

# Women of Partition 1947: Aftermath lives in Pakistan

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## Abstract

Partition 1947, if one side provided salvation from the prolonged colonial rule, the other, it brought mass-level displacement. Females were the major sufferers of this forced migration, a major group that scholars have historically neglected. Countless maidens turned into mothers; brides became widowed. Drawing on previously untapped and rich unpublished memoirs, including archival data, vernacular old newspapers, assembly debates, and declassified documents, this paper considers the role of the state, society, and charitable institutions in the lives of these women. It intends to analyze how women's self-identity was targeted twice during migration and recovery. Thus, they had to bear physical, mental, psychological, and emotional torture. It highlights how state's respect is prioritized over female self-respect. It also explores the circumstances they had to face after the partition. It answers the question of how, besides the state, male strata of society, charitable institutions took a keen interest in humanitarian grounds for the permanent shadow of assaulted ladies—related with these philanthropic steps, what sorts of socio-economic security was granted to destitute ladies. This article argues that the acceptance ratio, sympathy, consolation, and cooperation for destitute women was larger in West Punjab than in East Punjab. This articulates that the early days of compassion laid the modern benevolence in the early years of Pakistan. It then posits such questions: what was the attitude of families and society after acceptance? Did they were owned virtuously, or did other fates await them?

**Keywords:** Partition Women, Assaulted Ladies, Abduction, Recovery, Society Acceptance.

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## Introduction

This exploration expands within the emergence of another side of the history of partition studies, a yet unexplored, particularly in the Pakistani context. Women and the partition of 1947, a major researchable aspect of the partition event in the historiography of South Asia, still needs to be addressed. Till now, much scholarly work has been done on partition from a political perspective. However, two decades of efforts started establishing a new trend in partition historiography under the “Subaltern School of thought”<sup>i</sup> with a humanistic approach. They see the partition of 1947 through the lens of common people, masses, and all marginalized classes belonging to lower strata of society (Guha, 1999). What sort of their concerns are regarding partition? To them, was this equally a freedom, as told by scholars, carrying a political lens or something else?

*The Other Side of Silence* (Butalia, 1998) and *Borders and Boundaries* (Menon & Bhasin, 1998) are two notable works that tried to shift the paradigm in partition historiography. These pioneering works explored the common man’s perception of the 1947 partition, particularly women’s sufferings. It is pertinent to note that these works show the picture of one side of the border (the Indian side). Violence, rehabilitation, and settlement of destitute ladies, particularly from an Indian perspective, have been discussed<sup>ii</sup>. However, *Ashes from 1947, Reimagining Punjab* (Virdee, 2018) enlightens a little about Muslim migrated women. This work mainly focuses on the economic implications of two districts, Lyallpur (Faisalabad) and Ludhyaana. A room for in-depth study and dedicated academic work about Partition Women in Pakistan is there. What kind of circumstances they had to face, about acceptance or rejection of society, is yet to be explored.

This research discusses the aftermath lives of women of partition 1947 by directly investigating the process of both the role of the state and the social experience in which women were channeled into Widow Houses. Housemaids were handed over to desirable hands in Pakistan. Moreover, it considers their miseries, from abduction to sexual violence by individuals or gangs, unwanted pregnancies, forced marriages, involuntary conversion, and recovery. How did inauspicious circumstances after abduction turn their destiny? How charitable institutions played philanthropic roles in their rehabilitation toward life. Topmost, how does the so-called concept of female purity and impurity of

socially constructed patriarchal culture despoil their life? What were the motivational or pushing forces for the acceptance ratio of those females to be larger in Pakistani society as compared to Indian? By attempting to answer these research questions it contributes to our understanding regarding the early phase of Pakistan and its citizen's philanthropic passion. It also helps to understand the policy of newborn states to tackle critical circumstances.

This documentation relies on collecting archival records: Old Newspapers, Unpublished Memoirs of partition survivors, legislative assembly debates of Pakistan, declassified documents of the National Documentation Center Islamabad, ministries of refugees' reports, and records of the Special Police branch. These sources reveal that the female section of society was a major sufferer of partition riots. Simultaneously, it reveals philanthropist response in challenging hours by states, culture, and benevolence institutions in Pakistan. They did not leave destitute females alone or helpless.

The limitation of sources has previously prevented scholarship of partition to explore the women of partition in Pakistan. Political historiography of partition has blurred so far to the extent of the sacrifices of females under a nationalist approach. Existing scholarly work on partition enlightens a little about female persecution and aftermath lives from a Pakistani perspective. From the Pakistani perspective, the main work of partition refugee rehabilitation and settlement deals primarily with their residential and land settlement issues<sup>iii</sup> (Faridkot house Partition refugees files, Lahore. Interview, Sectery, Rehabilitation Ministry Asifa, 2023 December).

This effort is a voice to unlistened voices of partition through partition survivors. Moreover, unpublished memoirs, archival records, old newspapers, and declassified official documents provide core evidence about affected ladies. By standing with these women, we gain valuable insights into the situation in which they materialized their socio-economic life in early days of Pakistan. Philanthropists' response in challenging times reveals a compassionate and prejudice-free society (*Nwaywakt*, 4 Sept. 1947). Contributors set unique precedents in tolerable society by coming together through benevolent institutions. They represented an impartial and gentle mentality for future philanthropist. So, this paper helps to learn about how the

fabric of societal faith remains intact somehow through this traumatic experience.

### **Partition 1947, Women as a Victim of Violence**

Under the Indian Independent Act 1947<sup>3</sup> (Indian Independence Act 1947 Ch: 30), the partition of British India ended the British Raj. Under this Act, two major subcontinent communities became independent states, India and Pakistan. Based on the Hindu and Muslim Majority, three provinces, Punjab, Assam, and Bengal, were divided, which led to displacement and horrific communal violence on both sides. Hindus and Sikhs were displaced from Pakistan, and Muslims from India. More than 14 million people are insurmountable refugees. During that displacement, communal violence under ancient animosities resurfaced, and over 1 million died as a result of prompt chaos and violence. Females became the main target of communal violence and butchery. They were abducted by killer gangs (*jathaas*) from foot caravans (*pedal qafilas*) or trains. They were snatched from their families by threatening or killing guardians in their houses. After abduction, some were raped at group level and passed to the next group for the same ruthless activity. Some were killed after fulfilling their lust. Many were brought to abductors' houses. After that, forcefully religious conversion, they were tied to matrimonial relations and kept as a wife. This relation turned the maiden into a mother by producing unwanted children (Interview: Kareeman: Qasur. Nov. 2022).

Gender-based pitiless sexual violence frequently happens for multiple reasons. To degrade other nations, for looting and plundering jewels, to fulfill lust by getting the benefit of this anarchy rascal male community left no stone unturned. Women had their breasts cut off. The babies of pregnant women were hacked out of their bellies. It left both physical and mental scars on women. Partition was anything else but not freedom or independence for them. Unpublished personal memoirs of partition survivors revealed actual subalterns' views about partition 1947 in the following ways, ، جدوں اجاڑا پیا ، (جدوں اسیں اجڑے when we despoiled) when we become homeless ( Interview: Shareefan, Qasur. Nov. 2022). How many women were mutilated, raped, abducted, and abandoned after sexual assault, and how many became partitioned and widowed<sup>iv</sup> (Menon, R. & K. Bhasin, 1998, Ch. 3)? From which

age majority belonged. Official documents, old newspapers, and first-person accounts estimate around one lac on both sides of the border (Interview Kareeman: Qasur, Nov. 2022 & Butalia, 1998, ch: 4, 132). These disturbed and assaulted females needed to come back to their actual lives with the help of the state. Victimized female, while coming toward East Punjab, met with the ironic face of their destiny, which made them alien in identity.

### **Abducted Women's Recovery**

A paramount issue was the recovery of the lost and abducted ladies. On high public appeal, messages were received in daily newspaper advertisements from the public and concerned family members. Some families reached with particulars near *Thana* to submit claims about their lost women. They pressured them to start searching on emergency grounds (*Pakistan Times*, 17 Feb. 1948, Lahore). Above all, local newspapers were highlighting the woeful plight of affected families. (Nwaywakt, 4 Sept. 1947) On 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1947, a first and foremost meeting was held in Lahore between the Prime Ministers of both newly made countries (Assembly Debates Wednesday, 26 May, 1948, pp. 237-239). The meeting agenda was 'recovery of lost ladies.' Resultantly, a 'joint declaration' was issued with the purpose that forced religious conversion and marriages would not be recognized further.

Moreover, abducted ladies must be recovered from both sides quickly.<sup>4</sup> (Recovery Ordinance 1949 & Menon, & Bhasin 1998 p:68-70 ch:4) Henceforth, under public pressure, recovery work was started at the state-to-state level. States level first conference held at Lahore on 6<sup>th</sup> December 1947 (Assembly Debates Wed, 26 May, 1948). At that conference, a discussion was made about the tracing and recovery of abducted ladies.

To run the recovery plan smoothly from time to time, appropriate programs were organized for the representatives of both governments. A meeting was held in Lahore on 13<sup>th</sup> December 1947 of representative females of both governments. In this joint meeting under the presidentship of Begum Shah Nawaz, a proper plan was discussed. From the East Punjab personal representative of Nehru Mridaula Sara, Mrs. Sara Bai, Mrs. Prem Thaper wife of Jhulundher commissioner Mr. Thaperr, Shirmiti Shah Devi M.L.A while

from Pakistan Begum Shah Nwaaz M.L.A Fatima Begum; President Punjab Muslim league Women wing, Miss Mumtaaz Shah Nawaz Miss Shamim Jhulundhri, Begum Zaka-Ud-Din, Begum Zubaida Shah and Mrs. Ghori shared their thoughts to make recovery program smooth. The meeting decided that in East Punjab, the women's recovery team agreed to send in the required areas. District-level headquarters were set. The police department was also involved, chiefly to protect recovered ladies till they got them back (*Nwaywakt*:13 Dec. 1947).

Alongside, a 'joint appeal' was made for the Indian and Pakistani public with the signatures of some political representatives, Ghazenfer Ali Khan, Iftikhar Hussain Mamdot, Begum Liaquat Ali Khan, Begum Bashir Ahmed, Begum Shah Nawaz, Begum Slama Tasadduq Hussain, Begum Inaam-Ur-Raheem, Miyaan Iftikhar-ud-Din, Mister K.B Nevgi, Sardaar Suran Singh, Shirimiti, Dheteri Nehru, Shirimati Sara Bai, Shirimati Phattoo Pavay, Sita Devi and Purkaash. The purpose of the Appeal was to settle communal riots permanently between India and Pakistan by recovering destitute ladies. Without their recovery, to settle peace seemed impossible. Further, it was said that any loss can be undergone, but the disrespect or degradation of ladies is unbearable for us. That 'bitterness and hate' to keep these kinds of feelings would be a natural process. So, to rehabilitate the perpetual good relationship between two newborn states, India and Pakistan, it is inevitable to recover our females. Therefore, for cooperation with recovery committees, a public appeal for both countries was made (13 December 1947). To get mass cooperation, Pakistani politicians appealed to the Pakistani Public to show an accommodating attitude by saying that although the number of abducted ladies is small in Pakistani Punjab as compared to Indian Punjab, Pakistani people must cooperate with the recovery team (*Nwaywakt* 10 January 1947).

Extract from the Resolution passed by the All-India Congress Committee held in November in New Delhi:

During these disorders, many women have been abducted on either side, and there has been forcible conversion such conversions, and there is nothing more heinous than the abduction of the women. Every effort for their original homes with the cooperation of

the Government Concerned (Government, Punjab 1950, Lahore).

In answer to the first conference, a recovery operation was started in Pakistan on 16 December 1947 for returning abducted ladies. From West Punjab *Begum Fatima* Deputy Chief Officer and *Miss Rabia Sultana* on Special Officer Duty left for *Jhulndher* on 17<sup>th</sup> December 1947 for searching operation. More members were asked to meet them in *Jhullndher* after some time. It was the front-page headline of the 18<sup>th</sup> of December 1947 daily *Nawaywakt*, Lahore. “مغویہ عورتوں کی بازیافت کے لیے مہم شروع کر دی گئی” (work for abducted lady recovery has been started) (18<sup>th</sup> December 1947). The recovery team first stayed in *Jhullendher* headquarters, as in every big city, a headquarters was established. A Deputy Officer and Assistant Officer were also appointed. This recovery committee provided information to “Residence the Mall Lahore” to a political activist, *Begum Bashir Ahmad*. For immediate action regarding the particulars of recovery women. All telegrams (*taar*) were sent to *Begum Fatima Sahiba* after verification by Deputy Commissioner *Jhullndher* (18<sup>th</sup> December 1947).

Finally, the Government of West Punjab Issued a press note for the public to send their particulars to the police, without delay, at the superintendent of police A.C & I.D West Punjab Civil Secretariats Lahore.

Required particulars

- Abducted person’s name.
- Appearance, age details.
- Date and place of abduction (if known)
- Area (where abductors can be found) (if possible) or whereabouts of that person who played a key role in sending or receiving the abductors
- Guardian under which they are living now (if this situation is existing)

Additionally, those who were searching for their females by themselves in East Punjab were asked to meet directly in *Jhulundher* with *Ch. Immam-Ud-Din* Deputy Superintendent Police station. He was appointed to rescue the recovered abducted ladies. Police staff were sent only to keep recovered

abducted ladies secure till bring they were back in West Punjab<sup>5</sup> (10<sup>th</sup> December 1947).

### **Staff Appointed for Recovery**

To run the recovery process smoothly, besides the Police and Defense force, Government employees from different Public Services departments were deputed. Like Ahmed Ali DEO (District Education Officer) (Interview: Ali, Akbar Raiwind Tehsil, Nov. 2022), Begum Ameena Ghani Ghuman, Deputy Directress Education Lahore Division, and Khalida Munir-ud-Chughtai, lecturer in Kinnaird College Lahore, were deputed for recovery operation in India.

| <b>Designation</b>            | <b>Task</b>                                                  |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| Head Recovery Committee(lady) | Supervise work in district Head office                       |
| Divisional Officers           | Visit door to door with recovery team                        |
| Deputy officer                | Helper for research officer                                  |
| Central Officers              | Organize work for every province                             |
| Assistant Officer             | Helper to recovery officer                                   |
| Recovery Team                 | Search Abducted ladies by investigating house to house       |
| Police Staff                  | Protection and maintenance of laws and order during recovery |
| Army                          | To keep law and order in control and protect recovery team.  |

**(Nwaywakt: 15 Dec. 1947)**

Another significant step was state-to-state interdominion conferences. After discussion, an Ordinance for ‘Abducted Person Recovery’ in 1949 became an Act. In the first conference, from the Indian side, Minister Yanogi, Sardar Soran Singh, Shirimati Ramaishvari Shanodevi, Sardar Samporan Singh Punjabi, Chandra, Rao, Brigadier Hohat, Sardar Sant Parkash Singh, and



Natho Ram were present<sup>6</sup> (5 December 1947). This session decided that with cooperation, abducted ladies would be recovered from both sides and returned to their original homes. The flabbergasted point was that under the states' decisions, the personal will of females was said to be ignored. State representatives must bring them back voluntarily or involuntarily as quickly as possible.

Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, in their work *Borders and Boundaries*, asserted this view that for the state, it has become essential to bring their females back, whether they agree or not (Menon & Bhasin 1998). Here, an eye-opening point is that females were seduced on both sides. In the early phase, it was challenging to challenge them to come back. The majority refused under multiple factors. In atrocious riots, while they were protected from *ghundas* gangs having devil will give shadow, many of them were protected on sympathy grounds to send in families after tracing. So, it was normal to get sentimental attachment.

Additionally, over time, they become disappointed about meeting with their families, so they develop their feelings with them. Meanwhile, they had to pass from the solemn emotional transitional phase. Another weighty factor was some were newly pregnant, having natural feelings and motherhood emotions that did not allow them to let their baby down carried in the womb. Aside from those above, a similar reason was revealed from personal accounts of recovered abducted ladies: that after fulfilling body needs through intercourse, their body feel such pleasant feelings. With this kind of sexual relationship and loving, caring meetings with their abductors, the couple had fallen in love with each other (Interview: Jannat, Qasur 2022 Nov.).

اوہ ساڈا بڑا خیال رکھدے سن۔ سانوں چنگا کھان تے پاون نوں دیندے سی۔ سانوں اونان کنڈی نیی " سی روکیا کجھ کھان توں۔ جو جی کردا سی پھڑ کے کھا لینے ساں سارا دن

(They took much care of us. They gave us good and healthy food and good clothes to wear as well. They never forbade us from eating anything. Whatever or whenever we wanted to eat, we were allowed to take or provide.)

سوال: اوہ توآڈے نال زبردستی کردے سی؟

Question: Would they ever have used you wildly?

Answer: جواب: نا نا نا کدے وي نا، اوہ بڑے آرام آرام نال کر دے سن، کدے سختي نبي سي کيتي (Not at all. He always had sex with love and affection. He did everything with love and never violated.

(Jannat: Dist. Qasur Nov. 22)

In another case, a woman who was left from her family during displacement was seized by a Sikh. During recovery, she refused to come back with the recovery team as she had two children in her lap.

Besides personal unwillingness, some other complications created thorny problems during recovery. Despite time-to-time state-level meetings among representatives, public appeals, and interdominion conferences, the recovery operation couldn't run as smoothly as considered. An Urdu newspaper, *Nwaywakt*, reported on difficulties faced by recovery teams in East Punjab. The recovery team unveiled all the hitches that they faced. Police and military who were summoned to cooperate with search teams, both did not.

On the contrary, they created hurdles by delaying. Females were sent to another secret place where teams needed help approaching easily. Major Ghulam Rasool, a person leading the recovery team, told the *Nwaywakt* news reporter that he and his team were bided in Amritsar to start searching operation with weapons in our assigned village. Additionally, police and members of the army, with the help of villagers, girls were transferred to another village to hide from the recovery team. Females were threatened and fed negativity, so they refused to be recovered<sup>7</sup> (*Nwaywakt*: Dec. 1947) (interviewed Ali Amjid Sialkot 22 December). A similar dealing was with the team led by the Begum Amina Ghani Ghuman in Patiala. Local machinery showed an uncooperative attitude and misbehaved with her.

Consequently, she had to be on protest and kept on fast for 48 hours. Her companion asked her, "Please break this fast; what do we already have to eat? Dry bread with water, and you refuse to eat even that". But she is determined in her ideology. After 48 hours, Lady Mount Batton visited her. She assured

her to vanish all grievances and make a smooth recovery of Muslim Abducted Females (interviewed: Amjid, Sialkot 22 December 2023)

However, from 1947 to 1948, the Indian side 9,362, and from Pakistani, 5,510 women were recovered. With some annual renewal plans and new severe and strict measures, recovery operations continued at the state level for around ten years, from 1947 to 1957 (Menon & Bhasin 1998, p. 69). After this period, in infrequent cases with family efforts, females were brought from East Punjab into West Punjab (Ismaeel, Raiwind, Lahore, November 2023). Otherwise, proper searching had been stopped by the state. According to Urvashi Butalia and Kamla Bhasin's research work (a member of the Indian recovery committee appointed by the Indian government in west Punjab), around 30,000 women totals could be recovered during 1947- 957. Around 8,000 from West Punjab, and about 22,000 from East Punjab (Interview: Kareeman Qasur, Nov. 2022.) Nobody knows about the exact number of assaulted ladies. The estimation is around one lac (Butalia, 1998, p,132 ch: 4).

### **Rehabilitation and Permanent Settlement**

After completing the Herculean task, the recovery team sent the recovered female to transit camps. Transitory camps were set out by states all over the Punjab, particularly near border areas. These were for provisional stay first aid treatment. Temporary camps were set in Lahore Wagha Border, Walton Railway Station, Mental Hospital, Ganga Ram Hospital, Gandha Singh Border Kasur, Railway Station of Raokhan Walaa and Raiwind, D.A.V College Lahore<sup>v</sup>, Red-crescent society, Anjumaan-e-Himyat Islam Lahore institution, Yateem Khana, Bibi Pak Daman, Bagh Wala Lahore and in Shahdraa (*Nwaywakt* 7 Dec. 1947). After recovery, women were temporarily settled in these transit camps till their families looked them back (interview: Ismaeel, Raiwind, Lahore November 2023).

In camps, government and public welfare organizations made efforts to help, particularly medical aid in the form of medicine and injections. Aside from these, for humanitarian services, a common female comes forward, individually and from any socio-political platform. They helped out in the form of cooked food, clothes, medicine, and other life necessities<sup>vi</sup> (Kiran, 2017 June, p.161). Khalida Munir-ud-din Chughtai; an educationist, Pakistan Movement Worker, Social Worker, Fatima Jinnah<sup>vii</sup> Begum Salmaa Tassaduq

Hussain, Begum Jahan Araa Shah Nwaaz. Above all, the Muslim League women's wing was the most dynamic. It worked wholeheartedly. Begum Rana Liaqat Ali Khan urged women for voluntary services. She headed the board established for refugees' medical treatment. She interviewed Muslim Women for medical services (*Nwaywakt*: 7<sup>th</sup> Dec,1947). She always visited hospitals and camps in Lahore with her women's team. They asked the government to arrange marriages for helpless ladies whose families did not make any contact (July 1949).

Groups of recovered female

- a) Whose families were waiting
- b) Whose families contact after sometime
- c) Whose families did not make contact.

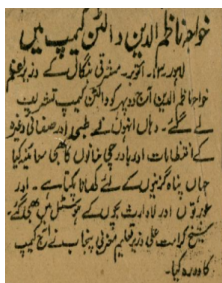
The first group, whose family was already waiting for them. They took them back shortly after recovery. Husband for wife, parents for daughter had reached the camps immediately.

Another group, whose family couldn't make contact quickly due to a lack of awareness about the system. They had to stay in camps to await their families (Interview Janno Bibi, Qasur, Nov. 2022). The government made efforts through its representative to hand over their females. Public announcements through radio and loudspeakers at railway stations were started. Moreover, advertisements in daily newspapers with particulars were published (*Dawn*, 2nd Oct. 24<sup>th</sup> & Aug 1948). Besides this, young male volunteers performed this duty by hand speaking in streets<sup>8</sup> (Riaz, 2020, p. 185). In daily newspapers, headlines were made 'اگم شدہ عورتوں کے وارث متوجہ ہوں' (The attention of guardian of the lost female is required). Many reached after listening to public street announcements and radio and newspaper advertisements (*Nwaywakt*, 12 Dec.1947). Thus, the majority were taken back by their families.

To rehabilitate destitute ladies, the government took steps on different grounds. Department of Pakistan National Guard was established in every province. These women guards were assigned tasks for camp first aid relief work (*Nwaywakt*, 17 Dec. 1947). In Lahore, on 5<sup>th</sup> December, a local newspaper reporter visited small home industries. This industrial training

center, the former *Muhleet Maha Widya Lyaa* building, was established. In this center, hundreds of migrants' children and ladies were living. Stitching, needlework, soap making, purse making, carpet weaving, shawls, and toy making were taught in these small Industrial units. Besides this, handicraft training and other skills were taught. Refugees were found quite satisfied in this center. Shamim Jullundur and President Begum Bashir Qureshi Hussain were leading this center. News reporter impressed. Camp staff requested visitors and news reporters to convey their message to local people that here we have skilled hands. This advertisement of skilled would attract locals to purchase items.

Furthermore, I asked all visitors for publicity to come for stitching dresses from these ladies in camps (5 Dec. 1949). Categories of 'B' and 'C' group women worked in small handicrafts camps-based industries till permanent settlement. In this way, the government was doing its all-out in challenging hours.



**Figure 1: Nway-e-Wakat advertisement, Governor visted Camps.(5 Dec, 1949)**

A third group of recovered females, whose families neither made contact nor could reach after announcements. Their parents or relatives could not be traced out. Nobody knew whether their families were killed or alive. The government took them under the proper guardian of a camp team where government representatives often visited to keep them under proper care (Saddique, 2014, pp. 192-197).

Some females did not want to return to families within the last month of pregnancy.<sup>viii</sup> Peak's concern about these females was to find permanent shadows, particularly for partition widows and helpless females. To settle

these female widows, houses were established in Ganga Raam Hospital (*Nwaywakt*: 12 July 1949). and a Qasar-e- Istaqlaal in Lahore at Rajgrah Road for rehabilitation and permanent settlement by the state for destitute ladies (Kiran, 2017, p. 161).

For the helpless and whose guardian come late, their temporary look after and shadow in a protected way was necessary until their guardian reached. Walton Camp, Mouri Gate Primary School camp, Hanfiaa Islamia High School Qasur camp, Qasur Civil Hospital camp, American Christian Missionary Institute in Qasur camp, and Ganga Raam Home in Lahore were converted for their accommodation (Saddique, 2014, pp. 192-197) Only in Ganga Raam Lahore 3000 refugees at a time accommodated, with possible medical, facilities and hygienic environment. Each individual is allotted sleeping accommodation in a room, pillow, *durrie*, *razai* (blanket) (*Pakistan Times*, 18 Feb. 1948). A most gratifying aspect of managing this home was that refugee women ran it. The government paid them for the job they had done. Mrs. Craster, the dynamic honorary worker, has been inspired by confidence and discipline in all the inmates, and she created amazingly regularity in their habits. A similar situation occurred in Qasur Civil Hospital; a refugee skillful lady nurse from Amritsar took responsibility for delivering all pregnant ladies. Thus, many pregnant ladies delivered their babies in hygienic and proper medical care. (*Pakistan Times*: 18 Feb. 1948). Any stray women and children were also welcomed in that Home. Subsequently, their transitory period passed in a secure environment.

However, for permanent settlement, the government asked for marriage proposals through newspapers whose family was not in contact even after one year. The government arranged collective marriages at the district level. The District Deputy Commissioner was involved till the completion of these marriages. APWA All Pakistan Women Association, Anjuman Himayat Islam, and Red Crescent Society vigorously arranged these marriages (*Nwaywakt*: 10 Sept. 1947).

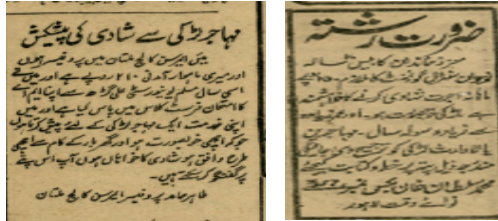
Muslim League Women's Wing was also active. In Lahore, on 14<sup>th</sup> July 1948, "A Committee of Recovered Abducted Ladies West Punjab" was formed under the presidentship of Shaikh Sadiq Hassan. This meeting Passed the following resolution (*Nwaywakt*: 12 July 1949)

1. Whose families yet not have reached into contact, the government must arrange marriages for them as soon as possible.
2. Women in the cooperate of the government were sent for the recovery of abducted ladies.

Advertisement under the title “ضرورتِ رشتہ” (need of marriage proposals) newspapers *Nawaywakt* and *Dawn* were published daily. Reasonable proposals for these women were received from refugees and local families. Advertisement with the title “کڑی ہے جو ان کی مدد کرے؟” (Is there anyone who would help these women? Four groups of the male community come forward (*Nwaywakt*: July- August 1947, 1949).

1. Youngster (bachelor)
2. Widower (need in partner)
3. Family holder but childless (in wish of child)
4. Philanthropist (wants to be brought up till marriage)

Firstly, young bachelor proposed their services on humanitarian grounds for a life partner. In *Nwaywaqt*, they sent their unconditional marriage proposals to helpless females.

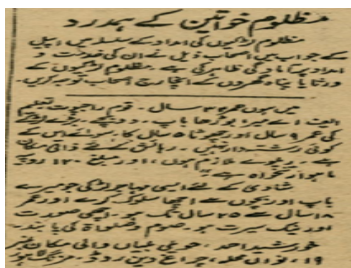


**Figure 4, 5: Nway-e-Wakat advertisement Muhajir Larki Say Shadi ki Paeshkash (Marriage proposals for particular refugees females)**

Left side advertisement: proposal of a twenty-year-old bachelor from a respectable family, central government servant. Monthly income: twenty-five rupees. Want to get married to a beautiful girl? Helpless and refugee girls would be preferred.

Suitable side advertisement proposal from a Professor of Emerson College Multan: My monthly income is two hundred and ninety rupees. I have completed a Master's this year from Muslim University Ali Grah with distinctive marks. I offer myself for marriage to a refugee girl. (*Nwaywakt*: 12 July 1949)

Secondly, the widower group proposed for matless and abandoned migrants and recovered females. They were living alone, having property along with a handsome income. They proposed to widows or any aged lady with or without children. Thirdly, childless males proposed for a second marriage for children.



I am a thirty-year-old widower. I have an old father and two sons, personal residence, do not have another relative, railway servant: monthly income one hundred and twenty rupees. I want to get married to a refugee's noble female.

**Figure 6: Nway-e-Wakat advertisement *Mazloom khwaateen kay hamdard* (Kind toward persecuted female)**

As importantly, the fourth group of well-settled male community for helpless females has an altruist mentality. They were neither single nor in any need of a partner. They just wanted to give respectable status to helpless females in society by providing jobs within four walls of household duties. Additionally, they were ready to look after all necessities of life, good food, and accommodation, till getting a good marriage proposal. Until adulthood, their grooming and marriage expenses (dowry) were proposed to bear on sympathetic ground. These types of marriage proposals were from different states. Some come from agricultural backgrounds, having agrarian land, government job holders, and many minor or large-scale business holders.



Consequently, a sympathetic environment was created. Greed of status, wealth, and superiority was minimized in society at that time.

### **Female Acceptance in Pakistani Society**

After tracing, recovery, rehabilitation, and transitory periods in camps, the majority of females have been taken back by their families. The next phase was the chief and core issue of their acceptance in Pakistani society. Their lives now needed acceptance. Acceptance by family, acceptance by society. This was one of those fears which hindered many to come back. They were not enthusiastic to meet their family due to the socially constructed, stereotypical patriarchal culture in which females were considered a symbol of male respect. Her chastity was more important than her life. It was under the patriarchal traditions that their male advised young maidens to jump into the well if they separated from their families during migration<sup>9</sup> (Kareeman: Qasur, Nov. 2022). Now, those ladies were part of a patriarchal culture in which their sealed wombs were most important for marriage. Possibly, this notion of *izzat* (respect) was the main reason why both sides' males sexually tortured them. However, archival sources' unpublished confidential records of partition survivors reveal that the ratio of acceptance in Pakistan was comparatively considerably better than that of India. Pippa Virdee's research shows the facts about Gandhi's acknowledgment of female acceptance in Pakistan. She mentioned:

Gandhi himself was quite clear on this issue and explicitly stated in his morning prayer meeting in December 194. It is being said that the families of the abducted women no longer want to receive them back. It would be a barbarian husband or a barbarian parent who would say that he would not take back his wife or daughter. I do not think the women concerned had done anything wrong. They had been subjected to violence. To put a blot on them and to say that they are no longer fit to be accepted in society is unjust. At least this does not happen among Muslims. At least Islam is liberal in this respect, so this is a matter that

the Governments should take up. The Governments should trace all these women. They should be traced and restored to their families (Virdee, 2018, p. 177)

Moreover, on the Indian side, political leaders made public speeches to attract families' particularly the male community, to raise passion for acceptance. But despite these efforts, they were repeatedly called 'impure,' and the acceptance ratio remained alarmingly low. While in Pakistani society, males showed compassionate minds. They came forward, plus they communicated through the press to create a sympathetic environment. A male voice from a daily English newspaper, *Pakistan Times*, reveals the feelings of Pakistani males:

Islam teaches us to honor women. To dishonor women is the most despicable act in the eyes of Islam. Islam has enjoined upon us to protect and help women, irrespective of their cast or creed. The holy prophet has enjoined upon us not to raise our hands against women, children, and the old. We, the Muslims of Pakistan, apart from political expediency, owe. It is our moral to restore all the abducted women and children in trouble. It is inhuman to keep women and children in trouble. It irritates against every canon of morality and humility. Every civilized nation would condemn this act (*Pakistan Times*, 17 Feb. 1948).

Similarly, the All-Pakistan Women's Association (APWA) platform worked for destitute ladies and delivered public speeches to nurture humanity among the male section. All *Beghmaat*\* played their vital role in keeping the male section compassionate (*Nwaywakt*: 15 Oct. 1947). Urvashi Butalia and Menon acknowledged that Muslim Society and Families were more willing to take their females back<sup>ix</sup> (Virdee, 2018, p. 179). Many volunteers from East Punjab, during their recovery duty, observed camp scenes and the way Muslim families were rushing to get their recovered female back (*Pakistan Times*: 17<sup>th</sup>



February 1947). Women in Indian Punjab (East Punjab) who recovered from West Punjab were largely unaccepted. For these women, *Ash Raam* was opened.<sup>x</sup> In Pakistan, recovered ladies in transitory camps after basic treatment (if required any) were handed over to their families as soon as possible<sup>xi</sup> (Riaz, 2020, p. 185). They were accepted happily. Over 3000 refugee women were restored to their parents within two months after starting the recovery procedure. The Ganga Raam Homes for destitute women and orphan children, which started functioning early in October 1947, so far traced the guardians of about 3,241 women within six months, inmates who have been finally handed over to them (Saddique, 2014, pp. 192-197). The Refugees Minister himself visited families and witnessed sentimental scenes while receiving their female back.

**Figure 2, news: Pakistan Times** (*Pakistan Times*, 18 Feb. 1948)

While the refugees' minister was in the women's Home, he watched many women being restored to their relatives. There were touching scenes when the husband saw long-lost wives whom they had practically given up for lost parents wept as they clasped their daughter to their bosom<sup>xii</sup> (*Pakistan Times*: 18 Feb. 1948).

Hence, returned girls were married to their relatives. According to Jannat, an abducted recovered lady living in the West Punjab (Pakistan) district Kasur Tehsil Chunian:

I separated from my family during migration. Sikhs abducted me. He took me to his home. They took me to their gurdwara (a Sikh worship place) forcefully. There, they forced me to drink water and bound in a

marital relationship. I lived with him for three months in a marital relationship, but I could not (luckily) conceive any baby when the recovery team from Pakistan reached our door. I told them about a large number of other abducted girls in the same street. We all were brought back to Pakistan and stayed in transitory camps. There were many brick beds on the floor. We were injected with a heavy dose of injections daily. Despite this, I was not pregnant. I, too, was injected. These injections were for abortion of present pregnancies or shortly, if any chance, might be after recent intercourse. After providing treatment in camps, we were handed over to our relatives (Kareeman: Qasur. Nov. 2022).

I asked Jannat, did your family own you?

Yes! My family owned me. They asked me nothing. I was married to my paternal cousin, Taya (father's elder brother), on watta\*. He never tortured or teased me, even till today.<sup>10</sup>

She is living with her 3rd generation in a joint family. The self-experience mentioned above, she told in the second meeting in isolation. In the first meeting, in front of her family, son, *bahu* (daughter-in-law), and grandchildren, daughter, she spoke very consciously. In the second meeting, she was alone, so in a calm mood, she talked about three months passed with Sikh (husband). She told that “ہاں واسدی رہی ہاں میں۔ تین مہینے وسی اوتھے سیکھ نال۔ اوہنا ” بہن بنا کے تھوڑی رکھے رکھیا سی، چنگا پلا واساندے رہے سائوں ہر رات۔

(Yes, I lived with him in sexual relations for three months. I was used daily. He did not keep me as a sister. He had sex with me every night.)

From recovery to her treatment, all she told in isolation. This kind of conscious level revealed that in the late 90s when she was a grandmother, she socially constructed a strong concept of عزت بے عزتی (self-respect and disrespect) she has strongly in her mind. However, her family had an idea. In the first meeting,

her *bahu* (Daughter-in-law) said, “She will not tell you, as she becomes furious whenever anyone ever tries to talk about her past”<sup>11</sup> (Kareeman’s daughter-in-law, 2022). Nevertheless, she was living with a good standard and earned respect in her family, with 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generations enjoying the permanent shadow of the family.

## **Conclusion**

This study not only augments the empirical knowledge of partition and its legacies but also contributes to our understanding of intergenerational traumas suffered by countless women. This human dimension of partition historical discourse brought to light the fact that in challenging hours of forced migration, in 1947, women section of society became chief victims on both sides of the borders. Challenging hours were the same, but the response differed in both societies. Archival records and confidential data of partition survivors reveal that Pakistani society responded with a benevolent mentality. Male strata of society showed its altruist nature and accepted destitute females.

Moreover, the selfless emotions of society planted the roots of philanthropists. These implications generated the concept of charitable institutions, widow houses, and social welfare programs in new birth countries, as evidenced by APWA, Widow House in Ganga Raam Hospital (Dawn 24<sup>th</sup> August 1948) Anjuman Himayat Islaam Social Workplace. Moreover, in 1950, Pakistan Legislation of Establishment of Orphanage and Women’s Home in Punjab’. In that way, the historiographical gap means ignoring not only the admirable efforts of the state but also charitable institutions, the energies of volunteer workers, the hard work of the Muslim League Women Wing, and the philanthropist services of the male community played their vigor role in set aftermath lives of refugees’ women. This writing is a preliminary effort based on primary hitherto unexplored data to acknowledge the efforts of the state and society for their rehabilitation and settlement in Pakistan. To nurture this angle of historiography, a scope of further research is always there.

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