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Terrorism: Gender and Identity

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Abstract: Even in the beginning of the twenty first century with the attack at World Trade Center (America), terrorism continues to be one of the major issues, which the world is facing. In the early 1970's Germany experienced the activities of the ultra left-wing groups such as the Red Army Faction (RAF) and the Baader-Meinhof group. Spain has had the experience of Basque terrorists, Italy of the Red Brigades and Britain of the republican extremist groups such as the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in the Northern Ireland. The Tamil terrorist groups agitating for an independent 'Eelam' state in the North-East of Sri Lanka, Sikh extremists used terrorism for an independent 'Khalistan' in Punjab, India. The extremists in Punjab used extortion, bombings and hit squads to achieve their goal of an independent state. In the face of these terrorist attacks, the Indian government responded severely with torture and summary executions. Terrorism that breeds' violence, by its very nature ultimately becomes indiscriminate and unpredictable, which has an uneven impact on women's status. At the height of violence, the Punjabi women faced the terror of the Indian police by day and of the militants by night. This study based on Punjab terrorism(1978-1993) has been divided into three parts. First part focuses on the role of women as supporters and activists during militant period in Punjab. In the second part it will be discussed how in the patriarchal society, in the periods of ethnic strife, women become the targets in these conflicts and how harassment of women in many a time is used as a strategy to undermine the position and status of the opposing group. In the third section the conclusions are drawn on the issue of identity by considering the effects of violence due to terrorism on the parties involved; the actor (or violent group), the target (recipient of the violence) and third parties who witnessed the violence.

Women have existed in this world as long as men. Along with men they have participated in the evolution of human society and along with them they have witnessed the rise, and fall of various movements. Our society is organized around some given parameters and aims, where generally males are held responsible for all acts of violence female's role in provocation behind the perpetration of violence is always concealed or underplayed. The war on terrorism has concentrated on males, I would like to stress the importance of not ignoring female's role in terrorism from giving birth to bringing up future terrorists in becoming terrorists themselves. Women are possibly the most dangerous enemy in the war because their potential role in terrorism isfor the most part ignored. In Punjab women who constitute half of the population were activists, supporters and targets during terrorism. In the decade of 1980's militants organized themselves along with the independent cells: women. The terrorist groups involved women to participate in their most extreme attacks.

During the entire terrorist phase Amritsar, Gurdaspur and northern parts of Ferozepur district remained more affected as compared to other parts of Punjab. This study is carries out from gender perspective to have an in depth understanding of womens's role as supporters and activists during militant period in Punjab.HarjeetKaur and her mother lived in village BhuttarKalan, Distt: Gurdaspur. When terrorists came to know that there was no male member living along with them, they took advantage of the situation and started taking shelter at their house. HarjeetKaur also got impressed by the terrorists and joined them. She started giving information to terrorists. She helped terrorists in carrying weapons from one place to another. She was arrested many times by the police. Village panchayat members used to plead to the police that she being a woman should be released. Police often used the word 'Harlot' for her. They would come at her home often and ask 'where are your boy friends'. HarjitKaur had the advantage of being a woman. Had she been a male, she would have been arrested or would have been killed. On having the slightest suspicion of having links with the terrorists many young boys of this village had been arrested. In another case Mazhbi woman of 56 years lived with her young daughters at village Bhuttar-Kalan. Her husband was in military, so she stayed alonewith her daughter. Once terrorists came to the village and started beating those men who did not obey them. At that time patrolling police party came and those terrorist ran away from the spot. Two of those terrorists went to the terrace of this woman's house and started filtering sand. Police enquired if anyone had come to their residence. She said that she had not seen anyone. Later they both went away. It is said that her daughters were young at that time and terrorists used to spend nights at her home. Terrorists gave this woman money and also kept looted valuables at this woman's residence. Later these terrorists were killed. Now it is believed that this women has invested money in business. She has opened one shop and has given money on loan to other people.

Militants used small arms and light weapons that had the advantage of being carried by only one person. If weapons were heavy, then vehicle or on animal was usedand thus, possible for mobile operations. Their use by terrorist damaged the human life and property. Since small arms required minimum maintenance and logistics, they were also suited for protracted operation. Their easy concealment made them suitable for covert actions and transfer from their male counterparts. At village BhuttarKalan a JatSikh woman of about 65 years lived with her daughter-in-law and grandchildren. Her son was driver who usually used to stay away from home. Her house is in fields without any fencing. When the terrorism was at its peak these women could not remain aloof. Elder woman was forced to work as a courier for militants to cross the police check-post in the area. Woman refused by saying that as she is old, it would be tough for her to carry weapons, but militants trained her in handling sophisticated weapons and thus she was assigned the task to carry weapons.

The basic needs of human beings are food clothing and shelter. Women in the terrorist phase complied with these roles. Terrorists who had become fugitive could not go to their own houses as police would chase them if smelled in the surroundings too, so they used to take shelter at other's houses. . Women not only provided food to militants, they washed the dirty clothes of militants and stitched new clothes as well as sewed the torn clothes. There were women in these villages that not only provided shelter but also were entrusted with the job of identifying safe infiltration routes for militants. Being women, they had been fearlessly roaming without drawing the attention of any villager. Few women who worked thus, belonged to good families and to the upper caste. The general notion that the lower caste women acted as informers was wrong. Another aspect which came into light was that the women who took initiative to give shelter were elder women but those who worked as agents/informers were the young unmarried women. Persons who had voluntarily sheltered militants were of course police targets, but those who had opened their doors at gun point were not spared by police either. These people had no involvement with militants and yet they did suffer extortions and other excesses from militants as well as follow up of police raids. One of the women of BhuttarKalan had to give shelter to Gurmej Singh Kitti. Due to fear of police she requested him not to come again. Later after two or three days he was killed. Police got information about his stay at this women's residence and suspected of having hidden weapons over there. After this incidence for long period family members were harassed.

Women are considered to be the victims of this gender system. This pertains to a two-fold popular assumption that only men are the perpetrators and only women the victims of the gender ideology. In a large number of situations, this may be the case but as discussed women are also the perpetrators of gender ideology. The point being both males and females are only the instruments of the gender system and both can be the victims as well as the perpetrators The Punjab problem was the internal war in which the security forces used legitimate or illegitimate force to change the tactics used by terrorists. The forces deployed to finish terrorism used the most common method of arresting and prosecuting terrorists. Little attention was paid to the human victims of this violent process. Suspected militants and militant sympathizers received brutal treatment. An old Nai woman of village BhuttarKalan narrated that her son Kahan Singh about whom it is said that he was involved in militant activities, had gone to Gurudwara and was killed there. Later another son who had no link with militancy went in morning as usual to Gurudwara to pay obeisance. Police picked him up from Gurudwara and till today the old lady with her daughter in law and grand children are searching him. During this period government had given all rights to policemen. Though suspicion is tough to be proved in court and sympathy is an attitude not a crime but the police exercised extra judicial punishment. People regarded as suspect or sympathetic to the militants were in grave danger of torture and summary execution

Female heads of households are a special group of women in society with no spouse present, they are solely responsible for home and family. Maltreatment began with the arrest of women. The women of the family of militants lived in constant fear for their lives, often they were picked up and severely tortured to get information about the militants. All this was designed to confuse, disorient and frighten the victims into meek acceptance of their fate. Anyone with the slightest suspicion of links with the terrorists was rounded up and taken into custody. The authorities hoped that these measures would curtail terrorist activity, but all this produced further difficulties as certain sections of public resented. The decision for women whose relatives were involved in militancy to use violence was not sudden. They had the option in front of them to participate or leave the group. It was difficult choice for an individual whose one of the family member was already involved in militancy to leave the group. A powerful need to belong and intellectual agreement with the close relatives who were militants lead them to accept violence as victims, as well as participants. KaramjeetKaur (name changed) sister of ParamjeetKaur [who was one of the women militant] was picked by the Station House Officer of Dhariwal, KaramjeetKaur was arrested to know the whereabouts of her militant sister. Karamjeet was tortured to such an extent that she had vaginal problem and was admitted to hospital.

Women in this phase played an important role in defending/hiding the male members of their families from police as well as militants Sukhdev Singh of BhuttarKalan was involved in militants' activities. First he got involved with militants and latter wished to leave them. But it was quite tough to do this. He along with his wife started living at Patiala. Terrorists used to come to his residence to know his whereabouts. According to few

respondents, all family members were involved in militant activities. They were living in the outer area of the city at farm -house (dera). Many times this had happened that when males were not at home and women of this joint family used to provide food and shelter to militants.. An old lady of the house of that time was believed to be more courageous as compared to other ladies. In this case also Sukhdev Singh's mother who was of nearly 68 years at that time was the one to open the gate for terrorists and to talk to them. Other women of the house prepared food and she used to serve the food to the terrorists. From this house militants on the tractor would be driven to their place of destination. Sukhdev Singh and his wife were arrested from Patiala. Sukhdev's wife was released soon but Sukhdev Singh was kept for longer period in jail. Government's way of arresting and torturing family members had an effect on terrorists. During this period many militants surrendered

In a multi-religious society, religious extremism survives and thrives on a state of mind of a group that a threat, real or imaginary, exists to their faith. In an environment of shrinking opportunities, increasing competition and pauperization, the appeal of religious extremism emerges as a crucial factor promising solace and security to the people. According to the white paper published by the Government of India in 1984, the AkhandKirtaniJatha started mainly as a religious group, but it extended support to other Sikh political and extremist organizations particularly BabbarKhalsa, BibiHarsharanKaur and BibiAmarjeetKaur were among its activists. On May 12, 1984 'The Hindu' (newspaper) states that the IstriAkali Dal of Punjab favors "Sikh Homeland". The IstriAkali Dal wants that 'Sikhs should straight away demand a homeland.' By its view, the Anandpur Sahib Resolution in essence, means the creation of a Sikh homeland." This was stated in a resolution adopted by the working committee of the Istri Dal attended by about 500 activists including district and circle Jathedars, the meeting was presided over by Mrs. RajinderKaur a former Member Parliament. The Akali Dal adopted a "Sikh homeland" resolution at its first conference in Attari in 1940. Later also the Dal adopted resolutions to this effect. Both the Dal and the S.G.P.C. were on record as having stated that the 'Sikhs are a separate nation', further 'The Hindu' July 13, 1984, reports that Akali Dal has announced that 'ShaheediJathas' (suicide squads) will proceed to the Golden Temple at Amritsar from July 16 to liberate it from army control. The Akali Dal announced the first Jatha of women led by Mrs. RajinderKaur a former M.P. and the president of the women's wing of the Dal, to march towards the golden temple on July 16. On this day 74 women led by Dr. RajinderKaur were arrested". The dynamic leadership and the activities of Dr. RajinderKaur had drawn the attention of a large number of people belonging the cross section of society.

Extremist religious groups of Punjab gained the support of the people by giving religious sermons. With the help of these sermons they gained sympathy from people. Baba Swaran Singh of village Zaffarwal had connections with Dam-DamiTaksaal². He used to preach in Gurudwara. In 1980's many people without thinking had become the followers of SantJarnail Singh Bhinderanwala. When Bhinderanwala visited this village many boys joined the movement. Baba Swaran Singh was the man to instigate youth to follow this path. In this Gurudwara where Swaran Singh resided SukhjitKaur 'Sukhi' used to come to pay obeisance in the presence of Guru GranthSahib. These young boys, who had already started participating in militant activities, too, used to come. SukhiitKaur got involved in this group. She started passing weapons from one place to another. One of the boys of this group was the Granthi (religious preacher) of this Gurudwara. It is said that SukhjitKaur and this boy had an affair. Once SukhjitKaur accompanied this boy to carry weapons where ordered and while going further they had to cross police check post. The Police on check post arrested both on the suspicion of carrying weapons according to the information. But the police could not find anything, but yet for questioning they took her to the police station. Meanwhile SukhjitKaur's parents along with few villagers came there with the story that there minor girl had run away from the home and requested to release their daughter. In this manner SukhjitKaur was released from jail and after two or three months she was married to another person. During this period government's writ had stopped running in large parts of the state. The Punjab terrorist groups had become authoritarian. Terrorists believed that the authorities had failed in their task of keeping order. At that time terrorists were the stronger means than the authorities. Impressed by the popularity of terrorists many girls married terrorists as shown in table I.

³Jarnail Singh Bhindrawala: Leader of Dam DamiTaksal and supporter of Sikh majority state of Khalistan.

¹SGPC :ShiromaniGurudwaraPrabandhak Committee which control religion places i.eGurudwara's of Sikhs.

² Dam-DamiTaksaal : Sikh educational organization whose students associate themselves to a particular sant or prominent spiritual leader.

Name	Village	Caste	Education	Marriage
Harjit	BhuttarKalan	Jat	Middle	
Pinki	Quadian	Jat	B.A.	
ParamjitKaur	Dayalgarh(Gsp. distt.)	Jat	Matric	
ManjeetKaur	Kohar(Gsp. distt.)	Jat	Primary	Married to Satnam Singh Chinna, had two sons; killed along with her sons
GurbinderKaur	Dayalgarh	Jat	Matric	Married to Joga Singh Bishmandi.
Gurmeet Kaur (Bholi)	Manchopra(Gsp. Distt)	Nai		Married to Mohinder Singh Bijliwal.
PyarjeetKaur				Sarwan Singh GoliTheckrawal
Lovely	Tanda(Gsp. Distt)	Jat	B.A.	Yugraj Singh Cheema
SandeepKaur	Mari Megha[Near FatehgarhChurian]	Jat		Dharam Singh Kashtiwal
Babli	Manoharpur	Jat	Matric	Terrorists of her own group killed her on suspicion to be involved with other

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During the one and a half decade of turmoil, the Punjabi society was adversely affected in terms of the institutional and normative growth by terrorism. Woman, the preserver and deliverer of the child, who is devoted to life rather than destruction, throughout history and across cultures, has been victim of various subtle and bizarre forms of discrimination, abuse and exploitation in cloistered silence This part of the study is based on the rhythm of women's life during the period of violence raising certain questions. Why atrocities against women are on the rise? Why in our male dominated society woman is not regarded as on end in herself like man, but solely as ministering to his appetite-sex object? During these violent years in Punjab (1978-1993) certain social groups irreparably suffered in one way or the other. Women, dalits and youth could be specifically mentioned in this regard. Terrorists mercilessly killed both Hindus and Sikhs, i.e. whoever opposed the creation of Khalistan, was the target. The juggernaut of terror prevailed, the people of the Punjab surrendered to the law of gun Only handful of brain washed terrorists were responsible for this violence. In committing acts of terrorism for the achievement of their objectives, the terrorist chose the instrument of "indiscriminate violence" and the target were the innocent civilians. When the lines of innocent civilians were in jeopardy, oppressive conditions were created and public opinion was mobilized. 'Operation Black thunder(operation carried out to route out terrorists from Golden Temple, Amritsar) had revealed that majority of recruits to the terrorist cause were the common criminals. Their motivation being the crude profit or the supplementary fruits of the illegal power militancy conferred access to women, to status within the village and at the lower levels, the demand for motorcycle, dry fruit etc. to lead fun-frolic life.' (Puri, Judge, Sekhon: 1999)

'Violence accompanies power; it is committed to prove or feel a sense of power; it is an instrument of coercion used to maintain power. Any hierarchical system of dominance and subordination victimizes the weaker sections and this victimization can vary from subtle pressures through the power of ideology and socialization or open brutal oppression. The aim is always to induce the subordinate group to comply with the wishes of the stronger. There are crimes that are specifically directed at women: rape, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and abuse as in prostitution and domestic violence'. (Desai and Krishnarajl987) 'The specificity of the gender dimension lies in the fact that while violence against women perceived as a structural phenomenon is indeed part of the general violence against oppressed classes, the forms of control and coercion exercised in the case of women are gender specific and arise out of the hierarchical gender relationship, where men are dominant and women are subordinate'. (Economic and political Weekly, March 23, 1985)

Terrorists forced people to accept their wrong demands. According to one of the respondent of BhuttarKalan, SantAmrik Singh was forced by militants to become mediator between a terrorist and young woman to get them married. But when he refused, he was killed. Another Mazhbi respondent of BhuttarKalan narrated the incident of Sekhwan village. A young woman of this village was engaged with a young man. The parents of the young woman were not aware of the young men's involvement in militancy at the time of engagement. When the parents came to know about this they refused to marry their daughter with militant. Militants forcibly tried the young woman to be married with their militant friend. They threatened the family by firing shots. But one of the minister too belonged to this village and so some people of this village for security had weapon's they too, in return fired. Later after four or five days it was heard that these terrorists were killed. In another case a young woman from village Khokar (Gurdaspur district), was picked up by terrorists, as the parents of this young woman refused to marry their daughter to the terrorist. Thus the friends of terrorists kidnapped the girl and got her married to the terrorist of village Arjunpura, but later this terrorist was killed.

During the reign of terror when the killings were at peak, the policemen were performing their duty to arrest the killers, but they, on the other hand, were harassing the innocent people who were victims of this period. At the time of Operation Rakshak, Army commander, Brigadier Sinha collected the panchayats of several villages and made himself highly unpopular by threatening villagers with rape of village women to "breed a race through his soldiers that will be loyal to India." Similarly at Guru Nanak BhaiLaloRamgarhia College for Women in Phagwara the girls were at the receiving end of a remarkable lecture from a group of women police constable who told them, "You are all virgins. We will teach you a lesson in such a way that you won't be able to show your faces". The constables had been called in to keep order during a minor agitation against the principal but even this occasion was considered a fit time for crude and abusive verbal extremism'.[Jaijee: 1999]

In our society women have been victims of humiliation, torture and exploitation. During militancy victimization of women took new strides. The exploitation and victimization ranged from harassment, beating, threatening to kidnapping, rape and killing. During the terrorist phase there was no such thought of innocent civilians, all members of the society were legitimate targets. School going girls from their very stage of identification were forced to wear salwar-kameez and cover their heads with dupatta. They were restricted from wearing jeans, shirts, frocks etc. Young women could not wear jewelry nor good clothes. If they wore, they at that time had to face harassment from different sections of society. Working women especially teachers were harassed by students in different forms, as they had connections with terrorists. Middle aged women and allies who gave shelter willingly and under threat were the worst victims of harassment in the hands of police and militants. The maltreatment began with legal restrictions, arrests and beatings. All this was designed to confuse, disorient and frighten the victims into meek acceptance of their fate. During militancy, elderly women were the victims of this predicament. The eldest lady of the house during that time guarded her house as the security personnel were on the border. During this period many youngsters were killed in fake encounters. Thus whenever police used to come at homes, the old ladies of the house used to open the doors. They, in their style, would make the policemen believe that no male member was at home and they were all alone. Similarly when militants used to come, they gave the same answers but, militants were not ready to believe. Militants beat many old ladies, when women did not provide the knowledge they required. Generally, all this happened with those ladies whose relatives were earlier in militancy and had later on left or whom they doubted to be police informers Violence has also been used as a weapon of the weak, as a technique in which a few individual though weak in comparison to the power of the state but prepared to lose their lives, can make life difficult for thousands of persons in authority.

Violence is presumed to be used to compel others by threatening to what they might not otherwise do. In other words terrorist attacks are designed to produce terror not by the killing or destruction they cause, but by the threat of killing and destruction yet to be carried out. Militants collected a huge sum of money by pasting threatening letters to people. Power is conceived as a strong and powerful medium to carry out one's plans. Antisocial elements took full advantage of this situation. A respondent of village Zaffarwal narrated that thieves disguised as terrorists came to her residence. They demanded bottles of alcohol from her, and she refused. The thieves threatened her by saying, "You have three daughters we will see". The lady and her daughters underwent fear and awe after this. Due to fear, the lady approached terrorists and narrated the whole incident and asked for help. Then the terrorists searched the thieves disguised as terrorists and threatened them to be prepared to face the severe consequences for their act. As a result of the threat, the thieves felt sorry from her for their misconduct.

People in the Punjab villages spoke of a situation where as a result of the rule of the gun of terrorists, the police refused to move out of their barricaded police stations after dark. The force's will to fight terrorism, it appeared had been broken. The police responses were distorted to such an extent that effective reaction was precluded even in cases where policemen and their families had been specifically targeted by the terrorists. But the will was far from lacking' (Gill: 1997) During militancy few women entered into new liaisons with men who became a source of gifts. But it was not only the search for material gifts that drove women to form these liaisons but attractions towards money also played a decisive role. According to women interviewed, women were forced to lead the life of prostitutes. In other words, terrorists had kept mistresses. In this dark period militants ruled the state with an iron fist, imposing strict codes of behavior made by different militant organizations according to their mental construct. These codes of conduct were enforced with the power of gun, therefore these could be called restriction as well. Moreover, in such situations antisocial elements, not having any religious sentiments, took advantage of the situation to molest, threaten and tease women. Hooligan Gulzar Singh of village Zaffarwal who joined the terrorist group forced women to cover their heads with dupatta. He threatened women that if he ever found uncovered head of any girl, he would separate it from body. He told girls to wear parandha with a plait. He used to roam with hammer in his hand. Their pain inflicting strategies were simple as a word, as a gesture or a comment, but they were capable of insulting the woman and killing her personal dignity and selfrespect. Women stopped using cosmetics and putting bindi on their forehead. Even in the hottest days of summer they could not wear thin clothes.

The whole community had learnt to live with the restrictions, which were advocated more on females, men had greater freedom and choice in their outward appearance. In those days T.V. announcers and newsreaders were restricted to cover their heads. More emphasis was laid on the telecast of religious programs. People were told not to hear the television news so that they might not turn against terrorists as it broadcasted the crimes committed by terrorists. The terrorists who considered themselves as patriots and freedom fighters attempted to justify acts whose moral standing is doubtful as part of their terrorist campaign. Militants used to visit villages in darkness, no one dared to switch on lights at night and not even radio sets and televisions. No one could keep dogs and hens at that time because both gave signal if someone came in the area. The terrorists shot barking dogs. One family from village Zaffarwal migrated to Dhariwal just because their dog barked at terrorists and in return terrorists threatened them for not obeying their rules. Torture is justified as it is closely aimed to the state's fight against terrorism. For women detainees' threats of rape are often compounded by police taunts, that rape will deprive women of their virginity and honour. As a result of it no one will marry them and their families and communities will ostracize them.

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Violence present in different spheres of life generates a great deal of instability. It is directly related to the intensity of the commitment of the people to the cause. The findings of the field study i.eGurdaspur District of Punjab shows that in the decade of 1980's Punjab militants constructed their identities around dominance and females constructed their identities around deference. Though there was a smaller share of women than men in violent acts, yet they were entrusted with the job of identifying safe infiltration routes for militants and providing shelter. They were used as courier by taking advantage of the situation that women are least suspected. The women who worked with terrorists in operations: as agents and shelter hives had no good image in the eyes of police/general public, yet in the eyes of their own culture they were capable of receiving reverence and respect from the men around them.

Terrorism thrived under the cover of public support, which was either the result of fear and intimidation or based on the sympathy with the cause and appreciation for those who were sacrificing their lives. Sikh fundamentalists in Punjab laid different codes of conduct, the first victims of which were the vulnerable section of the society i.e. woman. Religious extremists projected such values and norms to minimize the promotion of their identity through women, who were the victims of circumstances, which have been created due to gender discrimination. The act of issuing the edicts during terrorism gave the individuals involved in terrorist activities a chance to gain the kind of significance that most likely could not be gained by legitimate channels. They issued the edicts to women ranging from young school going girls to elder groups.

The fact cannot be denied that the police, particularly, in the rural areas did not make the sufficient effort to the protection of women. Security forces stepped up surveillance on people suspected to be harbouring militants. Many women of these areas were under police scrutiny for suspected links with militants. Women police was rarely used for arresting females. In maximum police men interrogated/ tortured the apprehended women. Police uniform gave the cops a false sense of security. They thought themselves to be above law. They harassed the innocent people who were victims of this chaotic period. The policemen of these areas forced beautiful women, especially of lower class, to have physical relations with them on the threat that if they refused, their young brothers or fathers would be killed. Women faced violent degradation. Women were victims in the hands of both police and terrorists. They faced verbal abuse, rape, physical injury, rebuke, threats etc. Even if all such acts did not involve physical injury, these certainly resulted in psychological injury and destruction of the personality of a woman. Women were bound by the limitations of their body, especially their physical structure and thus they were easy targets of men's aggression and violence.

However, there is no denying the fact, as it emerges from this study, the violence generates negative consequences for women. In a way, there is reinforcement of their confinement even if nothing happens during violence. The present studies shows that families took special measures to save the honour of their women by confining them to the house, with drawing them from studies, and marrying them at the earliest. Even if we assume that nothing happened during the terrorist phase of Punjab between 1978-1993, these three effects are sufficient to lend credence to the argument that violence dehumanizes and reinforces unequal gender relations during the violent periods.

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