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Partitions: Divided country, divided people, and divided minds

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Abstract

This article considers the political and personal impact of the partition of British India by reviewing the lives led by the authors' fathers. These men lived through colonialism, partitionand its aftermath, before migrating to Europe as young men. Taking concepts such as extractive introjection (Bollas, 1987) and alienation (Steiner et al., 1975), the article moves between the ways in which social and political traumas have been a part of the psychology of these men as well as their daughters' legacies.

KEYWORDS

alienation, belonging, colonialism, extractive introjection, partition, post-colonialism, subjugation, trauma

> *Conflict is a necessary factor of society and the problem consists in its proper institutionalisation and canalisation, or if one prefers the psychoanalytical idiom, sublimation. (Hussain, 1966, p. 33)*

Until recently the end of colonialism, marked by the partition of India, seemed to be an untold story in the UK. With the 70th anniversary in 2017, TV documentaries such as *My Family, Partition and Me* (Burley, 2017a, 2017b), radio programmes such as *Partition Voices* (Gallagher, Smith, & Adeane, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c) and a British-made fictional film, *Viceroy's House* (Berges, Chadha, & Nayar, 2017), personal and regional stories about partition have surfaced and captured the minds and imaginations of many people in the UK. For some, it has felt like an opportunity to claim an unknown heritage. For us, as authors, partition has been a missing jigsaw piece helping us to achieve clarity about some of our legacy. We both have fathers who were raised in colonial India and who witnessed partition as young men, before subsequently migrating to Europe for further education and a better life. Like so many others of their generation, our fathers found it difficult to talk about what they saw and experienced during partition. Both had extended experience of migration—initially to Pakistan and then to Europe, which meant they encountered traumas, atrocities, and losses. In Europe, this was followed by a need to adjust to a new culture, landscapes, climate, and people amidst the explicit racism, hatred, and discrimination experienced during the 1960s and 1970s. These later social, political and psychological processes of alienation, (Steiner, et al., 1975) added to those previously encountered in colonial India and during its subsequent partition. This is a reflective article that contemplates the psychological impact of colonialism and the political and social traumas inherent in it. We consider some of the ways in which these

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traumas made an impact consciously and unconsciously on our fathers and subsequently on us. Throughout our narrative, we make links between the personal and the political.

Here, we start by considering the history and the legacy of colonialism before its violent end in India. Picking up on the links between political history and psychology, we link colonialism to Bollas's (1987) ideas on extractive introjection and Shaw's (2014) concept of traumatic narcissism. From here, we move on to think about the political and psychological impact of partition and its aftermath. Next, we reflect on the challenges facing a new nation that has had little opportunity to process all that has been lost and how the lack of processing around loss arouses a crisis in belonging and identity. Finally, we consider how this legacy has made its impression on us, as daughters, and on how we approach our clinical work.

1 | COLONIALISM AND EXTRACTIVE INTROJECTION

Reflecting now, in this postmodern, postcolonial world, it can still feel shocking to recount the arrogance of colonialism and how it was ever possible in the first place. It was, in fact, possible because a number of conditions were present. The culture and social organisation under colonial rule drew Europeans together because there were a number of financial and lifestyle benefits. The capacity to disregard the other—especially people of colour—had long been established through years of slavery. Essentially the whole notion of white supremacy and imperialism became a driving force during and after slavery because taking control of nations rich in natural resources brought huge economic benefit to the West.

Chinnock and Minikin (2016) have argued that there had to be a relational process to make this at all possible. In other words, the colonizers' wish to move in was not enough—somehow the colonized had to imagine there was some benefit to them—it had to make sense to both parties. One of the key ways in which this happened was to create a dependency of the colonised on the coloniser. We might think of this as a form of political and social symbiosis (Schiff et al., 1975). The desirability of the colonies lay in their resources; in return, jobs were created, roads were built, churches and schools provided. However, since then, a wide range of research and writing has described the social and psychological consequences, one seminal text being *Black Skin, White Masks* (Fanon, 1952/1982), in which Fanon described so powerfully the way in which nations and people were robbed of their identity—their culture, their spiritual beliefs and connections and society. As their social structures and cultures fell apart, so the people were subjugated to the "superiority" of the coloniser:

> *Every colonized people—in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality—finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation. (Fanon, 1952/1982, p. 9)*

This psychological aftermath of colonialism persists in terms of struggles with economies, conflictual politics, and a distressing loss of identity and pride—in short, a loss of the cultural sense of self. Chinnock and Minikin (2016) linked the process of colonialism to Bollas's (1987) writing on extractive introjection. Bollas referred to interpersonal and intersubjective dynamics and we relate this also to larger scales in terms of group dynamics and international relations:

> *Extractive introjection occurs when one person steals for a certain period of time (from a few seconds or minutes to a lifetime) an element of another individual's psychic life. (Bollas, 1987, p. 158)*

Bollas went on to describe the absence of awareness, the deadening numbness that is sometimes created in relationships of asymmetrical power. We link the anaesthetizing affect that he described to a sense of "mystification" (Steiner et al., 1975) in the process. In other words, this process can only work if the colonized do not realize what the colonizer is doing. So, in order to colonize, the colonizer has to assume that the colonized has no internal experience of the violence that is taking place—in other words, no idea about what the colonizer represents. The most disturbing aspect that Bollas described is the "theft of the self" (p. 166) which he described as a "catastrophe, from which there may well be no recovery" (ibid).

In any relationship, including the psychotherapeutic one, people are vulnerable to these powerful intersubjective processes. The subjective loss of aspects of the mind can become unconscious as people become persuaded of the

benefits of buying into a new frame of reference. It is on top of this kind of seduction, exploitation, and mystification that the hurried process of partition took place. We now summarize some of the key events of partition and the psychological aftermath that we experienced through our fathers.

2 | UNPROCESSED LOSS: PARTITION AND ITS AFTERMATH

The partition of India displaced around 14 million people on religious grounds (see Figure 1), and while the number who died has never been clearly confirmed, estimates range between 200,000 and two million people (Talbot & Singh, 2009, p. 2). Figure 2 illustrates the changing political face of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. As previously stated, the lead up to 1947 was traumatic and many photographs available on the internet document some of the atrocities that were committed. We include just two here, in Figure 3. Accompanying the numerous horrific acts of violence and killings directed against men and boys, there was violence committed against women; around 100,000 women are said to have been kidnapped, raped, humiliated, and/or subjected to slavery (Singh, 2002). Such

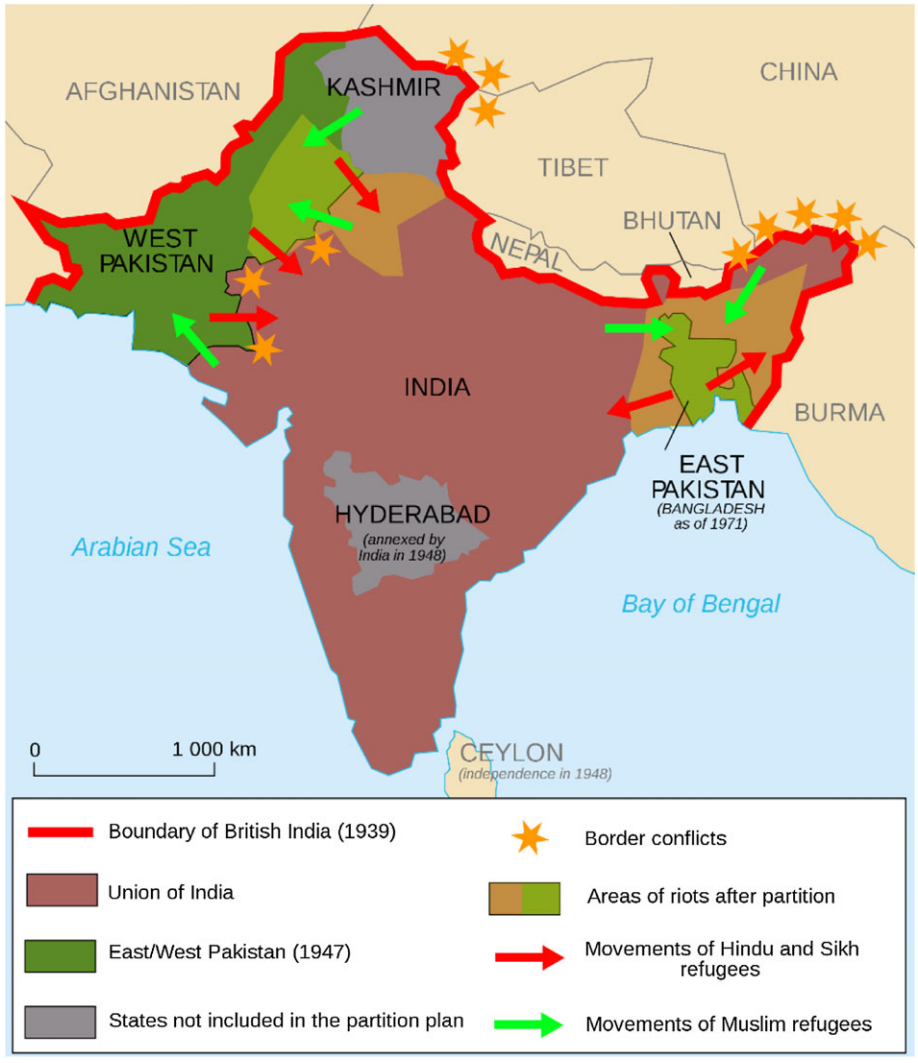

FIGURE 1 Map of the partition of India. Source: studindia.Kunci.or.id

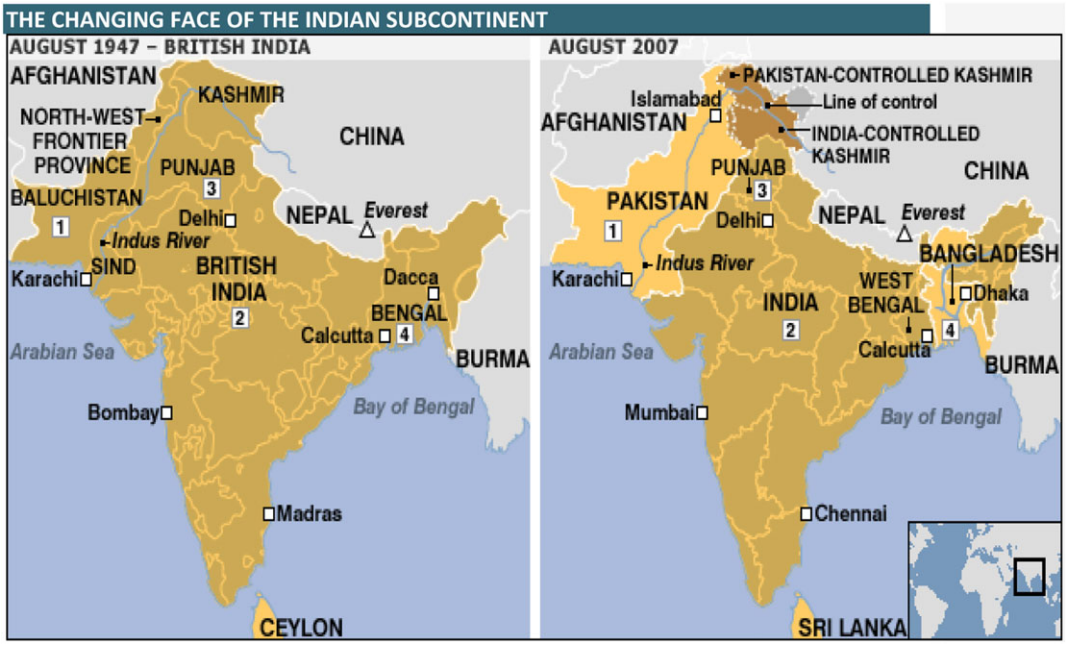

FIGURE 2 The changing face of the Indian subcontinent. Source: Special Report - After partition: India, Pakistan, Bangladesh (BBC News Channel, 2007)

During the summer of 1947, over a million people were slaughtered on both sides in the riots. These are the bodies of the victims being picked up from a city street. PHOTO: MARGARET BOURKE-WHITE
http://tribune.com.pk/story/864867/11-devastating-pictures-from-the-1947-partition/

https://guy8461.files.wordpress.com/2015/09/140414-calcutta-riots-1946-02.jpg
By M. Das 9/14/2016

FIGURE 3 Atrocities leading up to Partition

violations are seemingly a part of the retributive violence and other forms of "ethnic cleansing" that have taken place across the globe throughout history. At the time of writing this we have heard of similar horrors from Myanmar.

Given the tremendous diversity and complexity amongst the people and administration of India, planning and implementing partition needed a great deal of organization and thought. The power of the British Raj—profoundly domineering for nearly a century—left a political, cultural and psychological legacy. This also meant it took tremendous pressure directed over a long period of time to build consensus that Britain needed to leave. However, the execution of this departure lacked the consideration that was required. Last year the authors learnt more about the impact that the sense of panic had on the people. This urgency was due in part to the escalating violence expressing

(in our view) some of the frustrations and pressures that had accumulated amongst the people. The discounting of this crucial information may have added to the division and rage that was being acted out. As families and people became further divided, the impetus to fury escalated, resulting in what many have described as retributive genocide.

The minimizing of the significance of this escalating violent migration and the subsequent ruthless implementation of boundaries marked a generation previously by the Boundary Commission, led by the British lawyer Cyril Radcliffe, meant terrible mistakes were made. Radcliffe later admitted that he had had to rely on out of date maps and census materials (BBC News, 2017).

Having recounted the historical background, we turn now to the personal stories of both our fathers and describe how they have embodied their era. Given the nature of this article, we include two personal photographs of our fathers with us as young children, (Figures 4 and 5). Our fathers were 15 and 16 when partition took place. We mark our personal stories with italics:

Farah: *I remember my father telling me about listening to Ghandi and Nehru on the radio discussing the complicated politics of India and the uncertainty of the future. These times were difficult, but he remembers them with nostalgic happiness until his mother—whom he had a close bond with—died due to illness exacerbated by extreme poverty. He was 15 and the eldest of three. Her death devastated him and at the same time triggered deep rage as he tried to make sense of who was to blame for his loss. He took responsibility for his younger siblings and in this process lost his identity as a child.*

Karen: *My paternal grandmother died in childbirth when my father was just four. When I asked my father about it he was rather dismissive, saying this happened to many Indian women. I was shocked by his acceptance of death and wondered, with my European mind, if it had left him longing for something maternal and constant. When I asked him about partition, he told me he had caught one of the last trains out of Delhi when he was 13 or 14, "before the butchering started." Looking up at me he declared, "They were my friends! I went to school with Sikh and Hindu boys—we visited each other's homes." Returning to Rawalpindi, he did not go on to tell me about the trauma of the riots that took place a couple of years later. But I imagine those riots—some of the worst that took place in the Punjab, the violence in 1947 was some of the most terrible. One horrific account I heard last year was how Sikh fathers killed their daughters to protect their honour and shield them from the capture, rape, and slavery that many women from all sides endured. To hear such stories even though historical and experienced in my imagination alone can feel overwhelming and the images intrude in violent bursts as I write this.*

FIGURE 4 Farah and her father (1974)

FIGURE 5 Karen and her father (1963)

It seems difficult to imagine how a nation recovers from such atrocities, let alone tries to build a new state. The birth of Pakistan was violent, and the rage and hatred left would take generations to recover from. Remembering his nation in the 1950s, Karen's father described the anger and rage of a country moving into its infancy:

> *The students blame the teachers, the teachers blame the students and the government and, above all, the government runs down the people. The tendency towards alienation is marked and I was brought to wonder if independence has meant any more to the Pakistani people than the substitution of the brown raj for the British raj. (Hussain, 1966, p. 167)*

Rage accompanying helplessness is the aftermath of trauma and this affected the new states across the Indian subcontinent as well as these two men. Both embodied the assault on their identity and dignity. Their internal dynamics were a confused mire added to by the complexity of dependency on their previous imperial ruler in Europe. Despite the cultural and psychological wreckage from colonialism and partition, both men did salvage something. They did survive, find work, and have families. We turn now to their experiences in Britain; like many from this era, they sought refuge in the "motherland." Yet, this refuge had a complex nature and the shadow from colonial history spilt into this postcolonial period, creating a sense of alienation amongst the many that came to the UK at this time.

3 | NEW STATES, ALIENATION, AND THE CRISIS OF BELONGING

In her book, *The Fascist State of Mind and the Manufacturing of Masculinity*, Christine Wieland (2015) wrote:

> *When the balance between individual and society breaks down, we can expect cataclysmic disturbances where regression to a more regressive or "debased" (Bion) states [sic] of mind takes place. . . . I suggest that fascism within the mind and within society is the alienated child of this broken marriage. (Wieland, 2015, p. 12)*

Here Wieland linked fascism with alienation. She wrote about a loss of connection that is painful and needs to be defended against. As she explored the breakdown of relationship between the individual and society, we understand that she was describing how qualities such as self-sufficiency are idealized. This leads to the primacy of the state and its entitlement to dominance being justified, fought for, and defended. In contrast, democracy is seen as "weak" and ultimately harmful to the state. In the context of colonialism and the partition and early postcolonial eras, there is support for the rhetoric of strength in nationalism whilst diminishing and dismissing economic, social, and political fallibility or vulnerability. Our interpretation is that this promotes "one mind thinking" and is defensive of any critique of the establishment as well as a denigration of philosophical, social, political, and psychological differences.

In an atmosphere where "otherness" in society and within the mind is killed off or banished, it is as if the masculine and what that might represent has to be aggrandized to protect against the risk that anything representing the feminine can make itself known. This is grounded in a white racist form of masculinity. For instance, Frantz Fanon wrote, "black is not a man" (1982 p. 138) and Wieland (2015) described the Jews being portrayed as feminized men in nineteenth-century Germany and across Europe. It was within this mindset that our fathers lived when they came to the UK. In other words, we suggest that the earlier period of colonialism involved the subjugation and therefore emasculation of Indian men. We think this legacy contributed to a vulnerability to feeling humiliated alongside repression and dissociation of rage. We also wonder how this contributed to the dynamics in their relationships with our white mothers. There was little time for new nations to recover and rebuild after colonialism and the traumas of partition. So, at a personal level, there was little time for our fathers to adjust to the impact of being raised during the era of colonialism as well as recovering from their adolescent years where they witnessed social, political, and environmental traumas. The residue of such experiences must have been available to be ignited on arrival in Britain. We move now to this early post-colonial era using historical reflection as well as our fathers' personal stories, to illustrate what was happening at micro and macro levels.

3.1 | From the 1950s to the 1970s

Colonialism had offered hope via education—a chance to carve a better life for oneself. Education and academic and professional qualifications continue to be seen as passports to privilege in many postcolonial countries. In the formative period from the 1950s to the 1970s, children of this era were creating social mobility, moving from the working class to the middle class. Colonial rule had meant that many men in India and Pakistan were fluent in English. The presence of the British had made many believe they understood the English people. During the 1950s and 1960s the British government actively encouraged travel to England and, with the process being relatively straightforward, many decided to venture there and send money back home to families. Farah's father, like many, believed it was his duty to do that and he believed this would give his family hope and opportunity.

Farah: My father tried hard to transition into UK society. Even though he was a Muslim, he went to the pub, drank alcohol with English men and exchanged "banter" with his work colleagues. He tried to integrate himself into the social norms. . . but it seemed as if they rejected him randomly, resulting in internal confusion and paranoid thinking. He felt this was all about his difference, his colour and ethnicity, particularly when he displayed his cultural norms or thinking. He told the story of how his Irish friend (a woman, also subjected to maltreatment and abuse for being Irish), requested out of self-protection that they walk separately on the streets. He was deeply hurt and angered by this. There were echoes here of his life in India as he was not allowed to associate with his Hindu or Sikh friends due to reprisals that could include death.

Karen: My father shared similar stories of racism from his experiences in England at this time. He could be furious about abusive encounters in London—one involved him and his wife being persistently verbally abused for being together, when travelling on a train. His response to survive such indignities was to make use of his capacity to charm and seduce others with clever thoughts alongside his handsome looks. His charisma won him allies and lovers. With white men he often felt a heightened sense of alienation. Finding a better reception with women, he forged many friendships—some sexual, some intellectual, and some both. However, this provoked envy and contempt from some white men. Some aspects of his curiosity about people and the meaning of his experiences remained alive; he had a capacity to think philosophically and was available in part to the language of feelings and their importance in belonging and identity. From humble beginnings he carved, at least for a short time in his adult life, something of a productive life. Like many countries that were colonized, education for some children in India and Pakistan was a path out of poverty. Whilst this describes his better self, it is not the whole picture and his capacity to collapse under pressure and become oppressive and aggressive on occasion meant there were many fragmented and destructive features to his life.

Highlighting or emphasizing his difference and protecting his identity to some degree enabled my father to continue thinking. He somehow managed to hold on to his mind by understanding and following an academic path. The translation of experience into knowledge might have marked a determination in his professional life to overcome haunting memories and to try to discover some hope. The connections he made at the India Club in London helped him forge friendships and alliances that encouraged his thinking capacity and a continuation of his identity whilst here in London.

Perhaps both our fathers knew they had to transition well and they each had a personal determination to escape their troubled land and survive. Their hurt came from being rejected by the same ethnic group, the English, who had divided and fragmented their country, leaving it a place of loss, death, and grief. Recent controversy in the UK, the "Windrush scandal," has led to many men and women originally from the Caribbean being targeted by the Home Office because they were missing a British passport. After decades of living in the UK, it has been shocking to see that, like our fathers, they had wrongly believed that they were welcome in England. These experiences evoke strong feelings of betrayal and our fathers responded to this in their individual ways.

Farah: My father felt duped by the British Government and society; this fed a kind of primitive distrust of the English. He learnt that English men would say one thing to your face but have completely different responses in private—they had two faces. .. he used to use the expression "double faced" from a very hurt place. When he returned to Pakistan he was revered by his family and friends because he had "made it" and appeared, relative to their poverty, as incredibly wealthy and educated. This "new" English filter and his experiences of London meant that he had further introjected a sense of British supremacy and so looked upon some of the cultural behaviours and mentality of his relatives as backward, less than. His one-up, superior attitude towards them may have soothed him internally and might have been welcome respite after so much injury. I wonder also whether it was a defence against feelings of guilt and shame when faced with their relative poverty and destitution. Further, after being made to feel "small" by the English, this may have been his attempt at restoring his ego and dignity after suffering the humiliation of racism from his host country. Upon returning to London, my father was forced to continue reverencing the "superiority" of the "white colonial masters." Attempting to join and belong to British society fed his ego and was, we think a narcissistic defence against the shame and humiliation that he endured.

Karen: My father strove in his professional life to find some alchemical gold, and his personal life in England was for a few years charismatic, exciting, as well as dishevelled and fragmented. He left significant trails of personal destruction behind him, which left him and others connected to him feeling alienated. Those close to him often ended up feeling angry, humiliated, or betrayed by some of the ways he conducted himself. The losses have been profound and seem to indicate the enactments related to trauma in the aftermath of partition on his country.

The fragmentation that came about in India continues in Britain today and has been transmitted down the generations of the Sikh, Muslim, and Hindu communities. With the rise of terrorism and Islamophobia, Sikhs and Hindus are at pains to justify their differences from their Muslim "brothers and sisters" to the dominant white population as a way of protecting them from the affliction of abuse and hatred. We turn now to the legacy in Britain as well as in us, their daughters, before sharing some of our personal experiences in clinical practice.

4 | THE LEGACY OF PARTITION IN BRITAIN

The legacy of colonialism informed political and foreign policy in subsequent years. This opened up global migration, and the more modern versions of voluntary diaspora have had complicated consequences politically, socially, and psychologically. We, the authors, are postcolonial children and as such we embody these experiences as well as our ancestral heritage of colonialism. As "mixed children" we have both the colonizer and the colonized in our DNA. We share some of our personal stories about how we have experienced this heritage.

Farah: I was raised around the North West and West London area which has been classified as the most ethnically diverse region in Europe. Being of mixed heritage I identify strongly with my London and French European roots. At school, I remember being shown maps of the world coloured in pink to identify the countries that had been colonized by the English. My father's interpretation was that the British had simply stolen and taken what they wanted, including the Crown Jewels with the Koh-i-noor diamond. During Queen Elizabeth's Jubilee celebrations in the 1970s, I remember how his bitterness and trauma were activated by the parading of these jewels with no mention of how they were obtained.

I remain based in London which is now a multicultural environment and I sometimes wonder about how the Empire has now come to the UK and exists in London. What is interesting for me to observe is the fear that is so easily aroused and how this may have contributed to the Brexit vote. I feel a sense of pride in being the child of two successful immigrants. Later in life, I have sometimes felt forced by others—including clients—to claim an identity or to be defined by their projection. For example, being seen by some men as "exotic" and by others as "an unwelcome drain on British society." This evokes strong feelings including rage and shame for me. Whilst I have needed to develop a capacity to hold hostile projections, there have been other more benign projections—sometimes even creative ones, based on curiosity to discover something about my difference.

Karen: I was the darkest amongst my siblings. My conscious awareness of my colour really developed when we first returned to England from Nigeria, in West Africa, when I was ten. Here in England I was at the receiving end of racial abuse from other children in my class. This was confusing and difficult for me, given that many of my friends in Nigeria had been black or of mixed heritage. There I had identified with them, as well as trying to navigate my sense that I was also "white." So, I was seen as white in Africa, yet black in the UK. This was complex and confusing, compounded by the different projections I was now facing. As a clinician, I have experienced sexualized objectification, curiosity, as well as racial hatred for coming here and taking over jobs and professions. My physical presence as a woman of colour has aroused a number of conscious and unconscious processes and intersubjective dynamics. In addition, within the psychotherapy community, I have sometimes felt myself to be the face of the "acceptable other." By this, I mean I am both different, yet similar enough, conventional enough not to pose too much of a threat to white colleagues and clients. In other words, my sense of being "the other" amongst many of my colleagues as well as the adult learners I teach poses a mild rather than a radical disturbance. Psychotherapy in the UK is largely dominated by white liberal philosophy—a reflection of the dominant

population of psychotherapists and, whilst this offers some openness to difference, there are many economic, social, political, and cultural constraints, meaning the journey to personal and social pluralism in the UK continues to be long.

For both of us, having been raised under British hegemony has led to an internal tension in terms of our wish and our reluctance to belong. We find ourselves drawn into groups and communities that offer a place to belong and then want to pull away, retreat for protection and recuperation. Some of this is common for many people drawn to psychotherapy as a profession and the pull/push in us has been both conscious and unconscious. We discover more from sharing such experiences and offering our observations of each other in and out of groups. Our resistance to being dominated again and our profound need to be independent is linked to our strong urge to survive. We fear subjugation; when we reflect back on our relational experiences of it, it can feel like a death—the numbing, anesthetizing that Bollas (1987) wrote about in connection to extractive introjection speaks to us vividly. Our need for our own identity is a lifetime discovery.

As clinicians we have noticed that some clients discover permission to discuss their own differences as they see the differences in us. There is sometimes an assumption that we will understand their internal alienated world of what it is like to be different, to struggle to belong whether that be as a result of sexuality, ethnicity, or gender. This opens the door for opportunities to explore dynamics around identity. So, curiosity and confusion about our ethnicity sometimes leads to a desire for clients to connect to us socially, as real women. This has pressed us to think a great deal about how we want to hold ourselves as professionals. For instance, where our personal and professional boundaries sit in terms of personal revelations and how much we think is therapeutically helpful to either share or withhold. We are both inclined to work relationally and psychodynamically—so we often hold tensions with our appearance and identity between both the real "I/Thou" relationship (Clarkson, 1992) as well as the transferential one. This is a dilemma that has been paralleled in writing this article.

In addition to how we hold such boundaries is the ambivalence we experience around belonging. We recognize this resonates with the experiences of our fathers who, as we have shown, felt a deep sense of alienation after moving away from their fragmented homeland. Rather than belong, our fathers pursued nomadic lives and interests and were literally "lost between two shores" (Diamond, 1971). Like them we have been challenged as to what to do about where we identify and feel we belong to. Sometimes we have ended up electing to be on the periphery of communities, perhaps so we can move in and out with ease and no ties.

Both our fathers were modern and liberal compared to many of their Muslim peers and we are thankful for that. It was important to them that we were educated and independent women. Within Indian culture it is the norm for parents to take an active part in their children's education, further, to not allow their children to take their education for granted. Our fathers wanted us to have transferable skills to set up anywhere in the world, to be independent and not reliant on others. We suggest that this is at times a tough formula, to be resourceful and flexible in order to survive. We think of this as part of the "immigrants' state of mind," a mindset in our view that emerges from the need to find life away from trauma and poverty. Looking back at history and thinking currently about migration, we think this may exist globally as part of immigrants' psyches.

5 | CONCLUSION: NATIONALISM, A 21ST CENTURY CHALLENGE

The question of how a newly born state might facilitate a new identity for its people would seemingly require a deep connection with the philosophy and psychology of belonging as well as the wisdom and capacity to bring about such an ambitious outcome. One day our fathers were Indian and then overnight they became Pakistani. A few years later and both were attempting to make a life in the UK. Barriers to thriving were numerous, whether it be in the search for lodgings, jobs, or progress in careers. Some of the examples we have shared indicate the state of mind that is evoked when there is a terrible fear of being robbed by the hated and alien "other." We suggest such

states of mind attack internal possibilities for democracy, so that parochialism and totalitarian states of mind become the dominate feature.

The chaos of partition has been reflected in our process of writing this article. As writers sharing experiences, we lost our way several times as free association and spontaneous reminiscing was shared. Ordering our memories and subjective experiences into a coherent narrative has been a challenge. We understood this as a powerful parallel process that mirrored something frantic about the speed of partition and the impossibility for millions of people to come to terms with what had been lost, won, and what needed to be rebuilt across the Indian subcontinent.

Across the globe, difference has evoked struggles, conflicts, fights, and splits. These have inspired wars and contributed to all manner of atrocities. The complexity of identity, including national, regional, cultural, racial, political, and psychological identities destabilize us, divide us, challenge us to face our limitations. Needing to belong to a land and fights to claim land contribute to the writing and rewriting of history, geography, and culture. Add to this international, national, and regional politics that influence social identity as well as conscious and unconscious psychological processes, and there are multiple layers at work when it comes to working in the consulting room. The global historical and sadly current phenomena of white supremacy, as well as reactions and responses to this, remain a potent and complex contribution to how we live, communicate, and negotiate together. It seems that right now, we are being pushed to return to the problems our fathers faced.

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