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Violent Belongings: Partition, Gender, and National Culture in Postcolonial India

Kavita Daiya

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Focusing on the historical and contemporary narration of the Partition of India, *Violent Belongings* examines transnational South Asian culture from 1947 onwards. Spanning the Indian subcontinent and its diasporas in the United Kingdom and the United States, it asks how postcolonial/diasporic literature (eg., Rushdie, Mistry, Sidwa and Lahiri), Bollywood film, personal testimonies and journalism represent the violence, migration and questions of national belonging unleashed by that pivotal event during which two million people died and sixteen million were displaced.

In addition to challenging the official narratives of independence and Partition, these narratives challenge our contemporary understanding of gender and ethnicity in history and politics. *Violent Belongings* argues that both male and female bodies, and heterosexual coupledom, became symbols of the nation in public life. In the newly independent Indian nation both men and women were transformed into ideal citizens or troubling bodies, immigrants or refugees, depending on whether they were ethnically Hindu, Muslim, Jewish or Sikh. The divisions set in motion during Partition continue into our own time and account for ethnic violence in South Asia.

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