

The Trauma and the Triumph: A Story of Loss and sufferings of people in Eastern India

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Abstract: *The Partition of 1947 is an unquestionable and memorable event in the history of contemporary India and South Asia, and the effects are still felt by the people of India and Pakistan. The interpretation of the partition of India is not just confined to the political sphere, given the riots, mass killings, and physical and psychological torture of both men and women, discussions have also begun to take place in the disciplines of feminist history, literature, gender history, etc. Writers such as Ritu Menon, Urvashi Butalia began honing new approaches to this historic partition in the 1990s. Another work added to this list is “The Trauma and the Triumph: Gender and Partition in Eastern India” edited by Jasodhara Bagchi and Subhoranjan Dasgupta (2006). Therefore, the primary aim of this study is to examine the discourse on Partition within this book; also, it seeks to evaluate the book’s relevance to the history of 1947.*

Keywords: *Trauma, sufferings, Jyotiirmoyee Devi, Epar Ganga Opar Ganga, Akhtaruzzaman Ellias, Khowabnama etc.*

Introduction: In the history of contemporary South Asia, the question of India's division was unquestionably significant. This division was brought about by the August 15, 1947, execution of the Mountbatten Plan. India and Pakistan are the two new states created by the division of unified India. There are still signs of the profound effects this separation had on South Asia's history in the current situation. The socioeconomic, cultural, and psychological beliefs of Indians were also impacted by this split, albeit the effects varied from person to person. This division also created a new dilemma known as the "immigration problem," or "refugee problem."

These diverse partition-related concerns are discussed in "The Trauma and the Triumph: Gender and Partition in Eastern India," which was co-edited by Jashodhara Bagchi and Subhoranjan Dashgupta. Bagchi served as the chair of the West Bengal Women's Commission, while Dasgupta is a professor in the Department of Human Science at the Institute of Development Studies in Kolkata.

Through this book, they talked about the 1947 division of India and the numerous issues that resulted from it. This book has adequately addressed the refugee issue as well. Every aspect of the refugee crisis and its effects on Indians, particularly women, are covered in this book. It also discusses how women handled the issue. Numerous well-known authors, including Rachel Weber,

Urvashi Batulia, and Selina Hossain (a well-known writer from Bangladesh), have contributed to this collection with their research articles on the partition of India.

With the exception of the introduction, the editors have organized the entire book into four major chapters. "Analysis and Literary Evidence" is the title of the first chapter. This section has eight subchapters in total attached. "Interviews and Reminiscence" is the title of the second portion, which has nine subchapters added to it. A total of four subchapters have been added to the third chapter, "Creative and Literary Text," and two subchapters have been added to the final chapter, "Documentary Evidence." To put it simply, there are 22 subchapters inside these four main chapters.

Analysis of the chapters:

In the introductory part of the book, the editors have shown how the partition of India in 1947 forced the people to migrate from the eastern and western parts of the Indian subcontinent. The migration process was compared with the Jewish migration process and these two migrations have been cited as examples of Charles Tilly's 'coerced migration' theory. The two authors then discuss the main purpose of their book, **"The Trauma and the Triumph: Gender and Partition in Eastern India"**. In this context, the renowned author Urvashi Butalia's book **"Other Side of Silence" (1994)** has come up. In this so-called book, Urvashi Butalia has highlighted the nature of migration in Bengal and Punjab, but despite this, the issue of the human dimension remains elusive. In this sense, the authors stated that the purpose of their book is to focus on the human dimension to fill this gap.

As discussed later, in which aspects, does the partition of Bengal differ from the partition of Punjab? In this case, emphasis has been placed on four issues: -

Firstly, whereas the partition of Punjab was a one-time event and forced migration was its main feature and this forced migration was limited to 1947-1950, the migration process from East to West, i.e. from West Pakistan and Bangladesh to West Bengal was continuous.

Secondly, widespread brutality and violence were the main reasons for the two-way exodus in Punjab, which has not been seen in the East. That is why; the people who migrated from west to east had no resemblance to the people who migrated from east to west. Considering the carnages in Kolkata and Noakhali (1946), Dhaka-Narayanganj (1962), and Bhola and Jessore (2001), the partition process of Punjab was much more destructive and brutal than the partition of Bengal which was much slower and painful.

Thirdly, history and politics were precise and static in the context of the partition of Punjab. However, these characteristics have not been seen in the case of Bengal's partition. Rather, the partition of Bengal has been reflected in the past six decades through a conflicting prism. For example, the two-nation theory was adopted in Punjab, but that theory was challenged by the language movement of 1952 in East Pakistan, in which, a strong resistance was formed against the rulers of West Pakistan which resulted in the formation of the state of Bangladesh in 1971.

Fourthly, the border and boundaries of the West have divided the entire region into two rigid parts politically, strategically, and militarily, whereas the partition of the East was much more flexible and porous.

Although there were differences between the two provinces on various issues, one thing that was very common between the two provinces was that, the main tool of persecution in both countries was women, especially lower-class women. Many people lost their homeland, and their family members, but the condition of women were more deplorable and crueler. Why? Because, on the one side, they lost their land, and family, on the other side, they were victims of atrocities like rape, abduction, etc. That is why; many women have chosen the path of suicide to get rid of this oppression. Thus, just as the partition of India affected the political and socio-economic situation of the people of Bengal, so did their mental health, especially women, and this issue is very well illustrated in this book.

The first chapter is entitled **“Freedom in an Idiom of Loss”** and this chapter was written by the Editor-in-chief Jshodhara Bagchi. This chapter is the sub-chapter of the first main chapter of this book, **“Analysis and Literary Evidence.”** The theme of this chapter is the partition of Bengal and its impact on Bengali women. However, it should be noted that the author has discussed only certain issues in the context of Bengal's partition. She named Bengal Sonar Bangla or Golden Bengal and said that the partition was like a scar on the body and mind of this Sonar Bangla and the state hadn't any remedy to cure this scar.

In this chapter, the author has admitted that the partition of Bengal has driven her to constant dialogue with herself, and she saw herself as a real beneficiary of the Nehruvian thrust. She said that students like her who studied abroad in the late 1950s and 1960s would be proud of the memory of being rewarded as India's mini-ambassadors. In this context, she described India as a state committed to democratic, humanitarian, and political justice. This ends the first phase of the first chapter.

The second phase of this chapter begins mainly with the partition of Bengal, the refugee problem, and its impact on women. The author has shown that as the people of Bengal were forced to leave their ancestral home due to the partition of Bengal, so was their dignity and disgrace. All these uprooted families have gathered on the platform of Sealdah station and the streets of Kolkata. The issue of this uprooting made Bengal mentally upset.

According to the author, the issue of partition of Bengal never came to an end. Just like the Sikh riots of 1984 and some early riots in Bhagalpur, the state-sponsored uprooting and its consequent plight of women and the so-called rehabilitation program for abducted women, the Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1970 - through all this, the pain of partition has come alive.

In 1905, Lord Curzon made the first attempt to divide Bengal, in this context world poet Rabindranath Tagore wrote the **“Banglar Mati, Banglar Jol”** - a poem through which the individuality of Bengal was revealed and it was Lord Curzon, who tried to divide this individuality,

although his attempt was failed. Because the Swadeshi- Boycott movement was formed in Bengal due to this attempt to divide Bengal. Lord Curzon finally withdrew the Bengal Partition Act due to the horrors of this movement. But the author has likened this anti-Bengal partition movement to a Bengali proverb like “Ghost in mustards”. Because, according to her, the Swadeshi movement has formed in Bengal to protect the individuality of Bengal. But ultimately, this individuality could not be saved. Examples, like the horrific genocide in Calcutta in 1946 (popularly known as “The Great Calcutta Killing) and the Noakhali riots were significant, the final result of which was the partition of India as well as Bengal on August 15, 1947.

Talking about women of Bengal, the author has shown that, in Bengal, although women have never exchanged for property or shelter, the most important weapon of defense against any kind of social catastrophe was women and their chastity. Women's chastity played a significant role not only in dealing with social catastrophes but also in maintaining family honor. The author points out that, anti-colonial resistance helped to turn women into victims of communal strife. We got instances of women's abduction in the accounts of the partition of Bengal. Recent researchers, who have dealt with refugee issues, have shown that special emphasis has been placed on women's chastity. They have proved through various sources, that, even in exchange for their property, chastity of women was never given up and these characteristics could be seen in both the Hindu-Muslim communities. Because the two nations were born out of a nationalist struggle and the abduction of women was the heart of these two nation's relationships.

A hypocritical obsession with the moral purity or virtue of the so-called chaste women marks the patriarchal basis of the hegemonic class in India. The female body has also been used as a chess piece in the formation of the state. To express this hypocritical obsession with moral purity, the author has given an example of the novel "Epar Ganga Opar Ganga authored by Jyotirmoyee Devi. Jyotirmoyee Devi's "Epar Ganga Opar Ganga" was a rare example among the novels written in the Bengali language during the partition of Bengal because this type of novel was the first in the history of Bengali literature whose author was a woman. In her novel, Jyotirmoyee Devi skillfully illustrates this point through the story of the birth of a nation-state in the Indian subcontinent and the pre-partition and post-partition violence. The story of this novel has focused on the violence and the rape of a Hindu Bengali adolescent of East Bengal named Sutara Dutta and being isolated by her community in pre and post-secular India. In her novel, Jyotirmoyee Devi successfully presented the physical and psychological pain of the teenager named Sutara with restraint and courage. The main theme of the novel is like this, in 1946, riots broke out in the residential village of Sutara on a dark night, where both Hindu and Muslim communities have been living in harmony in that village. Before she understood what was happening, her father disappeared, her mother committed suicide by jumping into a pond to save chastity, her married sister disappeared and she became unconscious due to molestation. She regained consciousness in the care of a Muslim family in their neighborhood but was devastated mentally and physically by the horrors of the incident. The Muslim family started receiving threats from the Hindu community for giving shelter to this girl. This Hindu class stated that, if there is a war, women will be harmed, and this has been

happening in all countries. Eventually, it was decided to send Sutara to his brother's house, who lives in Calcutta. However due to the riots in Calcutta at that time, his brother was sheltered in his father-in-law's house, so Sutara also had to take shelter in that house. But due to the long association with her benefactor Muslim family, Sutara was treated in that house as almost an untouchable. So, with this kind of mentality, it is well understood that women were seen as a commodity in the society of that time, and for that reason, if there was any war or social catastrophe, they were the victims of violence. This is further illustrated by a quote from the novel "Epar Ganga Opar Ganga" mentioned in the author's text, where the housewife says about Sutara, **"She was in a Muslim family for six months, is there any sanctity left for that girl! Ok, you let the girl stay here, but at least let her stay in a corner of the house like Hadi and Bagdi, but you let the girl go around the house! Who know what she has eaten and what she has done in these six months!"** But the question is right here, Sutara was indeed molested, and it was not her fault, the Muslim family saved her from death, Sutara was innocent of this also, and then for what crime is she being punished? And the most surprising thing is that, the one who is saying these kinds of words about Sutara is a Hindu Bengali woman herself. So, the situation in the society was such that, women did not respect other women if for some reason the other woman was physically abused. But if a boy had faced such an incident instead of Sutara, he might not have had to face these questions.

So, it can be said that, in this chapter, from the Partition of Bengal in 1905 to the Partition of India in 1947, the refugee problem, Hindu-Muslim riots, and violence against women – all these issues are illustrated very well, and here is the success of the author.

The second chapter of this book is entitled **"History's Creative Counterpart – Partition in Akhtaruzzaman Elia's Khowabnama"** and the author of this chapter is Suvoranjana Dashgupta, the second editor-in-chief of this book. It is the second subchapter of the **"Analysis and Literary Evidence"**. In the introductory part of the chapter, the author presents some questions, like – whether we ignore the best examples of literary creativity, especially fiction as a non-historical element of history, or should they be hailed as a fictional translation based on history, where writers combine reality with memory, events with legends to reveal the realities around them and realities of the past. According to the author, this type of fiction is not a non-history but a historical narrative of another genre. He defined these historical narratives according to Brian Fay's perspective, in which Brian Fay said, that in such fiction, reality is presented in a poetic-rhetoric form. These narratives can be called meta-history. Contemporary creators of such fiction include Latin American writers. Examples like German author Gunter Grass, Czech author Milan Kundera, and Bengali novelist Akhtaruzzaman Elias belong to this genre. The author has shown how fiction works creatively in history through the novel entitled "Khowabnama" by Akhtaruzzaman Elias. The word 'counterpart' is defined in this chapter such as; counterpart is not an imitation of history nor its antithesis but a larger and more complete matter. The author compares the novelist Akhtaruzzaman Elias with the 19th-century writer Balzac.

Badaruddin Umar and Shaukat Ali mentioned two novels by Elias – *Chilekothar Sepai* and *Khowabnama*. Why?, it was through these two novels and other short stories that Elias emerged and established himself as an ideal chronicler, who not only portrayed the environment of reality in imaginative contexts but also, like a sociologist, explored the twists, and turns of the novel's events. He condemned the partition of Bengal, not once, but more than once. He said, **“Like other educated Muslim middle-class members at the time, my father wanted Muslim boys and girls to live in harmony with their Hindu classmates, to live with equal dignity. But, it is important to remember that, these Muslim boys and girls belong to a special class, the Muslim-middle class. It is also noteworthy that, only this Muslim middle class aspired to progress. But, the movement, they had started to fulfill the aspirations could not be accepted. The partition of 1947 was so catastrophic, so tragic, so heartbreaking and meaningless, that we are realizing it every day.”**

According to the author of this chapter, the most striking feature of Elias's writing is his Marxist perspective. The Marxist influence was so clear in his writings on partition that, it made partition not only attractive but also irresistible to his Muslim community. So, there is no need for empirical thinking to conclude that the partition of India was a conspiracy between the Muslim and Hindu upper-middle class of the Muslim League and the National Congress. So, it can therefore be said that Elias's rebuke did emerge from a reactionary middle class but from a Marxist perspective determined by a conscious class. He emphasized on three things:

Akhtaruzzaman Elias has recreated the event of partition through his novel *Khowabnama*. The Muslim community, who were being exploited and oppressed by the Hindu zamindar class, was the most affected by the Muslim League's plan. The pain of this persecution came through the character of lonely Choto Mian, who rejected the notion that Muslim zamindars would become more responsible if the state of Pakistan formed. In this novel, Elias seems to have expressed his attitude towards partition through the character of Choto Mian, where one thing has come up again and again – all the members of the Muslim League were rich and zamindar class, if these members were expelled, the future of the League will be uncertain. Thus, none of the promises that the Muslim League had given regarding the state of Pakistan before the partition was fulfilled. On the contrary, all the demands of the Tebhaga agitators were described as meaningless and the agitators were labeled as ignorant.

Elias vividly portrayed the horrors of the Tebhaga movement in his novel. He has presented its reality with such extraordinary artistry that no other contemporary writer of Bengali literature has been able to present it. The realistic description of Elias was as strong as it was irresistible on the one hand and powerful and touching on the other. In this case, it is worth mentioning that the novelist Elias did not only illustrate the partition of the country and, the Tebhaga movement as the main theme preoccupation of his novel, but also the food crisis of Bengal has been portrayed vividly in his novel. The horror of this food crisis is described through the character of Sakhina, the daughter of Tamij, the lead character of the novel. Unable to bear the plight of their daughter,

Tamij's wife Fuljan committed suicide, and eventually the lead character Tamij was shot dead during the Tebhaga movement. The story of Khowabnama ended here. Actually, the author has a hidden motive behind giving a brief introduction to Elia's novel Khowabnama in this chapter. The author tried to illustrate the characteristics of Elia's writings, as well as Akhtaruzzaman Elia's own attitude towards partition, a comparative discussion between partition and the Tebhaga movement, the attitudes of the so-called upper-middle-class community of National Congress and Muslim League towards partition, the plight of the lower class Hindu-Muslim peasants of that time, their real despair of the state of Pakistan and so on and all these events were perfectly illustrated by Elia in his novel Khowabnama.

In the conclusion of this chapter, the author states that each writer has his uniqueness and Elia was no exception. This unique character of Elia's writing is found in chapter 21 of another unique novel 'Chilekothar Sepai', where he described the death struggle of the people of East Bengal against the rule of Ayub Khan in 1969. This so-called novel combined ideology and aesthetics in an unbreakable bond, and it was a mixture of politics and history as well. So, once this is clear, whether it is Khowabnama or the Chilekothar Sepai – Akhtaruzzaman Elia's Marxist ideology exists in both novels. Both novels show the struggle of the lower class against the upper class, which is a characteristic of the Marxist class struggle and it is this varied attitude that makes Elia a unique novelist among the contemporary Bengali writers.

The title of the third chapter is **“Kantatare Prajapati”** or **“Butterfly on Barbate Wire”**. The author of this chapter is Selina Hossain, a prominent writer in Bangladesh. The main theme of the chapter revolves around the imprisonment of Ila Mitra, the leader of the Tebhaga movement in Nachol. The chapter contains a detailed account of her subjection to unspeakable torture while in prison, and how she was tortured mentally and physically only for her confession which was beyond humanity.

In this chapter, on the one hand, Ila Mitra's previous happy married life described, her well-organized leadership during the movement, which earned her the nickname Rani Ma, on the other hand, the misery of her imprisoned life and finally her 'not guilty' appeal were well illustrated. The author tries to show here, how much the Tebhaga movement was responsible for the rise of women's power. That is why, ordinary housewife Ila Mitra did not hesitate to take part in the Tebhaga movement. Even though she was subjected to unspeakable torture for the confession, she did not confess, rather than that, she showed her infinite endurance by fighting against this oppression. That is to say, the infinite courage, endurance, and ability to lead a movement, which is hidden in the women, and if needed to be, that power can be ignited, has been expressed in this chapter in a very fluent language.

The title of the 4th chapter is **"Re (Creating the Home: Women's Role in the Development of Refugee Colonies in South Calcutta)"** authored by Rachel Weber. The main content of this chapter is the experience of the so-called refugees from East Pakistan as a result of partition. The author also represents a parallel relationship between the arrival of refugees and the Jews who

were fleeing from the Nazi regime during World War II. However, she acknowledges that there were differences between the two groups. However, the difference that attracts the author the most is the location of these two groups of refugees and the nature of their accommodation. For example, she shows that most of the refugees who came to America occupied the city center, and large buildings, but in contrast the refugees of Calcutta chose the lower part of the city, especially the swamps or shallow lands as their abode. It is also worth mentioning that, the houses and colonies that the refugees built did not only reflect the needs and protection of the middle-class Bengali population but also the reorganization of space. Based on this, a play was staged in Calcutta in the 1950s named 'Natun Ihudi'

In this chapter, the author recounts her experience regarding the data collection on refugees. Since she is a foreigner as well as a woman, she has had to face various adversities while collecting information especially when interviewing refugee women, he had to face some particular questions, like why she was interviewing the women of the colony because all the women in the colony were illiterate, dead or crippled. However, one thing that seems very surprising to the author is that even though there are official documents on the colonies made by East Pakistani, there is almost no academic information, neither in Bengali nor in English. In the chapter, the author clarifies the relationship between spatial form and social form by discussing the meaning of home and house. For example, where the home is the physical structure of the dwelling, the house represents the social relations both inside and outside the dwelling, connecting the dwellers of the house with other families, communities, and all above with the state. So, in one word, home is a symbol of family, warmth, security, and stability. And the entire responsibility of making a home into a house rests on the women. It is the women who turn a home into a house through their skillful work.

The next phase of the chapter discusses the definition of the word 'refugee', the nature of their arrival, etc. In this regard, the author agrees with the opinion of Somdev Dashgupta that, the word 'refugee' is very complicated to understand. 'Udbastu', in Bengali refers to a group of people who have no shelter or bastu (home), that's why they have been called refugees or 'udbastu'. As a result of the partition of the country, such refugees came in groups and took shelter in Calcutta and the author has specially described the refugees of Calcutta in this chapter. However, she has limited the period of arrival of the refugees from 1946 to 1950. These refugees have described their arrival in Calcutta as very difficult. Most of the refugees took shelter at Sealdaha station. Refugee camps were set up later for them. But the construction of the camp was completed hastily, and they were inhabitable and cramped. Finally, in the late 1950s, the government realized the need for adequate shelter and resettlement for the refugees. But it is noteworthy that, only 1/5th of the total refugees were enrolled in government camps and the rest of the refugees forcibly occupied the private and government-own vacant lands, thus the refugee colonies gradually developed.

The next part of the chapter discussed how women adapted to the environment of the refugee colonies. The author mentions that the houses in East Pakistan where women lived were located

in rural areas and less populated areas. The houses had separate dwellings for women known as Andarmahal. And there were Kacharighar and Bahirmahal which were open for men only and women were not allowed to go there. But as a result of partition, after leaving East Pakistan and coming to Calcutta, all these families did not have any property or money with which they could build a house including the inner house. So, as per the situation, the male and female members of the family started to live in the same house. Most of these houses were made with fences and without any privacy. Through these fences, rainwater and chilly air would enter into the house, causing many of the occupants to fall ill. But, one thing to note is that living with men opens up a larger and new world to women and exposes them to political and business thinking as well as making refugees aware of their problems. These houses of the refugee colonies were entirely different, not only that, but the whole community was different. In the former settlement, the refugees were living in a centered community where they had other family members and housekeepers but most of the colonies in Vijayagarh and South Calcutta were interdependent and the colony houses were attached to the footpath or sometimes adjoined with another house and the houses along the road were built in such a way that it has created a sphere puzzle. However, the impact of such a change on women is important. For example, when the refugee colony was formed in Vijayagarh, there were very few tube wells, and because of that, most women went to fetch water from the street pumps, where they would discuss various issues, such as the price of rice or kerosene, with many other refugee colony's women like them. So, it can be said that on the one hand, just as a special characteristic called 'inner house' or 'andarmahal' came to an end, the equation of a new relationship between women of the colonies started.

In other words, the author wanted to show in this chapter how the lives of women of Bengal changed before and after the partition. For example, a new world opened up for the women who came to this country from East Pakistan as refugees. These women began to earn for the family along with household chores. In this way, they began to recognize the society in a new way, to make them self-reliant, to realize that there is a world outside of their inner circle which was impossible in East Pakistan or Bangladesh. Another striking fact in this case was that the male members of their household also supported this self-reliant characteristic of women. That is why; women have started to participate in politics. So, on the one hand, the issue of women's miserable life has come up as a result of partition and on the other hand, the issue of women's empowerment has been clearly illustrated through this chapter.

The 5th chapter “**And Still They Come**” is authored by Renuka Roy. The main theme of this chapter is to portray the rehabilitation process of the refugees who have come from East Bengal as a result of the partition of India during the tenure of then Chief Minister of West Bengal Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy. The socio-economic condition of the refugees has been discussed thoughtfully along with this.

The issue of rehabilitation of the refugees is discussed in detail in this chapter, as Renuka Roy was an eyewitness of the rehabilitation process. At that time, she was the regional adviser of the Eastern

zone. She mentions that it was not the refugees who started coming to West Bengal at the beginning of the post-partition period; here she gives the example of Beliaghata. Because, until then, both Hindu and Muslim communities were living happily in Beliaghata. It has been proven, that, even a few months after Gandhiji's death, the migration process started like a gushing river, which was turned into a swollen river later. However, before December 1949, the government did not realize that the migration process had already started. These refugees have faced many difficulties during their journey to West Bengal. Many were killed on the way, women were raped or injured, and finally, when they arrived in West Bengal with swollen legs, they were almost half dead, tired and mentally devastated. It is to be noted that, on the one hand, just as Hindus came to West Bengal in droves due to partition, a large number of Muslims left West Bengal for Pakistan. But as a result of the Nehru-Liaquat pact, many Muslims returned to West Bengal. Because, according to the pact, Muslims were given back rights over their property, and their security was taken into consideration. However, the Hindu refugees could not return to Pakistan because the Pakistan government did not take such initiative. That was why, the number of Hindu refugees from East Pakistan and Assam was constantly increasing instead of decreasing. So, it can be concluded that the exodus was a one-way process.

By December 1948, the refugee crisis was getting worse. But the central government was unable to realize the horror of this crisis. The author voluntarily submitted a notice regarding the refugee problem, but the then Union Rehabilitation Minister Mohannal Saxena did not take it seriously. According to the author, in the end, the central government accepted the fact that a large number of people from East Pakistan started to come to West Bengal as refugees. According to her, the Nehru-Liaquat Pct was the root of this refugee issue. Because none of the promises made in the agreement were properly fulfilled, instead of, all the Hindus who left East Pakistan and came to West Bengal faced bigger problems. But, neither had they shelter in West Bengal, nor any rehabilitation plan for them made by the government. But in the 1950s, the situation has changed dramatically. The then Chief Minister of West Bengal Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy handled the refugee crisis on his own. Providing safe shelters, adequate food and a sterile environment for thousands of refugees was a huge initiative. In this great work of Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy, the author was his comrade and the author proved herself to be a worthy refugee adviser. That was why; she was elected Minister of Rehabilitation after the 1952 elections (Although the author initially objected to this position).

According to the author, the state government has taken an innovative approach to rehabilitating the refugees. The government allows the camp and non-camp refugees to settle on the same land. But as a result, the population swelled, so by 1954, the government had arranged a placement for these homeless people in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar Orissa, and other Indian states. The author gives statistics on the refugees who came to India between 1955 and 1956 and the refugees who were placed in the government camps. She also included in this chapter two other statistics of official expenditure for the refugees of East and West Pakistan between 1954-1955 and 1956-57. As a

result, the reader will be able to easily understand what kind of amount the then government spent on refugees and how many of those refugees were sheltered in government camps.

The purpose of the author of this chapter is to illustrate a pattern of refugee's arrivals, and their rehabilitation process as well as a clear picture of the disagreement between Central and State governments in this regard. However, she lamented the fact that she thought that it would be her advantage to get a permanent seat in the Lok Sabha to eradicate the refugee problem. But when she succeeds in this, she realizes that the situation in Lok Sabha is against her. That is why; she could not solve the refugee crisis. On the contrary, that problem existed then and still exists today.

The title of the sixth chapter is **“Uprooted and Divided”**, written by Meghna Guhathakurata. At the beginning of the chapter, she said that she is not a professional historian, but a professor at the department of International Relations from Dhaka University. However, the topic of her research is the family history of the people who experienced the partition of 1947. She pointed out three reasons behind choosing such a unique topic for her research:

Firstly, she realized that she and her family were directly or indirectly involved in the partition.

Secondly, the immigration process that began two decades ago continues two decades later, mainly due to partition. However, indeed, many families did not leave their homeland as a result of partition but the situation arising out of partition forced them to make this decision.

Thirdly, since she is a feminist researcher, she has realized that it is not right to identify any research from personal and political perspectives. Rather, it is necessary to evaluate the life-oriented perspective of any research.

The author has therefore tried to outline her research based on three main methods, namely: (a) identifying both the controversial and situational context of the partition, (b) selection of family histories for assessment as a method of the research on the partition, (c) highlight some specific issues using illustrations from the case studies. Until recently, all the information which were available about the partition of the Indian Subcontinent, apart from the description of well-known historians, was largely based on fictional and autobiographical writings. Such writings tend to place more emphasis on the communal and violent nature of partition, along with a detail of the forced immigration. However according to the author, only in Punjab was there an example of forced emigration. In the case of Bengal, the picture was different, as some families left the country voluntarily, especially those, whose family members were in government service and were given the option of equal opportunity in West Bengal. On the other hand, some families decide to leave the country in a very short time.

The author wants to show the history of such emigrant families through her case study. She divided the case study into four criteria based on the available data: (i) Communal Identity, (ii) The Construction and deconstruction of the Nation, (iii) Resource base and Social Mobility, and (iv) General interpretations of the family, community, and nation. For these four criteria, the author evaluates the case histories of two families – one is the Muslim family of Barasat in West Bengal

and the other is the Hindu family of Barishal in East Bengal (It is worth mentioning that, the later Hindu family is the author's own family and she cites her Aunt's testimony, because her aunt was an eyewitness of the partition). As a result of this assessment, the experiences of men and women of the two families, the horrors of communal riots, the decision to leave the country for the protection of their female members of the family, emotional conflict over emigration, etc are covered by this chapter. At the same time, the War of Independence of Bangladesh, is a varied description of the social situation, mental thinking, manners, and etiquette of two Bengals. This description has become more vivid because the author presents the experiences of the men and women of the two families in simple but clear language in this chapter.

The seventh chapter named as **"The Nowhere People"** authored by Urvashi Butalia. This chapter contained the lifestyle of a special class of people who have been living in the intermediate area of the border regions of Bangladesh and West Bengal. This intermediate area is known as Chitmahal. These people often travel across the border to West Bengal and Bangladesh. Most of them cross the border through illegal means that is without a visa or passport.

In this chapter, the author discusses the lifestyle of the people of such a remote village named Belubari, their views on the partition of the country, etc. In this case, she portrays some characters, such as Abu Bakkar, who was arrested by the police as a Bangladeshi and illegal entrant in India, the next one is Jagadish Babu, a resident of South Belubari Panchayet area. The author has brought out some discussions with him about the so-called chitmahal in a hasty manner due to which, this chapter has become more meaningful.

The chapter also portrays the lifestyles of women living in the chitmahal. Sometimes, if they have to go out of their house on any occasion, rape or abduction or both are inevitable and these abducted and raped women have no right to return to their villages. Due to these unsecured circumstances, women of these chit mahals have no opportunity to go out of their houses. One such woman is Milan Barman (a resident of Dahala Khagrabari chitmahal). Through her disposition, the miserable life of these chitmahal's women is revealed. As they live in a fearful environment every day. If someone needs to go out of the house for some reason, there will be a high possibility of being arrested as an illegal Bangladeshi. Even when they go to the doctor to get treatment, the doctor refuses to treat them because they are residents of Chitmahals and do not have citizenship in any particular country. That is why this chapter concludes with two short but significant lines, "We've never had any doubt about our nationality. We're Indians. The problem doesn't lie with us; it lies with the Indian state. For the state we're the nowhere people living in no man's land".

The 8th chapter is entitled **"Tripura: The Aftermath"** authored by Meenakshi Sen. The novelty of this chapter is that the author has highlighted the impact of partition on Tripura, not on Bengal, especially on the refugees arriving in Tripura and the women of Tripura. At the beginning of the chapter, she writes that a large section of Bengali-speaking Hindus started coming to Tripura long before the Partition. For example, by 1280 AD, the Manikya kings of Tripura had invited highly

educated Bengalis and employed them as teachers and administrators. This trend continued even after the partition. Because Tripura had various job opportunities for the educated people.

The main purpose of this chapter is to discuss the impact of partition on the women of Tripura. For this, the author divides the women of Tripura into three groups – (i) Bengali Muslim women of Tripura, (ii) Bengali Hindu women of Tripura, and (iii) Tribal women of Tripura. In the case of the first group, she interviewed her housemaid Akia Begum, mother of Kulsum. The interview revealed the unemployment of Akia Begum's husband Dudu Mia, refusal to leave Tripura, arrival of refugees, loss of their home, poverty, atmosphere of ultimate panic, eviction of Muslims by Congress, marriage of their adoptive daughter Kulsum, Kulsum's paralysis on the time of childbirth, and finally the attempt to murder Kulsum by her husband etc. So, one thing is clear due to partition, the lives of hundreds of Muslim women like Akia Begum became miserable. Their lives were not illuminated by any new potentiality but plunged into a dark world.

The second group of women discussed in this chapter is the Bengali Hindu women. In this regard, the author has interviewed two important women, namely Manjulekha Basu (Chairperson Women Commission and CPM State Committee member) and Anjali Barman. Manjulekha Basu's family belonged to Tripura before the partition. She gives a unique perspective regarding the impact of partition on Tripura. According to her, the partition did not have much effect on Tripura. There was employment for the educated, and this situation did not change immediately after the influx of refugees began. Rather, the people of Tripura and the Tripura government accepted all these refugees with an open mind. Even, the tribal community of Tripura helped in this regard. Not only this, the resettlement system of women was also done very well by the Tripura government, due to which the refugee women of Tripura did not face many problems.

Anjali Barman (she was a resident of Brahmaberia, East Pakistan. She and her brothers migrated to Tripura due to partition and unsafe conditions for women. Within a few days of her arrival in Tripura, she got a job as a teacher in a school); the other interviewee supported this perspective regarding partition. She felt that there was no shortage of employment in Tripura despite the partition. Both men and women were engaged in various jobs and most importantly every girl was educated. In one sentence, it can be said that Bengali Hindu women did not have to face many difficulties compared to refugee Bengali Muslim women in Tripura despite the partition.

In the discussion of the third group of women i.e. tribal women of Tripura, various issues have come up; such as their importance in the tribal family, later the decline of that importance due to the influence of the so-called Bengali culture, the changes in the tribal marriage customs, the emergence of dowry system and brutal practices like Sati, etc which brings out a new aspect of partition history. At the same time, it became clear as day that partition impacted the women of Tripura in two ways, on the one hand, its impact on the Bengali Hindu women who came to Tripura was favorable, while on the Bengali Muslim and tribal women was adverse.

The second main chapter of this book is titled **“Interviews and Reminiscences”**. This chapter is divided into a total of 16 sub-chapters. Its main theme is to describe the partition through interviews and reminiscences. These 16 sub-chapters included some special topics such as interviews with Mrs. Nalini Mitra, Director of the Refugee Rehabilitation Department of West Bengal, interviews with several elderlies of “Amar Bari” old age home in Vrindaban, excerpts from the personal diary of a social activist, Mrs. Suhashini Das, reminiscences of a resident of Sonarang village, etc.

In every interview and reminiscence, different memories of partition came up. Needless to say, these memories were not very pleasant. Partition, difficulties in deciding whether to leave East Bengal or not, riots, the plight of the refugees, turbulent environment, financial crisis, adaptation to that situation, government initiatives to resettle the refugees, Gandhian movement, inclusion of Sylhet with East Pakistan, etc various issues have come up.

So, it can be said that these chapters are rich in information and have been able to shed special light on the political, and economic changes, refugee problems, Gandhian movement, etc. related to the so-called partition of the country.

The third main chapter of this book is **“Creative and Literary Texts”**. This chapter is divided into four sub-chapters. These four sub-chapters included the English translation of two poems “Rupasi Bangla” and “Banglar Mmukh Ami Dekhiyachi” by poet Jibanananda Dash, the English translation of two poems by author Taslima Nasrin, the translation of Santosh Kumar Ghosh’s short story “Hoina”, partly translated drama “Natun Ihudi” by Salil Sen and partly translated classic film “Meghe Dhaka Tara” by renowned film director Rithik Ghatak. The main theme of these chapters is to highlight various issues related to Bengal’s glorious past and partition through literature. For example, poet Jibanananda Dash described the natural beauty of Bengal through his poems and that is why Bengal is the best place in the world. On the other hand, Taslima Nasreen’s poetry depicts the partition of 1947, along with this, the refugee problem, the mental conflict between men and women due to this partition, economic distress, women's self-reliance, etc are not excluded in her poem. Along with this, through the English translation of Sontosh Kumar Ghosh’s story ‘Hoyana’, the importance of women's chastity is shown through the dialogue between the two protagonists of the story, Soroj, and Arati. In other words, the partition of 1947 not only affected the economy, politics, and mental thinking of people, but also it had a great impact on Bengali as well as Indian literature, theater, film, and other entertainment.

The fourth or the last main chapter of this book is **“Documentary Evidence”**. This chapter is divided into two sub-chapters. Its main purpose is to discuss the partition through the analysis of various kinds of data regarding partition. Its first sub-chapter is **“East is East, West is West”**. The main theme of this sub-chapter is to discuss the initiatives taken by the Indian government for the men, women, and children refugees who came from East and West Pakistan. The purpose of such discussions is to verify the veracity of allegations (**refugees from East and West Pakistan were treated differently and refugees of West Pakistan enjoy more benefits than the refugees**

from East Pakistan. This division was also evident in employment) against the Government of India. For this purpose, a group of researchers divided into two small groups by 1955 and surveyed some NGOs in India, such as East Punjab, Pepsu in Himachal Pradesh, and Delhi. The first research team included Smt. Suniti Pakrashi (Deputy Director of Women's Rehabilitation, West Bengal), Smt. Bina Das, Smt. Sudha Sen and Smt. Sheela Davar and the second team consisted of Smt. Ashoka Gupta and Smt. Amar Kumari Verma. After monitoring various NGOs of the mentioned states and the Central Infirmary of Rewari, the team submitted a report regarding this.

This report provides a comparative discussion between the refugees from East and West Pakistan in terms of accommodation and employment. For example, the living quarters of the refugees, who came from West Pakistan were clean and equipped with hygienic kitchens, bathroom and toilet facilities. One or two families lived together in one room. So, the atmosphere of the room was never suffocating, rather it was very open. On the other hand, refugees who came from East Pakistan lived in a thatched room with mud roof and four to five families lived in one room. There was no clean kitchen, no bathroom, or good toilet facilities. So, the atmosphere in those rooms was a suffocating one. Employment, child care – such gaps were noticeable. But Gariahat, Titagarh was a little different. Because the recruitment system here was slightly better than other places in West Bengal.

So, it can be said that the refugees from West Pakistan did not have to face the same crisis as the refugees from East Pakistan. So, it can be said that the government policy in the case of rehabilitation of the refugees, who came from East and West Pakistan was largely biased.

The chapters of this book included various issues related to the partition of 1947 and its effects, such as the economic crisis, political chaos, the refugee problem, psychological conflict regardless of gender, etc. The language used in each chapter is simple, straightforward, and concise. Through the use of primary data, such as Census reports, interviews with refugee women, and the work of various NGOs, a clear idea of partition has been presented.

Firstly, the articles included in each chapter of this book are different. Novelty can be seen in the content of each article. For example, an article compares the partition of Bengal in 1905 with the partition of 1947, in an article, on the partition of the country shown through the writing of Akhtaruzzaman Elias (Khowabnama) and the well-known writer of Bangladesh, Selina Hossain (Butterfly on Barbed Wire). An article has shown a comparative discussion between the refugee problems of Bengal and Punjab, what effect the partition had on the women of India and Bengal, and how much the Bengali refugees who came to Tripura from outside, the tribal and Muslim women living in Tripura were affected by the partition, that has been presented along with this. Not only this, an article describes the lifestyle of the people living in remote villages like Belubari, who are constantly living a struggling life due to living in the region between the India and Bangladesh border.

Secondly, what is more, interesting about this book is the inclusion of a special chapter named **“Creative and Literary Texts”**. Several poems and short stories are included in this chapter which gives an impression of novelty to this book. Not only this, Bengali films and dramas are also included in this chapter. So, the partition not only affected the economy or politics of Bengal but also affected Bengali literature and films – this matter has been presented in the subchapters of the **“Creative and Literary Texts”** of this book.

Thirdly, The issue of women’s empowerment is also shown through the article of Rachel Weber, which shows how the refugee women played a significant role in building the refugee colonies in South Calcutta and through the interviews with people like Ashoka Gupta, Suhashini Das, Nalini Mitra etc in which they describe their experience of joining Gandhiji in the 1947 partition era movement, the non-cooperation movement, Quit India Movement, the movement against the annexation of Sylhet, movement against coercive exodus respectively.

Fourthly, a bibliography is added to the book and the bibliography is divided into primary data and secondary data in detail. These secondary data are further divided into smaller categories, such as short stories, plays, etc. As a result, it will be convenient to collect more new information about the partition and its impact.

But it is not true that the book is completely flawless.

Firstly, the difference between the title and the content of the book can be noticed. Almost all the chapters of the book focus on women. That is, what was the impact of the partition of 1947 on Indian women – they are presented. Not only this, but even those interviewed people were women. But no example of how a man was affected or what kind of psychological pain he suffered due to partition is given in this book. However, the title of the book is **“The Trauma and the Triumph: Gender and Partition in Eastern India.”** Generally, ‘gender’ refers to both men and women, but the content of the articles in each chapter of the book is focused on women. Therefore, despite the use of the word ‘gender’ in the title, the book’s chapters do not present any examples of the effects of partition on men, nor do they interview any such person. So, in that respect, this book shows some evidence of bias.

Secondly, the book contains Bengali poems and plays. This initiative is praiseworthy. But, the words that have been chosen for the English translation, in some cases, it seems quite difficult to understand the meaning of the original Bengali poems and plays.

Thirdly, the author’s introduction is absent in the book (Exception can be observed). Since, the book is a compilation of many articles, if an introductory note of the article’s author was added at the end of each chapter, a clear idea of the author’s identity and designation has been obtained.

Fourthly, another thing that stands out in this book is the lack of a content list. Since the book is a compilation of various articles, the reader may face some difficulty in finding a particular article as there are no content lists that represent the articles with their title, author's name along page number.

Conclusion: Despite its flaws, this book has been able to highlight various new aspects regarding partition and its impact. So, it can be said that the book succeeds to a large extent in keeping the promise made in the preface of the book to present the partition of 1947 in a new light.

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