images" to spur them on.<sup>23</sup> The exchange of violence that reprisal en-

tails is justified by what some social scientists have called the language of feud. In this consideration, feud may be defined as "a pact of violence" between social groups in such a way that the "definition of the self and the other emerges through an exchange of violence". In this exchange, victims of feud are simply "bearers of the status of their group, the means through which the pact of violence continues to be executed".<sup>24</sup>

In our own time, analyses of ethnic violence in Bosnia, especially, but also in Sri Lanka, Sudan, Chechnya and Rwanda, see a strong link between ethnicity or religion-based territorial vivisection and ethnic "cleansing". Nationalist fratricide is part of the partition of countries when that partition is caused by the collision of two fundamentally opposed nationalist imaginations. Partitions in South Asia—India-Pakistan, Pakistan-Bangladesh, Tamil Eelam, among them—are the archetype of nationalist fratricide, the "conflict of people of a common cultural heritage in competition as 'nations' for control over land and government".<sup>25</sup>

### **Marking the Body**

Women occupy a special place—and space—in such enactments of violence. Our own interviews with several women, survivors of the violence and the displacement, as well as with those who worked on their recovery and rehabilitation over an extended period of time corroborate, but also expand and elaborate upon what is found in written accounts.<sup>26</sup> In the next section, we discuss in detail the violence of abduction and forcible recovery of women; our attempt here is to look at the violence that women were subjected, to both, at the hands of men of the other community and within their own families, and to demonstrate how these diverse, yet linked, kinds of violence formed part of a continuum of violence that began pre-Partition and continued into the early Fifties. A careful consideration of such violence, specific though it may be to a particular historical moment and to communal conflict, may enable us to gain

some insight into the more mundane violence and abuse that form part of the everyday experience of many women. It is also our hypothesis that the dramatic episodes of violence against women during communal riots bring to the surface, savagely and explicitly, familiar forms of sexual violence—now charged with a symbolic meaning that serves as an indicator of the place that women's sexuality occupies in an all-male, patriarchal arrangement of gender relations, between and within religious or ethnic communities.

The most predictable form of violence experienced by women, as women, is when the women of one community are sexually assaulted by the men of the other, in an overt assertion of their identity and a simultaneous humiliation of the Other by "dishonouring" their women. In this respect, the rape and molestation of Hindu, Sikh and Muslim women before and after Partition probably followed the familiar pattern of sexual violence, and of attack, retaliation and reprisal. What may be remarkable is the exultation that accompanied it. Stories of women been stripped "just as bananas are peeled",<sup>27</sup> and being made to parade naked in the market-place; or of being made to dance thus in gurdwaras; or of being raped in the presence of their menfolk, recur both in written accounts and in our interviews. The Civil Surgeon of Sheikhpura, for example, testified to the Fact Finding Team mentioned earlier, on the violence in Guru Nanakpura on August 26, 1947 and said that, "women and young girls in all forms of nakedness" were brought to his hospital; "even the ladies of the most respectable families had the misfortune of having undergone this most terrible experience. The wife of an advocate had practically nothing on when she came to the hospital."<sup>28</sup> And the medical doctor at the refugee camp in Jhang testified as follows:

Apart from the injured from Jhang-Maghiana town (following the violence of August 26, 1947) over 500 seriously wounded persons were brought to the refugee camp from adjoining villages. One of the cases that I treated was of a woman from village Chund Bharwana who was the wife of a railway porter. One of her hands was chopped off above

her wrist and then she was thrown into the fire, as a result of which her lower portion got burnt. But she escaped from there and was then thrown into a well with her two daughters and one son. She was taken out of the well later on and brought to the refugee camp.<sup>29</sup>

Among the chief types of injury inflicted on the wounded, the same doctor cites "amputation of breasts of women", and adds that "six such cases of chopped-off breasts were brought to the refugee camp and all of them proved fatal".

Very large numbers of women were forced into death to avoid sexual violence against them, to preserve chastity and protect individual, family and community "honour". The means used to accomplish this end varied; when women themselves took their lives, they would either jump into the nearest well or set themselves ablaze, singly, or in groups that could be made up either of all the women in the family; the younger women; or women and children. The Fact Finding Team recorded that in Bewal village (Rawalpindi distt.) during the massacres of March 10, 1947, "many women and girls saved their honour by self-immolation. They collected their beddings and cots in a heap and when the heap caught fire they jumped on to it, raising cries of 'Sat Sri Akal!'"<sup>30</sup> A schoolteacher of government high school, Sheikhpura, who was in one of the three camps attacked on August 26, 1947, recounted the following:

During the attack, my wife and daughter got separated. My wife took shelter in one house and my daughter in another. My daughter tried to put an end to her life by persuading a lawyer's son to strangle her. Three attempts were made but my daughter survived though she remained unconscious for some time. There were one or two girls in this house also, and they prepared a pyre with some quilts and charpayees.<sup>31</sup>

And the story of 90 women of Thoa Khalsa (Rawalpindi) who jumped into a well on March 15, 1947, is too well known to bear repeating.

Similar accounts abound but it is not our purpose here to repeat the litany of horror; it has been amply documented and can be easily located. Nevertheless, as we read and

heard these reports, and as today we read and hear about similar violence in Meerut, Surat, Bhagalpur, Ahmedabad, we begin to discern some specific features of "communal" crimes against women: their brutality, their extreme sexual violence and their collective nature. The range of sexual violation explicit in the above accounts—stripping; parading naked; mutilating and disfiguring; tattooing or branding the breasts and genitalia with triumphal slogans; amputating breasts; knifing open the womb; raping, of course; killing foetuses—is shocking not only for its savagery, but for what it tells us about women as objects in male constructions of their own honour. Women's sexuality symbolises "manhood"; its desecration is a matter of such shame and dishonour that *it has to be avenged*. Yet, with the cruel logic of all such violence, it is women ultimately who are most violently dealt with as a consequence.

Each one of the violent acts mentioned above has specific symbolic meaning and physical consequences, and all of them treat women's bodies as territory to be conquered, claimed or marked by the assailant. Some acts are simultaneous or continuous (they may begin with stripping and culminate in raping, branding or tattooing); they may take place in public—market-places, temples or gurudwaras, the latter two signifying the simultaneous violation of women and sacred space—or privately, but with families as witness. Tattooing and branding the body with "Pakistan, Zindabad!" or "Hindustan, Zindabad!" not only mark the woman for life, they never allow her (or her family and community) the possibility of forgetting her humiliation. In the deep horror of its continuous and forever present recall of brutality, this particular violation has few parallels. In the context of Partition, it engraved the division of India into India and Pakistan on the women of both religious communities in a way that they *became* the respective countries, indelibly imprinted by the Other. Marking the breasts and genitalia with symbols like the crescent moon or trident makes permanent the sexual appropriation of the woman, and symbolically extends this violation to future generations who

are thus metaphorically stigmatised. Amputating her breasts at once desexualises a woman and negates her as wife and mother; no longer a nurturer (if she survives, that is) she remains a permanently inauspicious figure, almost as undesirable as a barren woman. Sudhir Kakar, in his exploration of how communities fantasize violence, says that sexual mutilation figures prominently: the castration of males and the amputation of breasts "incorporate the (more or less conscious) wish to wipe the enemy off the face of the earth" by eliminating the means of reproduction and nurturing.<sup>32</sup>

Stasa Zajovic, analysing the mass rape of women in Bosnia-Herzegovina, says that as a result of rape "the female womb becomes occupied territory".<sup>33</sup> In Serbo-Croat, she continues, the term "cleansing" is popularly used for abortion, but abortion takes on a particular political significance in circumstances such as these. The idea of polluting and cleansing applies especially to women's bodies. In the process of rehabilitating women, post-Partition, many were regularly submitted to "medical check-ups" to eliminate the possibility of their bearing the enemy's children and "polluting the biological national source of family". Thus is a woman's reproductive power appropriated to prevent the undesirable proliferation of the enemy's progeny. Worse, the female body itself can be made to seem as if it has turned traitor.<sup>34</sup>

The violence against women during Partition cannot be separated from the violent hostility that erupted between Hindus and Muslims at that time. The repertoire of violence on all sides included profaning everything that was held to be of sacred and symbolic value to the Other—from pigs and cows slain in front of mosques and temples, to the circumcision of non-Muslim men, and the forced consumption of beef by Hindus—and this extended to sexually violating their women. The preoccupation with women's sexuality formed part of the contract of war between the three communities, and in our view, was of an even greater order of magnitude than circumcision or forcible conversion and marriage. So powerful and general was the belief that safeguarding a woman's honour is *essential* to upholding male

and community honour that a Whole new order of violence came into play, by men against their own kinswomen;<sup>35</sup> and by women against their daughters or sisters and their own selves. Three such accounts were given to us by the families of the women concerned, and one by a woman who barely escaped such a death herself.

### Split Memory

*"Puttar, aurat da ki ai, au tan varti jaandi ai hamesha, bhanve apne hon, bhanve par aye."\**

It has been almost impossible to write the accounts that follow with equanimity. Although we had read several reports and documents that describe the violence experienced by women in chilling detail, we were unprepared for what we heard from the women themselves about how many of them had been forced to die—at the hands of men in their own families, or by their own hands. Poisoned, strangled or burnt to death, put to the sword, drowned. It was made abundantly clear to them that death was preferable to "dishonour", that in the absence of their men the only choice available to them was to take their own lives. So many women told us how so many others had killed themselves, and so many men recounted with pride how their women "preferred to commit suicide" (*khudkashi*).

We could not, as some have done, accept these forced deaths as "suicides" with women "voluntarily" endorsing an honour code that requires their dying; just as we cannot consider the deliberate and premeditated immolation of widows on their husbands' funeral pyres, as *sati*. The circumstances in which many women took their own lives can hardly be said to have offered them much choice in the matter. When vials of poison or kirpans are handed to you; or quilts piled up, doused with kerosene and ignited so that you can jump into the fire; or wells and rivers pointed out

\* "My child, what of a woman? It's her lot to be used, either by her own men or by others."



so that you can drown in them, can there be anything "voluntary" about such a death? With fathers, brothers, husbands, sons, mothers and aunts urging you to end your life swiftly and "courageously", such "suicides" in normal times would be called by another name. As we discuss later, these deaths were an instance of when, to acquiesce is not to consent, and to submit is not necessarily to agree. Notions of shame and honour are so ingrained and have been internalised so successfully by men and women, both, that a death which has been forced onto a woman may quite easily be considered a "willing sacrifice" even by women themselves.

Many women lived with the fear that each day may be their last and carried their poison packets around their necks. As they recounted their stories, simply but terribly, we realized that no description by us could adequately communicate the full import of what the imminence of death meant to them. The only way to do so is in their own words, with each narration describing another way of dying. And so, our first story is a first hand account by one who almost died. We sat in Taran's house in Kanpur in a middle-class neighbour-hood, listening to her as she reminisced; her memory moved back and forth between 1947 and 1984 when, as a Sikh, she was the target of another violent communal attack. In between, because we were with her for a few days, we laughed and joked, she read us her stories and poems, sang for and with us in a beautiful, mellifluous voice, cooked, even played cards. Around us swirled the city of Kanpur and the dailiness of her life flowed in and out of our conversation. She spoke of her children, her writing, her joys and despair, her dreams. And she spoke about 1947.

One night, suddenly we heard drums and our house was encircled. A mob gathered outside. I was 16, brimming with vitality. My two sisters were 17 and 14, and my mother was sick with worry. She trembled with fear. She took out all her gold, tied it up in handkerchiefs and distributed it among different family members for safekeeping. She made us wear several sets of clothes each, one on top of the other, shoes, socks, everything, and she asked us to hide the gold. We did not know where each of us would end up—this gold was

our security. She kept crying and kept giving us instructions. The Muslims had brought *mashals* with them and were shouting slogans. The thanedar there was a Sayyid. He held the Qoran Sharif in one hand and warned the crowd not to touch the Hindus. They shouted back in anger and said they would not spare the kafirs. He said, "I am a Sayyid and you will have to walk over my dead body before you reach the Hindus and Sikhs." The mob left that night, but such incidents were repeated. They could attack at any time.

So we formed committees which met and discussed what to do. One day they were talking about what to do with all the young girls in the community. We would listen stealthily and overheard them saying that all of us should be locked up in a room and burnt alive. Our own families were saying this—they had seen what some Muslims had done to the women/raped and killed them. The ones who escaped and came back were in such bad shape—disfigured, mistreated. They felt it was better to kill their women than have them go through this.

Should I tell you what I felt when I heard this? I loved life, was in love with it. And I saw death staring me in the face. Just a few days earlier there had been a wedding in the family and we all had new clothes made. I started wearing a new suit every day, along with all the jewellery. I would dress up and call my friends over. I was going to die anyway, what difference did it make? My grandmother would get furious and say, "What do you think you are you up to? Why are you doing all this?" I said to her, "Beji, since we're going to die, why shouldn't I wear all my nice clothes now? Why should someone else wear them when I'm dead?"

Taran survived Partition, as did her sisters, and then lived to experience the terrible violence against Sikhs in Kanpur after Indira Gandhi's assassination in 1984. But that's another story. Or is it?

Charanjit Singh Bhatia is a genial Sikh patriarch, head of a large family that came over to Rajasthan from Quetta in the NWFP, in 1947. We met him in Kota in his large, well-appointed house, evidence of his family's having made good in the intervening years. He listened politely as we explained

our "research" to him, interrupting every now and again to add some bit of information or variation on an event that we recounted. Almost as if he was giving us just another detail, he told us about his uncle:

He had six daughters, all of them very good-looking. He was well-to-do and also had very good relations with his Muslim neighbours. They told him to give his daughters in marriage to their sons—that way, they would all then be related and his family's safety assured. They could continue to live in the village without fear. He kept listening to them and nodding, seeming to agree. That evening, he got all his family members together and decapitated each one of them with his talwar, killing 13 people in all. He then lit their chita (pyre), climbed on to the roof of his house and cried out: "*Baratan lai ao! Hun lai ao baratan apniyan! Merian theeyan lai jao, taiyaar ne vyah vastel*" (Bring on the marriage parties! You can bring your grooms now. Take my daughters away, they are ready for their marriages!) and so saying, he killed himself too.

Charanjit stopped. Then, shaking his head sadly he said, "That was a terrible time, people were made to do terrible things."

Part of the tragedy of those terrible times was that protection, both for those who offered it and those who could not accept it, was contingent upon a transgression—that of conversion and marriage—that in itself was equivalent to dying. By calling to his sometime friends and neighbours to come now and claim his dead daughters, Charanjit's uncle was reversing a fate that would otherwise have befallen him had he accepted their offer. This response that chose real, but honourable, death over the symbolic death that marriage and conversion entailed seemed not just preferable, but almost prescribed for Hindus and Sikhs. Another branch of this particular family succumbed and left behind a young daughter in exchange for safe passage to India, while three others were abducted in the confusion of moving. All were subsequently recovered and claimed by the family, one after ten years in Pakistan.

*The Sheikhpura Tragedy:* The district of Sheikhpura in West Punjab was a Muslim majority area but the Sikhs formed a substantial minority, 19 per cent of the population. Mainly agriculturist, they hoped that the Boundary Commission would allot the district to India because of its cultural association with Nankana Sahib, the birthplace of Guru Nanak, and Sacha Sauda, an important shrine glorifying the piety of his childhood. For this reason no large-scale exodus from Sheikhpura took place before August 16, the day the Radcliffe Award was announced. The Sikhs were at a disadvantage, arrangements for evacuation could not be made, and for several days no escape was possible. Sheikhpura became a byword for murder, arson, loot and rape; between August 17 and August 31 it was estimated that close to ten thousand people had been killed. They took refuge wherever they could, in Chuharkana and Sacha Sauda refugee camps, at the Namdhari Dharamsala, the government high school, the gurudwaras. The Sacha Sauda camp alone had over a hundred thousand people, as refugees from Gujranwala and the surrounding rural areas converged on Sheikhpura.<sup>36</sup>

In Amritsar in 1991, we heard the story of Sheikhpura many times over from various people, one of whom was a woman who herself had been a Search Officer working with Mridula Sarabhai on recovering abducted women. She recounted to us the story of a friend of her's and her husband's in Amritsar, a medical doctor who had died only a couple of years earlier. His name was Dr. Virsa Singh, and he came from Sheikhpura.

Virsa Singh claimed he had shot 50 women personally. First he shot his own wife because the Muslims came to get them. Once he had done this, all the women in the neighbourhood gathered around, saying "*Viran, pehle mannu maar, pehle mannu maar.*" (Brother, kill me first.) Some would push their daughters forward, saying, "Shoot her, put a bullet through her now." He says he just kept shooting and shooting. "They kept bringing them forward I kept shooting. There was shooting all around. At least 50 or 60 women I shot—my wife, my mother, daughter. . ."

I used to talk to him about it, ask him how he had killed like this. He would say, "How could I see my wife, my daughters fall into the hands of the Muslims? I recalled Sikh history, the bravery of our people—I wasn't a murderer, I was their saviour." I said to him, "This must be a terrible burden for you to bear." He said, "Not at all, no burden." He subsequently remarried, had children, and wrote a book about it, called *Bhuler da Saka*.

"I don't know," said Mrs. Narindar Singh to us, "we were friends, we talked about it sometimes, I don't know how he did it."

Our last example is of a family of Khattris from Azad Kashmir all of whose women, save three, died so that there were hardly any female elders left on the paternal side of the family.\* We heard the story of how they died first from Iqbal, their nephew, who was a young teenager at the time. We were introduced to him by his niece, Reva, in whose house we met one evening in 1991. Both Reva and his wife were present throughout. Iqbal is a refugee twice over—first in 1947 from Muzaffarabad to Kashmir, then in 1990 from Kashmir to Delhi. As with Taran earlier, his retelling of events in 1947 was laced with references to his recent experiences in Kashmir, and particularly to the vulnerability of Hindu women in the prevailing tension between Hindus and Muslims in the Valley.

On October 17, 1947 he told us, the fourth day after Muzaffarabad was raided, the town was under curfew. In Baramulla the *kabailis* (tribals) looted jewellery off the women and took two truckloads of them back into the surrounding mountains. The Hindus then decided to collect in clusters and stick together for safety. They informed a senior officer of the impending attack and asked for protection. According to Iqbal this information was somehow relayed to the raiders by an informer, and they advanced their attack by two days. Here is how he recalled the events that led to the women's suicides, and to his assisting in the death

of his young cousin, a beautiful 18 year old whose husband strangled her to death with her own dupatta.

On October 19 we noticed a massing of tribals on the hills around our village. Mehta Dhuni Chand, the DC, was the first target—he was killed. Many Hindu families, including ours, gathered in a large haveli. Some had rifles and guns with which we kept the tribals at bay for a couple of days. After this, we were overpowered and had to surrender. All our money was taken and we were told to march across the bridge over the Krishanganga. My three sisters swallowed poison—the hospital compounder distributed poison to anyone who wanted it—my bua gave the signal to the other women to jump by jumping off the bridge first. Then other aunts, my bhabhis, six in all, killed themselves. No one tried to stop them, not even my father. We tried to persuade Veeran, a young cousin, to take opium, but she refused.

Iqbal himself didn't acknowledge the role the men had played in the women's deaths, nor would he admit to having helped strangle his cousin (the women of the family told us that he and her husband held one end of the dupatta each, and pulled). He kept repeating that the decision was theirs alone—they saw that they couldn't be protected any more and took their lives. But he also kept adding, "Naturally, if we (that is, the men) were going to be killed who would protect them? They had no choice." (Even as Iqbal was recounting this his wife kept interjecting: "They must have encouraged them, after all, what could ladies do in this situation? They must have persuaded them, what could the women do?" )

We knew that two or three of the older women had not taken their lives and wondered what their memory of that incident was. Perhaps they could fill in some details/tell us how it actually happened. In a cool and darkened room on a hot summer afternoon in Delhi in 1992, we heard Bimla Bua's story:

Two days before the attack people were already distributing guns and preparing for battle. We were told to leave Muzaffarabad and make for Srinagar and safety. But before we knew it 'they' arrived. We were asleep when they at-

\* Names in this account have been changed to safeguard privacy.

tacked. We were first running, then we gathered in a few houses and stayed there till they burned them down. We never separated from each other. Outside, there were bullets flying, everybody trying to put out the fires. . . slogans, Pakistan, Zindabad!... They took everybody's gold, herded us out. We got separated, hid in a sugarcane field, didn't know where the others were. . . Somehow we came to the jail, next to which flowed the Krishanganga, and as we approached we saw women throwing themselves off it, bullets flying. . . we couldn't believe our eyes. . . .

Then they caught hold of a beautiful 17 year old and her sister who wouldn't let go of her hand. They dragged them for a long distance and the girls kept calling out, 'Bachao, bachao. . .' The *kabailis* were collecting all the Hindus and Sikhs in a hideout, Bala Pir. The two girls were already there. . . . Night fell, they kept raping the women, then dumped them. Divided up the gold. They wouldn't leave the 17 year old and she decided she would commit suicide. But how to kill herself? She asked for a rope— but where to get it from? Her brother and husband then got hold of a scarf and decided they would strangle her with it. They were unarmed and helpless. She survived, despite their efforts to strangle her all night. During this she fainted, and in the morning they decided to throw her in the river. We didn't try to stop her—we, too, thought we would do the same, but we had the children to think of.

The next day they took her to the river, accompanied by the *kabailis* who kept saying, 'Give her to us, we'll restore her to health.' When she stirred and opened her eyes they tried to catch hold of her. Her brothers and husband then picked her up and threw her into the river.

They fed us only *gur ke chane*, no water, no food. In the evening they said the men and women have to be separated. Then they killed all the Sikhs and for some reason, allowed us to go. We crossed the bridge, it was dark, somehow we reached the jail where there were about 4,000 people. . . .

Bimla Bua says she kept a diary

. . . because I could never forget what happened during Partition, and because I wanted to put down what I had seen. I called it *My Recollections*. I simply couldn't forget that experience,

it came before my eyes every waking moment. Now when I walk the streets of Green Park, I think only of Nadir Shah because I'm steeped in history. Partition was something I experienced— how could I forget it ?

We stayed in jail for eight days, in a large hall. On Id, the things I saw, I couldn't believe... how many women died by their own hands, first with opium which was very slow, then the hakims gave a poison which you just placed in your mouth and died. . .

The *kabailis* were not interested in our lives, they wanted young girls, they would kill any Muslim who tried to protect a Hindu. . . I had a ring left—and a pen. I kept hoping they wouldn't steal my pen. . .

*Reva's story:*

Krishna (the cousin who was killed ) was very young, very beautiful. We often spoke about her when we were young. . . the children would gather round to hear Partition stories. The suicides and deaths were remembered with some kind of pride by my male relatives—and women also. For us, it was like a story, a kind of drama. We had photographs of the women who died, the family kept their photographs, and we would look at them sometimes... now we don't talk about it very much. But then, we were also told some funny stories. . . there were very few aunts left in our family. . .

In Jammu in 1992, we met another branch of the family which had left Muzaffarabad in 1947, five months after the raid, but were on the move for ten years before they finally settled down in Jammu in 1958. Many from their *biradari* (kin community) live here in a kind of Muzaffarabad recreated, intermarry within the community, and keep close family ties. Munni, another of Iqbal's nieces and Reva's cousin, added an almost macabre twist to the story we had already heard from Iqbal and Reva, and as she told it her father kept interjecting, correcting her or providing details as he thought fit.

Her part of the family, Munni said, prepared to commit suicide by piling wood in the kitchen and setting themselves on fire. Her mother threw Munni, who was just 10 months old/on a lighted pyre but she was saved by a *kabaili* who

pulled her out just as her hair caught fire. He fed her with sugarcane juice till she revived and then handed her over to her mother; They escaped and stayed in a cave for four days but were separated from her father. When her mother heard (wrongly, as it turned out) that her husband had been killed, she killed herself too, by swallowing poison. Munni was brought up by her grandmother with whom she lived till she was an adult. Her father, meanwhile, had remarried.

Munni says her (maternal) grandfather could never reconcile himself to the suicides of the women in the family. He believed they had been sent to their deaths by one man in the family: his own brother and Iqbal's father. When the women turned to the latter for direction as the *kabailis* advanced and asked, "*Bhravan, hurt ki kariye?*" (Brother, what should we do now?) he is supposed to have pointed to the Krishanganga and said, "There flows the river/'

Only three women stood firm and refused to kill themselves or their children, despite the fact that packets of poison were ready for them all. "No more," they said "we're not going to kill our children." One aunt (Veeran) refused to take poison or give it to her 13 year old daughter, in spite of the menfolk urging her to do so. Later she justified her refusal by saying that "someone had to stay back and cook for the men if they survived", but she was made to feel ashamed of her "cowardice", her lack of courage in embracing her death.

### Violent Means, Violent Ends

As our interviews progressed and we spoke to a wider group of people—survivors, men who had killed, families whose women were forced to die—we began to recognize some features of what we call a gendered telling of violence. No one failed to recall the violence of Partition, in general, and a particular moment of violence for themselves, personally; nor did anyone, man or woman, gloss over how women are dealt with in communal conflict. Yet, in the recounting of violence within their own families we noted an

element of detachment in the men. The story is told in the heroic mode—the singular and extraordinary instance of doing a kinswoman to death is elevated to supreme and glorious sacrifice. So, one man's—or one family's, or one village's, even one community's—tragedy is sublimated and unfolds against the backdrop of siege and resistance, valour and vanquishment, honour and shame. The unhappy conjunction of all these made it incumbent on men to *act*, and to act almost on behalf of the collectivity of men. Although none of the men we spoke to (except Munni's father) admitted to it, the same unhappy conjunction may well have impelled them to kill members of the other community, too—that would not only avenge, it might even confer, honour.

For both men and women the trauma of Partition violence was difficult to articulate and this often made for a hesitant, disjointed or sometimes even "wordless" telling. We cannot say that men and women, as men and women, always spoke in different voices. Yet, as their accounts themselves indicate, the gendered nature of the experience of violence engendered its telling in specific ways. At least some part of this difference must lie in the fact that women, as Veena Das and Ashis Nandy have pointed out, were not only objects of, but also witness to, violence. Because they "retained the memory of loot, rape and plunder" in their bodies they remember it differently.<sup>37</sup> With men, the representation of violence may take a more formal or organized narration, like Iqbal's; be declamatory, like Dr. Virsa Singh's, or sadly matter-of-fact, like Charanjit Bhatia's. Occasionally it is distressed but, whatever the mode or tone, there hovers over their telling what Val Daniel calls "the protective shadow of a coherent narrative"; and even though there may have been ambivalence in their own actions, they are constrained from acknowledging it. Their telling has been incorporated into, and is part of, the master narrative, that male consensus which incorporates many singular voices into a whole. Its conceit, says Daniel, "is in its claim that it represents the truth or reality. . . This indeed is the mode of the narrative of modern history"<sup>38</sup>

The women's telling, on the other hand, exhibits what Daniel calls the "recalcitrantly ambiguous character of lived experience", and thereby challenges the normalising discourse of the men. Women's are the dissonant voices which are ordinarily "deflected, ignored, subordinated, excluded or destroyed";<sup>39</sup> and so, Iqbal's wife's is a questioning voice, a critiquing voice which avoids statements of fact even as it challenges the "facts" her husband offers. It is a voice which seems to account for the dead women's silence itself, fully conscious of male power to "encourage" and "persuade". Meanwhile, her husband keeps repeating "the decision was theirs", thereby attempting to speak/or the dead women, in complicity with their men.<sup>40</sup> So, too, Bimla Bua's ambiguity with regard to their own (imminent) and Krishna's (real) death—"we didn't try to stop her—we, too, thought we would do the same but we had the children to think about"—is embedded in the larger social and historical discordance of the time and the crises and confusion it generated. Her account reverberates with its tensions, her recall is forever haunted by what she can "never forget". Her telling exposes the cracks in the family narrative at the same time as it exposes the celebration of "suicide", and punctures the coherence of the master narrative in which the death/sacrifice of women was considered the "normal", even inevitable, response to the chaos of an abnormal moment. In this scheme of things, Taran's defiant assertion of life in the face of death could only shock her grandmother because it turned the "normal" inside-out and showed it up for what it was—an inhuman code of conduct required almost exclusively of women. So, although she may have had no choice in the matter, she nevertheless demonstrated her disagreement by flamboyantly drawing attention to the very body that was considered a liability.

Reva's unexpected reconstruction, in hindsight, of women's mass dying as simultaneously heroic and humorous, and her non-committal recounting of one aunt's refusal to comply, has something of the detachment of her uncle's account. But it is drawn into sudden intimacy with the mention of

the women's photographs and quickly identifies her now, today, telling the story, with them; there is a direct correspondence between her own vulnerability and theirs, always the potential sacrifice. The poignant, almost unconscious aside—"We used to look at (the photographs) occasionally, but now don't talk about it very much"—tries to distance that tragic (but necessary) event from her own life and circumstances, and is in striking contrast to her aunt's inability to forget.

Taran told herself she was "dying for freedom", not to save her "honour"; Bimla Bua rationalised her non-compliance in terms of maternal responsibility, almost as powerful a charge as safeguarding honour, but could not put it behind her. Fifteen years later she wrote her recollections ("in simple English" she said) in order to reconcile her life and her memories, but it was clear from her telling that neither reconciliation nor serenity attended her writing. If not serenity, then an element of recollecting in tranquility marked the accounts of Iqbal and Charanjit Bhatia. Shorn of the intimate detail that are present in both Bimla Bua's and Taran's accounts, they are more obviously representational: the words they use describe the events alright, but the relationship between themselves and what they describe is obscure. Neither Iqbal nor Munni's father were able to reflect on their own implication in the women's deaths: "What else could they do?" they asked, or simply, "They wanted to die." The normalising imperative that condoned, almost enjoined, such a violent, resolution.

Gradually we realized that this violent "resolution" was part of a *continuum of violence* that had death at the hands of one's own kinsmen at one end, and rape and brutalisation by men of the other community at the other. In between lay taking your own life, sublimating your vulnerability and making of it something heroic. Also in between, and governed by the same logic, was the covert violence of the state exercised through the implementation of its recovery programme, a programme which forcibly recovered women abducted by men of the "other" community. In an attempt to resettle and

rehabilitate them, it displaced and dislocated them once again. What connects the brutal and deliberate communal sexual violence against women to the desperate, but no less deliberate, doing to death of them by their own kinsmen? What links these two, in turn, to the equally deliberate and no less violent actions of the state in its apparently benign programme of recovery? What connects them, in our view, is a powerful consensus around the subject of violence against women. Neither absolute nor monolithic (obviously, not all men agreed that killing kinswomen was acceptable) this consensus is, nevertheless, at once deep and wide-ranging and encompasses most forms of violence, including the specific forms we have spoken of in this discussion. It has two critical and distinguishing features: it sanctions the violent "resolution" (so to speak) of the troublesome question of women's sexuality and sexual status—chaste, polluted, impure—and *simultaneous!)/ insists on women's silence regarding it* through the attachment of shame and stigma to this very profound violation of self. Thus, the woman raped, the woman who may be raped, the raped child, the young widow whose sexuality can no longer be channelised, the wife raped by kinsmen or others, the women who must be killed so that their sexuality is not misappropriated, the wives, daughters and sisters who must be recovered so that sexual transgression is reversed—are all compelled into acquiescing.\*

Some kinds of consensus are familiar, such as the patriarchal notion of safeguarding honour (male as well as community honour) through a control over women's sexuality. Most men and women we spoke to were agreed that honour—for losing or preserving—is located in the body of the woman. (Many women told us of how mothers would try to disfigure their young daughters who were attractive by smearing ash or mud on their faces to prevent them from

being molested.) Even Durga Rani who said, "What fault was it of the poor girl's? She didn't leave on her own, she was picked up ..." had to admit that once abused, her "character" was now "spoilt". The consensus during Partition around killing one's own women is less common, and has to be considered in the context of general communal violence and forced evacuation. (Falling into the hands of men belonging to one's own community did not give rise to the same sort of shame-fear-dishonour syndrome, what Gananath Obeyesekere calls *lajja-bhaya* [shame-fear]: a perceived loss of status is shameful; *bhaya* is the fear of losing status and of humiliation.<sup>41</sup>) Such an extreme circumstance transforms the deliberate taking of life into an act of humanity, easily accommodated in an unfolding scenario of shame, honour and martyrdom (*shahidi*). The consensus here is that actual death is preferable to death-in-life or the symbolic death of rape/abduction/conversion; the consensus is that murder is permissible. But the nature of the agreement is different, as we have seen from the accounts presented earlier: women can be part of the consensus and sacrifice themselves to honour; or they may agree on the importance of upholding honour but refuse to die in order to save it. Munni's story illustrates the ways in which women offer resistance even when they are most critically in jeopardy. The resistance of the aunt who refused to consume poison, justifying her non-compliance through a non-threatening discourse of respect and service; the resistance of the woman who said, "No more", and the powerful memory of that resistance in Munni's narration; Taran's defiance; even Bimla Bua's ambivalence demonstrate the women's unwillingness to either consent to or acquiesce with an inhuman demand. And even when they do, they may well do so after weighing the consequences of both resistance and assent. With women, then, the shame-fear-dishonour syndrome presents itself differently: fear at the prospect of being sexually used; the unspeakable shame of being raped; fear of death and afraid because without defenders; and the twin dishonour of violation and consequent rejection.

\* Much later, and post-Partition, many of these same husbands and fathers would force their women into prostitution to enable the family to survive; now, male "survival" was more urgent than male "honour".

The consensus is most successful when women "voluntarily" participate in the violence that is done to them, and ensuring their silence is a necessary part of the consensus. How often were we told of the courage and strength of women who came forward to be killed, or who set an example of self-negation by taking their own lives; and again and again, we heard men say with pride, "They preferred to die." This not only released the men from any responsibility for their deaths it also put a closure both, on the women's lives and on their speech. In much the same way the strenuous efforts made by families to protect their women at the height of communal violence were wholly consistent with later attempts to erase their very presence from their lives if they had had the misfortune of falling into alien hands; so too, the equally diligent efforts made by the authorities to eliminate any evidence of their having been so misused through large-scale abortions. The subsequent taboo on recall drove many, many women into silence and a willed amnesia regarding their violation. The consensus around the overt and dramatic violence of "suicide" and honourable killing, or rape and abduction also operated in the recovery programme; the state's ready consent to engaging in a similar violence (which, like the others, masqueraded as deliverance) lends piquancy to such a notion of patriarchical consensus.

The circumstances and particular violence against women that we have discussed may have been peculiar to Partition. Yet, as Pradeep Jeganathan writing on ethnic violence in urban Sri Lanka says, the "form and content of the extraordinary is deeply embedded in the history of the everyday, but nevertheless also stands outside the everyday".<sup>42</sup> So, moments of rupture and extreme dislocation, extraordinary as they are, underscore the more daily doses of violence against women and enable us to see them as part of the continuum—and, despite the shudder of horror, part of the consensus.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Satya Rai, *Partition of the Punjab* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1965), p.102.
- <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103.
- <sup>5</sup> M.S. Randhawa, *Out of the Ashes: An Account of the Rehabilitation of Refugees from West Pakistan in Rural Areas of East Punjab* (Bombay: 1954), p. ix. A Boundary Commission was set up under Sir Cyril Radcliffe to partition India and redraw her boundaries within 36 days. He was assisted by eight judges, four Hindu and four Muslim, in the task of dividing Punjab and Bengal; the cities, towns and districts awarded to East and West Pakistan, and to East Punjab and West Bengal were announced on August 16, 1947.
- <sup>6</sup> Satya Rai, *op. cit.*, pp. 109-10.
- <sup>7</sup> Census of India, 1941, taken from M.S. Randhawa, *Out of the Ashes*, *op. cit.*, p. 8.
- <sup>8</sup> Confidential Papers and Reports of Evan Jenkins. Note dated March 4, 1947 on "Disturbances in the Punjab". (London: India Office Library, R/3/1/176).
- <sup>9</sup> G.D. Khosla, *Stern Reckoning: A Survey of the Events Leading Up to and Following the Partition of India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1949), p. 101. A total of 2,094 villages were covered by the survey in Punjab; 316 in the NWFP; and 216 in Bahawalpur.
- <sup>10</sup> Note dated March 10, 1947 by Evan Jenkins to the Secretary of State for India. Confidential Papers and Reports, *op. cit.*
- <sup>11</sup> G.D. Khosla, *Stern Reckoning*, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-53.
- <sup>12</sup> Evan Jenkins, Confidential Papers and Reports, *op. cit.* Jenkins quotes from an appeal which appeared in *Ajit*, a paper published from Lahore, on April 5, 1947.
- <sup>13</sup> Evan Jenkins, Confidential Papers, *op. cit.* Report dated April 25, 1947.
- <sup>14</sup> For India, the Report of the Fact Finding Organization headed by G.D. Khosla, published its findings as *Stern Reckoning*, *op. cit.* The Pakistan government issued its version of events in five pamphlets: *Note on the Sikh Plan: an account of the secret preparations of the Sikhs; The Sikhs in Action: showing the Sikh plan in actual operation; The Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh or the activities of the secret terrorist Hindu organization in the Punjab; Tribal Repercussions or what led the tribal Pathans of the north-west fron-*



tier to come to the aid of the people of Kashmir; *Kashmir Before Accession: showing why the people of Kashmir rebelled against the Maharaja's government, what he did to suppress them and why he acceded to India*. An unofficial contemporary account may also be found in the report put out by the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabhandak Committee, *Muslim League Attack on Sikhs and Hindus in the Punjab* (Amritsar: Sikh Publishing House, 1950).

- <sup>15</sup> Swarna Aiyar, "'August Anarchy': The Partition Massacres in Punjab, 1947" in *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, Special Issue on "North India: Partition and Independence", op. cit., pp. 13-36.
- <sup>16</sup> G.D. Khosla, *Stern Reckoning*, op. cit., pp. 102-05
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 230.
- <sup>18</sup> Anis Kidwai, *Azadi ki Chaon Mein* (Delhi: National Book Trust 1990), p. 306.
- <sup>19</sup> G.D. Khosla, op. cit., p. 234.
- <sup>20</sup> See, for example, G.D. Khosla, op. cit.; Swarna Aiyer, "August Anarchy" op. cit., M.S. Randhawa, *Out of the Ashes*, op. cit.; Kirpal Singh, *Partition of Punjab* (Patiala: 1972); Ganda Singh, "A Diary of Partition Days" in Mushirul Hasan (ed.), *India Partitioned: The Other Face of Freedom*, op. cit., pp. 27-96; and the private papers of Evan Jenkins in the India Office Library, among others.
- <sup>21</sup> See especially, Sudhir Kakar, *The Colours of Violence* (Delhi: Viking, 1995); Veena Das (ed.), *Mirrors of Violence : Communities, Riots and Survivors in South Asia* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990); and Gyanendra Pandey, "In Defence of the Fragment-Writing About Hindu-Muslim Riots in India Today," op. cit.; and "Community and Violence: Recalling Partition," in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XXXII, No. 32, August 1997.
- <sup>22</sup> Sudhir Kakar, *The Colours of Violence*, op. cit., p. 37.
- <sup>23</sup> Veena Das (ed.), op. cit., p. 28.
- <sup>24</sup> Veena Das and Ashis Nandy, "Violence, Victimhood and the Language of Silence", in *Contributions to Indian Sociology* (n.s.) Vol. 19, no.1, pp. cit.
- <sup>25</sup> Jason Francisco, "In the Heat of Fratricide: The Literature of India's Partition Burning Freshly" in *The Annual of Urdu Studies*, op. cit.
- <sup>26</sup> We have found almost no analyses of the specific violence against women during the partition of India. Descriptions abound, especially in fiction, but an analysis from a gender

- perspective is generally absent. The essay by Das and Nandy, op. cit., is an exception, as are the following articles by Urvasi Butalia, "Community, State and Gender: On Women's Agency During Partition", op. cit. Nighat Said Khan, "Identity, Violence and Women: A Reflection on the Partition of India, 1947" in Nighat Said Khan, et al. (eds.), op. cit., pp. 157-71; and Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, "Recovery, Rupture, Resistance: Indian State and Abduction of Women during Partition," op. cit.
- <sup>27</sup> Shorish Kashmiri, "Humiliated and Harassed They Left", in Mushirul Hasan (ed.), *India Partitioned*, op. cit., p. 156.
- <sup>28</sup> G.D. Khosla, *Stern Reckoning*, op. cit., p. 133.
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 181.
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 109.
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 130.
- <sup>32</sup> Sudhir Kakar, *The Colours of Violence*, op. cit., p. 37.
- <sup>33</sup> Stasa Zajovic, "Women and Ethnic Cleansing", in *Women Against Fundamentalism*, No. 5, 1994, Vol. 1 (London) p. 36. Trs. by Cynthia Cockburn.
- <sup>34</sup> In the rape camps of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kadira who was raped again and again (she has forgotten how many times) reports: "They just came in and raped us and later they told us, 'Come on now, if you could have Ustasha babies, then you can have a Chetnik baby, too'." She said that those women who got pregnant had to stay in the camps for seven or eight months so they could give birth to a Serbian child. "They had special privileges; they got meals, they were better off, they were protected. Only when a woman's in her seventh month. . . then she's released. Then they usually take these women to Serbia." In Alexandra Stigmayer (ed.), *Mass Rape: The War Against Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), p. 118. Accounts of the violence against women in Bosnia and Herzegovina are the closest parallel we have found to Partition violence. Though the differences are obvious, the two events nevertheless alert us to the link between a religion-based vivisection of countries, the sexuality of women, and their role as upholders of honour and reproducers of the community.
- <sup>35</sup> It is commonly held that Hindu and Sikh women suffered such a fate, but we were often told in Pakistan that Muslim women, too, died in similar circumstances. For more details on this, see Nighat Said Khan, "Identity, Violence and Women", op. cit.
- <sup>36</sup> See G.D. Khosla, *Stern Reckoning* and M.S. Randhawa, *Out of*

*the Ashes*, among others, for detailed accounts of the violence in Sheikhpura.

<sup>37</sup> Veena Das and Ashis Nandy, "Violence, Victimhood and the Language of Silence", op. cit.

<sup>38</sup> Val Daniel, "Mood, Moment and Mind: Writing Violence", op. cit.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> We are grateful to Paola Bacchetta for drawing our attention to this important difference.

<sup>41</sup> As discussed by Pradeep Jeganathan in his unpublished paper, "All the Lord's Men? Perpetrator Constructions of Collective Ethnic Violence in an Urban Sri Lankan Community", n.d.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.