

# Humming Resistance: A Feminist Reimagining Of Motherhood Through Memory, Migration, And The Kitchen

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» Featured Image Source: Photo of author's grandmother

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» Editors Note: #MoodOfTheMonth for April 2025 is **Feminist Reimagining Of Motherhood**. We invite submissions on this theme throughout the month. If you would like to contribute, kindly refer to our **submission guidelines** and email your articles to **shahinda@feminisminindia.com**

My grandmother migrated from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) to West Bengal during the Partition of India in 1947—an event often referred to as the “Holocaust of India.” It tore through families and homes, displacing millions who were forced to reconstruct belonging from fragments and memory. Like many women in the wake of such forced migrations who survived, my grandmother too endured not only the trauma of physical displacement but also the deeper, quieter violences—emotional, mental, and existential. She lost her home overnight, but more enduringly, she lost a sense of rootedness.

Growing up, I often found myself irritated by her unwavering insistence that I learn music and dance. The same applied for my mother too. In many Bengali households, this insistence has a choreography of its own—persistent, rehearsed, loving, and, at times, stifling. What I once saw as an imposition, I have come to understand as a form of transmission. A passing on. A quiet refusal. How might a feminist reimagining of motherhood help us dwell in these intergenerational ruptures—between the performative and the personal, the sanctioned and the silenced?

I turn to the kitchen—not as a static symbol of domestic confinement but as a sonic and affective archive, where memory and resistance simmer quietly. How can we listen differently to the maternal, and in doing so, reimagine motherhood not as a duty or ideal, but as a lived practice of remembering, resisting, and becoming?

### **Partition, patriarchy, memory and the quiet rebellion of my grandmother**

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The history and memory of Partition is often marked by remembering it as the subcontinent’s greatest rupture of home, memory and belonging. With migration came loss: of home, community, language, and belonging. For women, the violence was not only physical but emotional and cultural. Like many others, my grandmother lost not just land but the right to continuity. Yet, in the everyday, she insisted on something else. She ensured her daughters—and later her granddaughters—learned music and dance.



Source: FII

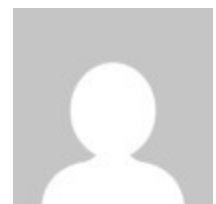
At the time, I found this insistence frustrating. Only later did I understand it as resistance: a refusal to allow erasure. Her father, Amarendra Narayan Bhaduri, was a noted patron of Hindustani classical music, having hosted legends like Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, Pandit Radhika Mohan Moitra. And yet, like many in post-colonial Bengal, his daughters were denied the opportunity to formally train. That contradiction between cultural patronage and gendered restriction haunted our family history.

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## About the author(s)

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Sumedha is an interdisciplinary dance artist-researcher, filmmaker. She is pursuing her PhD in Ethnomusicology in University of Music and Performing arts Graz, and currently a Lecturer at Jindal School of Liberal Arts and Humanities, teaching Screendance and Interdisciplinary seminar courses also in Ashoka University, JNu, Columbia University and University of Utah. She is an Erasmus Mundus scholarship recipient and studied her Choreomundus MA in Dance Knowledge, Practice and Heritage in Norway, France, Hungary, and the UK. With a focus on screendance filmmaking, dance anthropology, and visual ethnography, she traveled, lived together, and collaborated with a range of forms, communities, and dance-theatre makers across local, national, and international locations. Her films have travelled nationally and internationally: Tranzit House Romania; Screen.Dance, Scotland's Festival of Dance on Screen Screendance Festival; San Souci Festival for Dance Cinema; Movimiento en Movimiento International Film Festival, Mexico City; Numeridanse TV, France;



International Documentary and Short Film Festival; and International Council for Traditions of Music and Dance Conference, Ghana. Her noteworthy films include Biroho (2023), Saraab (2019), and Mau (2023). Teaching helps reflect on her own artistic practice and continue her grandmother's love for teaching as a way to transgress.