



Blue Ava Ford Publications

International Journal of Trends in English Language and Literature (IJTELL)

An International Peer-Reviewed English Journal; ISSN:2582-8487

Impact Factor: 8.02 (SJIF); www.ijtell.com Volume-6, Issue-3; July-Sept(2025)

Unheard Voices, Unwritten Histories: Oral Narratives and the Ethics of Representation in Butalia's *The Other Side of Silence*

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Article Received: 05/06/2025
Published Online: 15/07/2025

Article Accepted: 13/07/2025
DOI.:10.53413/IJTELL.2025.6302

Abstract:

Oral histories are fundamentally entwined with memory, notably in relation to mass suffering and historical trauma. The dynamics of remembering and forgetting, which are either intentional or unconscious, are usually a result of the intensity of the events experienced. Trauma in such a way is not characterized by forgetfulness; it includes a psychological disruption, which may result in repression, dissociation, or amnesia. These processes do not only concern individuals, but communities, as cultural memory are selectively remembered or silenced after catastrophic events. The Partition in 1947 accompanied by large-scale displacement, unfathomable communal riots, and brutal atrocities against women, children and the marginalised, continues to be one of the heart-wrenching and silenced moments in the history of South Asia. Butalia's groundbreaking text *The Other Side of Silence* is an intervention into the silence. Butalia skilfully resorts to oral testimonies to excavate the obliterated personal narratives from official histories. The text helps survivors to articulate experiences that have been suppressed by political erasure and cultural forces. In this process, Butalia is involved in giving a voice to what trauma researchers call, articulating the unarticulated: helping survivors give words to feelings that are difficult to describe. This makes space for the return of stories usually ignored and thereby challenges traditional history that focuses on nations rather than individual experiences. The narrative foregrounds memory not as something secure and fixed but as an object prone to forgetting and remembering, while making visible how oral testimony functions as a mode of resistance and healing. The way in which narration is fragmented or tentative reclaims agency for those who have been suppressed. This research paper based on studies of trauma and memory as philosophical and theoretical foundations dwells upon how oral testimony acts as means of collective reckoning beyond functioning, as an act of documentation, and unveils the ethics of representing the



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unwritten accounts of the Partition. As such, the memoir becomes a space where the inexpressible finds expression and is allowed into the domain of the narrative, where silence is no longer forgetting, but delayed expression and eventual recuperation.

Keywords: Partition of India, Oral history, Testimony, Narrative recovery, Gendered dimensions.

Butalia's evocative exploration serves as a compelling and potent medium for unearthing generational wounds and documenting collective history. More than documenting, oral history is the act of witnessing, that allows individuals and communities take control of their lived experiences and challenge constructed narratives. In particular, this is important in situations where historical records from the past, including written documents, legal testimonies or official archives don't register the lived experiences of the oppressed, subjugated or marginalised groups of people, including women, children, and minority communities. Essentially oral history is individual's personal testimony, mainly in the form of interviews or personal reminiscences and provides a direct connection to the past. It is a historical inquiry that favours emotional resonance and subjective perspective over clinical objectivity. Thus, oral history emerges as a potent source of illuminating trauma, as Butalia's work points out in particular, if the trauma has been suppressed or repressed from dominant historical narrative. Ten years of Butalia's extensive interviews with partition survivors show how the recovery of silenced voices and nuanced rendering of historical events are made possible through oral history. Shoshana Felman's formulation of "testimony" as the ethical and legal act, grounds one of the key theoretical frameworks informing the practise of oral history. According to Felman's interpretation, to testify is therefore to take on responsibility for the truths that are articulated, especially when they are related to historical collective trauma. It is not merely the retelling of events, but a conscious act of carrying the ethical responsibility of their importance. Testifying is not just telling about things that have happened, but also about obligation: legal, social or moral. In oral history, however, the scope of the testimonial function of the witness is expanded beyond the legal into the realm of social and historical responsibility. Testimony is a witnessing act of the voiceless, where the voiceless are not only called to recall personal experiences, but also are themselves a conduit for voices who cannot testify themselves. Felman contends that testimony has a performative and ethical dimension and offering testimony to an interpretive public, regardless of whether



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they are readers or viewers goes beyond the mere narration of facts, incidents, or personal experiences. It is not only an act of narration but also a gesture of assuming responsibility through language for the documented past. In this context:

Memory is conjured here essentially in order to *address* another, to impress upon a listener, to *appeal* to a community . . . To testify is thus not merely to narrate but to commit oneself, and to commit the narrative, to others: to take *responsibility* – in speech – for history of for the truth of an occurrence. (40)

Oral testimonies offer survivors a means to tell their stories of suffering when institutional records have been discarded, or their stories erased, and when the event that is being remembered is such a traumatic historical event as the Partition of India. Even the very act of narrating trauma however painful, can provide a form of psychological release and emotional catharsis. When these testimonies are shared, they promote empathy and understanding in listeners or readers and create the space for collective healing. In addition, oral histories draw attention to the relational side of memory. Here the memory in question is not simply an individual or private recollection; it is always mediated through social and communal context by which it is shared. Testimonies are commonly narrated in dialogic form, because it is through the empathetic or emotional connection between the speaker and listener that implies one's involvement, which in turn influences the construction and containment of the conveyed memories. The social function of oral history is placed in the reciprocal relationship between the narrator and historian. Therefore, the historian as well as the interviewer must be sensitive in formulating the narrative, and assuring that witness's voice is heard and recorded appropriately. In addition, oral history attempts to subvert traditional historiography in its attempts to complicate the hierarchy between the official written record and the personal or experiential. Because oral histories contain not only emotional, subjective, and embodied experiences, but also take an alternate approach from the objective, dispassionate view associated with written histories. From a counterpoint to hegemonic historical narratives, which are inadequate in incorporating marginalised groups' experience, and stories that frequently go unacknowledged in mainstream historical accounts, oral history emanates. The dominant historical accounts concerning the subcontinent's separation often disregarded or gave an altered version of the narratives of the juvenile, disadvantaged subjects and women, and thus for example, Butalia's work and others of the kind have been significant in bringing those voices to the foreground. Butalia also foregrounds the male trauma, which lies largely neglected, and relates the story of her maternal uncle Ranamama during India's Partition, which subverts the dominant narrative of women's victimization. She portrays men dealing with humiliation and emotional distraught, highlighting how their sense of manhood



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got destabilized and compromised during the violent changes. Not only does she document the violence perpetrated by men, but also demonstrates the gendered discourses of trauma as not being singular, by portraying men as victims, too, not merely as perpetrators or protectors, but also as individuals deeply affected by loss of power and helplessness. Academic discourse on Partition has largely ignored this dimension of male suffering and her work is therefore an important intervention into Partition historiography. Trauma theorist Dominick LaCapra opines that in certain respect, “Survivor testimony” represents a new mode of articulation “necessarily problematic genre-in-the-making with implications for oral history, particularly in sensitive areas of research” (110). Therefore, bearing witness is not restricted to the domain of individual psychological experience, but also a collective experience that shapes communities and societies. Beyond the private realm of personal experience, the testimonies of survivors are witness to the socio-historical realities. They are an “all-compelling frame” (60), as Laub puts it, encapsulated by a female Holocaust survivor's account of Auschwitz. It further deviates from traditional historiography in featuring lived and affective truth, rather than objective chronology. The sum of these testimonies becomes part of an ongoing conversation concerning memory, identity, and justice. Al-Nakba, or the Catastrophic event of 1948, when hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were displaced as the state of Israel was formed, is a moment of extreme historical trauma among Palestinians, whose occurrence is characterized by violence, forced migration, and loss of homeland. As much as organizations and activists have tried to remember Al-Nakba, the Israeli state has often tried to interfere with any memorization processes, thereby limiting or suppressing community remembrance. In current theoretical work on collective memory, there is an increasing recognition that remembrance serves as a kind of resistance, and the attempts by the state of burying or manipulating the memory is a broader approach to gain control over historical writing and consolidation of political legitimacy. Oral histories become a shaping tool of the future and not just recording the past. They strive as means of resistance against historical amnesia. In this sense, the very act of recounting trauma is a form of resistance to the silencing and erasure of these experiences. As LaCapra observes, testimonies play a crucial role “to understand experience and its aftermath, including the role of memory and its lapses, in coming to terms with - or denying and repressing - the past” (86-87). As such, the witness must not only do the recounting of what has happened, but also be responsible for preserving the testimony for the generations to come so that the stories of the oppressed are not lost. Oral history is a vital way for those increasingly marginalized voices to come back to life and comprehend the complexity and depth of historical trauma. It is not only the past that is recorded through oral testimonies, but the past is put into a dialogue with the present, that further creates a space for



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reflection, reconciliation and, lastly, healing. Partition and memory - consequently, it is important to question the assumptions under which oral history is done today, and particularly when events of a very traumatic nature are being documented, such as the Partition of India. Key concerns stemming from these issues pertain to the role of the witness and the influence of the interviewer—all of which have the potential to affect and moderate the testimony. As with legal testimony, recorded oral histories, whether written or audio-visual, are shaped by the context of the relationship between testifier, interviewer, and final audience. Framing the testimonies is determined by the interviewer's positionality, ethical obligations, as well as the choice of the narratives they employ. This is particularly impactful because most of those who testify are burdened by tremendous personal trauma. Thus, the testimonial process of articulation also entails a much more complex negotiation with silence, pain, and the politics of representation. Hence, memory—both individual and collective plays a formative role in shaping the narrative of the Partition through oral histories. LaCapra puts forward:

Memory that confronts the traumatic dimensions of history, is ethically desirable in coming to terms with the past both for the individual and for the collectivity. It is bound up with one's self understanding and with the nature of a public sphere, including the way a collectivity comes to represent its past in its relation to its present and future. (95-96)

However, oral histories provide a place for these fractured memories to appear (and not because of their incompleteness), but precisely because of it. In this context the interviewer has a critical interpretive task and requires them to listen not only to what is spoken, but also to what is unsaid: to absences, silences, and the emotional signifiers of recollection. It is especially so when the testimony relates to experiences of violence, loss, and dislocation long excluded from dominant historical narratives.

A significant intervention into these questions is Butalia's acclaimed book. One of the first-hand accounts of the Partition drawn from lived experiences, the book unsettles the sanitized and state endorsed celebration of India's independence, by documenting just what people went through during that period. Thus, Butalia sets the experiences of 1947 in contrast to public commemorations, which erase the trauma of 1947. Her work delineates oral testimonies as rooted in memory that constitute vehicles of reclaiming silenced history, and reinscribes the gendered violence of the Partition into the collective memory. Butalia asserts in her seminal work:

Silence and speech. Memory and forgetting. Pain and healing. These are the heart of my book. . . . while it may be dangerous to remember, it is also essential to do so – not only so that we can come to terms with it, but also because unlocking memory



and remembering is an essential part of beginning the process of resolving, perhaps even of forgetting. (356-358)

The oral testimonies of Butalia form a critical and subtle exploration of how memory, trauma, subjectivity, and historical witnessing interrelate with one another. An examination of the Partition through the accounts of survivors, the current research responds to a key question in the trauma research concerning the discussion of the present in its construction and conception of particularized experiences of suffering with regard to the larger political and social contexts. Through an intensive intellectual inquiry of these narrations, the author strives to explain how collectivities affecting the body and political formations interrelate with individual histories of trauma. The approach used by Butalia in analysing the testimonies of survivors of the Partition raises a methodological and ethical dilemma central to the study of trauma, that is, how to describe experiences that are intensely personal and, at the same time, strongly politically embedded. She argues that oral narratives create a separate, autonomous point of view on a historical inquiry because they interrogate the traditional, linear structure generally imposed by written histories. She reminds the reader that personal stories are frequently so versatile that they go beyond time-based chronology and take the form of a non-linear progression. What has been produced consequently is a very fluid and subjective manner of knowing the past that is antithetical to the traditional approaches to history (13).

Emile Benveniste effectively draws a distinction between two Latin terms of bearing witness, *testis* and *superstes*. The *testis* refers to a non-participating viewer: a witness to a happening that is not a participant in it, a witness whose credibility is based on the impression of disinterestedness. In the area of law and formal aspects, the line separating these two types of witnesses is vital. *Superstes* in contrast operates as practical observer, having lived through the event in question, and survived its associated impacts. Memory building, emotional involvement, and the larger requirements of survival always condition testimony, a set-up that makes it highly subjective and extremely compelling (Fassin 535). In Butalia's collection of testimonies, she pulls together those narratives that take us through the entire continuum of the witnessing process, thus identifying herself with the subtle use of this conceptual opposition.

In literature, in the field of partition of the Indian subcontinent, Anis Kidwai can be placed in an ambivalent spot in regard to the *superstes* and *testis* dichotomy that is dominant. She is, on the one hand, a good portrayal of the category of *superstes*, as her husband was taken by notes of ethnic violence; and, on the other, her human aspect as *testis* is recorded through her efforts at recovering and archiving abducted women through her curatorial and



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civic engagement, as a way of reconstruction of social memory. The memoir by Kidwai throws light into the stratified modes of witnessing that blur the traditional distinctions between witness and victim. Kidwai contributed to the gendered aspects of the Partition as an early scholarly discourse by documenting gendered brutalities during Partition.

The oral history offered by Damyanti Sahgal itself makes a representative of the fact that personal narratives create difficulties and undermine a traditional distinction between *superstes* and *testis*. Sahgal, interviewed by Butalia in 1989 at around eighty years of age, forty years after the Indian partition, narrates the suffering that she endured during the riots, characterized by long phases of travelling without food or cash. These experiences mark her as a *superstes*. However, this proficient description of the sufferings of others, with a perceptible amount of callousness towards the anguish of herself, places her simultaneously in the *testis* field. The current study focuses on the ambivalent position held by witnesses to mass trauma. The synthesized account of Damyanti reveals the gendered aspects of displacement, trauma, and historical obliteration in India, during and after the Partition. Men were prevalently noticeable in ways that women were not, as the world returned to normalcy through aggressive battles and creation of geopolitical outfits. Losing a permanent home was what drove Damyanti to social work, a field that she was able to pursue with the help of her aunt, Premvati Thapar. She took the role of recovering and rehabilitating abducted women, an activity that reveals the complex interplay between victimhood and unwilling agency. What began as a reluctant recollection narrated at Butalia's home and later as a written record, ends up being more of a collective than personal memory, befitting the collective nature of the Partition memory. Butalia's work is a substantial contribution to the overall feminist discourse. By preserving the chronology and rearticulating the narrative structure, she makes the oral witness account of Damyanti a quintessential piece to the discipline. Not only does the story being considered recover a voice long disenfranchised, but it also shows how the Partition produced new, although often not uncontentious subjectivities of women in the public arena, albeit all the way, revealing the limits of state and community recognition of female traumatization (Butalia 110). Empirical scholars list the fact that displaced persons are usually placed in the position of narrators and mediators in the process of collective memory building. Under displacement, people are constantly in negotiation of personal identity as they also summarize group histories, thus developing a hybrid account that not only focuses on individual experiences but also on collective ones. This hybridization procedure groups personal reminiscence with shared repertoires, and results in types of hybrid memories utilized as narrative conveyances of personal and shared realities of belonging. Menon and Bhasin puts forward , "Oral history holds the very real promise of exploring the social



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experience of women and retrieving it as both “compensatory” and “supplementary” women’s history” (14). Although such interviews may seem an effective means of eliciting information, yet the oral interview as a field is very revealing as a space between disclosure and resistance. In this arena, respondents call upon not only repeated speech acts of narrative sequencing, discursive footwork, and synoptic summarizing, but silences, denials, and contested memory.

The term “the era of the witness” introduced by Annette Wieviorka in 1998, marks a pivotal transformation in the narratives of Holocaust memorialization. The period can be characterized by the rising status of survivors in the memorial landscape of the recent past; the Partition period too witnessed the dissemination of first-hand accounts through scholarly work, mass-media interviews, audio-visual documentaries, museum exhibits, and personal testimonies. The survivor has become a central construct in contemporary cultural discourse: not simply a person who endures deep trauma, but a person who takes upon the responsibility to describe the experience of the deceased (Fassin 535). Butalia focuses on male trauma through the story of Ranamama even though the work is an exploration of violence and trauma committed against women during the Partition of India. Such silent suffering, as demonstrated by the long process of repentance for conversion, is a particular kind of violence: it disorients dignity, belonging, and identity. Academic and popular sources have so far favoured the narratives of female victimhood; however, by placing the voice of Ranamama at the center, Butalia problematizes the hegemonic discourse. Along a spectrum of emotional alienation and tolerance of un verbalized pain, the cultural diktat of being manly at the expense of suppressing vulnerability is concisely, the trajectory of gender norms restraining men from emotional expression. Through her carefully chronicled accounts, she brings to the fore the trauma of women, and at the same time questions the male grief. Such dual attention shows how the Partition mutilated people, irrespective of their gender, in ways that are different and yet no less severe. This point is expressed in the utterance of Ranamama, who says, “I have not slept one night in these forty years without regretting my decision” (Butalia 38), a traumatic living nightmare that the Partition imposed upon men, which is a connotation most often ignored in canonical writings. Butalia notes that Ranamama, a Hindu who converted to Islam due to necessity to live through communal violence and access future opportunities, lived in chronic guilt and identity-disjointedness. His conversion was necessary in order to survive, but it led to emotional exile, the exile that broke not only his relationship with the original community, but also detached him from his children, who now perceive him as an outsider. Partition men not only suffered trauma of bodily harm, but profoundly psychosocially debilitating effects in the form of feelings of shame, alienation, and self-imposed silence. By laying emphasis on the erosion of individuality and the corroboration of



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feelings of guilt, the story of Ranamama acts as a cautionary reminder that the gendered discourses on suffering are not only exclusive to women. The speech is both a source of healing after the experience of trauma and the source defining its non-existence. This observation is foregrounded in Ranamama's confession to Butalia, which is further supported by Balaev, "Speech is again identified as both the solution to the problem of traumatic pathology and a main feature that, when it is lacking, defines trauma" (9). Over several decades, Ranamama harboured a heavy feeling of remorse and emotional pain, and remained largely silent on the subject of trauma of being converted and the loss of personal identity because of conversion. Under the terms of discursive production set out by Butalia, the production of the narrative is also an act of catharsis, which allows the expression of repressed emotions that have hitherto found no voice. The tone of the speaker, which is distinctly sorrowful, transforms into an instrument to reclaim control over the past that once denied him a voice, therefore, showing that the oral testimony is a significant step to the healing process by breaking the silence that is the foundation of trauma.

Similarly, the testimony of Mangal Singh, along with many other testimonies of survivors of the Partition, acquires increased academic significance when viewed in the context of the paradigm defined by Annette Wieviorka. Unquestionably troubling, but not to be taken as solely a treasury of personal memory, his first-hand testimony is however to be appraised as a crucial test of lived history, that shows how men struggled to process traumatic encounter through violence which seemingly got justified by considerations of honour. The testimonies of the survivors are one of the key methodologies that can be utilized when examining the strong emotional and moral consequences of genocide. In this sense, the account provided by Singh expands the academic repertory with an exploration of the Partition that is more experiential in nature, a conflict where male trauma, patriarchal tradition, and inter-communal violence intersected into a conflict that ultimately met with long silences and justifications to conceal the psychological trauma of the era. Mangal Singh's assertion delineates the intensity of male trauma experienced and the utter devastating effect during the traumatic event against a backdrop of masculinity, which is invariably and implicitly linked to notions of honour, control, and sacrifice. The violence, with the panic of religious conversion and sexual violence compelled men like Singh internalize a morbid obligation to defend the honour of the family, which commonly involved killing women themselves. Labeling women and children as martyr in context of the Partition speaks of a cultural shift where violent acts committed against them were re-energized as valorous sacrifices. In this same argument, the male instances of suffering and powerlessness have traditionally been viewed through the lens of responsibility and sacrifice. Under the



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patriarchal paradigm, men are normatively expected to embody resilience with dual responsibilities of protectors and executors. As a result, communal violence remodels masculine ideals with the tropes of sacrifice, domination, and internalization of emotional devastation. Then the first-person testimonies become an essential tool in the learning process, remembrance, and fighting denial, marking the transition towards experiential, lived histories as a form of understanding the Partition.

Childhood recollections of the Partition undergo a process of being refracted “through the prism of adult experience” (Butalia 249), implying that the application of emotional and mental maturation of the adult who is recalling the past significantly interprets the incident than a simple, childlike perversion of the occurrence. The use of memory as a tool of a historian becomes complicated due to retrospective filtering, especially when analyzing traumatic events, like the Partition. Childhood trauma has the potential to produce experiential configurations that include discontinuities in the cognition-affecting system, which is subject to reinterpretation, suppression, and continual reformation during the other stages of development. Young witnesses found themselves in those situations, which were hitherto unknown due to unprecedented violence, displacement, and loss in the historical matrix of the Partition. They are often hardcoded into the memories which one recollects decades later sometimes only as an adult, with ubiquitous fear, confusion, or lack of understanding. As adults, they are consequently burdened with trying to interpret a phenomenon that is still obscure. The memory of the traumatic events by the survivors themselves may prove to be a powerful source of history, but it also creates interpretative dilemmas that negate the integrity of evidence. These subjective memories contribute to bringing out emotionally charged realities and unveil the complicated interplay between individual cognition, communal recalling, and the broader historical construction of trauma.

Trilok Singh’s childhood experiences support the prolonged repercussions of traumatic experiences on young individuals as well as the episodic rather than chronological memory patterns such trauma produces. The unwilling recurrence of traumatic memories despite the conscious endeavors at suppression is encapsulated in the utterance, by the protagonist, that he tries to relegate the painful experiences to the past, by saying, “I want to put it behind me, but it keeps coming back” (252). That Trilok eventually took years to translate his experiences highlights the extent to which childhood trauma is repressed, and thus may manifest itself without foreseeability, and often beyond a person in control. Through this narrative, the role of memory, which is frequently painful and inaccurate, as the dominant medium of access to past, and as a concept through which children inherit and transfer the history of historical violence to future generations, is brought into focus. The memory, both



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at the individual and collective levels, forms a legitimate structure of inquiry into the history. Historically, academic skepticism regarding episodic memory has been based on the fact that it is inherently subjective, fluctuating, or that it allows variable manipulation of time. The institutionalized ejection of memory out of historical study is questionable, especially in case like the Partition of India, where memory and oral testimony are important mediums by which the historical phenomena of lived experience come to realization.

Butalia has transformed the interviews into a continuous narrative by removing the interviewers' questions, presenting the responses as a single, uninterrupted account, without altering the sequence of events. Despite her admitting that the relationship between the interviews are not subjected to some prescriptive format, she still engages in a selective procedure of editing the material both to make it more comprehensible and readable. By recognizing interviews as a performative practice that define power relation in such a setting, the author brings to the fore the need to explore the creation of knowledge itself (15). She vehemently asserts, "I have chosen to use a rather arbitrary criterion. I have included the stories that meant the most to me, stories of people with whom I have formed real friendships, or stories to which I keep returning again and again" (14).

Butalia's oral histories not only illustrate the multiplicity of witnessing positions that is possible to adopt in the present day public memory but also the stratified, disputed remembering, narrating, shaping processes of trauma. The analytical framework established within this piece of work reveals that memories are formed by discursive interactions that, in turn, are determined by structural forces, inter-personal interactions, and generational levels. Separation of *superstes* and *testis* enables one to have a clearer articulation of the overlapping modes of testimony that are expressed by Sahgal and Kidwai. Simultaneously, the methodological decisions made by an oral historian, the political orientation, affective engagement, and editorial decision actually determine the reception of these narratives as well as the ways it is recorded and interpreted. "Testimony, which is inscribed in a globalized media space, is now as essential a part of humanitarian activity as rendering aid" (Fassin 537). In the scholarship of Butalia, history becomes a form of interpretation, promoting sophisticated and humanistic recreations of one of the heart-wrenching tragedies.

Institutional memory remains scarce on the Indian side of the Indian-Pakistan border (save the Partition Museum in Amritsar, which commemorates the brutalities experienced by millions of people during the Partition). This further underscores the deeper reluctance on the sides of both countries in formally acknowledging this cornerstone in the history of the subcontinent. This oblivion goes topsy-turvy with the work of other independent scholars and activists, spearheaded by Butalia, who, often with little institutional support, have begun to



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take the difficult but important task of trying to keep alive memories in the form of oral histories, testimonies, and painstaking archival research. The alternative archives serve as counter-narrative to the mainstream historical fictions, at the same time highlight the generative potential of memory as forms of resistance and means of recovery. They reveal how non-state actors have assumed the ethical responsibility of remembrance, ensuring that the human dimensions of the Partition are neither forgotten nor silenced in the historical record. In Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India, an interest in oral history is increasingly being developed, driven by a rising want to describe and understand the highly personalized nature of such events as the geopolitical fracture of British India. Over decades, the resulting trauma of the event, which relocated millions and created widespread carnage, was a subject of silence in families. Oral testimonies are a progressively important form of methodology in facilitating survivors and later generations to represent suppressed memory, hence elucidating the impacts of emotional and psychological consequences of the earlier trauma. The difference between the words recorded in the official documents and the oral traditions deserves attention, as it creates the degree of specificity that is irreplaceable in creating a more comprehensive and personified vision of Partition legacy. Since the topic of political record-keeping often focuses on large-scale phenomena and negotiations between institutions, it will often lack coverage of the day-to-day lives of suffering and survival as well as the processes of identity building that is at the centre of oral histories. Oral histories, in turn, can provide much more focused first-person accounts of these events and thus, prove to be an invaluable source to scholars who aim at developing their understanding of the enduring legacy of the Partition.

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