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Violence, Martyrdom and Partition: A Daughter's Testimony

Nonica Datta

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This book presents the oral testimony of Subhashini (1914-2003), a woman living in north India, which is crafted as parallel history. Her candid, contradictory, repetitive narrative suggests a remarkable interplay of individual and collective remembrance. This book unfolds a story, within a sea of stories that has remained forgotten in the dominant historical narratives, and offers contrasting images of violence, martyrdom and Partition. Not 1947 but 1942---the year of her father's 'martyrdom'----is recalled as a violent rupture in the narrator's memory. Partition is a moment of celebration, revenge, divine retribution, empathy, remorse, ambivalence and fear. The testimony defies the binary opposition between victim and victimizer, witness and survivor, aggressor and spectator. It expresses the spirit of spoken word interwoven with a somewhat inchoate social history of memory and personal experience, and opens up historians' territory. Moving beyond a profoundly influential historical event, this book offers a parallel history of events and non-events, memory and history, testimony and experience.

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