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PARTITION LITERATURE Urvashi Butalia

Q. Illustrate the ideas projected on Partition in the novel of Urvashi Butalia's The Other Side of the Silence.

"Unless we examine how people remember Partition, we cannot even begin to comprehend what it was about." Feminist author, publisher, and activist Urvashi Butalia does a fantastic job of defining and examining the history of Partition from a "apolitical" standpoint, from the perspective of memories imprinted in people's minds. She views the victims of Partition as "human beings upon whose bodies and lives history has been played out," as opposed to just "numbers" or "informants." She uses first-person accounts from people who have lived through Partition to highlight their anguish and suffering. These stories, some of which are many pages long, are simultaneously heartbreaking, deep, and poignant.

She offers a feminist account of the history of Partition, concentrating on the suffering and brutality experienced by women, children, and Dalits in particular. By methodically arranging them into several chapters, she treats each group with the same fervor. She demonstrates how concepts of home, community, belonging, honor, and nation were etched onto women's bodies by highlighting the countless instances of women being raped, kidnapped, and forced into marriage (often by members of their own community, contrary to popular belief), followed by their violent "rescue" (many of them refused to return because they had found love and family among their kidnapper-husbands) from the enemy nation. These "recovered" ladies were subjected to mass abortions known as safaya, and a

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number of women (are now garbed in the language of valour and sacrifice) to avoid being raped by people of opposite faiths are some other shocking details that the book elaborates upon. It's interesting to note, however, that Butalia avoids presenting a purely pessimistic image and instead shows how Partition also gave many women the chance to enter the public sphere, frequently as social workers involved in the relief and recovery efforts of the Indian government. She also makes an effort to elicit the stories of youngsters who survived the Partition and have since dealt with a number of psychiatric problems. In addition to them, children born out of "illegal bonds" frequently caused anxiety, embarrassment, and citizenship issues, to the point that their stories were entirely ignored. In addition to women and children, Dalits' voices were muffled during Partition.

According to a number of their accounts, they seldom ever identified as Christians or Hindus. They faced unique difficulties because of their unique identities, such as being unable to seek safety in shelter camps designed specifically for Sikhs, Muslims, and Hin

She aims to uncover an unrecorded Partition story that has been obscured by the prevailing histories of the division by reading these "memories" alongside "facts." The term "Partition" itself implies a straightforward separation. She contends that it falls short in explaining the broader traumas and upheavals that this incident sparked. She admits the morality of this type of research throughout the book because it asks vulnerable individuals to

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remember horrifying aspects of their past. In some situations, empathy and compassion might not be sufficient.

Butalia acknowledges at the outset that this is merely one side of the Partition history. To learn more about the "other side," one can also read Sanjoy Hazarika's Rites of Passage: Border Crossing, Imagined Homelands, India's East, and Bangladesh. In contrast to Butalia, Hazarika focuses on the movement of individuals into the northeastern region of India during and after Partition from East Pakistan, which is now Bangladesh. The fact that this "crossing" continued for decades after Partition, leading to discussions over citizenship [the National Register of Citizens (NRC), for example], indigeneity, and the country, is what makes this subject more controversial.

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