



IIT ROORKEE



NPTEL ONLINE
CERTIFICATION COURSE

Partition of India in Print Media and Cinema

LECTURE 55 - REFUGEE WOMAN AND PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY

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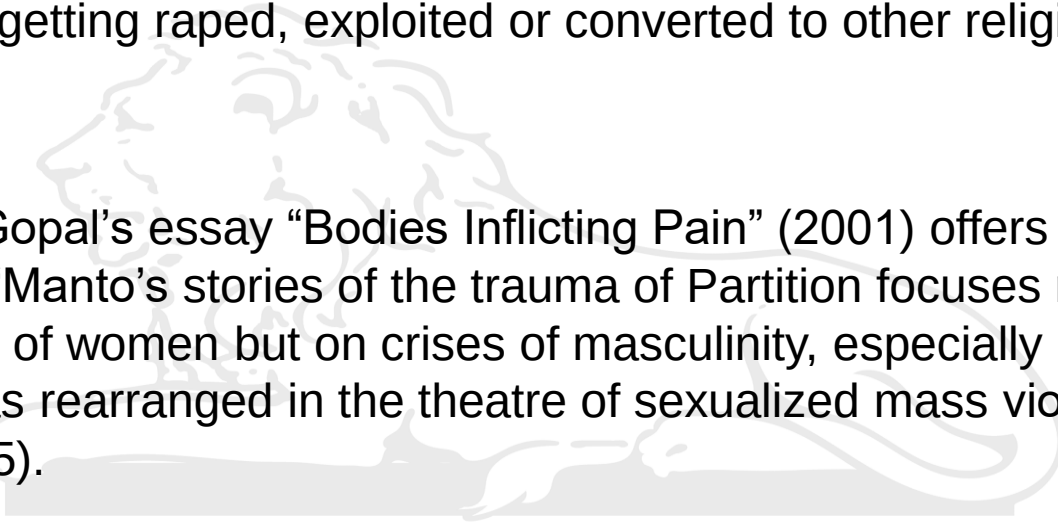


Thanda Gosht (“Colder than Ice”)

- Sudha Tiwari- “S H Manto's short stories on Partition scathingly highlight the physical and psychological impact of violence, abduction, migration and resettlement and most openly narrate the issues of masculinity and vulnerability of sexuality during the phases of "man"-made violence. He does not seem to judge the event or the behaviour of the mob/a particular individual” (51).
- Set against the period of partition, *Thanda Gosht (Colder Than Ice/ Cold Meat)* refers to the loot, marauding, rapes and communal strifes.
- Deals with Ishwar Singh looting the Muslim families and abducting a woman, only to find her already dead. The truth comes to light when due to the trauma of the incident he fails to make love to his wife, Kulwant Kaur.

Thanda Gosht (“Colder than Ice”)

- The case of the woman abducted by Ishwar Singh tells the tale of all such women who either attempt suicide or are killed by their families out of the fear of them either getting raped, exploited or converted to other religions.
- “Priyamvada Gopal’s essay “Bodies Inflicting Pain” (2001) offers a compelling reminder that “Manto’s stories of the trauma of Partition focuses not only on the victimhood of women but on crises of masculinity, especially as that masculinity was rearranged in the theatre of sexualized mass violence” (qtd in Tiwari 2013, 55).



Thanda Gosht (“Colder than Ice”)

- Raza Rumi- Manto blends the Partition holocaust so meticulously into the lives of his characters that it creates a living memory of the bloody event. More importantly, the dead Muslim girl is far more symbolic than either Singh's impotence or Kaur's desire. It is the most powerful metaphor for what humans did to each other during the 1947 bloodshed. Once again, it is Kaur whose libidinal urges represent the force of life in the darkness of the story (81).
- The story refers to the heinous act of necrophilia.
- Menon and Bhasin – women during partition were located at the intersection of “displacement and dispossession, of large-scale and widespread communal violence, and of the realignment of family, community and national identities” (210).

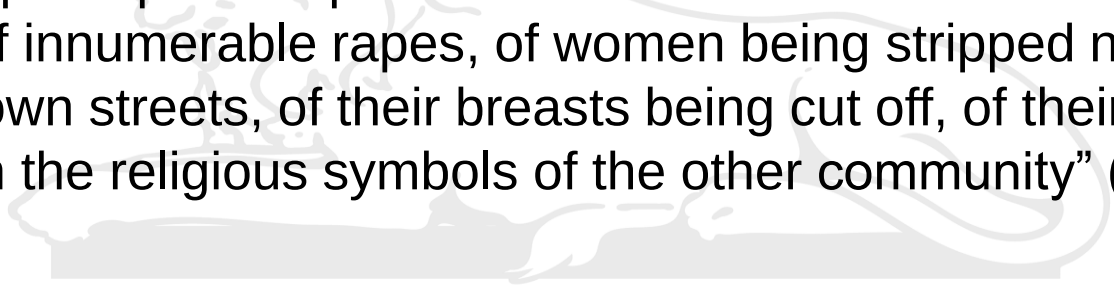
Thanda Gosht (“Colder than Ice”)

- Tarun K. Saint – Amrita Pritam’s *Pinjar* can be seen as a reworking of Manto’s *Thanda Gosht*. Puro's later acceptance of Rashid, her abductor, after the initial phase of radical rejection of the man who raped her, can be seen as an elaboration of and reflection on the implications of Manto's story (59).
- In *Pinjar*, the perpetrator of sexual violence experiences remorse, a development of a possibility latent in 'Thanda Gosht.' Puro's reconciliation with Rashid can only happen after reconciliation with her estranged self, after experiencing a form of death in life. Rashida's own acknowledgement of guilt and gradual self-transformation is a key stage in the process of working through the residue of trauma (Saint 59).

- Pooja Rajesh Mehta – “Across communities, men were slaughtered mindlessly, but women were taken and sexually violated without a second thought about their identity or religious affiliation. The female body became a good, something to loot and enjoy, just as gold ornaments, jewelry, and cash were objects subject to loot. The appropriation of the female body as loot dominated the mentality of Partition, and as Manto depicts, religious differences were not the only grounds for violence. In the chaos of Partition, as seen through Ishwar Singh’s involvement in gang activity and mass rioting, the spirit of misogyny dominated and gave way to widespread, mindless sexual violence” (38).



- Urvashi Butalia – “In addition thousands on both sides of the newly formed borders...were abducted, raped, forced to convert, forced into marriage, forced back into what the two States defined as ‘their proper homes’, torn apart from their families once to ‘protect’ them from being converted; perhaps an equivalent number killed themselves. There are accounts of innumerable rapes, of women being stripped naked and paraded down streets, of their breasts being cut off, of their bodies being carved with the religious symbols of the other community” (183).



Thanda Gosht (“Colder than Ice”)

- “The juxtaposition of Ishwar Singh’s two women, Kalwant Kaur and the girl whom he rapes, unsettles the way in which the woman as a subaltern figure wields agency...Kalwant Kaur exacts revenge on her husband for his adultery as well as for the crime he has committed against an innocent young girl with the very weapon marking her husband’s masculinity, the kirpan” (Mehta 38).
- “When Kalwant unsheathes her husband’s kirpan and plunges it into his neck, Ishwar Singh cries out, “Kalwant, with this kirpan I have killed six men... with this kirpan with which you...” (Manto, “Colder than Ice” 22). Ishwar Singh’s voice falters, and his inability to complete his sentence signifies the unthinkable nature of his wife’s agency.”

- “For feminists, the task of retrieving women’s agency has meant recovering strong, outspoken, powerful women who can then form part of our struggle for liberation. Indeed, in our anxiety to reclaim powerful women, we tend to regard every kind of agency as positive” (Butalia,182).
- Butalia throws light on the women who were a part of the section that tormented the other women during the partition, adding how through their act of torment they too were exercising an agency.
- She puts forth the question if feminists could see this exercise of agency as unproblematic and empowering. Since by aligning with their communities to oppress other women these women were reinforcing patriarchies in their communities, Butalia questions the very concept of ‘empowerment’ (182).

Thanda Gosht (“Colder than Ice”)



- Pooja Rajesh Mehta – “Kalwant Kaur’s voice and actions juxtapose the lack of agency of the girl who Ishwar Singh kidnaps and rapes. The juxtaposition of these two female characters provokes the reader to challenge modes of female representation in Partition fiction. The death of the unnamed girl counters the passionate act of violence committed by Kalwant Kaur. The young girl’s literal death, which occurred some time before Ishwar Singh encounters her body, mirrors the moral, emotional death of Kalwant Kaur. The immobile, unconscious, soundless body of the unnamed girl epitomizes the appropriation of women’s bodies as loot and objects of sexual pleasure. Her lack of agency, as represented through her death and postmortem rape, unsettles the way in which women were considered vessels of honor by society” (39).

Thanda Gosht (“Colder than Ice”)

- Treating the female body as an object to be penetrated and plundered takes away any agency she may pose, and it is through the character of Kalwant Kaur that Manto depicts a woman with agency, who appropriates a symbol of masculine pride to exhibit her agency.
- “Colder than Ice” forces the reader to confront both the “brute”-like nature of violence against women as well as the agency of women, neither of which can be sufficiently recognized through a historiography of Partition that lacks literary analysis (“Colder than Ice” 21).
- As the story serves as an agent of its own, Manto enables the reader to confront the unsettling facets of Partition that make vital contributions to the archive (41).

The Dutiful Daughter

- Ayushman Basu - In Manto's "The Dutiful Daughter," a mother is desperately looking for her daughter after they get separated during Partition. The mother, refusing to take help from the police, almost goes insane while searching for her child. Years later, fate brings them together when the daughter's husband catches a glimpse of the mother while crossing a road and tells his wife that he saw her mother." But the daughter refuses to meet her mother and hides away, followed by the mother's death (2020).
- Pooja Rajesh Mehta- "Restoring women and children to their families "amused" Manto, who comments that efforts to rehabilitate women who had been raped and taken away were undertaken by the very people who "had let them be raped and taken away in the first place" (63).

The Question of Rehabilitation

- Mehta - Manto questions the seemingly simple legislation of the Abducted Persons Recovery Bill (1949) in three important ways. The reality of the bureaucratic decision to recover persons as though they were government property was “not a simple task.” The difficulties that the task posed refer to the reactions of rehabilitated women, the children born out of rape, and most importantly, the failure of the term “abducted women” itself” (Mehta 64).
- Some abducted women either refused to return to their parents, committed suicide on the journey back to their families, suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder, or had become victims of substance abuse or become friendly with their abductors” (Mehta 64).

The Question of Rehabilitation

- Anis Kidwai: “But now a different problem arose. The majority of the girls did not want to go back.” The dilemma for their families was a different one. Some of the women were now ‘soiled’, they had lived with, married, borne children to the men of the ‘other’ community, they had therefore ‘diluted’ the ‘purity’ of the community, how could they now be taken back? And what was to be done with the visible results of their impurity, their sexuality- their children?” (quoted in Butalia, 1993)
- The resettlement of displaced people that followed 1947 was linked with “national reconstruction,” and the task of restoration had to be imbued with a sense of compensating for the loss, as well as... starting afresh (Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin 177, quoted in Mehta 69).

The Question of Rehabilitation



- “A significant problem of rehabilitation that Manto poses is the concept of terminology: “Why were they being described as abducted women?” (“The Dutiful Daughter” 97).
- Manto argues that the term “abduction” was used by police forces to also describe the elopement of a woman and man – the agency of the woman in such instances was unseen and unacknowledged, as the man was perceived as abducting a property that did not belong to him.
- In the case of Partition, however, Manto argues that “women had been taken against their will and violated” (98). Women were unable to exercise agency over their fate, and the term abduction therefore became an equivocation for two very different acts, elopement and violation” (Mehta 65).



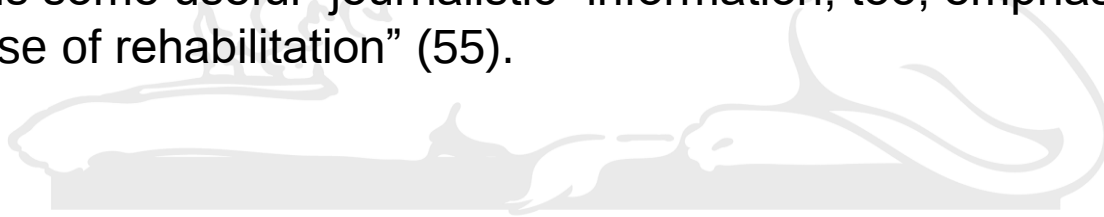
The Question of Rehabilitation

- The short story ends with the collapse and death of the old woman on the side of the road. The truth is left unclear, and the reader never told the side of Bhagbari's story. The reader does not know if Bhagbari had been kidnapped, had eloped with the Sikh, or had accepted her fate and did not wish to reunite with her mother, like Puro in *Pinjar*.
- “The silenced narrative of Bhagbari's decisions alludes to the silence that the community wished to impose on both its abducted and repatriated women. If abducted and not repatriated, the woman would convert to the religion of her abductor, silencing her past and eliminating her own experiences” (Mehta 68).

The Question of Rehabilitation



- Sudha Tiwari - “Manto’s ending reveals...that Partition involved the death of family ties as well as of individuals. The sorrows and occasional futility of the exercise of rehabilitation are laid bare as the abducted Muslim woman refuses to recognize her own mother. It is true that many women did find a new life after being abducted. Happily married to a Sikh youth, Bhagbari does not wish to risk her happiness by remembering this naked, insane woman as her mother. The story gives us some useful “journalistic” information, too, emphasizing the futility of the exercise of rehabilitation” (55).



The Question of Rehabilitation



- Another possible explanation of the ending is the implausibility of Bhagbari's mother accepting her with her present reality. Despite endlessly seeking her daughter, the old woman might be greeting the daughter as the woman she was prior to Partition. The old woman might have not accepted Bhagbari, had she confessed that she had willingly escaped with her abductor. Bhagbari's ambiguous past is not revealed to the reader, conveying the silence in which women suffered displacement and violence during the Partition.



Thank You

