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**THE PARTITION AND ITS VERSIONS IN INDIAN
ENGLISH NOVELS: A CRITICAL STUDY**

**A
DISSERTATION
TO BE SUBMITTED TO
SAURASHTRA UNIVERSITY, RAJKOT
FOR THE AWARD OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN
ENGLISH**

SUPERVISED BY

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2006

STATEMENT UNDER UNI. O. Ph.D. 7.

I hereby declare that the work embodied in my thesis entitled as **“THE PARTITION AND ITS VERSIONS IN INDIAN ENGLISH NOVELS: A CRITICAL STUDY”**, prepared for Ph.D. Degree has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University on any previous occasion.

And to the best of my knowledge, no work has been reported on the above subject.

And the work presented in this thesis is original and whenever references have been made to the work of others, they have been clearly indicated as such and the source of information is included in the bibliography.

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Firoz A.Shaikh

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Chapter-1
INTRODUCTION

Chapter-1

INTRODUCTION

The very title of this research study “The Partition and its Versions in Indian English Novels” needs a detailed discussion and explanation. The term ‘Partition’ is related with the great historical event of vivisection of subcontinent into India and Pakistan. The historical background is discussed in detail in this introduction. The second term of the title ‘version’ means ‘an account of something from one point of view.’ Under the term research covers novel selected for detailed analysis and interpretation. The next phrase, in the title ‘Indian English Novels’; is the most significant part of the title. It means novels written by Indians in English.

The literary term ‘novel’ [fiction] refers to a kind of literature that deals, presents and describes imaginary people, places and events in beautiful prose. The politico-historical term ‘partition’ refers to the real historical and political events that led to the vivisection of this great country. The contradictory terms ‘fiction’ and ‘history’ need explanation for better evaluation of this research study. Etymologically, the term ‘history’ has originated from the Greek term ‘ historia’ which means inquiry, interview or interrogation of an eye-witness and also reports of such actions. History denotes the science of the human past. In other words, it is used to designate the sum total of human activities in the past. But it is difficult to arrive at the precise definition of the term ‘history’.

The term ‘historical novel’ or ‘political fiction’ or ‘topical novel’ can be applied for the partition novels. It is not easy to trace the origin of ‘historical novel’ in English but with publication of Sir Walter Scott’s novels in the nineteenth century such ‘genre’ came into existence and with the passage of time the world literature was rich with classic historical novels such as A Tale of Two Cities, War and Peace and All Quiet on the Western Front etc. The Indian fiction in English selected for the research study are aptly categorized as ‘historical novels’ or ‘political novels’ and

hence it will be profitable for the evaluation of the selected novels to trace the history of Indian fiction with reference to 'political fiction'.

M.C. Lemon believes that history is essentially concerned with the past, it deals with the matters not present to us and which we cannot know 'immediately', in order to approach his primary material, the historian is engaged in two different mental activities- inferring and proving the knowledge of past. Since the former uses imagination and the latter requires the use of logic, both fail to meet standards of impartiality and objectivity to which most historians are supposed to be committed.¹ It implies that no historian approaches his material arbitrarily as, to use White's term, 'the fact do not speak for themselves, but the historian speaks for them.'²

According to Hayden White, 'novelists might be dealing with only imaginary events whereas historians are dealing with real events, but the process of fusing events, whether imaginary or real, into a comprehensible totality capable of serving as the object of representation is a poetic process.'³ Moreover, the historians have always concerned themselves with events, and as it in an ascriptive way. They require explanation and have to be narrated.⁴

In this way, historiographic narrative characteristically puts the distinction between history and fiction under apprehension and articulates historiographical issues in narrative form. It questions the capacity of history to reveal absolute truths. Jacques Ehrman, in this regard, reaches to an extreme formulation, "history and literature have no existence in and of themselves. It is we who constitute them as the objects of our understanding."⁵ Although White puts it differently; to him, "what distinguishes 'historical' from 'fictional' stories is first and foremost their *contents*, rather than their *form*."⁶ The story told in the narrative, he further propounds. 'is a mimesis' of the story lived in some region of historical reality, and insofar as it is an accurate imitation it is to be considered a truthful account thereof."⁷

Historical fiction, viewed in this light, has greater capacity to reveal truths of its time, which could not be learnt otherwise. History-fiction overlap has, thus,

undergone a considerable change and can, if not replace, definitely supplement each other.

With changed outlook and success and popularity of the historical (meta) fiction, a great number of writers made massive use of history by incorporating social, cultural, political events of their interest into the fictional frame of history. The changed historical scenario also played a major role. The world witnessed rapid changes in the declining decades of the 19th century and at the turning of the subsequent century. The great revolution of France, which is described as the meanest, cruelest and bloodiest in human history,⁸ revolution in Russia and China, the rise and collapse of fascism and the two World Wars stirred the imagination of writers leading to origin of a rich body of historical fiction. Alexander Solzhenitsyn, the famous novelist commenting on this trend writes:

Literature that is not the breath of contemporary society, that dares not transmit the pains and fears of that society, that does not warn in time against threatening moral and social dangers- such literature loses the confidence of its own people...⁹

The writer is, undoubtedly a product of his milieu, he is bound to reflect his own time in his works. Even the fiction of most improbable type bares the footprint of its time. Lucian Goldman believes, “at any given moment social and historical reality always presents itself as an extremely complex mixtures not of structures but of process of structurations and destruction...¹⁰

The quoted statement of Lucian Goldman proves that the relation between literature and society is closely interrelated so that the study of literature can be regarded as the regular tools of social or historical investigation. Hence novel selected for my research study will provide various versions of partition of India as a writer of historical fiction is as much a historian as a novelist.

Indian novel in English emerged out of almost five decades of intellectual and literary gestation that had begun in 1930s with the triumvirate of the old masters, R.K.Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao who contributed to Indian fiction in English through their rich corpus of writings inclusive of short stories and novels. The pre-Independence Indian novelists, besides them, who have made use of history in their novels in a way or other include K.S. Venkatramani (Kandan the Patriot, 1932), A.S.P.Ayyar (Baladitya, 1930 and Three Men of Destiny,1939), Bhabani Bhattachary (So Many Hungers, Shadow From Ladakh., 1966), Kamala Markandaya (Nectar in a Sieve, 1954) and many others. They were closely followed by G.V. Desani (All About H. Hatterr, 1948), Manohar Malgonkar (A Bend in The Ganges, 1956; Distant Drums, 1960; Combat of Shadows, 1962), Khushwant Singh (A Train To Pakistan, 1956) and Bhagvan S.Gidwani (The Sword of Tipu Sultan). These writers tried to capture Indian reality in their own way and have narrated historical events in their Indian perspective.

Thus there emerged a new Indian fiction in English that dealt with historical events and personal imaginary events and characters to give expression to writers' sensitiveness to history and they set their novels in the background of historical events that decided the fate of man. Such writers have mixed historical facts with fiction. Almost all novels selected for this research study come under this category. The novels are: -

- (1) Khushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan (1956)
- (2) Attia Hosain's Sunlight on a Broken Column (1961)
- (3) Manju Kapoor's Difficult Daughters (1998)
- (4) Manohar Malgonkar's A Bend in the Ganges (1964)
- (5) Chaman Nahal's Azadi (1975)
- (6) Amitav Ghosh's The Shadow Lines (1988)

- **The Partition: A Historical Perspective**

The Partition of Indian subcontinent- like the politico-historical events of the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution, the two World Wars and the great depression of America-was an event of great magnitude and significance that had far-

reaching political, social, cultural, religious, economic and human impacts on Indian subcontinent. The historical process of partition and its holocaust had profound impact on contemporary culture, literature and history. This is the most cataclysmic event in the history of twentieth century India. The impression left on the minds of those who lived through those traumatic times persists to this day. The European continent and America witnessed historical events of huge magnitude that inspired great writers to produce famous novels: A Tale of Two cities, War and Peace, The Grapes of Wrath, Exodus, Farwell to Arms, Dr. Zhivago, Lord of the Flies etc. The Partition stirred the sensibility of men of letters inspiring them to write novels, poems, short-stories and dramas. Even today it motivates literary genius to write, and film producers to produce films and TV serials.

The Partition of India does not mean only the vivisection of a vast subcontinent but also catastrophe for millions of people, the effects of which have not died out yet as is suggested by recent events. The massive involuntary and unprecedented migration caused communal clashes, massacres and atrocities of all kinds. Both the sides of the boundaries were filled with innumerable refugees- who were rendered orphans by the storm called Partition. In fact, this event which resulted in the barbarity of the most heinous kind and in the massacre of not fewer than two million people, was terribly tragic and heart-rending because it was deliberate, and not a natural calamity like an earthquake or a flood.

And yet, curiously enough, this unfathomably tragic and momentous event has not stirred the creative imagination and urge of many Indian-English writers; only a few novelists have treated it seriously and what is more surprising is that none of the foremost novelists-Mulk Raj Anand, R.K.Narayan, Raja Rao and Bhabani Bhattacharya- has concentrated upon it in any one of his novels. Bhabani Bhattacharya is fully aware of this fact and regrets that a fairly good number of novelists have not felt a strong creative urge to re-create this event which is of immense historic value and is exceedingly rich in human passion. In this regard, the Western writers present a contrast to the Indian who seem to have been too dazed to treat history, in detail, in their works. To quote Bhattacharya's words:

The tragedies of partition have been beyond anything that a writer could “invent”. But where is the creative expression of all these happenings? It would be somewhat odd to say that the writers have been too dazed by recent history to make it their material. In contrast, the two World Wars are adequately reflected in the best literature of the West; the writers have lived through history undazed.¹¹

Such interesting evaluation would naturally inspire serious students to explore the Indian English literature dealing with Partition.

Further in the preface to the same book, K. K. Sharma and B. K. Johri, contradict Bhattacharya’s statement in the following words:

However, the observations, made above, do not imply that the theme of partition has not been explored in Indian-English fiction, for we have some brilliant novels written about it. It has been a compelling experience, resulting in irresistible creative urge, for several Indian-English fictionists, who have dealt with the theme of partition as competently as their counterparts in Hindi and Urdu, and are in no way inferior to Yashpal, the writer of *Jhutha Sach*, Bishma Sahani of *Tamas* and Rahi Masum Raza, the author of *Aadha Gaon*. Novelists like Khushwant Singh, Manohar Malgonkar and Chaman Nahal stand out prominently among those who have treated the theme of Partition, in detail, while R. K. Narayan, Balchandra Rajan and Attia Hosain deal with it cursorily in their novels.¹²

The phenomenon like partition will give birth to such contradiction that can lead one to undertake serious research work.

For better analysis, evaluation and interpretation of fictional version of partition, one has to trace:

- (a) Historical events leading to Partition
- (b) Social and cultural relationship of Hindus and Muslims
- (c) The role of religion-Hinduism and Islam
- (d) The role of the British rulers and Hindu-Muslim-Shikh political leaders.
- (e) The impact of partition on creative sensitivity of Indian writers, particularly on Indian fiction writers.
- (f) The fictional version of political, social, cultural, religious and historical events rendered in the political novels dealing with the theme of partition.
- (g) The growth of political (historical) fiction writing in Indian English.
- (h) Whether the creative writers, the unacknowledged legislators of the world, accept or reject the partition on the ground of human values.

This agony of partition has found its echoes in literature in various Indian languages in as many ways as the writers themselves. My present research study is concerned with the Indian English novels dealing with the partition of the Indian subcontinent as India and Pakistan, and the purpose of my academic endeavour is to explore various versions of partition rendered in Indian fictions. Such novels may be categorized as political novels and hence the political motive may dominate the writing but my aim is to survey and analyze objectively the human values cherished by the common Hindus and Muslims. I would make sincere attempt to see whether various versions are impartial, unbiased and neutral, whether the novelists accept the Partition as correct final solution or they reject it as human folly of politicians. I would also make an honest effort to see whether common Hindu and Muslim accepted uprooting as a permanent solution or not.

The novels selected for my research work are political and historical in nature and hence it will not be incongruous to present a brief historical, political, religious, social and cultural background that ultimately led to the unfortunate event of partition.

- **The Political Perspective:**

The demand for the creation of independent states for Muslims, concentrated in the north-western and north-eastern parts of the country, was made in March 1940, as the logical culmination of a long standing communal division. It is, therefore, essential to get at the root of this communal division and find out what made the Muslims demand a separate state for themselves. To get an answer, we have to dissect the social milieu, the cultural orientation, the mindset, the thought process and the formulation of attitudes of the two communities. This requires tracing the interaction of various forces at work since the advent of Islam in India, and particularly after the Muslims lost political power to the British-the East India Company.

- **The Religious Background:**

Religion, which has an overwhelming influence on people's lives, particularly among Hindus in the country like India, played a major part in shaping the attitudes of the two communities towards each other. Hinduism's great quality of absorbing new groups and peoples within its fold filled Muslims with apprehension, particularly after they had lost political power and therefore they wanted to maintain their identity as a nation. Another characteristic of Hinduism is its exclusiveness in daily life, which forbade inter dining and intermarriage with the people of other castes and religions. So it was not surprising that Hindus and Muslims, having lived as neighbours for centuries, remained distinct and separate distrusting each other..

Though racially, it had a substantial percentage of Hindu converts to Islam, the Muslim population of the subcontinent had absorbed layer upon layer of Arabs, Turks, Afghans, Iranians, and others. The admixture of so many racial stocks, in course of time, resulted in the emergence of a new group that transcended racial barriers. This was made possible because Islam does not permit social barriers or restriction on interracial marriages among Muslims. The same was true for Hindu converts to Islam, who were admitted not only to a new faith but to a new society.

Thus there developed a community whose religion, dress, cuisine and many daily chores of life were distinct from the rest of the local population with whom it could not eat together or intermarry. This new community also developed a new language, Urdu, written in the Persian script, which though it had a common Prakritic syntax with Hindustani has a large percentage of Arabic, Persian and Turkish words.

Another important characteristic of the Muslim community, which was a source of friction with Hindus, was its trans-Indian world perspective, as against nationalism. Islam, which makes a distinction only between believers and non-believers, does not permit any differentiation between human beings on the basis of race, colour or nationality. Muslims were, therefore, always inclined to look beyond national boundaries.

This background, mindset and perspective of the Muslims of the subcontinent explains their attitudes and responses, policies and reactions to all socio-political developments in the country from the time of the break-up of the Mughal Empire up to the Partition of the country in 1947. These may be briefly recounted here. Muslim sufis, saints, scholars, thinkers, poets, artists, artisans and traders, who came to India, as well as those who were born in India, gave a new vigour and richness to Indian life in thought, culture and civilization. But after the fall of the Mughals, Muslims in India ceased to be a dynamic force, they became inactive and decadent. This degeneration began during the second half of the eighteenth century, and continued for about a century.

During this period the vacuum in Muslim leadership was sought to be filled by religious leaders like Shah Waliullah. The ulama worked hard to halt the decay of Muslims in India and rejuvenate them. To achieve this end, Shah Waliullah translated the Koran to make it easily understandable, and gave a fresh interpretation of Islam, so as to reconcile the differences between its various sects and schools. He even tried to persuade the regional Muslim powers to wage a jihad (holy war) against the Marathas and Jats. His explanation for the decay of the empire and the degradation of Muslims was that the Indian Muslim, because of Hindu influences, had become indifferent to Islam and his remedy was that Indian Muslims should forsake Hindu

practices and customs. Shah Waliullah was thus unconsciously instrumental in distancing Muslims from Hindus and harming the common culture, which had been evolving at the mass level.

The Ulama's strong fight against the Britishers for the restoration of the Muslim power not only failed but it also worsened the fate of Muslims. After the capture of Delhi by the British in 1803, the Ulama declared a holy war against them. Shah Abdul Aziz advised Muslims not to learn the English language and not to serve under the British. The unsuccessful fight of the ulama had earned for the Muslims the hatred and hostility of the British who now embarked on a policy of depriving Muslims of high positions in administration and also by striking them economically.

The result was that the Muslims were replaced from most government jobs by Hindus who had, in the matter of learning English and acquiring modern education, many steps ahead. This resulted not only in loss of power and prosperity among Muslims but a corresponding gain for the Hindus. The shift of administrative power and wealth from Muslims to Hindus naturally bred illwill and heart burning among Muslims against Hindus. This was further aggravated by the British government, which openly sided with the Hindus against the Muslims. An instance of this was provided in 1842, when the Governor-General, Lord Ellenborough, while restoring the gates of the Somnath temple said 'the insult of 800 years is at last avenged'¹³. He believed that the best way of restoring 'equilibrium between the two religions was to bring the Muhamaddans to their senses'.¹⁴ Such an outburst by a Viceroy could only have been motivated by the British desire to create discord between Hindus and Muslims and to play one against the other.

The Muslims after 1857 could not organize themselves into any political agitation against the British. They had already paid a very heavy price for their participation in the revolt of 1857. Muslims were by then too poor and frightened to run any further risks. The loss of government power and the change in the court language, the failure of all their efforts to regain political power, the hostility of the new rulers, the lack of modern education and rampant poverty-all these had created for them a situation, which demanded a basic change in their political thinking as well

as leadership. This change did come about. A few Muslims like Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, accepted the challenge of modernity and stood up against the ulama. The Muslims were goaded to get English education and change their entire attitude towards the British. The lead in this direction came from members of the Muslims aristocracy called Ashraf, who strengthened their position by getting English education and by making loyal overtures to the British.

It is one of the many paradoxes of modern Indian history that, while almost during the entire rule of the Company the Muslims led in battles against the British, the new middle class elite, comprising mainly Hindu traders, stood solidly behind the Company. After the revolt of 1857, the role of Muslims and Hindus vis-a-vis the British government were reversed: the Hindu elite started gradually turning away from the path of loyalty to the British and the Muslim leadership became the chief pillar of British rule. A parallel development was that the Muslim leadership got estranged from the new Hindu elite, which had, under the British dispensation, attained wealth as well as a position of authority that had been the earlier preserve of the Muslims.

While tracing the history of the communal divide that finally culminated in the Partition of the country, it is worth noting that the social and cultural organization of the nineteenth century, starting from Raja Rammohan Roy's Brahmo Samaj in 1830, had a common feature. Though the aims and objects were catholic and broad-based, yet in practice they mostly tended to be either Hindu or Muslim, depending on the religious faith of their founders and organizers. For instance, the Landholders' Association and the British India Association had very little to do with Muslim landholders and Muslims. In the same way, Sir Syed's Translation Society catered mostly to Muslims.

The nineteenth century also witnessed the Hindu revivalist movements, the most notable of which was the Arya Samaj, founded by Swami Dayanand, who gave a call to the Hindus to go back to the Vedas, as the Wahabis had earlier given a call to the Muslims to go back to the Koran. There ensued a long exchange of polemics

between the Arya Samaj leaders and the ulama. Cow protection societies appeared in the 1880's, which led to a number of Hindu-Muslim riots.

In 1885, the Indian National Congress was founded and the subsequent political history of India was shaped by the multilateral interaction between the forces of British imperialism, the Congress and Hindu and Muslim communalism. Henceforth, there was to be a continuous tug of war between the Congress, which had brought together people from the entire country on a common platform with common aims and grievances, on the one hand, and a Muslim leadership which wanted to chart a separate course, on the other. This was coupled with Hindu and Muslim communal forces playing their own role in driving Muslims towards separatism. The British government in this scenario played one community against the other.

The basic issue between the Congress and the Muslim leadership until Partition was that the latter considered the Congress to be a Hindu body and denied its claim to represent Muslims. The Congress, on the other hand, always tried to attract and enlist the support of Muslims. We shall examine how this struggle between the Congress and the Muslim leadership, first under Sir Syed Ahmad and then under the Muslim League (which shaped the political course of events from 1885 to 1947), was finally won by the Muslim League, resulting in the Partition.

The birth of the Congress was the culmination of the sustained work done for decades by public organization like the Brahmo Samaj, the Prarthna Samaj and the British India Association.¹⁵ But most of these organizations and their leaders were Hindu and their work was confined to Hindus. It was however, not deliberate but the result of circumstances that made the Hindus stand almost alone in the vanguard of education and progress at that time. From its inception, therefore, the Congress assumed a Hindu bearing, though fundamentally it was broad based. The Congress leaders, however, always denied the charge of any such communalism.

The charge that the Congress was a communal body, was levelled at its very first session.¹⁶ It was, however, countered by the arguments that it had Muslims, Christians and Parsis among its delegates and that its demands were for the political

advancement of all sections of Indians. It was a fact that out of the 72 delegates at the first Congress session only two were Muslims, and the foremost Muslim leader of the time, Sir Syed Ahmad, was not among them. The Muslim contention was that when Muslims were not present at the session, the Congress could not claim to speak on their behalf. Before its second session at Calcutta, the Congress invited the two premier Muslim organizations of the country- the Central National Mohammedan Association and the Mohammedan Literary Society- to send delegates but both refused to do so. The second session was attended by 27 Muslim delegates, out of a total of 413 delegates. In order to woo Muslims the Congress chose Badruddin Tyabji, who had not attended the first two Congress sessions, to preside over its third session at Madras.

- **TWO NATION THEORY**

The Congress efforts to attract Muslims made Sir Syed Ahmad come out with his famous Lucknow outburst against it, before a representative gathering of Muslims, on 28 December 1887, when he declared that Hindus and Muslims were two separate nations. He said that representative institutions were unsuited to Indian conditions, as the number of Hindu voters being four times that of Muslim voters, Hindu candidates would always win and the system of representative government would thus only lead to the perpetual subjugation of the Muslims by the Hindus.¹⁷ Sir Syed's speech was described by one British newspaper, as 'one of the most remarkable discourses ever delivered by a native of India'.¹⁸

After Sir Syed Ahmad's Lucknow speech, Muslims hailed him as their political leader. Meetings were held at important centres where resolutions were passed, endorsing Sir Syed's views. Muslim associations in the country accorded their approval to his stand. The Muslim press, too, with some notable exceptions, supported Sir Syed. For instance, the Muslim Herald wrote:

We proudly accept Sir Syed as our leader and exponent, the summit and crown of Islam, a faith that binds together... the five crore Indian Mussalmans. His speech sounds the keynote of our policy.¹⁹

Sir Syed and his colleagues also maintained that a few Muslim delegates at the Congress were not the genuine representatives of the Muslims. The same insinuation was made later against Congress Muslims by the Muslim League, during its campaign for Pakistan in the 1940s when Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was called the 'Show boy' of the Congress and Jinnah refused to accept him as representative of the Muslims.

To the charge that the Muslims were not with them, the Congress reply was that the comparative small number of Muslim delegates was the natural result of the lack of higher education among them. But not many were convinced by this explanation. The Congress, however, remained undaunted and continued with its wooing of Muslims. Accordingly, at its fourth session in 1888, a resolution was passed that it would not take up any subject for discussion to which Hindu or Muslim delegates as a body objected, and thus conceded, the principle of 'communal veto' which was to become at a later date a strong demand of the Muslim League. The Muslims responded to this favourably and at the Bombay Congress session in 1889, of the nearly 2,000 delegates, 254 were Muslims, the largest Muslim attendance that any Congress session had had so far.

With the eruption of Hindu-Muslim riots and the Hindi-Urdu controversy, the tenth Congress at Madras in 1894 resulted in the Muslim representation falling to a barely 24 in a total of about 1,200 delegates. Of these delegates, 18 were from places near Madras. The position at the eleventh Congress at Poona in 1895 was even worse. There were only 19 Muslims out of 1,584 delegates, and of these, the residents of Poona or places nearby numbered 17. However, in yet another effort to attract Muslims, the Congress, chose a Muslim, Rahmatullah Sayani to preside over its twelfth session at Calcutta in 1896. Sayani's presidential address led to a debate among Muslims, mainly carried in the Muslim Chronicle and later covered by other Muslim press. However, a majority of the participants in the debate agreed with the Muslim policy of non-cooperation with the Congress.

To add to the Hindu-Muslim differences, which were getting more and more embittered by the 'cow killing' riots and quarrels over government jobs at the time, a

section of the Hindu press-the Advocate of Lucknow and the Indian National of Patna-took a blatantly anti-Muslim stand, in the Graeco-Turkish War, which made the Muslims believe that the Hindus would always grudge the victory of Islam and rejoice at its defeat, irrespective of where it took place.

The death of Sir Syed Ahmad made politically conscious Muslims feel orphaned, particularly because he had left behind no proper political organization which could carry on his work. The existing organization, the Central National Mohammedan Association and the Mohammedan Literary Society were unable to cope with the new situation. Muslims were also disillusioned at the way the cause of Urdu was betrayed in UP. After the death of Sir Syed Ahmad, Muslim leaders meekly gave in to a mild threat from the governor, Sir Anthony McDonald in 1901. Thus at the beginning of the twentieth century, educated Muslims felt the need to have a political organization like that of the Congress, which could take up their cause.

- **PARTITION OF BENGAL**

The partition of Bengal on 16 October 1905 not only gave a boost to political consciousness among Muslims but also a blow to Hindu-Muslim amity. The event was depicted by the British government as a boon to Muslims, because in the new province of East Bengal they would number 60 per cent and thus have a greater share in its administration than they could ever have hoped for in a united Bengal. Lord Curzon had told Muslim gatherings that his object in partitioning Bengal was not only to relieve the Bengal administration but also to create a Muslim province where the followers of Islam could be predominant.²⁰ For instance, on 18 February 1904, in a speech at Dacca, Curzon tried to woo Muslims thus:

‘The proposed Partition would invest the Mohammedans in East Bengal with a unity which they have not enjoyed since the days of Musalman Viceroys and kings.’²¹

Not all the Muslim leaders were, however, taken in by these arguments. Some strongly condemned the scheme of partition. The whole of Bengal seemed to have

risen against the government on this issue. But the large-scale participation by Muslims in the anti-partition movement caused much anxiety to the government, which outlined a strategy of winning over Bengali Muslims by exploiting the conflict of interests between Muslim peasants and Hindu Zamindars, resulting in a few communal riots in Bengal. Coming as it did, soon after the Hindi-Urdu controversy in the UP; it further estranged Hindu-Muslim relations. Moreover, Tilak's activities in giving an aggressive colour to Hinduism frightened many Muslim leaders, who were now convinced that Muslims must have their own separate political organization, which would safeguard their political interest adequately.

The number of Muslim delegates, which was barometer of Hindu-Muslim relations, was again reduced at successive Congress sessions in the beginning of the twentieth century. For instance, in 1903, there were not even 10 Muslim delegates out of 538; in 1904 there were 30 Muslim delegates out of 1010; and in 1905, at Banaras, there were only 20 Muslim delegates out of 757.²² But the 1906 Congress session at Calcutta had 50 Muslim delegates, including M.A. Jinnah. This was, however, in no way, a reflection of the prevailing trend among Muslim leaders who increasingly wanted a political organization exclusively for the community.

- **BIRTH OF MUSLIM LEAGUE**

On 1st October, 1906 at Simla, about 50 Muslim leaders from all over India met Lord Minto and presented him with their special demands, which were appreciated by the Viceroy. Within three days, they decided to form a central political organization. On 31st December 1906, at the conclusion of the Muslim Educational Conference at Dacca, a special meeting of all delegates and prominent Muslims from all over India unanimously passed a resolution deciding to form a political association called All India Muslim League, with a view to protect and advance the political interests of the Muslims of India and to promote among them feelings of loyalty to the British government. Jinnah was elected as the Vice President of the Indian Mussalman Association at Calcutta, which was formed with the objective 'to work with other communities in all political and economic matters because the interest of Muslims was in no way different from those of others'.

The Muslim League, in its first six successive annual sessions, demanded among other things:

- (i) Separate denomination representation in all elective bodies from the Imperial Council down to municipal, district and local boards;
- (ii) Separate representation for Muslims in public services on the basis of their population and their political importance, that Muslim candidates instead of competing with the candidates of other communities, should be appointed only on the basis of the minimum qualifications required for each post; and
- (iii) Recognition of Urdu as the lingua franca of the country.

The special Aligarh session of the League in March 1908 demanded adequate representation of Muslims in all councils with separate electorates and weightages at all stages and also 50 per cent representation in the Viceroy's Executive Council.

The demand of Muslim League for separate electorates and weightages generated a rival communalism. Aurobindo Ghosh who had pleaded for nationalism in 1908 felt that there was no hope unless nationalism was given a Hindu colour and confirmed the two-nation theory. Addressing the Society for Protection of Religions, he declared:

I say no longer that nationalism is a creed, a religion, a faith. I say it is Sanatan Dharma which for us is nationalism. This Hindu nation was born with Sanatan Dharma, with it, it moves, with it, it grows. When the Sanatan Dharma declines, then the nation declines.²³

Yet another development that alienated Muslims was the use of Hindu symbols for mass mobilization in the cause of national freedom. The historical literature produced during the period often referred to the Hindu struggle against Muslim imperialism. Maharana Pratap and Shivaji gradually became national heroes. With the advent of the twentieth century, the Arya Samaj movement had become militant. In 1907, an association was founded for the reconversion of non-Hindus to

Hinduism, known as Shuddhi Sabha or Arya Pratinidhi Sabha. This resulted in widespread communal tension in north India.

On the other hand, a great change took place in the course of Muslim politics. The annulment of the partition of Bengal and the pre-war international situation were mainly responsible for this change. In December 1912, the Muslim League Council sought to work, in cooperation with other communities, for a system of self-government suitable to India. Thereafter for over a decade, the League steadily pursued a policy of cooperation with the Congress and opposition to the government. At its Lucknow session in March 1913, the League president, Muhammad Shafi, severely attacked Britain for rejoicing over Muslim reverses in the Balkan, Tripoli and Iran. For the first time many Congress leaders were invited to address the Muslim League session and were lustily cheered. Jinnah who had opposed denominational electorates started attending Muslim League session from 1912. Muslim leaders changed their opinion about Tilak.

After eight months of deliberations, a joint reforms scheme was finalized, which was accepted by the Congress and the League sessions held separately at Lucknow in December 1916, which came to be known as the Lucknow Pact. The congress conceded the demand for separate electorates and substantial weightages in the provinces where Muslims were in a minority. Muslim representation was restricted to 50 per cent of the elected representatives in Punjab and 40 per cent in Bengal. In the Imperial Legislative Council, Muslim representation was fixed at 33 per cent of the elected members. Muslims of the minority provinces were given weightage in both the provincial councils and the Imperial Legislative Council. Each community was also given a communal veto.

At the end of the First World War, the Khilafat movement of the Muslims, supported by Gandhiji and his Non-Cooperation movement, had electrified the whole political atmosphere of the country and brought a sea change in Hindu-Muslim relations. Many Hindu leaders were asked to address mosque meetings and many Khilafatists addressed temple assemblies. But this cordiality between the two communities was not to last for long. The Moplah outbreak in August 1921 had a devastating effect on the future course of politics and the communal situation. The

government gave wide publicity to the riots and, holding the Moplah outbreak to be the direct result of the Khilafat movement, exploited the riots to spearhead a propaganda offensive against the Khilafat and Non-Cooperation movements.

By the end of 1921, the Khilafat movement had run its course and Gandhiji had also expressed his helplessness in controlling and disciplining the course of the Non-Cooperation movement.²⁴ The Khilafat movement got a big setback with Britain and Afghanistan signing a Friendship Treaty on 22nd November 1921. The abolition of the Khilafat as an institution by the Turks themselves, in February 1924, gave a final death blow to the Khilafat movement. Though it ostensibly achieved nothing, the movement created considerable political consciousness among the Muslim masses.

- **TOWARDS RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT**

Muslims had reacted favourably to the Government of India Act of 1919, which was a step towards the establishment of a constitutional government in the country. But the Congress rejected the Constitution and did not take part in the elections held in 1920 under this Act. The Muslim League went radical and identified itself with the Congress. It did not meet as a separate body between 1919 and 1924. And, when it did not meet in 1924 under Jinnah's presidentship, it insisted on immediate and far-reaching constitutional advances. Its resolution on Swaraj contained six principles. The first four dealt with the old demands of separate electorates and minority safeguards. But it introduced two new demands: (1) India must be a federal polity; and (2) any territorial redistribution must not affect the Muslim majority in Punjab, Bengal and the NWFP. The Muslim League foresaw that even in a federal India, the centre was bound to be Hindu-dominated. It, therefore, demanded full provincial autonomy.

The period from 1913 to 1924 saw the Congress and the Muslim League come closer, an exceptional phenomenon, which can be explained by two factors: (1) the repeal of the partition of Bengal had made Muslims bitter against the British; and (2) the British animosity towards Turkey had aggravated this feeling. The warmth in the Hindu-Muslim relations did not mean that the fundamental differences had

disappeared. What had happened was that because of anti-British emotions, the Muslims felt a desire to reach at some understanding with the Congress. Gandhi saw in this a fine opportunity to bring Muslims closer to the Congress and threw himself on the side of the Khilafat movement. The Muslims naturally welcomed this. However, the Congress-Muslim League rapprochement proved to be unproductive. The Khilafat and Non-Cooperation movements did provide opportunity for Hindu-Muslim unity for a short while, but it soon evaporated and the country witnessed the worst Hindu-Muslim riots in its history. Within a year of the ending of the Congress-League honeymoon, in December 1925, the Muslim League attacked and concept of nationalism as an ideology, asserted that Hindus and Muslims were not just two distinct religious sects but two distinct nations. The December 1925 session of the Congress was marked by the virtual absence of Muslim delegates. The only Muslim leaders present at the session were the Ali brothers and Maulana Azad. Madan Mohan Malaviya pointed out that Muslims had deserted the Congress.

The entire country witnessed communal outbursts during this period - Bihar riots in 1917. Moplah riots in August 1921, riots in Punjab, UP, Ajmer and Sindh in 1923 and the Kohat riots in September 1924. This vitiated the atmosphere in the early 1920s so much that Hindu revivalists found an excellent opportunity to resurrect the religious conversion (shuddhi) movement, which had been started by the Arya Samaj. The Hindu Mahasabha movement also received a great fillip. The sangathan movement spread and Hindu youth organized themselves as a volunteer force, later known as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). The Hindu communal mobilization was, in turn, followed by a corresponding Muslim mobilization in the form of the tabligh and tanzim movements, which were counterparts to those of the shuddhi and sangathan. The Jamiyat and Khilafat leaders took an active part in these movements. The shuddhi movement was also taken up with such vigour in parts of UP that in the first half of 1923, more than 18,000 Malkana Rajput, Gujjars and Baniyas were reconverted to Hinduism. Both Hindu and Muslim fanatics, of this time, carried out the most provocative propaganda against each other through the press, pamphlets and abusive speeches.

The communal warfare stunned Gandhiji, who went on a 21-day fast at Delhi after the Kohat riots in September 1924. Prominent leaders from most of the parties hurriedly called a Unity Conference, which unanimously agreed upon a code of conduct. *Shuddhi*, *Sangathan*, *tabligh* and *tanzim* movements were abandoned, but only for a while. After three months, they were revived and communalism returned with a vengeance. Fazlul Haq of Bengal, once a great supporter of the Khilafat and non-cooperation movement, raised the cry of 'Islam in danger' in 1925, allegedly on account of the growing power of the Hindus.

After the boycott of the Simon Commission, the All Parties Conference convened by the Congress had appointed a Committee with Motilal Nehru as Chairman to prepare a constitution for India. The report of this committee, known as the Nehru Report, rejected federation as a possible solution to the communal problem and envisaged a unitary government at the centre. It also did not provide for separate electorates or any weightage. Reservation of seats for Muslims was allowed only at the centre and in the Muslim minority provinces. The report was rejected by all shades of Muslim opinion. An All India Muslim Conference met at Delhi in 1929 under the chairmanship of the Aga Khan and laid down Muslim demands, which were, so to say, the Muslim reply to the Nehru Report. These were:

- (i) The Central government was to be a truly federal government with complete provincial autonomy and the residual powers were to be vested in the provinces;
- (ii) Separate electorates should continue;
- (iii) Existing weightage for Muslim in the Hindu majority provinces should continue;
- (iv) Muslims should be given their due share in the central and provincial cabinets;
- (v) A due proportion of seats should be given to Muslims in the public services and on all statutory self-governing bodies; and
- (vi) There must be safeguards for the protection and promotion of Muslim education, language, religion, personal laws and charitable institutions.

In March 1929, Jinnah drew up his famous 14 points, which were a repetition of all the earlier Muslim demands and which greatly influenced Muslim thinking for the better part of the next decade.

The Simon Commission, after visiting India in 1928 and 1929, published its report in May 1930, which recommended a federal framework for India. The Congress rejected the report while the Muslim League reserved its judgment knowing that the matter would be finally decided at the Round Table Conference.

The three sessions of the Round Table Conference at London in 1930 and 1931, could not produce any settlement of the communal problem. So the British government came out with its own Communal Award in August 1932, which retained separate electorates for Muslims and all other minorities. The Muslim majorities in Punjab and Bengal were reduced to minorities. The Award was, however, not popular with any party. The recommendations of the Round Table Conference were incorporated in the Government of India Act, 1935, which came into operation on 1st April 1937. Part II of the Act, dealing with the All India Federation, however, never came into operation.

After the general elections in 1937, the Congress formed its governments in six provinces-UP, CP, Bihar, Orissa, Bombay and Madras, but only after getting embroiled in two controversies with the Muslim League. First, the Congress had obtained an assurance from the Viceroy that the provincial governors would not use the 'special powers' given to them by the Act for safeguarding the interests of the minorities, which was greatly resented by the Muslim League. Second, the Congress refusal to form a coalition government with the League in UP unless it ceased to function as a separate group, also angered the League.

The Congress rule in the six provinces from July 1937 to October 1939 was held out by the Muslim League to have been a nightmare for the Muslims. The *Pirpur Report*, the *Shareef Report* and Fazlul Haq's pamphlet *Muslim Sufferings Under Congress Rule* gave details of the alleged excesses of the Congress governments against Muslims, such as the ban on beef, the forbidding of azan (call to prayer), noisy processions before mosques at prayer time, attacks on worshippers in mosques and the boycott of Muslim shops. The Muslim League also took strong exception to the Congress education policy. A committee appointed by the All India Muslim Education Conference to go into this matter criticized the Wardha scheme of

education and the scheme of Vidya Mandirs. The Muslim complaint was that it was intended to take Muslims away from their culture, religion and traditions, to superimpose Hindu culture on the education system, as well as introduce highly objectionable textbooks and Sanskritized Hindi at the cost of Urdu.

- **THE MOVEMENT FOR PAKSITAN**

The Congress rule in the six provinces from 1937 to 1939 led to a significant change in the attitude of the Muslim League towards constitutional issues. At its 1938 annual session at Patna, the League authorized Jinnah 'to explore the possibility of a suitable alternative which would completely safeguard the interests of Muslims'. In March 1939, the League Working Committee appointed a body to examine various schemes already propounded and those that might be submitted thereafter. Thus, by the beginning of 1940, Muslim politics had decidedly taken a significant turn. The Muslim League, which had all through wanted an Indian federation with limited powers, now no longer wanted a federation. As the Congress traveled towards the idea of a united India, the League turned towards 'Muslim independence'. The political unity of India, which had been taken for granted by the Muslim League before 1937, was no longer looked upon as an axiom. The Indian political situation had undergone a fundamental change.

Before the All India Muslim League passed its historic Lahore (or Pakistan) Resolution in March 1940, the establishment of a separate Muslim state or states in the subcontinent had been advocated by some public figures like Saiyed Jamaluddin Afghani, Abdul Jabbar Khaire and Abdul Sattar Khaire, the latter two known as the Khaire brothers. In 1928, at the Calcutta meeting of the All Parties Convention, the Aga Khan had advocated independence for each province.²⁵ However, Sir Mohammad Iqbal was the first important public figure to propound the idea of Pakistan from the platform of the Muslim League. In his presidential address to the League's annual session at Allahbad in 1930, he said:

I would like to see Punjab, North-West Frontier Province, Sindh and Baluchistan amalgamated into a

single state. Self-government within the British empire or without it, the formation of a consolidated North-West Indian Muslim state appears to me to be the final destiny of the Muslims, at least of North-West India.²⁶

At the third Round Table Conference, Iqbal had pleaded that there should be no central government in the subcontinent and that the provinces should be autonomous and independent dominions.²⁷

Iqbal did not give a name to his projected Muslim state. That was the work of Rahmat Ali at Cambridge, who issued a pamphlet *Now or Never*, in January 1933, pleading the idea of Partition. He wanted Pakistan to comprise Punjab, the NWFP, Kashmir, Sindh and Baluchistan. Bengal and Assam would form another Muslim state of Bang-i-Islam. The Nizam's dominions in the south would be named Usmanistan. These three states should then form a triple alliance.²⁸

It was, however, the Lahore Muslim League session of March 1940 that adopted the establishment of independent Muslim states as its final goal. Jinnah, in his presidential address said that the Muslims were a nation by any definition. The problem of India could not be solved if it was treated merely as an inter-communal question. It was an international issue and must be dealt with as such. He further said that the Hindus and Muslims had two different social philosophies and social customs. They neither intermarried nor interdined together. They belonged to two different civilizations, which were based mainly on conflicting ideas and concepts. Hindus and Muslims derived their inspiration from different sources of history. They had different epics and different heroes. Very often, the hero of one was the foe of the other, and likewise their victories and defeats overlapped. To yoke together two such nations under a single state, he said, must lead to growing discontent and final destruction of any fabric that may be built up for the government of a state. Therefore, Muslim India could not accept any constitution which would necessarily result in the permanent rule of a permanent majority. The only course open to all, Jinnah said, was to permit the major nations to establish separate homelands by dividing India into sovereign states.²⁹

The Muslim League resolution proposing the Partition of the country said:

No, constitutional plan would be workable in this country or acceptable to Muslims unless it is designed on the following basic principles, namely, that geographically contiguous units are demarcated into regions which should be so constituted that the areas in which Muslims are numerically in a majority as in the north-western or eastern zones of India, should be grouped to constitute independent states in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign.³⁰

After the adoption of the Lahore Resolution, Jinnah explained to the Muslims of the Hindu majority provinces that whether India was partitioned or not, they would always remain minorities. By opposing the division of India, they could not improve their position but they would obstruct the freedom of a majority of Muslims in the subcontinent. Jinnah held that India was already divided and partitioned by nature, Muslim India and Hindu India existed on the physical map. There was neither a country, nor a nation, nor a central national government in existence that was being divided or violated.³¹ Jinnah pointed out that autonomous provinces were already in existence under the 1935 constitution. In some of them Muslims predominated, while others were mainly Hindu dominated. Their reconstitution into a 'geographical, contiguous, homogenous independent zone' was, therefore, the most feasible and practicable scheme.³²

The Muslims, as Jinnah stated, did not want to harm or injure any other community or interest. They asked for bare justice. They wanted to live an honourable life as free men. They stood for free Islam and free India.³³ Jinnah continued that Muslims were not demanding Pakistan from Hindus because they did not possess the whole of India. It was the British who took India from the Muslims and the Muslim demand was addressed to the British. It was 'utter nonsense' to say that Hindustan

belonged to Hindus because if larger habitation were the criterion, India was the motherland not only of the Dravidians, but also of the aborigines.³⁴

For the protagonists of Pakistan, the biggest proof of the correctness of their case was that a non-Muslim observer like B.R. Ambedkar was convinced that the Pakistan scheme, despite all its disadvantages, offered a feasible way out of the political impasse in India. In his book, Thoughts on Pakistan, he saw no substance in the Hindu objections to the Pakistan scheme and shared the Muslim fear of domination by caste Hindus.³⁵

After the outbreak of the Second World War, the British government in its 8th August 1940 offer promised Dominion Status and a constituent assembly for India at the end of the war. It also assured that full weight would be given to the views of the minorities in any revision of the constitution and that no further political development which did not satisfy the minorities would be approved by His Majesty's Government. The Muslim League had thus extracted an unequivocal declaration from the British government that Muslim satisfaction would be sought in any future constitutional arrangement.

The Cripps Proposals, published on 30th March 1942, apart from reiterating Dominion Status and a constituent assembly for India at the end of the war said that any constitution made would be acceptable to the British government subject to the condition, that any province would be free to keep itself out of the proposed Indian Union. And, if such non-acceding provinces so desired, they could have their own separate union analogous to the proposed Indian Union. The Congress opposed the non-accession clause of the proposal because it contained the seeds of India's disintegration. The Muslim League was also not satisfied with the non-accession clause, as according to it, this did not ensure the creation of Pakistan as envisaged by it and, therefore, it too rejected the Cripps proposals, though the possibility of a Muslim state was implicit in it.

The general elections to the Central and provincial legislatures were held in the winter of 1945-6 on very clear issues. The Muslim League went into the fray to

vindicate its claim of speaking for Muslim India and to prove the popular backing for the demand of Pakistan among Muslims. The Congress manifesto was that the Congress represented all Indians, and India was to remain one undivided country.

In the elections for the Central Legislative Assembly held in December 1945, the Muslim League won every single Muslim seat, the Nationalist Muslims forfeiting their deposits in many instances. The Congress success in non-Muslim constituencies was equally spectacular. The League won 86.6 per cent of the total Muslim vote and the Congress 91.3 per cent of the total general vote. In the provincial elections, held in early 1946, again the two main parties swept their respective constituencies. The Congress won a total of 930 seats, gaining an absolute majority in eight provinces. The Muslim League captured 428 out of 492 Muslim seats. The results of the general election, by establishing beyond doubt that the Muslim League represented Muslim India and that the Congress represented the rest of India, showed the Hindu-Muslim problem in its stark reality.

An important landmark in the evolution of Pakistan was the convention of the Muslim League legislators at Delhi on 7-9 April 1946, which modified the original Lahore Resolution of March 1940 and declared that there should be only one Pakistan instead of two, as contemplated in the original resolution.

After the British government's announcement on 29th February 1946 to send 'a special mission of Cabinet Ministers' to solve the Indian constitutional tangle, Prime Minister Attlee declared on 15th March:

We are mindful of the rights of minorities and the minorities should be able to live free from fear; on the other hand, we cannot allow a minority to place their veto on the advance of the majority.³⁶

On this Jinnah reiterated that the Muslims of India were not a minority but a nation and self-determination was their birthright.

After a conference with the Congress and the League representatives at Simla from 5 to 12 May, which could not throw up any agreement, the Cabinet Mission published its own Plan on 16th May. The plan was:

There would be a Union of India comprising British India and the Indian states, which should deal with Defence, Foreign Affairs and Communications. All residual powers would belong to the provinces which would be free to form groups with their own Executives and Legislatures. Each group could determine the provincial subjects to be taken in common. Any provinces could by a majority vote of its Legislative Assembly call for a reconsideration of the terms of the Constitution after every ten years. A constituent assembly elected by Provincial Assemblies on the basis of population, shall frame the future constitution for India.

The Congress, which accepted the Plan on 6th July, with the condition that it was open to the Constituent Assembly to vary the Plan, and that no province could be compelled to belong to a group against its will. The Muslim League had accepted the Plan on 6th June because the grouping of provinces provided the foundation for Pakistan. But after the Congress stand that it had only agreed to go to the Constituent Assembly and nothing else, coupled with the silence of the authors of the Plan on this Congress policy, the Muslim League withdrew its acceptance of the Plan on 27th July.

By the end of July 1946, British India had elected its 296 representatives to the Constituent Assembly. The Congress had won all the general seats except nine, and the Muslim League all the Muslim seats except five. The first meeting of the Assembly had been called for 9th December, but the League refused to participate in the Assembly proceedings or even to recognize it as a valid body, unless the Congress accepted the grouping clause of the Cabinet Mission Plan as the authors of the Plan had interpreted it. The British government, after its failure to patch up the differences between the Congress and the League by inviting the leaders of the two parties to London on 2nd December 1946, made a statement on 6th December:

Should a constitution come to be framed by a
Constituent Assembly in which a large section of the

Indian population had not been represented, His Majesty's Government could not of course contemplate forcing such a constitution upon any unwilling parts of the country.³⁷

The Muslim League demanded the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly on 31st December, 1946.

It was in this atmosphere of mutual recrimination that the British government made its historic announcement of 20th February 1947, which said:

It is a definite intention... to affect the transfer of power to responsible Indian hands by a date not later than June 1948. If an agreed constitution was not worked out by a fully representative assembly by that date, the government would have to consider to whom the power of the central government in British India should be handed over on the due date, whether as a whole to some form of central government for British India, or in some areas to the existing provincial governments, or in such other way as may seem most reasonable and in the best interest of the Indian people.³⁸

In the same statement, it was announced that Wavell was being recalled and replaced by Viscount Mountbatten. As the Cabinet Mission Plan was for all practical purposes dead, Mountbatten had to prepare another plan, according to the British government statement of 20th February. This plan was: The provincial legislative assemblies of Punjab and Bengal would each meet in two parts, one representing the Muslim majority districts and the other the rest of the province. The members of two parts of each legislative sitting separately would vote whether or not the province should be partitioned, if a simple majority of either part deciding favour of partition, division would take place. Each part of the assembly would also decide whether to join the existing constituent assembly or a new constituent assembly. As soon as this

was decided, the Governor-General would appoint a Boundary Commission to demarcate the boundaries of the two parts of each province on the basis of contiguous majority areas of Muslims and non-Muslims and also 'other factors'... Urvashi Butalia says:

It was never clear quite what this last meant. With a bare five weeks in which to decide (Radcliffe arrived in India on July 8, 1947 and the award was announced on August 16, 1947) Radcliffe got down to the momentous task of deciding a boundary that would divide a province of more than 35 million people, thousands of villages, towns and cities, a unified and integrated system of canals and communication networks, and 16 million Muslims, 15 million Hindus and 5 million Sikhs, who despite their religious differences, shared a common culture, language and history.³⁹

Predictably, there were irreconcilable differences between the members, and the different political organizations each had their own interpretation of where the boundary should be laid.

Radcliffe's task was not an easy one. He had little time, no familiarity with the land or the people, and census statistics which were, by now, quite old and almost certainly outdated. Boundaries are usually demarcated along geographical lines – rivers, mountains, etc.

In the end, predictably, the award satisfied no one. Indeed, there was no satisfactory way to make the division. 'The Amrita Bazar Patrika' labelled it the 'departing kick of British imperialism at both the Hindus and Muslims', while Dawn called it 'territorial murder' and said 'Pakistan has been cheated by an unjust award, a biased decision, an act of shameful partiality by one who had been trusted to be fair

because he was neutral'. For his part, Cyril Radcliffe knew he had not made himself popular. He would never go back to India, he said, and wrote to his nephew:

Nobody in India will love me for the award about the Punjab and Bengal and there will be roughly 80 million people with a grievance who will begin looking for me. I do not want them to find me. I have worked and traveled and sweated ... oh, I have sweated the whole time.⁴⁰

Later – much later – he was asked in an interview whether he would have done differently had he had more time. And he said:

Yes. On my arrival I told all political leaders that the time at my disposal was very short. But all leaders like Jinnah, Nehru and Patel told me that they wanted a line before or on 15th August. So I drew them a line.⁴¹

I have made an attempt to explore the 'historical blunder' that deeply disturbed the creative genius of Indian writers writing fictions in English, particularly their novels dealing with the theme of partition. Perhaps none, except the politicians and the British rulers, seems happy with partition.

The political developments that preceded the drawing of Radcliffe's boundaries contributed to the growing hostility between the Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims. This did not only have to do with religion. Much more was at stake: jobs, livelihoods, property, and homelands. A sort of competition developed for these, but significantly and differently, on religious lines.

On 2nd June, the Viceroy put the Plan before a meeting of the Congress and the League leaders and Baldev Singh, the representative of the Sikhs, and it was approved. On 3rd June the Plan was published. On 4 June Mountbatten held a Press Conference and mentioned 15th August, 1947 as the tentative date for the transfer of

power. On 10th June the Muslim League Council gave full authority to Jinnah to accept the fundamental principles of the Plan as a compromise. On 14th June, the AICC (All India Congress Committee) accepted the Plan.⁴²

Members of the Bengal and Punjab legislative assemblies representing the Muslim and non-Muslim majority districts met separately. In both the provinces, members from Muslim majority districts decided by a majority vote that their respective provinces should not be partitioned and that they should join a new constituent assembly, while members from non-Muslim Majority districts decided by a majority vote that their provinces should be partitioned and that they should join the existing Constituent Assembly. The Sindh Legislative Assembly decided by a majority vote to join a new Constituent Assembly. In Baluchistan, the shahi jirga and the non-official members of the Quetta Municipality met and unanimously decided to join a new Constituent Assembly. In the referendum in Sylhet, a majority voted in favour of separation from Assam and joining with East Bengal. In the referendum in the NWFP, held from 6 to 17 June, an overwhelming vote was in favour of joining a new Constituent Assembly. The Congress had boycotted the referendum because the people had not been given a third choice of voting for an independent Pakhtoonistan, besides the two choices of either joining the existing or a new constituent assembly.

Thus it was decided that the new state, Pakistan, would comprise the Muslim majority districts of Bengal and Punjab (which constituted the major area and population of these two provinces), the district of Sylhet and the whole of the NWFP, Sindh and Baluchistan. And thus on

15th August 1947, dawned the dual reality of Independence and Partition. As always, between the two of them, Gandhiji and Nehru mirrored the feelings of the Indian people. Gandhiji prayed in Calcutta for an end to the carnage taking place. His close follower, Mridula Sarabhai, sat consoling a homeless, abducted 15-year-old girl in a room somewhere in Bombay. Gandhiji's prayers were reflective of the goings-on in the dark, the murders, abductions and rapes. Nehru's eyes were on the light on the horizon, the new dawn, the birth of free India. 'At the stroke of midnight when the world sleeps India shall awake to light and freedom'. His poetic words, 'Long years

ago we made tryst with destiny,' reminded the people that their angry bewilderment today was not the only truth. There was a greater truth – that of glorious struggle, hard-fought and hard-won, in which many fall martyrs and countless others made sacrifices, dreaming of the day India would be free. That day had come. The people of India saw that too, and on 15th August- despite the sorrow in their hearts for the division of their land-danced in the streets with the abandon and joy.

Thus arrived long cherished moment of freedom with pang of partition. In Delhi, there was jubilation led by Nehru and his Cabinet while in Calcutta, Mahatma Gandhi observed fast keeping himself aloof from all celebrations. These mixed feelings have been depicted in highly touching manner in various versions of partition given by the Indian novelists writing in English. I intend to highlight these feelings in different versions..

In the backdrop of the holocaust, unprecedented in India's history, and the largest ever transfer of population in recorded history that immediately followed Partition, as well as the continuously strained relations between the two successor states, the big question arises- Whom has Partition benefited? The most striking fact about Pakistan is how it has failed to satisfy the interests of the very Muslims who demanded its creation. The main centres of Muslim population in undivided India were Punjab and Bengal where Muslims had dominated the political scene. But both the provinces ended up by being sliced into two. Muslim Punjab lost its fertile eastern districts. Muslim Bengal, which lost Calcutta, its economic heart, and the hinterland of West Bengal, was reduced to the status of an over populated rural slum. As for Muslims in India, who numbered 35 million at the time, they were left high and dry at the mercy of the very people they had antagonized in their struggle for Pakistan.⁴³

As to the question whether Partition could have been avoided the answer is that the Cabinet Mission Plan of 16th May 1946 had provided a way out and at one stage both the Congress and the Muslim League had accepted it, but the destiny of India had willed otherwise. The grouping clause of the Plan, the main attraction for the League, was too much for the Congress to digest. It also thought that there was no way to stop the prevailing chaos in the country but to accept the Partition Plan. 'The

Congress Working Committee accepted it with only one dissenting voice-that of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan.⁴⁴ As Gandhiji observed, 'Everybody is today impatient for India's independence. Therefore, there is no other help.'⁴⁵

The original date of independence was advanced by Mountbatten, the man who was said to be 'in a hurry' , and political leaders endorsed this speed- up agenda, giving people little time to make thought out decisions. There was reluctance and fear of consequences and hope for the freedom; both find its real expression in the two following references from Jawaharlal Nehru's speeches. He warned about the possible consequences:

“Any division of India on a religious basis as between Hindus and Muslims, as envisaged by the Muslim League today, cannot separate the followers of these two principal religions of India, for they are spread out all over the country. Even if the areas in which each group is in majority are separated, huge minorities belonging to the other group remain in each area. Thus instead of solving the minority problem, we create several in place of one.”⁴⁶

This is one of the grave consequences that the Indian subcontinent suffers even after fifty eight years of partition. Nehru's fearful words came true. Further, a few lines later, he suggests the inevitability of partition and perhaps reveals his own helplessness regarding it:

It is difficult enough to solve such problems by separation where nationalities are concerned. But where the test becomes a religious one it becomes impossible of solution only on logical basis. It is reversion to some medieval conception which cannot be fitted into the modern world.⁴⁷

Thus there was reluctance to partition the country. Then leaders, particularly within the Congress began to see it as a necessary price for independence, and were complicit in the processes that led to the severing of what Sardar Patel described as a 'diseased limb'. The blood that was shed, however, was not only that of a limb cut off, but of thousands of lives. Even Mohammad Ali Jinnah described Pakistan as 'moth-eaten'.

To some extent, the seeds of the idea of partition can be said to have lain within the economic and social differences that existed between Hindus/Sikhs and Muslims. Most Partition memories speak of pre-Partition days, when Hindus and Muslims and Sikhs lived in a state of- often mythical- harmony. Yet this harmony was built on concrete, material differences. At a more day to day level, there were other differences. Bir Bahadur Singh, to whom Urvashi Butalia spoke some years ago, described these eloquently:

....if a Musalmaan was coming along the road, and we shook hands with him, and we had, say, a box of food or something in our hand, that would then become soiled and we would not eat it; if we are holding a dog in one hand and food in the other, there's nothing wrong with that food. But if a Musalmaan would come and shake hands our dadis and mothers would say, son, don't eat this food, it has become polluted. Such were the dealings: how can it be that two people are living in the same village, and one treats the other with such respect and the other doesn't even give him the consideration due to a dog? How can this be? They would call our mothers and sisters 'didi', they would refer to us as brothers, sisters, fathers and when we needed them, they were always there to help. Yet when they came to our houses, we treated them so badly. This is really terrible. And this is the reason Pakistan was made.⁴⁸

Urvashi Butalia has provided us the facts and reasons for the birth of two nations. In the “introduction” to Orphans of the Storm- Stories on the Partition of India, Saros Cowasjee has beautifully explained why and how the partition holocaust stirred the minds, hearts and imagination of writers to impart creative expression to this great historical event of twentieth century.

Saros Cowasjee opens his introduction thus: In concluding pages of Khushwant Singh’s “Train to Pakistan” [1956], one of the characters recalls Jawaharlal Nehru’s famous words to the Constituent Assembly on the night of August 14, 1947:

“Long ago we made a tryst with destiny and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure but very substantially.”⁴⁹

No doubt revealing Khushwant Singh’s own bitter disillusionment, the same character pronounces:

Yes, Mr. Prime Minister, you made your tryst. So did many others- on the 15th of August, Independence Day.⁵⁰

Nehru made his tryst with destiny and became India’s first Prime Minister. But what of the “others”? Their tryst- the tryst of the common people caught between greed of politicians for power and the unseemly haste with which the Labour Government in Britain decided to transfer power. It is on record that Lord Louis Mountbatten, then Viceroy and Governor General of India, got his Reforms Commissioner, Mr. V.P. Menon to draw up the plan for the division of India in just four hours. With this plan he himself flew to London and got Mr. Attlee and his Cabinet to accept in exactly five minutes. The historian Leonard Mosley says:

It is all very well to draw up a plan to divide India in four hours and accept it in five minutes. How, in a land

consisting of 250,000,000 Hindus, 90,000,000 Muslims,
10,000,000 Christians and -particularly- 5,000,000
Sikhs, do you implement it?⁵¹

The implementation of the plan with neither foresight nor preparedness led to a holocaust. Overnight, two new states came into existence: a truncated India, and a largely Muslim Pakistan comprising Sind, Baluchistan, North West Frontier province and parts of the states of Punjab in the West and Bengal in the East. Mahatma Gandhi, Mountbatten's "one man boundary force", kept the peace in Bengal, but indescribable violence broke out in the Punjab. Even by a conservative estimate ten million people took to the road; a million did not make their destination. Trains packed with Muslim refugees, all of them murdered during the journey. Arrived in West Pakistan with messages scribbled on the sides of the carriages reading, "A Gift from India." In turn the Muslims sent back train loads of butchered Sikhs and Hindus with the message, "A Gift from Pakistan." Foot convoys, some of them 800,000 strong and seventy miles long, moved between the two dominions. Thousands were slaughtered on the way; and equal number fall victim to cholera and other diseases. One Captain Atkins of the British army recalls a road on which a convoy had passed: "Every yard of the way there was a body, some butchered, some dead of cholera. The vultures had become so bloated by their feasts they could fly no longer, and the wild dogs so demanding in their taste they ate only the livers of the corpses littering the road."⁵²

- **The Impact of Partition on Literature:**

The partition of the Indian subcontinent was an event of such a great magnitude that profoundly affected human emotions and values to such a great extent that all creative arts and artists have come under its influence. So not only writers but painters, film makers and TV producers also have explored this event in their respective medium. So we have moving TV sagas like "Buniad" "Tamas", films like "Garam Hava", "1942-The Earth", "Pinjar", "Veer Zara" etc. They have been performed and produced to educate and appeal the audience about partition. But it is fiction that provides vast canvass to the creative genius to deal with the very complex theme of partition and this genre has attracted writers of all Indian languages.

Vernacular languages have limited readership while Indian fiction in English has the international audience and therefore it has drawn world wide attention of writers and scholars, critics, readers and serious students of Indian English fiction.

Since the province of Punjab was the first casualty of this unfortunate event and a major participant in this, the Punjabi psyche was naturally the first to respond to it in various literary endeavours. Nanak Singh's Khoon De Sohle (1947), and Agg Di Khund (1948) which is actually one novel in two parts, is chiefly concerned with riots in Punjab, especially in Amritsar at the time of independence. Communal hatred and its shameless exhibition are picturised truthfully in them. His other novels Mazdhaar (1949) and Chitrakaar (1950) also deal with the problems of refugees, that is a consequence of partition. Kartar Singh Duggal's Nahun Te Maas, translated in Hindi as Choli Daman (1968) also serialized and telecast on the Doordarshan, is a novel that interprets communal relationships distinctly, and shows hatred taking roots, and growing deeper.

Amrita Pritam's Pinjar presents, with a psychological insight, the plight of a Hindu woman kidnapped by Muslims. Although she is married to a Muslim young man who is devoted to her, she could not fit into that altogether different world. She misses familiar faces, her home and the village. She had secretly returned to her home that very night she was kidnapped, but her parents refused to accept her. During the partition, however, she notices that many women are accepted in their families. Her brother's wife, who had been kidnapped by Muslims, has been welcomed home by her own mother. While hers was a case in isolation in the past so at that time her parents did not have the courage to accept their daughter. She, however, reconciles with life realizing how deeply she loves her husband and children.

In Hindi the list of the writers dealing with this theme is longer. They can be divided into two groups: those who dealt with the factors responsible for partition, and those who dealt with the event itself. Bhisham Sahni's Tamas (1973) deals with the pre-partition condition of India in the North West. Amritray's Bij (1967), Vishnu Prabhakar's Nishikant (1958), Bhairav Prasad Gupta's Sati Maiya Ka Chaura (1959), Bhagwathicharan Verma's Bhule Bisre Chitra (1961), Kamleshwar's Laute Hue

Musaphir (1971), Yashpal's Meri Teri Usaki Baat (1974), fall into this group. While Ramanand Sagar's Aur Insaan Mar Gaya, Acharya Chatursen Shastri's Dharma Purtra, Yashpa's Zootha Sach, Gurudatt's Desh Ki Hatya are particularly concerned with the event itself. Rahi Masoom Raza's Aadha Gaon covers a large span from pre- to post-Independent India, so does Laute Hue Musaphir by Kamleshwar.

Besides the selection of time span, it is interesting to note how the writers interpret this event from different perspectives. Bhairav Prasad Gupta's Sati Maiya Ka Chaura is written with a communistic point of view, and he suggests that the age of blind faith has come to an end, and people should realize it, for in India, the co-existence of people belonging to different faiths is inevitable. Similarly, Yashpal also has a progressivistic out look in his Meri Tei Usaki Baat, a big volume containing the story of three generations, the time spanning from the end of the First World War to 1945. Together with different political parties, Yashpal also considers the economical differences as responsible for breaking the communal harmony. Kamleshwar's Laute Hue Musaphir depicts the change in the psychology of the people living in a locality. Nothing undesirable happens there, just the attitude of the people has changed and that kills the lively atmosphere of the village. Many a people leave for Pakistan after Independence, some of them return to their village after ten-fifteen years. An old woman of this area is happy to receive these 'travellers' back.

Bhisham Sahni's Tamas narrates the story of a district in Punjab at the time when interim government was in power, and Nehru was the president. Violent riots break out due to a small thing, the horrors of partition haunt the atmosphere of the novel. Though labelled as a progressivistic writer, Sahani's treatment of the theme is more objective than most of his other counterparts.

Acharya Chatursen Shastri, in his Dharmaputra presents contrasting elements in communal feelings, through the intricate design of his theme. A boy who is reared by a Hindu family, turns out an anti-muslim extremist, later comes to know that he is the son of a muslim woman. Gurudatt has a rather orthodox Hinduistic point of view in his Desh Ki Hatya. He describes dozens of characters tortured by muslims. Though biased, his novel is realistic so far as some of the incidents and political aspects are

concerned. Ramanand Sagar's Aur Insaan Mar Gaya gives a dark picture of the event as the title suggests the death of man, and of human values. The strongly humanistic people fail in the chaotic situation, as does Anand, the protagonist of the novel. The novel has, however, an optimistic undertone and the writer's faith in humanity remains intact, though Anand seems to succumb to frustration.

Rahi Masoom Raza has presented a story of a village before and after the formation of Pakistan, in his Aadha Gaon. Some of the Muslim people desert the village, and so the village now becomes lifeless contrasting strongly with the lively atmosphere of previous days. Besides Aadha Gaon, Topi Shukla and Os Ki Bund by Raza are also based on the changes that take place in Hindu-Muslim relations after the formation of Pakistan.

Apart from novels, the writers have extensively used this theme through short story form also in their writings. Though Partition offered a variety of subject matter, the majority of the writers chose to deal with violence of one kind or another – abduction and rape being particular favorites. The less gifted writers tried to excel in graphic description of women being physically abused and mutilated, and too often succeeded in making the painful nauseating. But in the hands of the masters, the theme of rape resulted in some of the most heart –wrenching stories ever written. Among these are Kartar Singh Duggal's Kulsum, Khwaja Ahmad Abbas's Revenge and Saadat Hasan Manto's The Reunion.

Kulsum illuminates a moment of horror. In this story an old Sikh rapes a Muslim houri (whom he has abducted) for failing sexually to oblige his young guest, a schoolmaster. As the old man emerges from the hut tying his lungi, we find ourselves as dumbfounded as the girl, Kulsum. Her earlier plea to the schoolmaster, "Marry me first...I beg of you", repeated many times by hapless girl, takes on an added poignancy. Abbas's Revenge centers on a father's craving for vengeance on seeing his daughter stripped, raped and mutilated in his presence. Nothing less than stabbing a Muslim girl 'in her naked breasts' would recompense him. He gets his chance in a brothel. With a dagger poised in the air, he snatches the brassiere off the body of a young girl to find 'two horrible round scars' where the breasts should have

been. A single word “Daughter” escapes his lips. Melodramatic perhaps, but nonetheless moving.

The most harrowing tale about rape is The Reunion by the much publicised Pakistani writer, Saadat Hasan Manto. In it a Muslim girl has been raped so often that her hands involuntary move to undo her trouser strings even when the doctor asks the girl’s father to open the window. The father’s exclamation of joy, “She’s alive. My daughter is alive”, is Swiftian in its irony. The story is, as one critic puts it, “not about guilt but it is powerful enough to make a whole generation feel guilty.” Another story, “Xuda ki Qasam” (I swear by god)’ in which a mother relentlessly searches for her supposedly dead daughter, comes to very different end. Here, the abducted girl has done well for herself but fears meeting her corpse-like mother. When the mother learns the truth, it is much too painful for her and she collapses on the street. A tragedy like Partition cannot be relegated to statistics alone: there are deaths other than physical which are equally devastating.

In Vatsyayan’s The Avenger, a Sikh father and son, having lost all that they once possessed, now keep traveling between two Indian cities to see refugees like themselves safely to their new homes.

There is Narendra Mitra’s The Four-Poster –a story set in East Pakistan after the division of the country. Here, a well-to-do Hindu and a poverty-stricken Muslim are locked in a feud over the ownership of an antique bed which the former has impulsively sold to the latter. Finally, they resolve their differences, not through logic or reasoning, but by a compassionate awareness of each other’s sorrows.

Bapsi Sidhwa in Defend Yourself Against Me tells about two young Sikhs who beg forgiveness of an old woman for violence to her person by their elders. The old woman forgives them, saying, “How else could I live?” Forgiveness is all very well, the author seems to say but one must not forget.

When the most of the Hindi writers have written about Hindus being tortured by muslims, Manto has revealed all sorts of evils, Hindus against Muslims, Muslims

against Hindus and also Muslims against Muslims. Crimes were committed irrespective of its victim belonging to one or the other religion. In his short story Khol Do, a Muslim girl is seduced repeatedly by Muslim soldiers. The constant attacks have taught the girl to be submissive, so finally when she is taken to the hospital, when the doctor orders the peon to open the windows of the operation theatre, the girl undoes the cord of her trousers at the words “Khol Do”. Toba Tek Singh, is a satire on the very decision of the division of a country. Raising the question whether the patients of a mental asylum also should be divided equally between the two countries, the writer has actually pointed out the madness of the political leaders and the absurdity of the situation as well. Ironically it was ‘Manto’ who was declared insane by the Pakistani government and sent to the asylum. With some disturbing elements in them his stories forced the reader to reflect gravely on the issue.

Since Partition was as much a Pakistani as an Indian experience, five Pakistani writers are also included in the discussion of short stories. Of these, Saadat Hasan Manto and Bapsi Sidhwa have already been mentioned; Manto is Pakistani simply by an accident of history.

As we have already seen, Bapsi Sidhwa’s story Defend Yourself Against Me ends on a stern note of warning that the lessons of history must not be forgotten. The other three writers who have distinguished themselves in Urdu Partition literature are Qudrat Ullah Shahab, Aziz Ahmad and Intizar Husain.

Qudrat Ullah Shahab’s Ya Khuda [O God], skillfully translated into English by Faruk Hasan, is a powerful tale of what befell Muslim women during Partition. Aziz Ahmed’s Kali Raat is a tale that focuses on something other than the cross border migration of people. It deals with the plight of a well-to-do Muslim family within India.

Intizar Husain, who has equated the migration of the Muslims to Pakistan with the *hijrat* of the Prophet, feels that Partition as a creative experience has failed. In The Stairway, the central character, Saiyid, finds himself exhausted and bereft of memory at the end of his journey.

Husain's story takes us beyond the immediate bloodcurdling consequences of Partition to explore quietly its far-ranging effect on the human mind. In doing so, it opens up new vistas for writers, both in India and Pakistan, on a subject whose potentiality is far from exhausted.

But there is much in the fiction of this period that transcends the horror and brutality of Partition by giving a glimpse of the compassion and understanding that suffering generates. The compassion that one finds in Train to Pakistan(1956) and Azadi(1975) has not been easy to capture in the short story. The other novels based on the theme of Partition are: Manohar Malgonkar's A Bend in the Ganges(1964) and Distant Drum(1960), Attia Hosain's Sunlight on a Broken Column(1961), Manju Kapur's Difficult Daughters(1998), Amitav Ghosh's The Shadow Lines(1988), Bapsi Sidhawa's Ice-Candy Man(1991) , Balchandra Rajan's The Dark Dancer,(1959) These novels are written by writers who belong to different communities and different periods.

This historical event of great human significance inspired a host of sensitive and creative writers to express their human concern and inner agony through the literary medium of fiction in English. In the present research study the writers are Indians for whom English is not their mother tongue. As being Indians they had the first hand experience to be expressed through a foreign language. Their Indian perspective is the focal point of the discussion.

These novels encompass a larger period of half a century and hence it will render a wider perspective of the largest man made migration in the history of mankind. The selected novels will give the glimpses to the Indian writers' mind as only Indian novels are selected for the research study while the Pakistani novels are not taken in account.

In the study, my humble endeavour would be to make a detailed study of Indian-English novelists' treatment of the Partition in their writings and to bring out the patterns of reactions of these writers to the condition of the suffering humanity during the momentous and epoch-making period in the history of Indian

subcontinent.. The novels selected for the purpose of my research study are obviously by Indian fiction writers as my research aims at giving various versions of partition in Indian English novels.

My dissertation focuses on different versions of Partition portrayed in Khushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan Attia Hosain's Sunlight on a Broken Column (1961), Manju Kapoor's Difficult Daughters (1998), Manohar Malgonkar's A Bend in the Ganges (1964), Chaman Nahal's Azadi (1975), and Amitav Ghosh's The Shadow Lines (1988). All these writers are the major voices in post-independence Indian writing in English as far as the treatment of theme of Partition is concerned.

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CHAPTER-2
KHUSHWANT SINGH'S VERSION OF PARTITION IN
TRAIN TO PAKISTAN

CHAPTER-2

KHUSHWANT SINGH'S VERSION OF PARTITION IN TRAIN TO PAKISTAN

Khushwant Singh is one of the most significant authors in the field of contemporary Indian English novels. He was born on 2nd February 1915 at Hadali in West Punjab, now in Pakistan. He was educated at Government College, Lahore and at King's college and the Inner Temple in London. He practiced laws at the Lahore High Court for several years before joining the Indian Ministry of External Affairs in 1947. He was sent on diplomatic postings to Canada and London and later went to Paris with UNESCO. He began a distinguished career as a Journalist with All India Radio in 1951. Since then he has been founder-editor of Yojana, and editor of The Illustrated Weekly of India, The National Herald and The Hindustan Times. Today he is India's best-known columnist and journalist.

Khushwant Singh has also had an extremely successful career as a writer. Among his published works are the classic two volumes History of the Sikhs, several works of fiction including the novels Train to Pakistan (winner of the Grove Press Awards for the best work of fiction in 1945), I Shall Not Hear The Nightingale, Delhi and The Company of Women; and a number of translated works from Punjabi, Urdu and Hindi, non-fiction books on nature, current affairs, etc.

Khushwant Singh was a Member of Parliament from 1980 to 1986. Among other honours, he was awarded the Padma Bhushan in 1974 by the President of India but he returned the declaration in 1984 in protest against the Union Government's siege of the Golden Temple, Amritsar.

The first major breakthrough in Khushwant Singh's literary career came in the year 1950 when he published his remarkable collection The Mark of Vishnu and Other Stories. Almost all these were based on real experiences or those related by his colleagues and friends. It will be interesting to note that, Khushwant Singh did not become a full-time writer by choice; he had no such intention. The decision to write

came to him only when he had found something compelling to write about. This was at the time of Partition; he was greatly moved by the harrowing events during those turbulent days. His outlook towards life underwent a drastic change. He felt thoroughly disillusioned with the contemporary situation. As it was, his faith in the intrinsic nobility of mankind was completely shaken. He said:

The beliefs that I had cherished all my life were shattered. I had believed in innate goodness of the common man. But the division of India had been accomplished by the most savage massacres known in the history of the country... I had believed that we Indians were peace loving and non-violent; that we were more concerned with matters of the spirit, while the rest of the world was involved in the pursuit of material things. After the experience of autumn of 1947, I could no longer subscribe to these views. I became an angry middle-aged man, who wanted to shout his disenchantment with the world ... I decided to try my hand at writing.¹

Khushwant Singh was a witness to the holocaust that followed in the wake of the partition of the country. It was indeed one of the bloodiest upheavals of history that claimed innumerable innocent lives and loss of property. The traumatic experience made Khushwant Singh restless and in order to give vent to his feeling, he took to writing and the result is Train to Pakistan.

Khushwant Singh's second novel I Shall Not Hear The Nightingale (1959) again has a historical backdrop. The action of the novel takes place during the war years, from April 1942 to April 1943. In terms of Indian history, it is about five years before the country's attainment of freedom. The astounding success of Japanese in South-East Asia in the early forties has unnerved the British Government faced the imminent collapse of the Indian Empire. Meanwhile the Indian patriots, sensing the

end of the Raj, sought emancipation from the clutches of the British through revolutionary means.

Khushwant Singh's third novel 'Delhi' created great waves when it appeared in 1990. It is considered as a great piece of history-fiction and stayed as best seller for several months. The novel draws on history as its raw material. It celebrates the past of Delhi, the city with a long and chequered history. The central character of the novel is Bhagmati, a hijra, who represents the city Delhi. She can be seen as a metaphor for Delhi and history simultaneously. While the narrator is a mask for the author, the hijra is a multiple symbol of Delhi, of Indian society and culture.

His latest novel 'The Company of Women' (1999) is centered on the individual's search for the truth of existence within society. Mohan Kumar, a thriving businessman, is overcome by the boredom of socially respectable Delhi and embarks on an experiment with short-time companions for he is of the view that lust is the true foundation of man-woman relationships "because, unlike love, lust is neither elusive nor open to different interpretations."² The novel belongs to the tradition of the critique-of-society novels. It focuses on the life style of modernized and westernized urban men and women. The book makes an uninhibited erotic celebration of love, sex and passion. For the protagonist Mohan Kumar, sex is the principle driving force in life.

His literary fame rests with Train to Pakistan which was one of the first novels on Partition written in English. A.G. Khan considers it a brilliant, brutally realistic story and examines the characters of Hukumchand, Iqbal and Jugga and their behavioural patterns. Kamal Mehta studies the impact of Partition on different characters in the novel and opines that Singh chooses to narrate the disturbing impact that the community deeply felt at the social and psychological level. Rupalee Burke finds an interesting reading of exodus-the Biblical and the one at the time of Partition. She makes an impressive

observation that Partition-exodus was a cursed event of history. In *History and His-story* Nilak Datta focuses on history of partition and personal stories of the characters. Suza Alexander examines how public events affect the personal lives of the small village of Mano Majra, how it lays bare the grimly tragic situation leading to nightmarish experiences. Amrita Patel brings out the U shape of the novel and how the novelist establishes his vision of order over the disorder caused by hate and ill-will. Bharati Parikh focuses on the humanitarian view of the situation.³

Professor William Walsh, an authority on common wealth literature, has described Khushwant Singh's novel as:

...a study of the communal massacres of 1947 (that) is in spite of them, dry and cool. It is a tense, economical novel, thoroughly true to the events and the people. It goes forward in a trim, athletic way and its unemphatic voice makes a genuine human comment.⁴

Khushwant Singh gives vent all venom and indignation felt by him at the horrifying tragedy of brutality and savagery in his novel 'Train to Pakistan'. He pours out the agonizing tale of human tragedy and the sinister impact of the partition on the peace loving Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs of "Mano Majra", realistically with scathing irony. Khushwant Singh has designed the novel to explore the brutal and hypocritical image of man and simultaneously present his faith in the values of love, loyalty and humanity.

Khushwant Singh had selected the title Mano Majra for the novel Train to Pakistan as Mano Majra, a small village, close to the Indo-Pakistan border serves as the setting for the novel. For centuries in this village Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs have loved each other as brothers and lived together in peace. But this tiny village becomes

the microcosm of communal conflict and violence generated by the partition. This village had known no communal hatred and distinction before the flames of pre-partition communal frenzy reach there. The harmonious atmosphere, the functional 'integration', prevailing in this tiny place is vividly described in the novel thus:

Mano Majra is a tiny place. It has only three brickbuildings, one of which is the home of the money lender Lala Ram Lal. The three brick buildings enclose a triangular common with a large peepul tree in the middle. The rest of the village is a cluster of flat-roofed mud huts and low walled courtyards, with front on narrow lanes that radiate from the centre. Soon the lanes dwindled into footpaths and get lost in the surrounding fields. At the western end of the village is a pond ringed round by keekar trees. There are only about seventy families in Mano Majra, and Lala Ram Lal's is the only Hindu family. The others are Sikhs or Muslims about equal in numbers.... But there is one object that all Mano Majrans –even Lala Ram Lal –venerate. This is a three-foot slab of sandstone that stands up right under a keekar tree besides the pond. It is the local diety, the deo to which all the villagers- Hindu, Sikh, Muslims or Pseudo-Christian repair secretly whenever they are in need of blessing.⁵

Deo, the local deity, was the symbol of communal harmony in the village. But 1947 was not like other times; it was different in character. The situation of the country deteriorated miserable in the wake of the partition. There were killing and rapes. Evils dominated the scene. The violence that started in Calcutta swept the country and tortured people. Khushwant Singh Vividly describes the tragic scene:

The Summer before, communal riots precipitated by reports of the proposed division of the country into a

Hindu India and a Muslim Pakistan, had broken out in Calcutta, and within a few months the death roll had mounted to several thousand...From Calcutta, the riots spread north and east and west to Noakhali in East-Bengal, where Muslims massacred Hindus, to Bihar where Hindus massacred Muslims. Mullahs roamed the Punjab and the frontier Province with boxes of human skulls, said to be those of Muslims killed in Bihar. Hundreds of Thousands of Hindus and Sikhs who had lived for centuries on the Northwest Frontier abandoned their homes and fields towards the protection of the predominantly Sikh and Hindu communities in the east. They traveled on foot, in bullock carts, crammed into lorries, clinging to the sides and roofs of trains. Along the way-at fords, at crossroads, at railroad stations-they collided with panicky swarms of Muslims feeling to safety in the west. The riots had become a rout. By the summer of 1947, when the creation of the new state of Pakistan was formally announced ten million people-Muslims and Hindus and Sikhs- were in flight. By the time the monsoon broke, almost a million of them were dead, and all of northern India was in arms, in terror or in hiding. The only remaining oases of peace were a scatter of little villages lost in the remote reaches of the frontier. One of these villages was Mano Majra.⁶

The novelist puts the blame on both the Hindus and the Muslims. He feels the active participation of the Mullahs in instigating the people to mutiny and killing. "Mullas roamed the Punjab and the Frontier Province with the boxes of human skulls said to be those of Muslims killed in Bihar."⁷

The people of Mano Majra were peace-loving. In the beginning they were not at all effected by what happened in the country; they were blissfully ignorant of the

rampant killing spreading all over the north of the country. The robbery and the murder of the moneylender early in the novel were not accidental; it was a prelude to the swelling acts of murder and violence. Murder and romance – even the romance of Hukum Chand, the deputy commissioner of the district, with Haseena, the hired prostitute, on the eve of inhuman blood-duluge; foreshadowed the disaster that was soon to follow. The sub-inspector emphasized the peace, prevailing in the village so far, when he informed the deputy commissioner:

We have escaped it so far, sir. Convoys of Sikh and Hindu refugees from Pakistan have come through and some Muslims have gone out, but we have no incidents”⁸

Their conversation revealed the ghastly butchering of men during those troubled days of the partition. The trains carried death; the Muslims in Pakistan had sent the butchered Sikhs. The magistrate said to the sub-inspector: “You haven’t had convoys of dead Sikhs this side of the frontier. They have been coming through at Amritsar. Not one person living! There has been killing over there.”⁹

The merciless killing of the Sikhs did not remain ‘unretaliated’. Bloodshed and violence invited violence. The Sikhs could not sit quite; they cried for revenge and indulged in killing. The magistrate said to the inspector

... the Sikhs retaliated attacking a Muslim refugee train and sending it across the border with over a thousand corpses? They wrote on the engine ‘Gift to Pakistan!’¹⁰

The sub-inspector felt that the only way to this animality was to answer in the same coin- an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. This was probably the only appropriate answer for this kind of inhuman acts: “They say this is the only way to stop killings on the other side. Man for man, woman for woman, child for child.”¹¹

The partition was the result of the communal suspicion sown by the leaders. The sub-inspector was enraged at the ignorance of the leaders in Delhi about the brutal acts in Punjab done in the wake of partition. He referred to the tragic scenes of the horrible killings in Pakistan and regretted the utter ignorance of the leaders preaching non-violence. He said to the deputy commissioner:

What do the Gandhi-caps in Delhi know about the Punjab? What is happening on the other side in Pakistan does not matter to them. They have not lost their homes and belongings; they haven't had their mothers, wives, sister and daughters raped and murdered in the streets. Did your honour hear what the Muslim mobs did to Hindu and Sikh refugees in the market places at Sheikhpura and Gujranwala? Pakistan Police and the army took part in the killings. Not a soul was left alive. Women killed their own children and jumped into the well that filled to the brim with corpses.¹²

The conversation between the magistrate and the sub-inspector brings out the bestial bloodshed that swept the frontiers as a consequence of the partition. It shows how even the 'protectors' were busy in the game of rape, abduction and killing. Women's plunging into the wells, swelling with corpses, in order to save themselves from rapacious hands was a common sight during those days of brutality. Khushwant Singh, as a conscious artist spotlights these incidents to show the loss of all values and the naked dance of men's animality during the days of unrestrained violence caused by the partition of the country.

Killings, loot, arson, rape has no place in any religion including Islam. Islam teaches brotherhood and fellow feelings. It is not anti-Hindu religion at all. Gandhiji agrees with it and said in his speech given on 29th April, 1940 at Sevagram:

Religion binds man to God and man to man. Does Islam bind Muslim only to Muslims and antagonize the Hindu?

Was the message of the Prophet peace only for and between Muslims and war against Hindus or non-Muslims? Are eight crores of Muslims to fed with this which I can only described as poison into the Muslim mind are rendering the greatest disservice to Islam. I know that it is not Islam. I know that it is not Islam. I have lived with and among Muslims not for one day but closely and almost uninterruptedly for twenty years. Not one Muslim taught me that Islam was an anti-Hindu religion.¹³

Hakum Chand, the deputy commissioner of the district, insisted on maintaining law and order. He knew his duty and he restrained himself from indulging in destructive acts as his counter parts in Pakistan had sadly done. The magistrates in Pakistan had become millionaire overnight, and some on this side had not performed to let the Muslims go out peacefully. He said:

Nobody really benefits by bloodshed. Bad characters will get the loot and the government will blame us for the killing. No, inspector sahib, whatever our views- and God alone knows what I would have done to these Pakistanis if I were not a government servant – we must not let there be any killing or destruction of property. Let them get out, but be careful; they do not take too much with them. Hindus from Pakistan were stripped of all their belongings before they were allowed to leave. Pakistani magistrates have become millionaires overnight. Some on our side have not done too badly either...¹⁴

The depiction of these developments fairly reveals the inhuman drama enacted during those tragic days of the partition. It constantly reminds the readers of the bloody history that followed Independence. Even the hearts of the people, who were

entrusted with the task of maintaining law and order, were burning with the fire of communal hatred. The magistrates and the police were indulging in ruthless cruelties in both Pakistan and India. Psychologically, even the saviours were ironically affected by the furious winds of change and destruction.

The peace-loving people of Mano-majra did not know anything about the black partition that brought destruction and death before the trains, full of the dead bodies of the Sikh refugees, began to pass through the village. But the impact of the partition was noted by the train conscious Mano majrans in the late running of the over-crowded trains:

Now the trains were often four or five hour late and sometimes as many as twenty. When they came, they were crowded with Sikh and Hindu refugees from Pakistan or with Muslims from India. People perched on the roofs with their legs dangling, or on bedsteads wedged in between the bogies. Some of them rode precariously on the buffers.¹⁵

Iqbal, during his conversation with Bhai Meet Singh, explained his purposed of working in the villages. He also pointed out what was happening in the country in the wake of the partition. He came to Mano majra to do something important. He said to the Sikh Bhai:

I am a social worker, Bhaiji. There is much to do be done in our villages. Now with this partition there is so much bloodshed going on someone must do something to stop it. My party has sent me here, since this place is a vital point for refugee movements. Trouble here would be disastrous.¹⁶

Bhai Meet Singh was one of the many who did not share any ill will on the basis of religion. He represented the tension-free and hatred-free life of the Mano Majrans when he said to the social worker Iqbal:

Everyone is welcome to his religion. Here next door is a Muslim mosque. When I pray to my Guru Uncle Imam Baksh calls to Allah....¹⁷

Iqbal felt bewildered at news that a murder had been committed just across the Gurudwara. His journey by train to this place had been a tiring one. The movement of people from one place to another from one region to another, made the railway journey extremely hard. His journey to Mano Majra described the plight of the fear-stricken people, the miserable victims of the partition in flight. The confusion, created by the mad communal frenzy, is fully portrayed in this novel.

During his walk on the riverside, Iqbal saw the express train from Lahore coming on the bridge. This train from Pakistan too, like other trains including the one he had travelled by last evening was overcrowded. The story of this train was in no way different from the stories of the other trains of that disturbed period:

Like all the trains, it was full. From the roof, legs dangled down the sides on to the doors and windows. The doors and windows were jammed with heads and arms. There were people in buffers between the bogies.¹⁸

The train showed the plight of the people running away from Pakistan. There was obvious jubilation on crossing the border. Reaching the safe land was certainly an occasion of relief and rejoicing during those troubled days when the 'Two-Nation Theory' was put into practice, resulting in an indescribable human tragedy.

The Mano Majrans wanted to know from Iqbal all about Pakistan and Hindustan, and what made the British leave this country. Independence did not mean

anything to them. Lambardar expressed his doubt about freedom when he said to Iqbal:

Freedom must be a good thing. But what will we get out of it? Educated people like you, Babu Sahib, will get the jobs the English had. Will we get more lands or more buffaloes?¹⁹

The conversation with the important men of the village made Iqbal think a lot. He grew conscious of the world around him and of his own inability to stop the communal killings. He found everyone steeped in murder and killing, but amazingly he found himself incompetent to be able to realize his party's dreams. He regretted:

What could he-one little man-do in this enormous impersonal land of four hundred million? Could he stop the killing? Obviously not. Everyone-Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Congressite, Leaguer, Akali, or communist-was deep in it.²⁰

A constable described the police-atrocities inflicted on the Hindus in Lahore:

.... it was the Muslim police taking sides which made the difference in the riots. Hindu boys of Lahore would have given the Muslims hell if it had not been for their police. They did a lot of *Zulum*.²¹

The Pakistani army, too, sided with the Muslims; they were partisans:

Their army is like that, too. Baluch soldiers have been shooting people whenever they were sure there was no chance of running into Sikh or Gurkha troops.²²

Jugga described the barbarity of Baluch soldiers on their way to Lahore from Amritsar. Reaching near the Pakistani border, these soldiers:

...began to stick bayonets into Sikhs going along the road. The driver would slow down near a cyclist or a pedestrian, the soldiers on the footboards would stab him in the back and then the driver would accelerate away fast. They killed many people like this and were feeling happier and happier as they got nearer Pakistan.²³

Jugga believed that no one escaped God. Bad acts yielded a bitter harvest. Bhola, the tanga driver, stressed the madness of the blood hungry people and remarked. "...When the mobs attack they do not wait to find out who you are Hindu or Muslim; they kill..."²⁴ Perhaps to balance the brutalities done by the Muslims to the Sikhs, he narrated the story of the four Sikh Sardars, who went on rampage riding in a jeep alongside, a mile long column of Muslim refugees walking on the road: "...without warning they opened fire with their sten guns. Four sten guns! God alone knows how many they killed..."²⁵ Jugga reported about a lot of women being abducted and sold cheaply.

The situation is further vitiated by the arrival of the "Ghost Train" carrying the bodies of thousands of Hindus and Sikh refugees from Pakistan for their common funeral at Mano Majra. With this comes the first taste of nightmare "the killings, flamings, rapings, and pillagings." It creates commotion in the village. Everyone is fussing about it trying to get as much information as they can. This has been a way of life at any village where the people have plenty of leisure. The soldiers collect the firewood and kerosene oil from the villagers and cremate the bodies by the station. They are not told anything but they are tense and suspicious. The truth is discovered by the night and this discovery is suggested with colour and smell images:

The northern horizon, which had turned a bluish gray, showed orange again. The orange turned into copper

and then into a luminous russet. Red tongues of flame leaped into the black sky. A soft breeze began to blow toward the village. It brought the smell of burning Kerosene, then of wood. And then a faint acrid smell of searing flesh²⁶

When the truth is known they are gripped with 'deathly silence'. And Imam Baksh who has borne the death of his wife and only son is so shocked that he forgets to do his evening prayer for the first time in his life. The seed of 'religional' suspicious inherent in the heterogeneous social structure of the village shows its head first when the people of Mano Majra come to know the truth behind the 'Ghost Train':

When it was discovered that the train had brought a full load of corpses, a heavy brooding silence descended on the village...Everyone felt his neighbour's hand against him, and thought of finding friends and allies.²⁷

The partition of India led to the evacuation of Hindus from Pakistan and the Muslims from India and Boarder crossing of refugees. This also precipitated the communal riots in retaliation of killings of the Hindus in Pakistan and the Muslims in some parts of India. Muslims from Chundunnugger and some other villages have been evacuated and shifted to refugee camps. Some of the refugees who have come to Mano Majra raise the cry for reprisals. But the administration plays the final game to split it into two parts. Hukum Chand feels it necessary for easy evacuation of Muslims from Mano Majra. He thinks out a cunning plan and gives instructions to the sub-inspector to free Mali and his four friends who are arrested in the murder case of Lala Ram Lal and to send for the commandant of Muslim refugee camp for evacuation of Muslims from Mano Majra. Mali and his friends are the murderers of Lala Ram Lal and Jugga has once been in their company. Under Hukum Chand's game-plan Jugga and a social worker are kept behind the bar while the real culprits are released in Mano Majra and the villagers are asked about Sultana Budmash and Iqbal Singh who is declared a member of Muslim league and called by the police Mohammed Iqbal. In

fact the murder of Lala Ram Lal is given a communal colour. The modus operandi of the police here sheds light on the true face of the administration at lower level. The people have no say in the decision. But any way the obnoxious design of the bureaucracy is realized as the narrator says:

The head constable's visit had divided Mano Majra into two halves as neatly as a knife cuts through a part of butter. Muslims sat and moped in their houses. Rumours of atrocities committed by Sikhs on Muslims in Patiala, Ambala and Kapurthala, which they heard and dismissed, came back to their minds. They had heard of gentlewomen having their veils taken off, being stripped and marched down crowded streets to be raped in the market place... 'Quite suddenly every Sikh in Mano Majra became a stranger with an evil intent. His long hair and beard appeared barbarous, his Kirpan menacingly anti-Muslim. For the first time, the name Pakistan came to mean something to them - a heaven of refuge where there were no Sikhs. The Sikhs were sullen and angry. Never trust a Mussalman, they said. The last Guru had warned them that Muslims had no loyalties.²⁸

This is a case of reason giving way to communal emotion and of tolerance breaking its limit. Once a negative thinking sets in, the whole thinking goes in some way; and memories recollected also show the same colour. The young generation who obviously has a weaker bond of fellow feeling gets swayed more easily and reacts offensively in a meeting of the Sikhs at Lambardar's house. The youth are revengeful of what has happened to the Sikhs in Pakistan. One of them says:

Our problem is: What are we to do with all these pigs we have with us? They have been eating our salt for

generations and see what they have done?... They have behaved like snakes.²⁹

On the other hand Meet Singh who represented the old generation strongly protests:

What have they done to you? Have they ousted you for your lands or occupied your houses? Have they seduced your women folk? Tell me, what have they done?³⁰

At this critical juncture Lambardar diplomatically handles the situation and convinces both Imam Baksh and the Sikhs of the necessity of evacuation in the wake of incoming refugees who may wreak their vengeance on the Muslims of the village. “As far as we are concerned you and your children and your grand children can live here as long as you like.”³¹

The decision of parting was not easy. It shook the roots of togetherness that was centuries old. It created a mournful numbness and made them weep. Their tremendous sense of belongingness and the trauma of being uprooted from their soil are reflected through their words and tears. One of the younger men says: “It is like this, Uncle Imam Baksh. As long as we are here nobody will dare to touch you. We die first then you...”³²

Imam Baksh, Meet Singh and several other people are weeping and sobbing. Imam Baksh says: “What we have to do with Pakistan? We were born here. So were our ancestors. We have lived amongst you as brothers”³³

In this context I am reminded of Toba Tek Singh's (a lunatic) protest against his transfer to India in Saadat Hassan Manto's (a Pakistani Urdu writer) short story, Toba Tek Singh. When he is tried to be taken away to India by force he fixes himself at the place that is neither India nor Pakistan and dies. In Train to Pakistan Imam Baksh in the interest of Muslims decides to take shelter in the refugee camp. The last resistance comes from Nooran, Imam Baksh's daughter who says, “I cannot leave. Jugga has promised me to marry”. Jugga's mother, though does not allow her to stay

there, consoles her that Jugga will take her back as soon as he is released from the jail. It gives relief to Nooran who is conceived.

Next morning the Pakistani soldiers evacuated the Muslims of Mano Majra. The news that they will be taken to Pakistan comes as a surprise to the Lambardar and other Sikhs. But the villagers both Sikhs and Muslims are helpless. Muslim officer orders them to leave their cattle, furniture and the like goods which cannot be accommodated in their trucks and asks Lambardar to look after their cattle and other property. But Lambardar refuses to do so on the plea that property spoils relation. This pious attitude of Lambardar and Meet Singh gets a scornful rebuff from a Sikh officer.

You are quite right, Bhaiji there is some danger of being misunderstood. One should never touch another's property; one should never look at another's woman, one should just let others take one's goods and sleep with one's sisters. The only way people like you will understand anything is by being sent over to Pakistan: have your sisters and mothers raped in front of you, have your clothes taken off, and be sent back with a kick and spit on your behinds.³⁴

The Sikh officer's angry cry pointed to what was happening in Pakistan and in the process exposed his own heightened feeling of anger. It was a slap in the face to all the peasants. This was not enough for Mano Majra. The Sikh Officer appointed Mali and his companions the custodian of the evacuated Muslims' property, and the villagers were warned not to interfere with him or his men. Mali's gang and the refugees then unyoked the bullocks, looted the carts and drove the cows and buffaloes away. The people of the village could do nothing. They could only sit and sigh. The whole atmosphere is filled with reactionary and vindictive. The situation is well echoed in Manlgonkar's 'A Bend in the Ganges'

Every citizen was caught up in the holocaust. No one remain aloof; ... the administration, the police even the armed forces, were caught up in the blaze of hatred.³⁵

In this situation even an army officer looks for criminals like Mali and his gang, who can do what they can't do in their uniform. Mali and his men are given the responsibility of looking after the left over property of the Muslims of Mano Majra; and subsequently they plunder their property with impunity.

The people of Mano Majra encounter yet another ghastly scene of swelling Sutlej when they see floating corpses of men, women, children on the floodwater that has swept away some of the near-by villages. Soon they come to the conclusion that they are not drowned. They are murdered. Khushwant Singh gives a pathetic portrayal of this ghastly scene:

There were also men and women with their clothes clinging to their bodies; little children sleeping on their bellies with their arms clutching the water and their tiny buttocks dipping in and out. The sky was soon full of kites and vultures. They flew down and landed on the floating carcasses. They packed till the corpses themselves rolled over and shoved them off with hands....³⁶

The corpses floating on the water made the scene horrible. The ghastly murder of these innocent people-men, women and children-told the tale of woe caused by the Partition. It was an awful sight.

But this is not the last nightmare in the life of Mano Majra. When the Lambardar and his company return to the village to report, they find that the villagers are gripped with the fear of another 'ghost train' that has just arrived at the station. The picture of this scene is not as vivid as it is in the last scene of the 'ghost trains'. Only the last line of the passage suggests that it carries some corpses of the Muslims,

which are buried in the grave, the soldiers dug with the bulldozers. “Two soldiers were left to guard the grave from the depredations of jackals and badgers”³⁷

In fact the partition plunged India in to a blood bath and sparked off civil riots. But all this is given hint of and not directly shown as the sample village Mano Majra has witnessed no communal riots, no acts of bloody reprisal. By and large, they are still committed to peace and brotherhood. But this humanity and sanity is regarded as a sign of cowardice by the Sikh youths who come to the Gurudwara at night to provoke the fire of reprisal.

Do you know how many trainloads of dead Sikhs and Hindus have come over? Do you know of the massacres in Rawalpindi and Multan, Gujranwala and Sheikhpura? What are you doing about it? You just eat and sleep and call yourselves Sikhs the brave Sikhs! the martial class!³⁸

He continues to whip up emotion through rhetorical questions and punch.

You expect the government to do anything? A government consisting of cowardly banian moneylenders! Do the Mussulmans in Pakistan apply for permission from their government when they rape your sisters? Do they apply for permission when they stop trains and kill everyone, old, young, women and children? You want the government to do something! That is great! Shabash! Bravo!³⁹

When the Lambardar asks what we can do, he promptly says:

For each Hindu or Sikh they kill, kill two Mussulmans.
For each woman they abduct or rape, abduct two. For

each trainload of dead they send over, send two across.⁴⁰

Obviously they were guided by the maxim 'tit for tat' in a wrong perspective. The Muslims of Mano Majra, whom they want to avenge for what has been done to the Hindus or the Sikhs in Pakistan, have done no harm to any Hindus or Sikh. But for the fundamentalist forces all Hindus or Muslims are alike. Meet Singh's protest; "What bravery is there in killing unarmed innocent people"⁴¹ yields little results.

Then he reminded the youth of the last Guru, Gobind Singh, who said that no Sikh was to touch a Muslim woman. But he reminded Meet Singh how the Guru was deceived and stabbed by one of the Muslims of his army. He asked for volunteers from among the audience to retaliate the Muslims. The train, going to Pakistan next day, was to be attacked. A rope was to be stretched across the first span of the bridge. Bhai Meet Singh informed that the train would consist of the Muslims of Mano Majra. The youth quickly dismissed such feelings.

Hukum Chand, the magistrate, was very much perturbed on account of violent episodes, and felt that the whole world had gone mad. The news that the train going to Pakistan was planned to be attacked worried him. He was aware of the violent mob, looking for the blood of the Muslims. The Chundunnugger Muslims were temporarily saved by the shrewdness of the police subinspector. The Magistrate was told that all the Muslims, including Nooran the weaver's daughter, had evacuated Mano Majra, and they, too, were to go to Pakistan by the same train. He signed the papers and asked the sub-inspector to release quickly Jugga and Iqbal and to send them at once to Mano Majra. His plan to release Jugga was, perhaps, an attempt to avert the planned attack on the train.

Jugga and Iqbal were released. The subinspector informed Juggat Singh that all Muslims had left Mano Majra for the refugee's camp and they were to go to Pakistan by the train that night. A tanga brought Jugga and Iqbal to Mano Majra. The villages on the way were found deserted. The sight that they could catch hold of on their way to the village was of someone hiding behind the wall with a gun or a spear.

Iqbal meditated on the tragedy how in India life depended upon one's following a particular religion. He felt that his safely reaching Delhi would give him a wide publicity, and that the whole affair would get a political colouring.

Iqbal returned to Gurudwara and found a number of refugees there. Meet Singh's reply to his zealous question 'What was happening?' was an excellent comment on the incidents of those days. The Sikh priest answered in a baffling way:

What has been happening? Ask me what has not been happening. Trainloads of dead people came to Mano Majra. We burned one lot and buried another. The river was flooded with corpses. Muslims were evacuated, and in their place, refugees have come from Pakistan. What more do you want to know?⁴²

Bhai Meet Singh told Iqbal that train would be attacked that night. Iqbal wanted Meet Singh to do something to prevent that disaster, but found him, like himself. He felt that violence could only be controlled with violence and sermons were ineffective in the face of arms and thirst for blood. He thought of sacrificing himself in an attempt to avert the tragedy but found sacrifice futile if there was no one to see and admire the supreme act. He knew that a few subhuman species were going to slaughter some of their own kind,"⁴³ but then he realized that the other community was equally guilty. The Muslims, too, relished violence:

It was not as if you were going to save good people from bad. If the others had the chance, they would do as much. In fact they were doing so, just a little beyond the river.⁴⁴

Iqbal, a better philosopher than a social worker meditated seriously on life and religion. He found religion hollow and devoid of values. He believed:

India is constipated with a lot of humbug. Take religion. For the Hindu, it means little besides caste and cow-protection. For the Muslim, circumcision and kosher meat. For the Sikh, long hair and hatred of the Muslim. For the Christian, Hinduism with a sola topee. For the Parsi, fire worship and feeding vultures. Ethics, which should be the kerned of a religious code, has been carefully removed.⁴⁵

Hukum Chand felt sore about the developments following the partition. He thought critically of the powerful people sitting in Delhi making fine speeches in the assembly, in the presence of lovely foreign women. He thought ironically of “making a tryst with destiny.”⁴⁶ He remembered his colleague Prem Singh who went back to fetch his wife’s jewellery from Lahore and never came back. He thought of Sundari, his elderly daughter, whom many publicly raped, one after another, on the road while the bus in which she was traveling with her husband was stopped and stoned: “Sikhs were just hacked to death. The clean-shaven were stripped. Those that were circumcised were forgiven.”⁴⁷

Sunder Singh shot his wife and children dead when the suffering sight became intolerable. He gave his children urine to drink when there could be found no water. All these horrible things made Hukum Chand uncomfortable, uneasy and wretched. He thought of his dear Muslim girl who was in the train planned to be ambushed.

Everything to attack the train was done according to the plan. Jugga sought blessing at the temple in the night and was determined to sacrifice himself in order to see his Muslim beloved reach Pakistan safely. He climbed up the steel span and stretched himself on the rope. With his Kirpan, he slashed at the rope that was designed to bring about the train disaster. He hacked the rope vigorously. He set an example of supreme sacrifice and lay down his life for the sake of enabling the Muslims, particularly his mistress, Nooran, to reach Pakistan safely. Khushwant Singh narrates this last act of Jugga’s bravery quite poignantly thus:

The train got closer and closer. The demon form of the engine with sparks flying from its funnel came up along the track. Its puffing was drowned in the roar of the train itself. The whole train could be seen clearly against the wan moonlight. From the coal-tender to the tail-end, there was a solid crust of human being on the roof. The man was still stretched on the rope. The leader stood up and shouted hysterically: "Come off, you ass! You will be killed. Come off at once!" The man turned round towards the voice. He whipped out a small Kirpan from his waist and began to slash at rope. "Who is this? What is he...?" There was no time. They looked from the bridge to the train, from the train to the bridge. The man hacked the rope vigorously. The leader raised his rifle to his shoulder and fired. He hit his mark and one of the man's legs came off the rope and dangled in the air. The other was still twined round the rope. He slashed away in frantic haste. The engine was only a few yards off, throwing embers high up in the sky with each blast of the whistle. Somebody fired another shot. The man's body slid off the rope, but he clung to it with his hands and chin. He pulled himself up, caught the rope under his left armpit, and again started hacking with his right hand. The rope had been cut in shreds. Only a thin tough strand remained. He went at it with the knife, and then with his teeth. The engine was almost on him. There was a valley of shots. The man shivered and collapsed. The rope snapped in the center as he fell. The train went over him, and went on to Pakistan.⁴⁸

Train to Pakistan portrays the picture of ghostly horrors enacted on the border region during the horrible days of the partition. It begins with the horrors in the east

and very scientifically focuses the camera on the bestial activities committee in the madness of communal frenzy on the Indo-Pakistan border region in the north. The train loads of corpses, their cremation and burial, the swelling of the Sutlej with corpses presenting a dreadful sight, the young group believing in the theory of 'tit for tat', the in human killing on both the sides of the border, Hukum Chand's ironical thinking on tryst with destiny, Sundari's tragic fate and thousands of such terrible incidents give an idea of the ghastly deeds that accompanied Independence.

Khushwant Singh exhibits a genuine faith in the humanistic ideal, in depicting a real-to-life Jugga lying down his life for the woman he loved. It is Khushwant Singh's deep and ethical humanism that govern his portrayal of the real and the actual. Vasant Shahane says:

Train to Pakistan, therefore, is no mere realistic tract nor is it a bare record of actual events. On the contrary it is a recreation of the real and it reaffirms the novelist's faith in man and renews artistically his avowed allegiance to the humanistic ideal.⁴⁹

The novel states clearly that the outgoing rulers brought the nation to a terrible chaos. The leaders responsible for such an unprecedented tragedy had not been spared. The insanity of the two-nation theory, of a safe homeland, and of the partition, uprooting the masses of humanity, has been fully exposed. K.R.S. Iyengar says:

Khushwant Singh, however, has succeeded through resolved limitation and rigorous selection in communication to his readers a hint of the grossness, ghastliness and total insanity of the two- nation theory and the Partition tragedy. The pity and the horror of it all!- and the novel adequately conveys them both.⁵⁰

The thing that strikes us is the irony of situation. No rationality or humanity could wean away the violent frenzied mobs to control their irrational

behavior. The apostle of nonviolence, Mahatma Gandhi was shaken due to that “unprecedented exhibition of inhuman violence.” As Chakrovorty notes:

During the last phase of life he became a dejected and helpless man, a fact amply reflected in what he wrote about this upheaval, “It almost appears as if we are nursing in our bosoms the desire to take revenge the first time we get the opportunity. Can true, voluntary non-violence come out this seeming forced nonviolence of the weak? Is not a futile experiment I am conducting? What if, when the fury bursts, not a man, woman or child is safe and every man’s hand is raised against his neighbour?”⁵¹

Thus Train to Pakistan is a story every one wants to forget; yet one cannot overlook this stark reality of our past. When the nation was on the threshold of new dawn, it also faced unprecedented destruction, bloodshed and trauma. Khushwant Singh has successfully delineated this unpleasant phase of our national history in the novel.

The novel explores and lays bare the mysterious wellsprings of courage, endurance and affection, from which human beings draw inspiration at moments of distress to rebuild their lives and to sustain faith in themselves. Train to Pakistan remains, like all Partition literature more a warning for the future than a reminder of the past.

Khushwant Singh’s version of Partition in this novel is very balanced. He makes it quite clear that on the score of massacres no side was less guilty than another. While the two communities in Mano Majra pledge their mutual distrust, Jugga and the Muslim girl Nooran pledge their love. While at the lowest end of the moral scale are the parasites of Partition who massacre for pleasure and plunder (people like Mali and his dacoits who at the beginning of the novel, murder the moneylender of Mano Majra and at the end plan to reap a harvest of Muslim death), at

the opposite end of the scale, of course is Mali's enemy Jugga, without whom Khushwant Singh's version would lack a morally-redeeming aspect. Moreover, the author is careful not to exaggerate his village characters: while they succumb to mass hysteria, genuine moral bewilderment is also an important part of this process. They are manipulated by the authorities who want to create sufficient discord to ensure that the evacuation of the Muslims is desired by both groups, but there are mutual demonstrations of affection and regret when it is time for the Muslims to leave.

With respect to the actual narration, an important example of Khushwant Singh's balanced presentation of Partition version concerns the way in which he introduces news of the atrocities. Though brutal violence provides the basis of the story, the restraint with which Singh approaches this subject, particularly at narrative points when excessive or premature description would be at the expense of real-life expectancies, is commendable. Thus Singh so manipulates the version that a gradual and refracted revelation of the atrocities is necessary to coincide with the villager's growing suspicions: psychologically the main interest is in the impact the violence makes on their minds and also on Hukum Chand. Moreover, sinister suspense is as much part of the horror as the evidence of butchered corpses and is certainly a key aspect of the psychology of Partition violence.

Partition reveals the weaknesses as well as the strengths of our society as a nation. This strength is the tremendous capacity of Indian society to come out of the most traumatic crises. Its capacity tolerates whatever pain and shock and returns to normalcy soon again. This capacity to rise again after the setback has kept India alive in spite of constant onslaughts for over two thousand years. This is because of psychological toughness as well as the flexibility on the part of the society.

Nooran and the hero Juggut Singh alias Jugga belong to a Punjabi village called Mano Majra all having typical Punjabi touch, the hero and the heroine may belong to different religions but come from identical Punjabi culture. Politics and religious conflicts have divided them but elemental feelings of love unite them.

The title of the novel is suggestive of the plight of Muslims who are migrating to Pakistan by train as a result of Partition. But the human concern of Khushwant Singh is very obvious. It raises him successfully above the narrow levels of politics and religion at the same time he exposes the evils of Partition as well. So the novel can be categorized as Punjabi version that finally reaches to the greater height of Indian version.

Khushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan differs from most of the other novels on Partition in respect of canvas, and unity of time, place and action. It has greater unity of time and place. Its action centres in the vicinity of Mano Majra and it covers a period of not more than a month. Perhaps this is an important factor that enables him to transform the horrendous raw theme into fine fiction that is full of human compassion and love.

One significant aspect of Train to Pakistan is the use of English language. The style is realistic with down to earth idioms. It is transposed from Punjabi to English, which is a pronounced expression of the quality of his mind and his view of life. Another side of the novel is complete absence of direct impact of partition on the people of village, but indirect way to depict victims who feel affected by aftermath of partition.

The climax of Train to Pakistan is exciting where Jugga saves the train at the cost of his life as his immediate concern is the safety of Nooran but he manages to save Muslims migrating from Mano Majra. Jugga's death under the rumbling wheels of the Train to Pakistan may suggest the final estrangement of the two communities, but his heroic defence of the Muslims of Mano Majra and his consequent martyrdom attract attention to the inseparableness of the two communities of the rural India, the heart of the popular culture of India.

Thus, Train to Pakistan stands out as a shining example of the Sikh novel where the Sikh and the Muslims are never shown up in arms against each other. In spite of being a Sikh novel, Train to Pakistan can rightly be acclaimed as Indian version of Partition by Khushwant Singh.

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CHAPTER-3

**(I) Attia Hosain's version of Partition in
*Sunlight on a Broken Column***

and

**(II) Manju Kapur's version of Partition in
*Difficult Daughters***

CHAPTER-3

Attia Hosain's version of Partition in

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and

Manju Kapur's version of Partition in

Difficult Daughters

[I]

Attia Hosain was born in Lucknow in 1913 and was brought up in an aristocratic family in Oudh. Like Bapsi Sidhwa and Jane Austen, she could write with ease about a life she knew well. Having lost her father at eleven, she was brought up by a strong mother who imparted her education in English, and knowledge of Persian, Arabic and Urdu. Attia Hosain writes, "We seemed to live with the cultures of the East and the West in a way that was not dissimilar from that of many Indian families."¹ She was educated at La martiniere and Isabella Thoburn College, Lucknow. She was the first woman to graduate from amongst the feudal "Taluqdari" families into which she was born. She chose to spend her life in England after the Partition of India.

Influenced, in the 1930s, by the nationalist movement and the Progressive Writers' Group in India, she became a journalist, broadcaster and writer of short stories.

As a well-educated, thoughtful young woman at the heart of the storm in an India on the brink of Independence and Partition, she wrote for The Pioneer, then edited by Desmond Young, and for The Statesman, the leading English language newspaper in Calcutta. She also wrote short stories-"some published, some unpublished"²-but she never regarded herself as a writer. In spite of her ideals and those of many other Muslims in India, Partition seemed inevitable at the time of Independence and, rather than going to Pakistan, the Muslim ideal in which she did not believe, she chose to take her children to England, a country she had come to

know when her husband was posted to the Indian High Commission, and earned her living by broadcasting and presenting her own women's programme on the Eastern Service of the BBC. She says:

Events during and after Partition are to this day very painful to me. And now, in my old age, the strength of my roots is strong; it also causes pain, because it makes one a "stranger" everywhere in the deeper area of one's mind and spirit *except where one was born and brought up.*³

In addition, she lectured on the confluence of Indian and Western culture and wrote Phoenix Fled (1953), a collection of short stories, and Sunlight on a Broken Column (1961), a novel dealing with Partition. Anita Desai pinpoints the charm of Hosain's writing beautifully in her introduction when she tells us that to read her works is:-

Like wrapping oneself in one's mother's wedding sari, lifting the family jewels out of a faded box and admiring their glitter, inhaling the musky perfume of old silks in a camphor chest.⁴

As Hosain's title, taken from T.S.Eliot's The Hollow Man, indicates, the novel presents a vision of a 'dream-kingdom' which is now dead and gone-viz. the world of feudal aristocrats in Lucknow during the pre-Independence days, seen through the eyes of a highly sensitive woman, whose own growth from adolescence to youth and middle age coincides with the decay and vanishing of the way of life in which she was born and brought up. The central theme of Sunlight on a Broken Column is obviously how 'old order changeth yielding place to new,' in three generations in the feudal city of Lucknow.⁵

Attia Hosain's Sunlight on a Broken Column is set roughly from 1932 to 1952 against a feudal, taluqdari (landlord) aristocratic, Muslim backdrop in the United

Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh). It deals with India's struggle for independence and proceeds to present the ironic reward of this struggle. It depicts the ugly acts of communal violence, shows how the fight of the Indians against the British rule turned into the fight among themselves, and tries to diagnose the malady of the Partition and its indescribable consequences. It is the first novel by a Muslim lady on the theme of Partition and the tragedy that swept people in its wake. It presents a perspective on the Partition different from other Indian novels on Partition. It represents, for the first time, the Muslim point of view. The novel expresses a feeling of guilt and sorrow because the original impulse for the Partition came from the Muslims. In fact, Attia Hosain offers an impartial study of the whole situation. The Hindus are praised for saving the Muslims from the cruel violence. Similarly, the two important members of a distinguished Muslim family, Kemal and Asad, are the figures of national pride, for they stayed behind in India and, in spite of suspicious looks all around them, took India to be their home.

The novel examines the social structure dislocated by a historical and a political event- partition in 1947. Veena Singh comments:

Partition no doubt was a political decision but not an event in isolation for –it had repercussions on the lives of people as it resulted in geographical, economic and, most important of all, emotional and psychological dislocation.⁶

The same idea about the novel has been very well expressed by Sarla Palkar:

In the first place, one cannot neatly compartmentalize the personal history of Laila from the social-or national history-in fact what makes Sunlight on A Broken Column a three dimensional novel is the manner in which the personal, the social, and the national issues keep interacting and reflecting on one another.⁷

The novel, consisting of four parts, covers a period of some twenty years. It depicts the life of the narrator-heroine, Laila, the orphan daughter of a wealthy and distinguished Muslim family. She grew up during the thirties when the political struggle for freedom was sharpening. All people around her took active part and interest in politics. But she was unable to commit herself whole heartedly to any cause; her own struggle for independence was a struggle against the claustrophobic traditions of family life, from which she finally broke away when she fell in love with a student, Ameer.

‘Ashiana’, the name of Laila’s house, is symbolic one. ‘Ashiana’ means ‘the nest’, which also suggests that the Muslims had made India their home. According to Jameela Begum:

‘Ashiana’ is not representative of just a stone structure which houses the varied women characters but a metaphor and synecdoche of a way of life. Within its walls is captured in miniature the experiences of a whole nation fighting its personal and political battles. Caught within the purdah, the womenfolk are segregated to their own quarters and yet their lives must cross those of the men who are both inmates and visitors. So long as Baba Jan holds them together there is an uneasy calm that is fostered when characters of different temperaments are grouped under a common roof.⁸

The novel shows, in detail the traditional way of life among the Muslims in India. The people, described in it, were deeply rooted in the soil. It was a time of great political upheaval. The Muslims, in the vein of true nationalism, came out on the streets, followed Gandhi’s non-violence and shouted slogans for freedom. Parades and processions became a common feature on the streets of Lucknow. Asad was completely given to non-violence, and was an active participant in processions. As a

matter of fact, innumerable enthusiastic young men and girls participated in them whole-heartedly.

The processions for freedom-a perfect example of communal harmony and a cry for the ouster of the British- were baffling to the aged ladies, who were worried about the safety of their dear ones. Aunt Abida asked alarmingly, "What was happening?"⁹ Aunt Majida lamented the activities of the young ones and wailed: "What has happened to young people nowadays? Why must they go looking for trouble?"¹⁰ Hakim Bua described the rationale behind the hectic activities: "They have cats tied to their feet: they cannot sit still."¹¹ But then unfortunately united struggle degenerated into a communal one. The whole trouble started when religion entered politics. The intelligent novelist discerns the British game of divide and rule in the unfortunate developments. Asad makes it very clear in the first part of the novel that the British encouraged and helped the communal and sectarian riots. Zahid feared that the Shias cursed Sunnis. Asad remarked unhesitatingly: "He has learned the lesson the English teach us."¹²

He made it explicitly clear that the British had given us the message: "Hate each other- love us."¹³ The British, Asad observed, endeavored to stress that their presence in order to maintain peace in India was vital. When Zahid expressed his fears that there might be a riot that year during Muharram, Asad said: "May be because there haven't been any for too long, not even Hindu-Muslim ones. Something must be done to prove that the British are here to enforce law and order, and stop us killing each other."¹⁴

Attia Hosain shows that the British had a hand in dividing the Indians, but they were not solely responsible for it. The Indian Freedom Movement suffered a setback the moment religion entered politics. The influence of religion on Saleem was evident: "A new type of person now frequented the house. Fanatic, bearded men and young zealots would come to see Saleem..."¹⁵ The atmosphere grew grave, and it bustled with heated arguments. Envy, hatred and the will to hurt the other community became dominant. The traditional Lucknow courtesy was completely lost:

No one seemed to talk any more: every one argued, and not in the graceful tradition of our city where conversation was treated as a fine art, words were loved as mediums of artistic expression and verbal battles were enjoyed as much as any delicate, scintillating, sparkling display of pyrotechnic skill. It was as if someone had sneaked in live ammunition among the fireworks. In the thrust and parry there was a desire to inflict wounds.¹⁶

The rift became clear: the secular Muslim nationalists remained in the Congress, while the communal Muslims leveled grave charges against the Congress that was termed as a purely Hindu organization. The latter challenged the secular nationalists. It was declared that the policies and programmes of the Congress were deceptive. The politics entered sophisticated houses, and there was heated argument between uncle Hameed and his son Saleem. They found themselves in opposite camps. Criticizing the Muslim League, Uncle Hamid said to Saleem with sarcasm:

This Muslim League, in which you are so interested, I have heard it called communal and reactionary by nationalist Muslims. Certainly most of its leaders-and many are my friends-are of the kind you would call 'reactionary', according to your political theories.¹⁷

Saleem retorted forcefully and accused the Congress of having anti-Muslim elements. He felt that the need of the hour was Muslim unity, and the game of power politics would bring to light the hidden reactionary elements. In a very powerful vein, he flushed spitting poison against the Congress:

I believe the Congress has a strong anti-Muslim element in it against which the Muslims must organize. The danger is great because it is hidden, like an iceberg. When it was just a question of fighting the British the

progressive forces were uppermost; but now that power is to be acquired, now the submerged reactionary elements will surface. Muslims must unite against them.¹⁸

Saleem gave vent to the Muslim fears that in free India the Hindu majority would rule the Muslims. This feeling of fear and distrust could make Aunt Saira say suddenly: “Oh dear, there is no question, it would be better to have the British stay on than the Hindus ruling.”¹⁹ Saleem feared the Hindus’ feeling of revenge and stated:

The majority of Hindus have not forgotten or forgiven the Muslims for having ruled over them for hundreds of years. Now they can democratically take revenge. The British have ruled about two hundred years, and see how much they are hated.²⁰

Uncle Hamid did not share these fears. He regretted that his son salim had “learned of lot of lessons very quickly.”²¹ He saw no difference between the Hindus and the Muslims. He felt that the two could live peacefully and lovingly together. “I always found it was possible for Hindus and Muslims to work together on a political level and live together in personal friendship.”²² Saleem thought that the views of his father were irrelevant in the context of changed time. He told his father: ...

My best friends are Hindus. But there was not the same sharp clash of interests as there is now. Times have changed. Your political experience is of a time that is running out.²³

The sharp difference in the attitude of the father and the son led to an explosion of anger. Everyday Saleem felt that the issues on which the election was to be fought were vital to their future. The novelist traced the growth of communal hatred. It was the induction of religion into politics that sowed the seeds of communal violence. The leaders of all parties were held responsible for the savage acts of

cruelty. Saleem said that the Muslims “who are in the Congress are being used as dupes to give it a secular appearance.”²⁴ This proved that only the British were not the dividing force. Kamal expressed surprise at this statement of Saleem and reminded him of his earlier utterances accusing the British of striving to disrupt the freedom struggle. He expressed surprise at this change in attitude, and said to Saleem: “How you’ve changed! ...You used to say the British encouraged Hindu-Muslim quarrels and drove them apart in order to divide and rule”²⁵ Kemal’s amazement was promptly responded to by the narrator: “And now I wonder how far apart we will drive each other ourselves.”²⁶

Part Four shows the effect of the partition on the members of a family living far away from the Punjab that saw the people in flight, leaving their homes behind in search of a homeland. It witnessed great atrocities and massacre, and became the scene of violent actions. The novel portrays the impact of the Partition on the members of a family living safely and quietly in a nest-like house, ‘Ashiana’ at Lucknow far away from the main streams of bloodshed and cruelty. Saleem opted for Pakistan, while Kemal decided to stay in India. Apparently, the Partition acted as a great stigma in the lives of the people.

Laila came to pay a visit to ‘Ashiana’, the house associated with many memories. As she explained:

My most private emotions were contained by this house, as much a part of its structure as its every brick and beam. Its memories condensed my life as in a summary.²⁷

She felt embarrassed to find strangers living in the rooms where she had spent a good portion of her life. She felt grieved at the thought that these strangers were labeled ‘refugees,’ while her cousin Saleem, who opted for Pakistan was called ‘evacuee’; even today Muslims migrated from India are called ‘Muhajir’. Laila’s presence in the house brought tears in the sunken eyes of the faithful servant, Ram

Singh. He lamented the great change brought about by the unhappy developments. He said to Laila:

The house, Bitia, this is not how you should have come to the house. I saw you grow up in it, and I should have seen your children, and the children of Kemal Mian and Saleem Mian grow up in it. Bhagwan should have taken me from this earth before I saw this happen.²⁸

To Laila the house was a living entity, and the tears and words of the old servant opened her closed heart. She turned towards the house with every nerve alive and quivering, and found it a living being. In its decay she saw the one way of life buried and the other coming to an end. A month after the Partition of the country, Saleem had left for Pakistan and Kemal remained behind. The old world had undergone a tremendous change. Power and privileges no more existed, and Kemal was left with no alternative but to sell 'Ashiana.' Aunt Saira failed to perceive these changes. Kemal had unorthodox principles. He had married a non-Muslim. The constitutional abolition of the feudal system threw landowners into misery, cracking their world completely.

The Partition brought new laws and the harassment of people by the officers. "The Muslims who had left for Pakistan were declared 'evacuees' and their property declared 'evacuee property to be taken over by a custodian.'"²⁹ Kemal practiced utmost honesty. He was lucky to escape the unwarranted torture by the officers. The writer points out this corrupt aspect when she remarks about Kemal:

He was grateful he had not been harassed as so many other had been by petty officials who ordered humiliating searches of houses and lengthy cross-examinations.³⁰

Saira took offence at this sudden change, and felt grievously irritated at the ways of the government. She feared that the new devices had been strategically

planned to help the Hindus and to harass and molest the Muslims left in India. Her cry gave vent to the feelings of a person who lost all wealth in a deluge and fell on evil days. She railed at the government, at the way of the world, and at her son and his wife:

What right have they to steal what is ours? Will they never be content with how much they rob? Is there no justice? Is this a war with Custodians for enemy property? Did they not consent to the partition themselves? Why treat those people like enemies who went over? Were they not given a free choice? Were they warned they would lose their property, and have their families harassed? If they want to drive out Muslims why not say it like honest men? Sheltering behind the false slogans of a secular state! Hypocrites! Cowards! It is good Saleem has gone away. They will destroy you and all fools like you who have trusted them, the Banias.³¹

This dejected cry expressed the feeling that the Muslims who stayed behind in India had committed a blunder. They were insecure in free India. For them the only place of comfort and refuge was Pakistan-their “neo-Paradise across the border.”³²

However, Kemal felt that such laws were inevitable; they were the natural consequences of the aftermath of the Partition. He explained patiently how abundant property had been left behind by the Hindus in Pakistan. But all his efforts to quieten Saira proved futile. In her bitterness, she accused him of his anti-traditional beliefs and actions and of his defending a Government hating the Muslims. This made Kemal retaliate bitterly, and he asked her why she did not go to Pakistan with Saleem. Saira Kemal episode shows the bitterness of the tortured Muslims who remained in India after the Partition.

Laila surveyed the political scene through uncle Hamid who “had seen the gradual crumbling of all his dreams and ambitions.”³³ Saleem went away to Pakistan, while Kemal decided to stay in India. Saleem questioned the wisdom of Kemal’s decision to stay in India. He found him ‘somewhat romantic, even quixotic’. He asked him not to think in terms of India but India and Pakistan. No body could guess what kind of relationship would exist between the two countries. Saleem feared that the violence preceding the Partition might continue, though he saw no reason for its continuance. He said to Kemal:

Let us imagine the worst that could happen. Suppose the sporadic violence that preceded partition continues after it- though when one considers that the leaders on both sides have accepted the decision, there is really no reason why it should--³⁴

Saleem hoped that the leaders would act wisely to prevent killing and bloodshed. He feared discrimination against the Muslims in free India. He expounded his arguments in a bid to understand each other as individuals and as a family. Kemal did not want the family to split up. He knew all about the Partition and said that Saleem’s going to Karachi would mean going to another country:

Don’t you see, we will belong to different countries, have different nationalities? Can you imagine every time to see each other we’ll have to cross national frontiers? May be even have to get visas.³⁵

Kemal’s statement is expressive of the lament for the Partition. To think that a country would be divided into different countries was very tragic. Saleem saw his bright future in Pakistan, but Kemal asserted that India was his country: “This is my country. I belong to it. I love it. That is all...”³⁶ Saleem warned Kemal that in India he would have “to face suspicion, prejudice even hatred”.³⁷ Kemal, in spite of all unpleasant things that he might face in India, pledged to stay in a country that he

knew was his own. Even the promotion-lure did not shake him to change his decision. With a bold heart he told Saleem that he was unmindful of suspicion and hate:

Perhaps I have already done that. May be I know better than what I have to face or have faced. But I believe in my country. I have to fight for what I believe in. You forget I never shared your views. I cannot condone something I believe is wrong.³⁸

The widely different beliefs of the two brothers dawned upon them the futility of discussion. The meeting, called for keeping the family united, ended in disaster. There arose the question of loyalty. Kemal showed his loyalty to his country India. Nadira thought that it was Pakistan that needed their loyalty: “to build it up as a refuge where all Muslim can be safe and free.”³⁹ Kemal asked: who was to look after the millions of Muslims who were to stay in India? And where were those leaders who strengthened the seed of ill-will and hatred? Saleem felt that Muslims had no future in India, and that their children would face a greater predicament in this country. This made Kemal’s voice quiver with suppressed emotions. He spoke out:

I see my future in the past. I was born here, and generations of my ancestors before me. I am content to die here and be buried with them.⁴⁰

The heated and at times objective arguments over the dining table finally split the family. Saleem and Nadira left for Pakistan and as the writer aptly remarks: “it was easier for them thereafter to visit the whole wide world than the home which had once been theirs.”⁴¹

Saleem’s return to Hasanpur after two years highlighted certain important aspects of the Partition. He was happy to meet his old friends, and to feel ‘recognized identity’. It was something that he grievously missed in his new home-the new country. He was greatly moved to find his old friends unchanged, in spite of the great

upheaval. The writer makes an excellent analysis of Saleem's psychology and predicament when she writes:

Saleem was touched to find old friends unchanged in spite of the backwash of revengeful hate and suspicion that had spattered the humane, poetic soul of the city. He was glad of the feeling of recognized identity in Hasanpur after having lived among strangers who knew him as an individual without a background.⁴²

The statement clearly brings out the feeling of alienation in Saleem caused by the Partition. This feeling is contrasted with the feeling of association and identity that he experienced when he came to India on leave after his two years' stay in Pakistan. Nadira lost her youthful enthusiasm for an Islamic Renaissance, and devoted herself to the service of the new country that became "a symbol of her ideals."⁴³ She helped the victims of the Partition. The horrors of the Partition and the plight of the poor Muslims who ran away to Pakistan have been suggestively presented by the writer's observations on Nadira's activities:

She had become a selfless social worker among the pitiable refugees who had swarmed across the border in their millions, and had devoted herself to the service of unhappy victims of rape and assault and abduction.⁴⁴

The description of a refugee, who lost his family in the riots, is heart-rending. His unhappy experience developed in him hatred for all the Muslims and led him to call them 'traitors': "They're all bloody traitors-every bloody Muslim-deep in their bloody hearts."⁴⁵

Laila knew about the acts of violence, murder, rape and mutilation which were invariably seen on both the sides of the border. She criticized the Muslims who vomited hate against the Hindus. She lauded the Hindus for protecting the Muslims. She gave a beautiful rebuff to Zahra by remarking that Sita and other Hindus saved her:

Where were you, Zahra, when I sat up through the nights, watching village after village set on fire, each day nearer and nearer? Sleeping in comfortable house, guarded by policemen, and sentries? Do you know who saved me and my child? Sita, who took us to her house, in spite of putting her own life in danger with ours. And Ranjit, who came from his village, because he had heard of what was happening in the foothills and was afraid for us. He drove us back, pretending we were his family, risking discovery and death. What were you doing then? Getting your picture in the papers, distributing sweets to orphans whose fathers had been murdered and mothers raped.⁴⁶

Laila defended and praised the Hindus for saving the Muslims. She scoffed at the Muslim leaders, who fanned hatred and violence and ran away to safety on the other side of the border, leaving their followers behind. She said to Zahra:

Do you know who saved all the other who had no Sitas and Ranjits ? Where were all their leaders? Safely across the border. The only people left to save them were those very Hindus against whom they had ranted. Do you know what 'responsibility' and 'duty' meant ? To stop the murderous mob at any cost even if it meant shooting people of their own religion.⁴⁷

Obviously, the Muslim writer praises the Hindus for their sense of 'responsibility' and 'duty', and remains unprejudiced without taking sides. She passionately believes in friendship and tolerance. Zahra thought that in her passion for praising the Hindus, Laila had developed prejudice against the Muslims. Admiring her own actions, she accused Laila of having a prejudiced mind. She observed angrily:

What is so extraordinary about that? Do you think we did not have the same sense of duty on our side? Do you think the same things did not happen there? You are so prejudiced.⁴⁸

The maintenance of a complete balance between the violence and mercy of the two communities is an excellent achievement of the writer.

The changes brought about by the Partition absorbed the attention of the novelist. There was the change of language and manners. With the change of people- the exodus of the Muslims to Pakistan and the overflow of the refugees to India-, such things were inevitable. The refugee colonies came into existence. The huge rambling house of the Raja of Amirpur became the centre of a new colony for the refugees. Violence in the train has been pathetically portrayed in the novel. Zahid was killed in a train tragedy: he boarded a train for Pakistan on the thirteenth of August, but when “it had reached its destination not a man, woman or child was found alive.”⁴⁹

Asad was another Muslim free from all hatred. He practiced non-violence, and worked hard in the Eastern riot-hit areas in 1946. He lost his dear one Zahid in brutal communal violence, but he practiced restraint, and consciously worked to control his bitterness. Through him, the writer gives the message of ‘love’ ‘tolerance’ and ‘patience’ and of not indulging in retaliation, for it only leads to violence and hatred. Attia Hosain praised Asad’s patience and stated frankly that the path of revenge and retaliation must be abandoned:

The manner of Zahid’s death had been a terrible test for Asad’s faith in non-violence. He had accepted it as such, believing that bitterness and retaliation could only breed violence and start a never-ending cycle which was a negation of life; but he was human and it needed a conscious effort of will to restrain his bitterness.⁵⁰

Thus Sunlight on a Broken Column makes a strong appeal to shun all hatred, to embrace non-violence and to give up the desire to retaliate. It lays emphasis on Gandhi's conviction of non-violence. Asad stood the test and remained a Gandhian in spirit, in spite of sustaining the loss of Zahid.

In short, Attia Hosain maintains a commendable impartiality, showing that the participation in the national movement for freedom had no communal consideration; the Hindus and the Muslims worked together. She regrets, with a sense of guilt, the induction of religion into politics.

Attia Hosain does not like politics at all. She replies about the question why she does not want to take part in politics:

... Because, you see, my mother-in-law was a Muslim Leaguer. We were in opposite camps always. So there was never any question of my being actively in politics because that would have meant a total break in the family.⁵¹.

It was this development that poisoned the minds of the millions, and Saleem was one of them. This led to the fabulous rise and popularity of the Muslim League, to the split among the Muslims-the secular Muslims and the Leaguers-and ultimately to the division of the country. The events of rape, murder, abduction, fire and arson have been graphically depicted. The tremendous change caused by the Partition, the new terms and sights like 'refugee' and 'evacuee' the change of language and manners. The rise of new colonies, the air of hatred and violence-all these find emphatic expression in this novel.

In fact, the novelist does not commit herself to any religion. She criticizes the Muslim leaders for inciting hate, anger and violence and for running away to Pakistan, leaving their coreligionists behind to the mercy of the angry Hindus. She praises the Hindus-thousands of Sitas and Ranjits, who saved the lives of their Muslim friends at great personal risk. In the same breath, she admires the good

humanitarian work carried out on the other side of the border. The horror of the Partition, the train-tragedies, the pathetic sights of the millions, the heart-rending condition of children whose fathers were killed and mothers raped, the sight of a refugee who lost his family in riots and Zahid's murder-all these common on both the sides of the border catch the attention of the writer. But the novel does not concentrate on the Punjab-the scene of hectic activities of those days. It studies the psychology of a Muslim home that suffered at Lucknow on account of the Partition. A joyous, beautiful home 'Ashiana', the nest, was ruined by the Partition. The division of the country led to the division of a Muslim house. Saleem and Nadira, who saw in the initial stages the Islam Renaissance in the creation of Pakistan, opted for the new country of their ideals. Kemal took India to be his motherland. Asad, too, though a victim of the Partition, remained in India and took active part in politics. Laila, the objective narrator, surveyed the deserted nest. Remembered her days spent there, felt the tremendous change brought about by the Partition and the abolition of zamindari, recalled the scene in the house that ultimately caused the parting of ways of its different members, and meditated on its impact. It is, indeed, a very powerful novel that makes the readers feel the great tragedy of the partition emotionally and psychologically.

Attia Hosain herself admits that she had sieved out in the novel what was most important about the Partition. She opines:

...But what I knew was from that other angle: the Muslim family that has been riven and splintered, without even being conscious that it was happening that way.⁵²

In short, Attia Hosain presents Muslim version of Partition. She maintains a commendable impartiality, showing that the participation in the national movement for freedom had no communal consideration; the Hindus and the Muslims worked together. She regrets, with a sense of guilt, the induction of religion into politics. It was this development that poisoned the minds of the millions, and Saleem was one of them. This led to the fabulous rise and popularity of the Muslim League, to the split

among the Muslims—the secular Muslims and the Leaguers—and ultimately to the division of the country. The events of rape, murder, abduction, mutilation, fire and arson have been graphically depicted. The tremendous changes caused by the change of language and manners, the rise of new colonies, the air of hatred and violence—all these find emphatic expression in this novel.

Attia Hosain's impartiality is really commendable. Though we may be tempted to agree with the critics and call Sunlight on a Broken Column a Muslim version of the vivisection of the country but it can be regarded as human version with real artistic touch. It might have subjective touch as the Muslims have been presented in a very impartial manner. It is a rare literary phenomenon in which a Muslim female fiction writer has courage to present Muslims in dark colour.

Attia Hosain's boldness in presenting a genuine version of the Partition has drawn attention of the critics who have praised her neutrality. To many readers such version may seem rather strange but a genius like Attia Hosain can not but be impartial. Throughout history, communal frenzy and partition have stirred the imagination, emotion and sensibility of creative writers. The two female fiction writers Attia Hosain and Bapsi Sidhwa have significantly contributed to the partition literature. Sidhwa's Ice Candy Man and Attia Hosain's Sunlight on a Broken Column examine inexorable logic of partition as an offshoot of fundamentalism sparked by hardening communal attitudes.⁵³

It would be worthwhile to make comparative evaluation of Sidhwa and Hosain as a distinctive female voice in male dominating fiction writing. Both these sensitive women writers, in Ice Candy Man and Sunlight on a Broken Column, share similar perspectives on the calamities of partition. The denouement of both novels is quite similar. Both stress a similar vulnerability of human understanding and life, caused by the throes of Partition with relentlessly divided friends, family, lovers and neighbours.⁵⁴

Attia Hosain's Sunlight on a Broken Column renders a feminine perspective as the novelist uses narrator heroine Laila to reveal the trauma of Partition through her

memories and insight of her Talukdar family disintegrating. The enigma of Partition is sensitively shown, when Zohara, Laila's cousin married in Pakistan, returns to Hasanpur and quarrels with Laila about protection of Muslim culture and language. The disagreements were no longer youthful verbal quarrels but echoed bigger divisions. Laila surmises the cruelest aspect of Partition when she says:

In the end, inevitably we quarreled, and though we made up before we parted I realized that the ties which had kept families together for centuries had been loosened beyond repair.⁵⁵

Such is inner impact of Partition that makes Laila nostalgic and restless. Laila ruminates and wanders in her disbanded ancestral home 'Ashiana' after Partition. Memories come flooding back. However her nostalgia is controlled. Whilst walking through the rooms of Ashiana, she remembers the past, but does not wish for the old order to return. But at the same time Laila has also realize there is no easy solution to communal holocausts except intense struggle against dogmatism. Thus Attia Hosain upholds Laila's attempts at breaking of traditional customs.

There can be no better summing up of Attia Hosain's novel than reference to what Anita Desai has said in her 'introduction' which is an eloquent and succinct evaluation of the artist. Anita Desai appreciates Attia Hosain's fascination of the past which she also calls Attia's irresistible and unquestionable loyalty to India. Her introduction opens:

In India, the past never disappears. It does not even become transformed into a ghost. Concrete, physical, palpable-it is present everywhere.⁵⁶

Even today Sunlight on a Broken Column will revive nostalgia not only for Laila or Attia Hosain herself but also for the entire Muslim community. A.G.Khan rightly comments:

The novel has assumed relevance today in wake of the Ayodhya issue when Muslim psyche is deeply wounded in feeling of insecurity looms large over the minds of the “Broken Column”. The communal tension occurring only as a ‘sub-text’ was the topic of discussion. While one generation had feared that Muslims were not safe in the hands of Hindus (irrespective of political parties they belong to); others did have faith in secular outlook.⁵⁷

Anita Desai has beautifully concluded her introduction to the novel quoting Laila’s musings.

I wondered about the dead whose graves we had come to visit, whose stream of life flowed in us and through us. They had been kept alive by generations that respected their tradition. Did our alien thoughts and alien way of living push them into oblivion? Or was it final release for them and freedom for the living? Everything in those days of my years ended with a question mark.⁵⁸

The novel is one of those few Partition novels that are both aesthetically satisfying and at the same time present the tragedy of Partition with great objectivity and sympathetic understanding. It makes a strong appeal to leave hatred and violence and to follow the philosophy of love and non-violence. It is only by co-existence and tolerance that the world is going to survive and not by hatred and violence. The novelist shows that the national movement for freedom had no communal considerations but then the induction of religion into politics poisoned the minds of the millions of Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs. She also points out that this religion was inducted into politics by the communal and power-hungry leaders of the Muslim League. And ironically enough, this caused the partition even within the Muslims- the nationalist Muslims and the Leaguers, ‘a partition within partition.

[II]

Manju Kapur was born in Amritsar. She is a teacher of English literature at Miranda House, Delhi University and has four children. It took her five years to do research at Nehru Memorial Museum and Library at Teen Murti House for writing her debut novel Difficult Daughters. It involved a lot of hard work. As Manju Kapur says, "I had to rewrite the book eight times over seven years. And each time I thought I had finished the book." When Manju Kapur did not find any Indian publisher forthcoming to bring out her novel, she approached Faber and Faber in England. They published it after the suggested changes were made. Later it was published by Penguin India and was nominated for the Crossword Book Award, widely regarded as the Indian Booker Prize. At first the novel was entitled as Partition. Ira Pande has graphically describes the front page of the novel in the following words.

Manju Kapur's book first holds your attention with its cover, which has a stunning portrait of a young woman circa the '50s with large limpid eyes and a gaze that looks beyond. How many such photographs one has seen framed in silver in affluent middle class homes in north India. Tinged with sepia, these portraits show you the mistress of the home in her prime. Such is Virmati, the protagonist.⁵⁹

The back page of the book introduces us to the theme and setting and the heroine thus.

Set around the time of Partition and written with absorbing intelligence and sympathy, Difficult Daughters is the story of a woman torn between family duty, the desire for education, and illicit love. Virmati, a young woman born in Amritsar into an austere and high-mined household, falls in love with a neighbour, the Professor-a man who is already married. That the Professor eventually marries Virmati, installs her in his

home (alongside his furious first wife) and helps her towards further studies, in Lahore, is small consolation to her scandalized family. Or even to Virmati, who finds that the battle for her own independence has created irrevocable lines of partition and pain around her.⁶⁰

Manju Kapur's debut novel, Difficult Daughters (1998), which won Commonwealth Writer's Prize for Eurasian region (1999), has attracted a lot of attraction. It locates the life of Virmati against a backdrop of political happenings before and after Partition. As such there is a decency to categorize it as a Partition novel, a category which calls to one's mind a whole cluster of Partition novels which do not necessarily reflect upon the violence or communal conflict of Partition, but instead focus on the impact of dislocation during the Partition.⁶¹ Her second novel A Married Woman (2002) has the issue of Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi and the frenzied reaction of the people as the focal point. The political malaise of this issue and Astha's attempts to present it on the canvas are somehow sidelined due to Astha's sexual forays.

The twentieth century was a period of tremendous upheaval and change both in social organization and in the philosophical themes which emerged out of it. While Europe saw the consequences of the Industrial Revolution, the Great War, the Great Depression and the violence of the Second World War, India was to face the struggle for Independence and the holocaust that followed in the wake of the Partition of the country in 1947. The turbulent days that preceded and followed the Partition of British India were fraught with political hatred and violence, with passions which had seized people in a communal frenzy. In the words of Manohar Malgonkar,

The entire land was being splattered by the blood of its citizens, blistered and disfigured with the fires of religious hatred; its roads gutted with enough dead bodies to satisfy the ghouls of a major war.⁶²

Difficult Daughters by Manju Kapur is a very recent novel on the theme of Partition of the Indian subcontinent. The novelist has covered a long span of time when the Britishers were the rulers and the Indians were fighting against them to Liberate India. The fight then was fought unitedly by the Hindu-Muslim and Sikhs. However, it was the locale of Muslim in the novel. Amritsar, then undivided Punjab, witnessed some hidden hatred and enmity in the subconscious mind of the people. The city of Amritsar which constituted fifty-one per cent of Muslims was dominated by the Hindu and Sikh; and education, finance, trade and commerce and all other important spheres were in their hands. This made the Muslims angry and jealous towards the Hindus and Sikhs. Stray incidents of arsoning and violence took place. But no major incidents of mass violence or carnage took place in these days. People of Amritsar go to Lahore for higher education and so also people from Lahore go to Amritsar for various purposes.

It is on this background of the then undivided Punjab that the story of Virmati, the protagonist of the novel is narrated. She is the eldest of eleven sisters and brothers: Virmati, Indumati, Gunvati, Hemavati, Vidyavati, and Parvati. Of boys: Kailashnath, Gopinath, Krishanath, Prakashnath, and Hiranath. As the eldest daughter and also as the custom of the old days, it is Virmati who has to take care of all her brothers and sisters. Her mother Kasturi is pregnant for the last time when Virmati is hardly seventeen and studying for her F.A. examination. Children in those days were considered as god send and hence Suraj Prakash, the father of the eleven children does not bother about his daughters' higher education. He is living in a joint family with his father Lala Diwan Chand, brother Chandra Prakash and his wife Lajwanti and their only daughter Shakuntala gone to Lahore.

It is Shakuntala, an M.Sc. in Chemistry, goes out of the home and begins to lead her life in Lahore in the company of her friends. She is unmarried and takes part in conducting 'political meetings and join rallies.' She once says to Virmati,

These people don't really understand Viru, how much satisfaction there can be in leading your own life in being independent. Here we are, fighting for the

freedom of the nation, but women are still supposed to marry, and nothing else.⁶³

There she and her friends travel, entertain themselves, reading papers, conducting seminars and sometimes even smoking and drinking and so on. The aged Virmati is literally carried away by the way Shakuntala is leading her life. It has an ever lasting impact on her tender mind. She too strongly desires to be like Shakuntala.

At the same time, as luck would have it, there comes the Professor to live in their house as a paying guest. He is married. He is a lecturer in English with a scholastic appearance and teacher of Viru. Virmati and the Professor fall in love with each other and Virmati's tragic journey begins. Once she begins her journey towards her married lover, she does not even bother to establish immoral and illicit relations with him. She succeeds in extracting promise from Harish that he would soon marry her. Possessed by the only desire of possessing the girl, the Professor promises her and succeeds in keeping physical relations with her.

All this happens under the pretext of education. Virmati, who finds it difficult to escape her family members, insists upon going to Lahore for further education. She goes there only to widen her horizons. She comes in contact with several girls of her age living in hostels and rooms on their own; without any control on them. Once out of the control of the family members, she becomes free. It is here that the Professor traps Virmati by giving her frequent visits. It is, as if he forgets his wife, children and family, and lives with Virmati in Lahore. Once he says to Virmati,

Co-wives are part of our social tradition. If you refuse me, you will be changing nothing. I don't live with her in any meaningful way.⁶⁴

He further says, "There is a void in my heart and in my home that you alone can fill"⁶⁵ Thus he persuades her persistently and succeeds in seducing her virgin body in the guest room of one of his friends, called Syed Husain. That day they become one with each other and enjoyed sexual pleasure. This practice then continues for long. Even

after abortion, they do not hesitate to have sex with each other. This extra-marital relationship does not remain a secret.

Now Virmati persuades Harish to marry her. Ultimately they got married. This marriage of Virmati and Harish causes tremendous tension in both houses. Virmati is allowed by Harish's wife and mother but her relatives and parents close their doors on her. The first wife of Harish and his mother treat her so badly that life after marriage becomes a hell for her. When she goes to her mother's home she is humiliated and asked her not to show her face thereafter. Her mother throws chappal at her and says,

You've blackened our face everywhere! For this I gave you birth? Because of you there is shame on our family, shame on me, shame on Bade Pitaji! But what do you care...⁶⁶

Virmati thus finds herself sandwiched between her in-laws and husband on one side and her own family members on the other side. As a result of all this she finds herself in a highly disturbed state of mind. She experiences a strong feeling of being alienated from the society. The husband however tries to keep her happy to the best of his capacity.

Once, he, with the consent of Virmati invites his old poet friend to live with them. In the company of the poet and other friends of Harish, she spends a few days very happily. But this period proves very short lived. The poet leaves the family. This makes her nervous and sad. Now she decides to become aggressive in order to take revenge upon Ganga, Professor's first wife.

It is on this background that the communal poison begins to work and the Hindus and Muslims become enemies of each other. Suraj Prakahs, the father of Virmati becomes a victim of violence and dies a tragic death and so her grandfather. Virmati is so much disturbed that she undergoes a miscarriage and loses all interests in her married life. She is then sent once again to Lahore for higher education in the field of philosophy. There, instead of studying, she wanders here and there in the

company of her friends and attends meetings of the political organizations. This disheartens the Professor much who has now become Principal of his college and finds little time to go to Lahore to meet Virmati. He makes her appeal every now and then to come back to Lahore.

That summer vacation of 1945, she had seen the aftermath of the Direct Action Day. She is now afraid and thinks if this can happen in Bengal, Punjab is not far behind. In Amritsar too there are several incidents of violence and the Professor decides to send his first wife, his mother and children to Kanpur, a sage place for them. The day they are sent to Kanpur, Virmati takes it as her independence day. Now they are all alone in the home. She becomes pregnant, gives birth to a daughter. They too move to Delhi where in one of the colleges of Delhi University, Harish becomes Principal. They name their daughter as Ida. In fact Virmati wants her to name Bharati but Harish opposes this idea by saying:

I don't wish our daughter to be tainted with the birth of our country. What birth is this? With so much hatred? We haven't been born. We have moved back into the dark ages. Fighting, killing over religion. Religion of all things. Even the educated. This is madness, not freedom. And I never ever wish to be reminded of it.⁶⁷

The violence of the Partition thus changes his attitude towards freedom and he names his daughter as Ida instead of Bharati. It means a new slate, and a blank beginning.⁶⁸

Giridhar and chhotti-the son and daughter of Ganga too come to live with them but Ganga never comes back. Giridhar opens a small business in Karol Bagh and married with one of his customers. Chhotti after becoming an IAS begins to live with her mother and grandmother. Ida does neither bother for any intellectual brightness nor for her father. She too undergoes a short lived marriage.

Manju Kapur's Difficult Daughters is the story of the daughters who are indeed very difficult to understand. There are a good number of daughters in the novel right from the first chapter to the last. Some of them are very docile, humble, traditional, cultured and some of them are exactly opposite to them by being very revolutionary, modern, ultramodern and even non-hesitant to keep immoral and illicit relations with other man. The stories of these difficult daughters are woven in the form of this novel.

Right from the first chapter to the last page there has been a strong undercurrent of the politics of the Partition of the Indian subcontinent. The daughters as well as all other characters are born, in the pre-independent India. They are, in the beginning, fighting unitedly against the British. Their first aim is to drive away the Britishers from India. Like the Congress leaders, the Leaguers, the Akalis and all other political parties, organizations, castes and communities come together and fight against the British. But when the independence of India comes within sight, all these are disintegrated and are found in their separate camps and compartments. Now they begin their fight for the interests of their castes and communities. The final result is the Partition of the Indian subcontinent.

The story of Virmati is not an exception to this. She is born and brought up in an orthodox family and is taught only how to look after the children of the family. Her mother gives birth to a number of sons and daughters who are reared by Virmati. Though she does this duty unhesitatingly, she has within her a strong desire of taking higher education and widening her horizon. She falls in love with the Professor, marries him and finds herself in great difficulty.

She is, fortunately for her, (though unfortunately for the country) rescued by the political activities happening in and around the Punjab. Her father becomes the victim of the Hindu-Muslim riots, but even after his death, she is not allowed to enter her maternal home. That is in 1943. Soon afterwards the rift between the major communities is seen widening as the Muslims become aware of the possibility of freedom. The Sikhs too become aware of the possibility of Partition of the country. The Congress opposes any kind of Partition. It creates unforeseen chaos and

confusion in the country and the rhythm of the Punjab is disturbed. There is violence and bloodshed everywhere. The day on which the house of Virmati's father is going to be attacked proves very helpful to Virmati. All the residents of the street including Virmati's husband Harish, Virmati, her mother Kasturi, her son, daughter gather in Sardar Hukum Singh's house, the only one high enough to allow a watch to be kept from the roof. Here Kasturi sends for her. The novelist writes:

The attack proved to have been a rumour, but it did serve one purpose. Virmati's mother sent for her. The times demanded from Kasturi that she carry resentment no further. Virmati shifted to her mother's, where she helped with the cooking along with the other women, because the need of the hour was to feed the scores of people who passed through their house fleeing from the mobs in Pakistan. No one mentioned the past. The present was too drastic for such luxury.⁶⁹

It is thus Virmati gets an opportunity to come in the company of her mother, sisters, brother and other relatives.

Though right from the beginning from the novel there is a strong undercurrent of the political happenings of the Partition of the Indian subcontinent, it is in chapter xxv that the novelist has given full treatment to the Partition tragedy. By May, 1944, the situation worsens to such a level that the word 'Pakistan' appears more and more in the newspapers. The novelist describes communal situation thus:

“Segregation rears its ugly head. In Rani Ka Baug, a new locality proposed in Amrissar, ownership is going to be restricted to Hindus and Sikhs. In Sind, Hindus are not going to be allowed to buy property. In Lahore, two educated gentlemen refuse to continue eating the food

they had ordered, or even pay for it, when they discover the bearer, as well as the caterer, are Muslims.⁷⁰

In 1946, the things become more and more complicated and there is unrest all over the country. The novelist writes:

The Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs were agitated. Many Muslims don't want Pakistan. Dr. Khan Sahib says, 'I have no desire to understand Pakistan.' Abdul Ghaffar Khan says, 'How can we divide ourselves and live?' Dr. Syed Hossain, Chairman of the National Committee for Indian Freedom at Washington, states that unity has been a historical fact from the time of Akbar. Sir Khizar Hyat Khan accuses the British of being the father and mother of Pakistan. Still, the idea of Pakistan seems more of a reality day by day.⁷¹

The Muslims thus too oppose any kind of Partition of India and they blame the British for encouraging the Muslims for demanding Pakistan. As a result of this the ideas of Pakistan is in the heated discussion for the people of Punjab.

To make matters worse, Barrister Jinnah gives the call of the Direct Action Day. The aftermath of the observation of the Direct Action Day is pictured thus:

In mid-August the killings in Calcutta start. They go on and on. The drops of blood in the distance come nearer and nearer. Only now it is not drops, but floods. The sewers of Calcutta are clogged with corpses, they float down the Hoogly, they lie scattered in the streets. People die-roasted, quartered, chopped, mutilated, turning, meat on a spit-are raped and converted in rampages gone mad, and leave a legacy of thousands of tales of sorrow, thousands more episodes shrouded in silence.⁷²

Virmati felt afraid. She thinks, "If this had happened in Bengal, could Punjab be far behind? This prophecy of Virmati comes true and very soon the entire Punjab is engulfed by violence and bloodshed. The novelist has, like a historian, recorded the truth told to her by some person like Kailashnath, Gopinath, Kanhiya Lal, SwarnaLata, Indumati, Shakuntala, Parvati's husband and so on. It is through their eyes that the novelist has thrown light on the bestiality of Muslims. Indumati says:

In Amritsar we went wild. Wild with enthusiastic welcomes for those who made it to safety, wild with grief for the loss of a sister city that was steeped in blood. The Mussulmans chopped our people's heads off, raped our women, cut off their breasts, all of which they claimed was in retaliation for what the Hindus were doing to them.⁷³

This and several other types of atrocities are committed on the minorities. A very graphic and realistic and yet unbelievable account of train attack is narrated by Gopinath thus:

I will never forget the sight of that train. I threw up on the platform. It was taken straight to the shed to be washed. There was blood everywhere, dried and crusted, still oozing from the doorways, arms and legs hanging out windows smashed.⁷⁴

The story told by Swarna Lata is even more horrible in nature. She says:

When the refugees came, they told stories about the killings, the abductions-those screaming girls-they spared no one, not even ten-, eleven-, twelve-year-olds-the forced conversions-people dying of hunger-boiling

leaves-scraping the bark off trees-one roti in a day if
they were lucky-this city felt its heart about to break.⁷⁵

These and several other incidents are narrated by the novelist in a highly controlled manner. She has a remarkable sense of objectivity and impartiality. When she narrates one incident happening in India, she immediately balances herself by telling that exactly same things happening across the border. She very intelligently points out that all Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs are equally responsible for the violence and bloodshed that is seen in the Punjab. She also points out that the political leaders play their game and the people have to face the consequences.

The novelist touches upon almost all political aspects of the Partition. The people of the Punjab who an, in the beginning stands for unity and brotherhood and who think their first duty to drive away the British, become disintegrated partly due to their selfish motives and partly due to the poison of communalism spread by their leaders. The best example in the novel is that of Swarna Lata and Ashrafi. They are very good friends and take active part in all political activities, morchas, meetings and other activities. But as soon as she comes in contact with her Muslim friends, she is totally changed. The reason of her change is, as Swarna Lata puts in her words:

In this case it must have been religious identity, may be Muslim fear and insecurity. They must have told her she would be disloyal to the Muslim cause. I didn't want to stand against Ashrafi, but my group said we had to win this election if it was the last thing we did. So you see, ultimately I too put something before friendship.⁷⁶

The same old friend of Swarna Lata later on joins the youth wing of the Muslim League. She who is said to be the most 'political person, converts into a highly spirited activist of the Muslim League.

There are some nationalist Muslim characters in the novel who oppose the very idea of the Partition but in vain. Dr.Khan Sahib, Dr. Syed Hossain, Abdul Gaffar

Khasi, Khizar Hyat Khan are some examples who want to fight against the British. They are, however, in a very small number and their sane and wise words are not taken into consideration by the majority. They have to suffer a lot. The head of a Muslim, Hindu and Sikh Coalition Ministry, Sir Khizar Hyat Khan Tiwara is the ambassador of the Hindu-Muslim unity. But the Muslim League attacks him furiously. The attempt of coalition rule is thus discouraged by members of the Muslim League. The example of Ashrafi also falls in the same category. She too has to submit to the pressure of her community.

Gur Pyari Jandial aptly describes the novel in the following words:

Difficult Daughters successfully recreates India's painful passage into a new nation and a new world. This world is interwoven with Virmati's story of rebellion and her quest for Independence. Through courage and resilience Virmati scurries and so does India. We find in Kapur's treatment a radical retelling which emphasizes the strength and endurance which are essential for survival in a violent world. The novelist uses the backdrop of partition to build the story of absorbing passion but it is a partition in more ways than one. The social changes of the time also alter something deep insight the individual and this Kapur tries to express.⁷⁷

Her novel touches myriad issues like revolt against deep rooted family tradition, the search for selfhood, woman's rights, marriage and the battle for Independence at both fronts-personal and national. Along with suffering are mingled hope and its renewal. By the end of the novel, when we have gone through the horror of Partition, there is feeling of upliftment. Ironically, Virmati and the Professor find some semblance of peace after the turbulent events of 1947. Ida too in reliving those years has exorcised her ghosts and is ready to begin a fresh life. The novel depicts the triumphs of the spirit, the longing to beat the odds, to conquer weakness and to move

forward. What it seems to assert is that the forces of love and life are greater and more powerful than those of hatred and death.

Thus the story of Virmati can be interpreted as the feminist version of Partition as novel enables us to study three generations of women-Kasturi, Virmati and Ida. These and other female characters in the novel enable us to get an idea of feminist struggle against biases. Difficult Daughters discusses the period during India's struggle for freedom and Partition. While reading the novel one gets the impression that a women's life is like the life of a nation.

Manju Kapur has enriched her fiction with the literary device of parallelism and significant use of symbolism. There is parallel in the story of the protagonist heroine Virmati and story of Partition and freedom. Virmati is symbolic figure of newly independent country whose family is divided as the country is partitioned with advent of freedom. Multiple themes are introduced in the backdrop of Partition. Artistic interweaving of themes and characterization has made the novel very unique. Difficult Daughters has aptly been acclaimed as the feminist version of Partition as Pakistani Parsi novelist Bapsi Sidhva's novel Ice candy man is regarded as a Parsi feminist version of Partition.

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Chapter-4

Manohar Malgonkar's version of partition

in

A Bend in the Ganges

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A Bend in the Ganges

Manohar Malgonkar, born into a Marathi-speaking Brahmin family in 1913 in Bombay and the grandson of a former Dewan of Indore, has first-hand experience of life in the princely states. Malgonkar earned a B.A. in English and Sanskrit(1935) from Bombay University, served for a decade in the army(rising to the rank of lieutenant-colonel), worked in a manganese mine as well as on a tea plantation, and is a hunting-guide turned conservationist. Conservative in outlook, he lost in parliamentary election.

Malgonkar has published six novels- Distant Drum (1960), Combat of Shadows (1962), The Princess (1963), A Bend in the Ganges (1964), The Devil's Wind (1972), and Bandicoot Run (1982), three collections of short stories: A Toast in Warm Wine (1974), Rumble Tumble (1977), Four Graves and Other Stories (1990), three histories: Kanhoji Angrey: Maratha Admiral(1959; reissued in 1978 as The Sea Hawk: Life and Battles of Kanhoji Angrey), Puars of Dewas (1963), Chhatrapatis of Kolhapur (1971), three works of non-fiction: The Man Who Killed Gandhi(1978), Cue from the Inner Voice: The Choice before Big Business (1980), Inside Goa (1982) and a play: Line of Mars(1978). Open Seasons (1978), is excluded from the list of the novels because, to quote Malgonkar, 'Open Season was not written as a novel, and it is being offered in that garb only because the film was never made.'¹ The indelible impression of Manohar Malgonkar's novels is that of easy readability. As H.U. Khan observes:

His novels and short stories mark a reaction against social realism and romanticism in their keynote. His novels and short stories are rooted in authenticity and sound historical sense. A Bend in the Ganges (1964) serves as an interesting illustration of his vision of human nature. As regards

violence, Malgonkar views it as the essence of human nature. His novels depict outdoor life, action, adventure and violence. A major element that contributes to continuous external action, violence and adventure in his fiction is the theme of revenge. It is a recurrent feature of his novels and it ultimately acquires the status of a major motif in them.³

As a writer, he emphasizes the importance of plot and action because, he believes, fiction, above all, should entertain. His writing reflects his optimism and pragmatism, and is free of overt philosophical speculation. What is striking is Malgonkar's historical sense. His histories have the flavour of fiction, and his fiction has the verisimilitude of history. So he selected theme of partition for his politico-historical novel A Bend in the Ganges.

Manohar Malgonkar, as a prominent Indo-English novelist and a good story teller, "raises the fundamental issue of the meaning of violence and non-violence."³ It is an exploration into the human context of non-violence, violence, disintegration and communal disharmony on an epic scale.

Manohar Malgonkar regards the Partition as the outcome of the suppression of violence in Indian people by Mahatma Gandhi's creed of non-violence. He has depicted it from a political angle. Shakti Batra says that unlike Khushwant Singh, Malgonkar-

...presents the political side of the Partition from the point of view of Gian, the ardent disciple of Gandhi and his creed of non-violence; Debidayal, the terrorist, and Hafiz Khan and Shafi Usman, the communalists. Malgonkar's account takes the form of a cool, impersonal debate among the characters; it looks like a scientific analysis of the situation rather than something which emerges out of the characters themselves and their convictions. This 'detachment' also marks his

narration of the partition riots, when they are compared to similar descriptions by Khushwant Singh.⁴

It is in A Bend in the Ganges that Manohar Malgonkar uses violence, action and revenge articulating his vision of human nature and as an integral part of his technique. E.M. Forster considered A Bend in the Ganges as one of the three best novels of 1964. This novel was also aptly compared with such world-famous classics such as Leo Tolstoy's War and Peace by Richard Church in the review of the book The Bookman.⁵

Manohar Malgonkar's A Bend in the Ganges concentrates upon the painful drama of the partition comprehensively and suggestively. It shows convincingly how the 'terrorist movement'-a symbol of national solidarity-, designed to oust the British from the Indian soil, degenerated in to communal hatred and violence, and how the emphasis from the struggle between Indian nationalism and British colonialism shifted unfortunately to the furious and malicious communal hatred between the Hindus and the Muslims, throwing into shade the basic Indian fight for freedom from the British rule. The double conflict that led to dual impacts of freedom and the division of the country, but before it happened, a hell was let loose in many provinces of the nation.

The novel depicts powerfully the horrible developments resulting in the partition, the triumph and tragedy of the hour of freedom, the screams of the victims renting the morning air, the dawn of freedom greeting the sub-continent in the pools of blood, the barbarous cruelties heaped on men and women, catcalls of the crowd and innumerable women being carried away naked, struggling and screaming at the top of their voice. The Muslim fears of being ruled by the Hindus in the absence of the British rule in the country where they had been the rulers, their notion that the Hindus were mere dangerous than the foreigners and ought to be their real target and their subsequent striding at them, their struggle for a sage homeland separate from India leading to the Partition, and the terror and pity of it- all these form the contents of the

novel. Indira Bhatt, in her article “Manohar Malgonkar as a Political Novelist”, observes:

The novel is, in fact, a testament of ‘The tangle of feelings and relationship’ against the background of the freedom movement and partition holocaust.⁶

The novel opens with the ceremonial burning of British garments. The cries of “Boycott British goods”, “Bharat Mata ki jai” gave expression to the fire of freedom that was burning in the heart of the Indian masses. The ceremonial fire that raged in the market square was “just one of hundreds of thousands fires similar all over the country.”⁷

Gandhiji himself appeared on the dais. He did not speak, it being Monday- his day of silence (mounvrata). Gian, a young student from the college, felt overwhelmed at the sight of the apostle of truth and non-violence. He was swayed away by the conviction that non-violence was not for the weak, that “the path of ahimsa is not for cowards...”⁸ He threw away his blazer-his most elegant garment made of imported English material-into the fire, and thus showed the zeal of a nationalist.

Gian Talwar comes from simple peasant stock. He is an opportunist and he adopts non-violence as a principle of expediency, not of faith. He is a student from Konshet with limited means surprisingly received an invitation for a picnic on the sands of the old river-bed at Birchi-bagh from one of the important boys at the college, Debi-dayal, the only son of Dewan-bahadur Tek Chand Kerwad, the elite of the town. He reached Kerwad House at the appointed hour, and was fascinated by Debi’s sister. In the absence of Debi’s father, Gian showed a desire to see the museum-a pride collection of bronzes. Sundari took Gian to the museum. Gian had a strange feeling there. For a moment he became “the statue, lifeless, ageless, unbreathing.”⁹

As the spell broke, Gian found Sundari holding him by both the shoulders and her eyes staring with alarm. His announcement of becoming a follower of Gandhi was

subjected to sharp criticism. Strangely, he was in the company of the terrorists headed by Singh-vis., Shafi Usman in disguise.

The revolutionaries criticized Gian for being a follower of Gandhi, but Gian took pride in having come under the influence of that hypnotic power because he fervently believed that only Gandhi could lead India to victory. Singh's agitated invitation to name any country that had shaken off foreign rule without resorting to war perturbed Gian but he declared in a sudden defiance that Gandhiji was a god. Singh cited examples of America. Turkey and Shivaji, and affirmed:

“...Freedom has to be won; it has to be won by sacrifice: by giving blood, not by giving up the good things of life and wearing white caps and going to jail. Look at America- the United States! They went to war. Turkey, even our own Shivaji. Non-violence is the philosophy of sheep, a creed for cowards. It is the greatest danger to this country.”¹⁰

The picnic threw enough light on the two distinct ways in India's fight for freedom: the one of non-violence hated and reflected by the terrorists; and the other of revolution dreaded by Gandhi and his followers. As the events clearly showed, it needed superhuman discipline to follow the path of non-violence. Gian Talwar, who announced to follow ahimsa even in the face of the strongest provocation, very soon, took to violence showing the hollowness of his defiant statements. Shafi-Usman, in the disguise of a Sikh, talked of fight against the British, but very soon this fight changed its target-his own Hindu associates and the Hindus in general became the object of his attack. The fervent advocate of shaking off foreign rule through violent ways degenerated into a narrow-minded communalist siding a particular community against the other, and eager to have blood bath.

The bloody battle between the two closely related families-the Big House and the Little House-has an important bearing on the theme of the novel. Vishnu Dutt was killed by the same Gian, who, a little earlier, had taken pride in proclaiming himself a

true disciple of Mahatma Gandhi. The two houses in the small village were in an unwarranted struggle. All this was a pointer to the main acts of horror caused by the partition. As K.R.Srinivas Iyengar aptly observes in Indian Writing in English:

Like a prologue to the main act, this story of family feud-suspicion, hatred, vindictiveness, murder-is to be viewed as the advance rivalry, micro-tragedy foreshadowing the macro tragedy on a national scale in the year of the partition.¹¹

The terrorist movement was very active in Duriabad. It was an integrated group of young men hailing from different communities and province, and all were united in the sacred cause of fight against the British rule. The members of the club were nationalists and fellow-terrorists. Shafi Usman, Alias Singh, with his battle cry 'a million shall die', was the leader of the club. His close associate was an outstanding figure, Debi-dayal. All young men despised the foreigners. As Malgonkar states:

Debi hated the British, as they all hated the British: that was what brought them together, Hindus and Muslims and Sikhs, men of different religions united in the cause of freedom as blood-brothers; the Freedom Fighters.¹²

The 'Ram and Rahim Club' stressed the need and the survival of the national solidarity to oust the British from the Indian soil in the face of the hot wave of religious fanaticism that swept the country:

"They were all fervent patriots, dedicated to the overthrow of British rule in India. Anyone who represented that rule, British or Indian, was their enemy; anything that represented that rule was their legitimate target. 'Jai-ram' answered by 'Jai-rahim' was their secret mode of greeting. The name of Rama sacred to all Hindus, and that of Rahim equally sacred to the Muslims."¹³

The Indian national scene of the time revealed signs of sharp religious differences between the Hindus and the Muslims. But this group under the secular leader, Shafi-Usman, remained unimpaired. The terrorist movement “was the last gasp of those who wanted to carry on the struggle united. They were all willing; almost eager to die for their motherland, and it needed a leader of Shafi’s calibre to keep them from making thoughtless sacrifices.”¹⁴

They knew exactly that the religious differences were the root cause of the country’s slavery and that the British played upon this weakness and continued to rule India by dividing the Indians into different communally antagonistic groups. All the thirty seven members of the club kept themselves away from the fire of religious differences that burnt in the country: “They themselves were elite, having smashed down the barriers of religion that held other Indians divided: blood-brothers in the service of the motherland.”¹⁵

The Congress and the Muslim League “had come to a final parting of ways, with Hindus and Muslims separated into opposite camps, learning to hate each other with the bitterness of ages.”¹⁶ Hafiz, the erstwhile leader of the terrorist movement, was won over by absolute and fanatic Muslim considerations. He now thought only on a particular line. The battle cry against the Hindus came to Duriabad with the cuttings from the *Dawn*, the *Awaz*. The *Sulah* and the *Subah*. He was now a strong advocate of Muslim point of view, a stooge in the hands of the British, playing to their tune of divide and rule. In his secret meeting with Shafi, he very calculatingly tried to impress upon him the popular fear that in the absence of the British rule the Muslim would have to live as the slaves of the Hindus and their lives, property and religion would be in danger in the face of the overwhelming majority of the Hindus. Jinnah’s conversion into an orthodox Musalman, standing up for the safe land for the Muslims and vomiting hatred for the Hindus was exemplary for the Muslims.

Shafi’s rejection of Hafiz’s outburst in the name of fanaticism prompted the latter to remark: “Fanatics! We have to turn fanatic in sheer self-defense...”¹⁷ made it clear to Shafi that the Hindus were a danger everywhere. The Muslims were second

rate citizens in the Congress-dominated states. The inclusion of one or two Muslims in the government was a big farce. The Muslims were not safe in a Hindu nation, and hence they needed a separate safe state-their own homeland. Hafiz voiced the general Muslim view-the inevitability of the partition of India for the welfare of the Muslims-when he tried to dispel the feelings of national solidarity from the mind of Shafi Usman in a forceful religious fervour:

One or two! Are we to be satisfied with crumbs? We who ruled the whole country? Have we now become dogs? And who are the one or two? Who-I ask you? Stooges-their own men. Muslims, who are members of the Congress, renegades. Don't you know that the Congress will not have any one who is not a member? That is what will happen here too. You will find a Congress ministry- a Hindu ministry with a couple of Muslims who are obedient servants of the Congress. Even today there are Congress administrations in eight of the eleven provinces. What is happening? They will not take any Muslim who will not join them. Jinnah has exposed them: 'The Hindus have shown that Hindustan is for the Hindus'. Now we Muslims have to look after ourselves. Organize ourselves before it's too late. Carve out our own country...'18

The statement of Hafiz was a clear reflection of the mentality of the Muslim leaders and of their influence on the orthodox Muslim minds. He fanned hatred and ill-will against the Hindus, who, he thought, by their hateful deeds in the provinces where they ruled, had paled Jallianwalla tragedy into insignificance. The Hindus were to be dreaded far more than the British. The Hindu-dominated freedom was undesirable. He affirmed:

'...we don't want freedom if it means our living here as slaves of the Hindus. If we succeed in driving out the British, it is the Hindus who will inherit power. Then

what happens to us? We are heading for a slavery far more degrading... struggling for it. That's what Jinnah is worried about. That's what all of us are worried about.'¹⁹

Shafi read the dangers of the Hindus-Muslims rift, knew it to be the mischievous doing of the British, and felt that the only way to free the nation from slavery lay in communal harmony. Rejecting Hafiz's call for reorienting the organization for a more sacred and indispensable fights against the Hindus, he remarked:

But this is just playing into the hands of the British. They can go on ruling. They want to keep the Hindus and the Muslims divided, so that they can go on ruling. Our only salvation lies in solidarity-that is the only way to oust the British.²⁰

Hafiz railed at Shafi and wanted him to change the tactics to cope with the newly-cropped up dangers. He gave vent to the Muslim hatred for the Hindus at the time and stated that in the recent Dasserri riots in the Congress- ruled state, the police actually sided with the Hindus: "I saw policemen shooting down Muslims, picking them out"²¹ Shafi warned that such an action would lead the Hindus to retaliate. This, according to him, was a danger-signal for civil war. Hafiz attempted to prepare him whole-heartedly for such a consequence. This, he asserted strongly, was inevitable. It was bound to happen in the absence of the British rule. Infusing the bitter communal hatred in Shafi, he said:

That is exactly what we have to prepare ourselves for a civil war. We have to think ahead, a year, two years from now, to a time when the British will leave this country, leaving our fate in the hands of the Hindus. Are we to setback and take whatever indignities they have in store for us? We must hit back ten-fold. It is to that end

that we must all work, must all recognize the new enemies: the Hindus.²²

Shafi, who had always striven for communal solidarity found it irreconcilable to prepare himself for civil war. He would prefer Gandhi's movement to a communal organization. This made Hafiz condemn Gandhi as a hypocrite, concealing violence in the name of non-violence.

The conversation between Hafiz and Shafi is of immense significance in that it reflected the Muslim line of thought before the partition of the country. It voiced the eagerness of a school that worked hard for having a safe land for the Muslims. It expressed Muslim anxiety to be ruled by the Hindus in the absence of the British. It showed the conversion of the Muslims, who devoted themselves earlier to communal solidarity, into the fanatics propagating and working for the cause of the Muslims alone. Men like Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and Jinnah who first worked for national solidarity and then became champions of the Muslim, were clearly ideal Muslims for Hafiz and Shafi Usman. Shafi's shifting to Muslim considerations alone displayed the peculiar Muslim character that was lamented by Maulana Shibli, the celebrated Professor of Persian at the Aligarh University. It reveals the unfortunate, mean Muslim mentality of preferring slavery under the Britishers to minority in self-government. Usman studied the situation.

The betrayal of Debi by Shafi was a glaring example of the rift between the two communities. Debi was arrested, tried, and sent to the Andaman. The young British police officer suspected the rift in the terrorists when he explained their movement to the captain of the ship sailing to Andaman Island with Debi on it as a lifer. He said clearly:

The terrorists? Oh, yes; they are all over the place...Once they know we're on to them, they go underground. Take this particular going. We knew they were certainly more than thirty in it. But we that is the police, seem to have bungled it, rather. They

operated from their club, a sort of gymnasium. When our men raided the place, only seven were there. The others had fled. It is rather funny, really; all seven were Hindus; not a single Muhammad in the lot; which makes us think that there was some kind of a rift among them...²³

In Debi, the national awareness was supreme. He hated his father and Shafi Usman who had betrayed him and his colleagues. He was keen to take revenge upon Singh showing clear signs of the rift between the two warring foes. Tek Chand was also conscious of the Hindu-Muslim rivalry. He knew that the bitterness, existing between the two communities, would never permit them to live in harmony. He was one of those millions who felt that the presence of the British was necessary to keep the nation quiet and away from the horrors of civil war. However, his fears of the feelings of bitterness among the Hindus and the Muslims came true. He knew that "In the chaos that would follow the withdrawal of British authority, Hindus and Muslims would be at each other's throats just as they had always been before the British came and established peace. Men like Churchill were not fools; the alternative to the British quitting India was civil war."²⁴

Debi returned to India with the help of the Japanese. The Quit India Movement had by now possessed the whole country by storm and acquired new dimensions. Debi-dayal came to Calcutta and met his old friend Basu who had been an active member of the terrorist movement at Duriabad. He was leading a miserable life in quivering poverty in a bustee with his mutilated wife and the two unkempt children. Basu, in his heart of hearts, nursed a great desire to take revenge upon Shasfi Usman the once solidarity leader, turned violently communalist. Debi was keen to see Shafi. He had a score to settle. Basu, too, wanted to see Shafi's face when Debi confronted him.

Basu's attitude explained the great rift between the Hindus and the Muslims. Now the scene had completely and dramatically changed. The terrorists were made to fight among themselves. It was the triumph of the British; their shrewd game of

'divide and rule' bore fruit and succeeded in making the Hindus and the Muslims the die-hard enemies of one another. Debi-dayal understood it and lamented this ugly and suicidal development. He regretted: " It is almost as though just when they are on the point of leaving the country, the British have succeeded in what they set out to do, Set the Hindus and Muslims at each other's throats. What a lovely sight!"²⁵ Basu suffered the humiliation of his wife's lovely face mutilated by an electric bulb filled with sulphuric acid. It must have come certainly from the hand of a Muslim: "Who else? Who would attack a Hindu house? When a race riot starts, it is the time for settling private scores."²⁶ The electric bulb, filled with sulphuric acid was the standard weapon of the Hindu-Muslim riots. The disfiguring of his wife's face was exactly "what has happened to the face of India-the mutilation of a race conflict."²⁷

The communal tension bred distrust. The Muslims stood with Jinnah and worked for the division of the country. The Congress was branded as a Hindu organization and was hated by the Muslims. Before the actual partition, India was being disintegrated. Basu gave vent to the Hindu-Muslim attitude before the partition when he heatedly pointed out the developments from national solidarity to communal violence:

What had been aimed against the British has turned against itself. And the ugliest thing it has bred is distrust. No Hindu can trust a Muslim any more, and no Muslim trusts a Hindu. The country is to be divided. That is what Jinnah wants: that is what the Muslims want. But before that division comes, every town, every village, is being torn apart. The Muslims don't want freedom for India unless it means the carving out of a separate state for them. They fear the Hindus will dominate them. They insist that when the Congress ruled, just at the beginning of the war, they treated the Muslim, as a subordinate race.²⁸

Basu's study of the situation reminded one of the arguments of Hafiz to win Shafi-Usman to the Muslim side; it expressed the popular Muslim notions of the time. The call of the Muslim League, with Jinnah as its spokesman, for a separate and independent state carved out of India was the burning subject of the day. It celebrated the triumph of the British in alienating the Muslims from the national stream and in turning them into blood-thirsty foes of the Hindus. Basu thought of the horrors and chaos that awaited the exit of the British authority from the Indian subcontinent; the hardened attitude would create anarchy and bloodshed. He anticipated the slaughter of hundred thousands, the rape, abduction and mutilation of a hundred thousand women and the scene of complete rottenness. He envisaged this tragedy and he remarked:

“...the moment the British quit, there will be civil war in the country, a great slaughter. Every city, every village, every bustee, where the two communities live side by side, will be the scene of war. Both sides are preparing for it, the Hindu Mahasabha are both militant...”²⁹

Basu wanted the Hindus to prepare themselves against the Muslims. The Hindus, he feared, would perish, if they failed to return violence for violence. He pointed out Gandhi's fears, and quoted his words that form an epigraph to the novel: “What if”... “when the fury bursts not a man, woman or child is safe and every man's hand is raised against his neighbour?”³⁰ He warned the Hindus of the hazards of the doctrine of non-violence. He wanted them to rise, awake and strike. He defended the Hindu Mahasabha and affirmed that it was an answer to the wrong doings of the Congress.

The long Debi-Basu conversation pointed to the cruel ways that men in India were resorting to in the pre-independence days. The partition of the country looked imminent. The Muslim demand for a separate nation was at its highest pitch, and the violence was let loose among the Muslims and the Hindus and the vice versa. Both the communities were determined and defiant, and hence civil war was at hand. The cities and towns were riot-torn. The game of divide and rule was in full swing and

was to attain its logical culmination. Basu, a terrorist and the erstwhile member of the Hanuman Club, stressed the necessity of joining the rival camp in sheer self-defense. He had suffered and his sufferings, coming in the wake of Gandhi's non-violent movement, made him despise the champion of non-violence; to him 'an eye for an eye' and a 'tooth for a tooth' looked the only answer to the situation.

Shafi was at peace with himself. He was "aware of a sense of purpose and direction. He had changed, almost inevitably, as the whole of India had changed."³¹ He now felt convinced that the Hindus and the Muslims were traditional enemies, and there was no possibility of their living together. The spell of provincial government had demonstrated it fully. Shafi nursed the popular Muslim notions that they were the superior race and that in the absence of the British authority they would become the second rate citizens in the face of the overwhelming majority of the Hindus. He detested the Sikhs more than the Hindus. He felt it absurd to go about as a Sikh as he once did.

Like many Muslims, Shafi detested the Congress. Freedom through Congress did not mean anything to him: it was unacceptable. Shafi believed along with the millions of other Muslims:

The Congress had been desperate to grab power and create an India ruled only by the Hindus so that they could ride roughshod over the Muslims who once ruled them. It was the vengeance of sheep. The Muslims would never agree. To them independence was worth nothing unless it also ensured freedom from the domination of the Hindus. They would never live in an India where they were only a tolerated minority.³²

For Shafi and innumerable Muslims the demand of a safe home land for their community was a great necessity. The absurd conception of a separate nation that Hafiz had given to him six years earlier appeared a reality: "the resolution of the

Muslim League in which Jinnah had demanded the creation of a separate state carved out of India, had crystallized the issues.”³³The Hindus were now to be eliminated:

Now the fight was no longer against the British, but against the Hindus who were aspiring to rule over them. It was Jihad, a war sanctioned by religion; a sacred duty of every true believer.³⁴

Jinnah had shown the way, and so Shafi, Hafiz and others did not believe in disciplined constitutional means to achieve their goal. They believed in creating terror—the only way the Hindus were to be forced to yield. The Hindus “would never concede their demands with grace. It was essential to draw blood, to shed blood, confront their adversaries with fire and steel, the prick of the spear.”³⁵ The Muslims were active in achieving objective in their Rawalpindi, Multan and Bhagalpur. The Hindus were compelled to leave the districts. They were to ensure that no Hindu remained in the part of India that was going to be theirs. The work, as long as the British did not show their back, was to be done secretly. Shafi was waiting for plunging into war with the Hindus at the right moment. He thought that the Hindus were also planning to do the same. But he knew well that the Hindus would never be a match to the Muslims in civil war. Assessing the Hindus, he felt:

They were pacifists at heart, their leaders fond of extolling secularism. They were soft and shrank from bloodshed. They would never be a match for the Muslims in civil war—not even the Mahasabhaites...with all their talk of a pure India which was nothing but a retort to their own demand for a pure Pakistan. Even their militancy was a false imitation of the creed of the League.³⁶

Shafi only regretted the want of money among the Muslims. He remembered the days when “the Muslims ruled the entire country, and were not struggling for just a portion of it.”³⁷

In their bid to take revenge upon Shafi for his ugly betrayal, Debi-dayal and Basu came to Lahore. Basu felt, like Shafi, that the proper time to settle score would roll in after the exit of the British. He asked Debi, who went into 'out of Bounds' zone to meet Shafi, not to pick a row with him right away. Basu feared Shafi's concealed design, and hated his erstwhile leader; but Debi did not feel any real hate for Shafi the moment he met him. He took Shafi sincerely and felt that the later had an inclination to be friendly with him.

Basu saw things in their right perspective, and suspected Shafi. He burnt in the fire of revenge. Debi felt that Usman was genuinely repentant, but Basu thought otherwise. He knew very well how things had changed in the country during the last six years. The Hindus and the Muslims no more stood united. They nursed hatred for each other. While Debi was willing to believe every word Shafi uttered, Basu found different meanings in him. His fear came true: the police was informed that, "a runaway convict and a paroled terrorist are living in Sehgal Lodge."³⁸The police raided the house but Basu's watchful care saved them from the hands of the police. Shafi's attempt to get Debi-dayal and Basu arrested by the police proved abortive, and he stood exposed. Debi-dayal was disillusioned and he decided to pay Shafi back. Basu thought that a letter to the police about Shafi's whereabouts was enough to take revenge. But that was not the way of Debi's paying the enemy back. He went to the brothel and took away Shafi's mistress, Mumtaz. It brought him in direct confrontation with Shafi Usman. Shafi hurled at Mumtaz a broken electric bulb filled with sulphuric acid, but Debi caught it in mid air and hurled it back harmlessly into the shadows where Shafi had stood.

The Debi-Shafi affair fully revealed how things had changed. Shafi concluded that friendly relationship between the Hindus and the Muslims was impossible. Debi, on the other hand, still thought of recapturing the warmth of the old days, of the possibility of the Hindus and the Muslims working together and of regaining the lost leader. But he was very soon disillusioned. This disillusionment was the tragedy of the nation. The British game of dividing the people of India into warring camp bore fruits. The demand of pure state for the Muslims- viz. Pakistan became persistent and

fruitful. The division was complete, and the communal hatred showed signs of a gruesome tragedy.

Debi's decision to accept the snatched Muslim girl, Mumtaz as his bride pointed to his emotional blindness. But it clearly demonstrated the caste-free conscience of the two lovers. Debi was duped and deceived by his erstwhile leader Shafi, who plunged himself wholeheartedly into the communal fire that swept the country before and after the Independence and the partition. But Shafi's betrayal did not make him hate the whole Muslim race. He stayed secular amid the sounds of guns and slogans and accepted Mumtaz as his wife.

This development and the exposition of the guilt in Gian assumed significance when during the post Independence communal violence Gian redeemed himself at Duriabad by saving Sundari from being raped and murdered and helped her to come out of Pakistan. The scene at Duriabad at the time of partition, like those at many towns, was one of complete chaos and anarchy. Sporadic disturbance between the Hindus and the Muslims were a common feature. They had almost become an inevitable part of a festival. This regular disturbance was always sternly dealt with by the authorities. But the riots, preceding the partition, were different. They were 'the anatomy of the partition', and were the direct consequence of the unfortunate division: "A vast landscape packed with people was now being partitioned according to religious majorities; the Muslims in Pakistan, the Hindus in India."³⁹ The nature of the present riots was peculiar. Everyone was a participant in the furious drama of the blaze of hatred of the civil war. The atmosphere was one of utter disbelief, and, "no one could be trusted to be impartial."⁴⁰

There could be no looker on; "when men and women of your own religion were being subjected to atrocities, you could not be expected to remain friendly with adherents to the religion of the oppressor."⁴¹ The administration, the police, even the armed forces were caught up in this fire of ill-will and hatred. Religious civil war was waged all over the country. It was a shameful, tragic sight. Every village, town and city that was peopled with two communities turned into a battle field. Terrible happenings were occasioned by the partition:

Tens of millions of people had to flee, leaving everything behind; Muslims from India, Hindus and Sikhs from the land that was soon to become Pakistan; two great people of humanity flowing in opposite direction along the pitifully inadequate roads and railways, jamming, clashing, colliding head-on, living their dead and dying littering the landscape.⁴²

The communal hatred, which resulted in the massive exchange of population, the mad killings, rapes and abductions, presented the cruelest and the most barbaric scenes. Animality in man became dominant, as the Nobel laureate William Golding has described the game of pig hunting in his world famous novel Lord of the Flies. All values suddenly collapsed:

The most barbaric cruelties of primitive man prevailed over all other human attributes. The administration had collapsed. The railways had stopped functioning because the officials and technicians had themselves joined the mass migration. Mobs ruled the streets, burning, looting, killing, dishonouring women and mutilating children; even animals sacred to the other communities became the legitimate targets of reprisals.⁴³

Gandhi's fears had come true. The long awaited freedom wrought only misery to millions of people. The pre-Independence scene was, indeed, ghastly:

The entire land was being spattered by the blood of its citizens, blistered and disfigured with the fires of religious hatred; its roads were glutted with enough dead bodies to satisfy the ghouls of a major war.⁴⁴

The escape from Duriabad was not possible. There was the danger of being cut to pieces on the road by people mad with hatred. Tek Chand could never visualize such thing in the twentieth century world. Gandhi became ineffective and irrelevant. The moment the British grip on India loosened, the people of the country discarded non-violence and “were now spending themselves on orgies of violence which seem to fulfill some basic urge.”⁴⁵

Tek Chand regretted for not having accepted his wife’s suggestion of pulling out of the troubled town a fortnight ago. He needed a car to drive out, but his Chauffeur, Dhan Singh, who had gone out in the car to bring his family to live with them, did not come back. He could not dare tell his wife what had happened to Dhan Singh and his family-how they were brutally butchered. Dhan Singh’s “wife and two children were dragged out. They stoned the children to death in front of their parents, then poured petrol over Dhan Singh’s hair and beard and burned him alive. After that they had taken his wife away.”⁴⁶The tragedy befalling the family of Dhan Singh was not an isolated affair. It was the destiny of millions of people shaped by the partition. The car had been turned into a burnt out shell. The servants of the house were assiduously instructed by the master not to say anything about this misfortune to Radha, the lady of the house.

The stream of men, crossing the border, presented a pathetic sight on the eve of Independence. Everything was in bad shape. Sleepless nights presented fearful sight of fire, arson, wailing, weeping and roaring. Duriabad had turned into a peculiar riottown. Human cries became a familiar sight for Tek Chand and the members of his family: “Even from their bed room window, they could see the red glow in the sky, like a winter sunset, the glow caused by the houses burning in the city, and now and then they could hear the roar of the mob, like the din of a migrating swarm of bees, punctured by shrieks, cat calls and the occasional reports of fire arms.”⁴⁷ The town was running without milk. All the cows were killed “just because they belong to the gowalas.”⁴⁸

Suddenly life had become absolutely unsafe and insecure. Normal life was completely paralyzed. No bank functioning. The thought of the convoy, escorted by

the army right up to the border on their way to Jullundur, was the only consoling feature of the whole drama. The expected convoy was not to be had easily. Already it was delayed by two days and there was still no sign of it. Tek Chand was in great pain to see and imaging ghastly things. He faced a psychological crisis. The city was his, as it was of others. His family, like those of some Muslims had contributed a great deal to beautify this town. But the change circumstances had brought about unexpected ruin. It made him utter angrily to his daughter Sundari:

That it should have come to this!... After a life time spent in this part of India, in this town, and giving oneself to eat and taking from it; letting one's roots sink deeper and deeper. There is a street named after my father, a library after me, a maternity home and a girls' school after your mother. This city, as much that of its most respected Muslim families-the Abbases, the Hussains, the Chinois. "I, my family, have done as much as any of them to make it prosperous and beautiful. And what are they doing? Burning it down! And look at us waiting for police protection because its citizens want to finish us off."⁴⁹

The emotional separation caused by the partition was one of the most unfortunate developments in the history of mankind. Such emotional separation will not be noticed either by politicians or the religious leaders but a great novelist like Manohar Malgonkar can depict such tragedy of human values in a fictional work like A Bend in the Ganges.

Tek Chand never wanted to be separated from the town of his ancestors. His attachment with the things at Duriabad made him scorn his wife's fear. He was now feeling a sense of guilt in misplacing his trust in the people of the town. His outburst, analyzing why he could not pull out of the disturbed city at the suggestion of his wife was enlightening. He confessed to Sundari in this connection:

Because I wanted to keep all this, all that my family and I myself have built. One of the best houses in town, a name honoured in the whole province, the best private collection of Indian bronzes in the whole country. And suddenly some one had decided that this land which is mine should be foreign territory-just like that! And merely because some hooligans take it into their heads to drive all the Hindus away from their land, I have to leave everything and go, pulled out by the roots, abandoning everything that has become a part of me⁵⁰

Sundari reminds her Abaji of his being luckier than millions of others who had to find shelter and work, for he could have money and house in Delhi. This made Tek Chand realize that money could not make up for emotional attachment. The very thought of abandoning the place, he belonged to, was unbearable. He, in a moment of utter depression, cried out to Sundari flinging up his hands in disdain:

Money...do you suppose all the money in the world will make up for this? My house, my bronzes...I could spend hours just looking at them, over and over again, feeling an inner peace, a religious exaltation, almost, to be in the midst of all that beauty. True art that lived a thousand years ago and still lives and breathes...⁵¹

This agonizing experience of a sensitive man told the tale of the horrid partition. The novelist gives vivid expression to the agony of a sensitive man.

Tek Chand went to the museum and found relief in the company of gods and goddesses who were like living creatures to him "more alive than many people he knew."⁵² The gods in the museum held a message for him. The psychic crisis in him was glaring. He was surprised at the beastly way the people had suddenly resorted to; religion and community had caused barriers among men and men and turned them into foes of one another. He thought of the days beyond this temporary crisis. Better

sense might one day drive the people to realize their grave mistake of fighting among themselves. He felt that he was among his own people and the vicious and dangerous days of hatred would soon end. He thought of sending away his wife and daughter with the convoy and of his staying behind with “his men and women and half-beasts and half-gods of metal.”⁵³ He felt sure of his plan:

He would like that; somehow he would be able to manage. It was his land, his town; its people were his people. They would come to their senses, as soon as this wave of hatred had passed; they would realize he was one of themselves and not to be spurned.⁵⁴

However, the moment did not last long. He knew his wife would never go away leaving him behind. He remembered his son Debi who could have dealt with this situation in an appropriate and convincing way. He knew his duty now. He contacted the police inspector by telephone and inquired about the convoy. The delay was disturbing. The police waited for the convoy of the Muslims from Delhi to arrange a convoy of the Hindus from Duriabad. The Hindus were now almost “being treated as hostages to see that the authorities on the other side send out”⁵⁵ the Muslims safely. The news of the killing of Muslims on the other side of the border was disgusting. Violence bred violence, hatred, suspicion and confusion. Men had turned into brutes. Inhuman deeds became the order of the day. The Inspector made it emphatically clear to Tek Chand that violence would be returned with violence when he gruffly said to him on telephone:

Everything depends upon how they treat our people on the other side. I hear a train as attacked in Patiala by the Sikhs; a convoy butchered in Amritsar. If that sort of thing is allowed to happen, how can we protect the Sikhs here from the mobs...⁵⁶

A telephonic call from Sardar Avtar Singh, inviting them to his house, gave a great sense of relief to Tek Chand. The second call by Sardar Avtar Singh a few

minutes later was horrifying. The house was put on fire and the telephone line ran dead.

Debi's attempt at reaching Duriabad along with his wife unfolded the scenes of train-disasters that preceded and followed the Partition. The trains, consisting of a hotchpotch of passenger carriages, cattle wagons and timber flats and packed to maximum capacity protected by military jawans, presented a pathetic sight. The train in which Debi travelled to Pakistan looked "like an enormous dead snake with myriads of ants clinging to its body,"⁵⁷ Men, women and children were squeezed in windows and doors. These unfortunate people were going away from the land of their birth to a place unknown to them. Tragedy had befallen them:

A week ago, they had all been citizens, of India: men and women jubilant at the advent of the long-awaited, long-fought for freedom. Today, they were just a small section of a seething movement of humanity.⁵⁸

Everything had changed. The Partition and freedom brought misery and misfortune to millions of people on both the sides of the border. Malgonkar very powerfully shows the plight of the displaced when he describes the people being carried away to Pakistan in the train in which Debi was traveling. He describes:

Here they were the Muslims, the counterparts of the 'displaced persons' on the other side, who were Hindus and Sikhs, both sides making for a border that was yet to be officially demarcated. They were, at the moment, stateless citizens, hounded out from the land of their birth as much by collective fear of racial massacres as by the actual outrages perpetrated upon them by their erstwhile fellow-citizens.⁵⁹

The poor people had fallen a victim to the whims of the politicians. Communal hatred, suspicion, the fear to be ruled by the majority, and the careful propaganda not

to be ruled by the people who once were slaves led the partition and brought about the mass movement of population. It brought untold misery to the millions of people for no fault of their own; their plight was simply horrible:

Political expediency had suddenly transformed them into refugees fleeing from their own land as though it had been invaded by an enemy. They left behind everything they possessed; their lands, houses, cattle, their household goods. They also left behind scores of thousands of dead and dying, sacrificial offerings to freedom. They fled without caring for the weak or the lame who had fallen by the way side, unable to withstand the rigours of the migration.⁶⁰

Tired, hungry, thirsty and sleepy people traveled in the train. These people were on their way to Pakistan-the land that most of them had never seen, the land that promised relief to them and the place that cut them off “from their environments as effectively as by a surgical operation.”⁶¹ The brutal violence reminded Debi-dayal of the often repeated words of Shafi Usman, the terrorist leader: “A million shall die.”⁶²

Independence was only three days away, but the tide of violence, rape, abduction that swept the country destroyed thousands before the sun of freedom dawn upon the land. It puzzled as how the people, proclaiming brotherhood earlier had come to this state of affairs, and how the centuries- old ties of fraternity were suddenly, shattered leading to this upheaval. It was the failure of Gandhi and the success of the shrewdly propagated British policy of divide and rule. Manohar Malgonkar raises certain important questions about this unprecedented event leading to the mass massacre of people in the name of religion. He asks

After living as brothers over so many generations, how had they suddenly been infected by such virulent hatred for each other? Who had won, Gandhi or the British? For the British at least had foreseen such a

development. Or had they both lost through not having allowed for structural flaws in the human material they were dealing with? Had Gandhi ever envisaged a freedom that would be accompanied by so much suffering and release so much hatred ? Had he realized it might impose transfers of population unparalleled throughout history? ⁶³

These thought-provoking problems show the hollowness of communal rage and frenzy. In India the Muslims were searched: "Gangs of hooligans went patrolling the streets, making house-to-house searches for the Muslims."⁶⁴ The whole land was torn to pieces as a result of gigantic convulsion. An unimaginable chaos had overwhelmed the country. The train services were seriously disrupted and paralyzed. All workers had run away for the safety of their lives. The movement of refugees was very slow. There was complete panic:

All the Muslim railway servants had fled from posts as the Hindus had fled from their posts on the other side: The station masters, signalmen, engine drivers, firemen ticket-punchers, clerks, guards, everyone had gone. The Hindu staff too had panicked and run away. ⁶⁵

Mumtaz and Debi had to camp out at the Kernal railway station in order to catch the train. It was an awful thing to catch the train; many perished in the attempt. The journey of Debi from Kernal to Pakistan presented the terrible sight of general massacre. There was scene after scene of carnage. The previous night a whole trainload of refugees was massacred. The scene presented a gruesome sight; it was:-

...a scene of massacre, transformed by some trick of the morning light into a mirage. The large patches of red which had resembled saris left out to dry, shrank and shrivelled and faded before their eyes, leaving only

pools of dried blood. The vultures, the dogs and the jackals emerged, strutting disdainfully.⁶⁶

Debi was traveling in the guise of a Muslim. It was his Punjab, but it presented a deserted sight. There was complete devastation. The ownerless cattle wandered in the group looking for food:

The land of five rivers had become the land of carrion. The vultures and jackals and crows and rats wandered about, pecking, gnawing, tearing, gluttoned, staring boldly at their train.⁶⁷

The journey to Duriabad seemed to be an unending process. It showed the great change between the past and the present. The heart-rending sights continuously reminded Debi of Shafi's warning: "A million shall die!"⁶⁸

Debi-dayal always loved this native province, the Punjab in its entire mood. But this time it was in quite a different mood; it presented a scene of destruction on both the sides as though by "denuded swarms of locusts or by invading armies."⁶⁹ The train stopped for hours on a station without showing any sign of moving forward. The emptiness of the station and the silence deepened the atmosphere of horror. The brutal picking up of the people for killing was sad and scientific. Appearance was not to be trusted: "They made you take off your trousers to make sure that you were circumcised."⁷⁰ This was the unmistakable process of identification. Debi felt safe in the Indian territory, but things took a violent turn the moment he crossed border.

It was now the dawn of the fifteenth of August-the dawn of freedom when the train came to a halt in Pakistan territory. In his heart Debi felt elated to greet the son of liberty that was his dream. But his blood congealed to see the cruel acts of impending violence. The Hindus, traveling in elaborate disguises with the Muslims, were found out and killed:

They were denounced by their fellow passengers and the men were ceremoniously emasculated before being abandoned to the vengeance of the crowd, and the women carried away.⁷¹

Even children could not escape the wrath of communal frenzy. Debi, too, in the process was suspected and detected. All the protests and pronouncements of Mumtaz, his Muslim wife, who had forcibly accompanied him, proved abortive. He was stripped naked, blinded and killed. His wife was snatched away from him. He could only “see her being carried away, naked and struggling, screaming at the top of her voice.”⁷² The last thing Debi saw was “the rising sun on the land of the five rivers on the day of their freedom.”⁷³ He, then, succumbed to pain and died listening to the cries of her dear wife and her determination to go with him wherever he went.

Shafi and his friends raided the house of Tek Chand. Shafi’s intentions were clear. He wanted to snatch away Sundari in a spirit of revenge. They spitted insult on the gods in the museum. Tek Chand implored Shafi not to touch ladies and insult gods. The gods were sacred to them:

Sacred, don’t you see, just as your own god is sacred to you. And these women are my wife and daughter. They should be like sisters to you. I implore you, in the name of all that is sacred to you, your prophet Mohammad himself, not to touch them, your sisters...⁷⁴

This utterance of Tek Chand elicited Shafi’s strong feelings of revenge. He tried to settle the score-the atrocities Muslim women were put to in India must be avenged. He took exception to the word ‘sister’. Shafi turned on him viciously and said:

Is that how you Hindus treated our women? Like sisters and mothers! They were raped in front of their own

men; in Nabha, Patiala; in Delhi itself. Raped, mutilated-they weren't sisters then!⁷⁵

There followed violent struggle. Shafi caught hold of Sundari, but was unsuccessful in his mission. Radha, Sundari's mother, was killed. Gian and Sundari killed Shafi with the image of Shiva that was once hidden in the little house at Konshet and that was later sold by Gian to Tek Chand. Sundari, Tek Chand and Gian joined the convoy to pull out of Pakistan, but on the way Tek Chand dropped out. He had a great sense of emotional involvement in what was left behind. He was lost on the way, and Gian and Sundari returned to India.

Obviously, the novelist reveals a sound historical sense. The unfortunate facts of our national tragedy have been artistically painted. The horrible consequences of the partition are frankly stated. Millions of people became homeless, lost their belongings, felt victims to violence and insult, faced a new challenge and had to start all over again. This was how "sunrise of our freedom" found millions mutilated, but cheered and insulted and tens of millions dispossessed of all that they had owned and cherished and brutally thrown away on the other side of the artificial border between India and Pakistan. Having viewed the results of communal violence in the novel we can agree with K.K.Sharma and B.K.Johri who state:

Gandhi became ineffective and irrelevant. The moment the British grip on India loosened, the people of the country discarded non-violence and resorted to violent methods.⁷⁶

A Bend in the Ganges portrays, in a powerful way the freedom struggle of the Indian nationalists, the mad and misleading communal frenzy, the Japanese invasion of the British territories in Asia, the bitterness brought about by the Partition, the massive exchange of population and the cruel and shameful acts caused by communal hatred. The atmosphere of the country became vicious and hell was let loose. The novel dramatically depicts, in great detail, what is stated briefly in the "Author's note":

What was achieved through non-violence, brought with it one of the bloodiest upheavals of history: twelve million people had to flee, leaving their homes; nearly half a million were killed; over a hundred thousand women, young and old, were abducted, raped, mutilated.”⁷⁷

Thus Malgonkar remains very objective in the delineation of his version of Partition. H.H.Williams sums up the achievement of Malgonkar in this novel by telling “there is an extraordinary objectivity in Malgonkar’s survey of the nationalist movement, the war and the partition.”⁷⁸

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Chapter-5

Chaman Nahal's Version of Partition

In

Azadi

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Azadi

Chaman Nahal, born in 1927 in Sialkot, India (now in Pakistan) and educated at Delhi University (M.A., 1948) and the University of Nottingham, England (Ph.D., 1961), was a professor of English at the Institute of Postgraduate Studies, Delhi University, and at Long Island University, New York, USA (from 1968-70). Between 1966 and 1973 he wrote a literary column for The Indian Express.

Nahal's fictions include My True Faces (1973), Azadi (1975), Into Another Dawn (1977), The English Queens (1979), The Crown and Loincloth (1981), Sunrise in Fiji (1988), The Salt of Life (1991) and The Triumph of the Tricolour (1993), and the short-story collection The weird Dance (1965). His critical works include D.H.Lawrence: An Eastern View (1970), The Narrative Pattern in Ernest Hemingway's Fiction (1971), and The New Literatures in English (1985).

Critics are in general agreement that Azadi which won the Sahitya Akademi Award and the Federation of Indian Publishers' Award for excellence in 1977 is Nahal's best novel. It was while writing Azadi that he became aware of the potentiality of an historical novel. In the novel he used history as a metaphor. He contemplated:

...couldn't he use the past to illustrate a theme that might have in mind. The artists have always leaned on myth for support.¹

Azadi tells the story of the flight of a Hindu family from Sialkot to Delhi during the Partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947. The love story of a Hindu boy and a Muslim girl unfolds against sense of terror and violence as millions of Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims flee to the new territories of Pakistan and India. K.R.S. Iyengar compares the "controlled tension" of Azadi's narrative to that of John Steinbeck's The

Grapes of Wrath (1939) and its “rigorous and resolved selectiveness” to that of Khushwant Singh’s Train to Pakistan (1956).²

Chaman Nahal, hailed as a brilliant Indian English novelist of the second generation, has enriched the field of political fiction which is very poor as compared to other forms of Indian English fiction. His Gandhi Quartet has an epic sweep covering the whole prospect of the Gandhian era in Indian life. Azadi which happens to be one of the four novels of the Gandhi Quartet offers an intensive picture of the effect of the traumatic experience of the Partition of the country into India and Pakistan on the life of the people living in the north-western border area of India. K.K.Sharma and B.K.Johri writes:

Azadi portrays vividly the horrors of the Partition, the colossal violence that still haunts the Indian psyche. It concentrates on the exodus of millions of refugees from Pakistan, and on the aftermath of the partition.³

As all historians and political thinkers of India know, the Indian freedom was won after a long struggle and sacrifice by the Indian leaders and masses. It remains memorable experience in the pages of Indian history. Azadi succeeds in giving a very convincing and graphic picture of the horrors and paradoxes of Partition experience felt by the people of north-western part of India around 1947. Bhagwat Goyal says:

It deals with the political, social, economic, religious, psychological and cultural implications of ‘azadi’ which India achieved in 1947.⁴

The unpalatable and cruel truth that India’s independence was achieved at the terrible cost of its unnatural dismemberment and tremendous human suffering points to the political unwisdom of Partition, which was a great betrayal of the people who were directly affected by it. This political theme of the novel is reinforced by the socio-economic consequences of the Partition which uprooted the simple, hard-working, honest and upright people from their homeland and turned them into

unwilling beggars begging for small pittances and favours of the corrupt and inefficient bureaucrats and government officials. In terms of religion, Partition resulted in the most obnoxious and monstrous holocaust ever witnessed in this country. Religion, which is supposed to be an embodiment of human and spiritual values, became an instrument of hatred, rapaciousness, evil, exploitation, sadism, torture, murder, rape and wholesale destruction. Psychologically, the Partition upset the whole balance of human relationships, snapping the ties of love and communication and making people strangers to their fellow-compatriots as well as to themselves. And culturally, the whole rhythm of life was disturbed. All the aesthetic beauty that lay in one's environment and institutions and cultural vigour that sprang from the fragrance of the soil got crushed under the iron heel of political expediency and historical foolhardiness.

Like a good creative writer, Chaman Nahal has depicted the horrors of Partition experience by concentrating on the life of Lala Kanshi Ram of Sialkot, thereby highlighting the positive as well as the negative side of the complex problem. Lala Kanshi Ram, the protagonist of Azadi becomes a spokesman of the Hindus who are deeply disturbed by the unprecedented political event. Although the novel has been written from an omniscient point of view, it depicts life as seen through Lala Kanshi Ram's consciousness. Lala Kanshi Ram has been leading a contented life in Sialkot as a grain merchant. He has also bought a few acres of land in his native village. He has a pious and beautiful but illiterate wife, Prabha Rani whom he tries to educate perpetually. He has a daughter, Madhubala and a son, Arun. He has been living in a rented house belonging to Bibi Amarvati. He is a spirited Hindu who has great respect for Vedic philosophy. He knows Sanskrit, Hindi and Punjabi sufficiently well. As member of the Arya Samaj, he has great admiration for Hindu culture in general.

Since he has been living in a colonial situation, he has an ambivalent attitude towards the British Raj. Although as a Hindu patriot he hates the British people and their Government in general, he admires the discipline and precision of the British Raj. He, therefore, takes his son Arun to the Hurrah Parade and inspires him to watch the discipline of the British officers. The British soldiers' parade is disturbed by the

stray dogs. The British sergeants, therefore, shoot the dogs deftly after the parade is over. Lala Kanshi Ram tries to see the principle of spiritual unity in human life and therefore thinks that even a British man is created by God. He believes that

All created matter was one, man and beast and bird, and the flowers and the trees to boot. And these Angrez were another aspect of the same Brahman who constituted total reality.... Their Hurrah Parade had been ruined by these nasty dogs, which no one owned and which were a nuisance to the entire community. They must help them to corner these scavengers and destroy them...⁵

At the same time his following remarks shows his favourable thinking about the British people:

What mattered to Lala Kanshi Ram was the precision of the British Raj, which was seen in as small an act as the killing of a stray dog. No wonder they ruled the world over, no wonder, he said to himself. There indeed was no Raj like the Angrez Raj !⁶

There is, thus, a love-hate relationship between Indians and the British Government as symbolized by Lala Kanshi Ram's approach.

Lala Kanshi Ram fears the division of the country. He sees in it the shrewd British plan. He knows the British policy of encouraging the Partition. His faith in Gandhi's oath of not accepting the Partition looks shaken. He says to his wife that if Pakistan is created, everything will be ruined.

Lala Kanshi Ram scents trouble ever since the British has set a time limit for independence. The British commitment that they would leave India by June 1948 in any case embarrasses him. He can not understand why they are in a hurry to go and

their designs to hand over power to any constituted authority or authorities further confuses him. He is critical of Gandhi-Rajaji offer to Jinnah in 1944. It almost amounted to conceding a 'homeland' to Jinnah; it encourages him to work for the reaction of Pakistan vigorously. The Congress is responsible for bringing about the Partition. The offer is a tragic one for the country. The talk of giving to the Muslims a section in the East of India and a section in the West makes Jinnah aware of realizing his dream. It only speaks of a common defense and foreign policy, and gives Jinnah a vision of a separate state:

“Until then Jinnah had talked of Pakistan, but he did not quite know what he meant by it. Gandhi, by going to him, not only gave Pakistan a name, he gave Jinnah a name too.”⁷

Lala Kanshi Ram believes that the offer crowned Jinnah with undue glory and popularity, and imparted tremendous strength to the disruptive forces-the Muslim League. It is a personal triumph for the leader of the League. He thinks :

Who took Jinnah seriously before September 1944? It was doubtful if he took himself seriously, either. Ever since then he had been sharpening his teeth and becoming more and more menacing. If the Congress would give this much, why not go for complete separation?⁸

He fears that the British has decided to execute the Partition of the country.

The conversation between Lala Kanshi Ram and Prabha Rani introduced the theme of the Partition in the novel. Like an average Indian, Lala Kanshi Ram was apprehensive of the division of the country and of the brutal violence that might follow it. His pondering over the delicate situation gave an idea of national scene-the Gandhi-Rajaji offer to Jinnah, its pernicious results, the February 1947 announcement of the British saying that not later than June 1948 India would be free, their hurry to

quit India, and the hollowness of the Congress' promise to shed the last drop of blood before conceding the Partition. The announcement from the A. I. R. by the Viceroy filled the protagonist with a sense of unutterable fear, justifying the famous proverb 'coming events cast their shadows before.'

The wave of excitement leads people to surround the radio-sets. Lala Kanshi Ram, alongwith the members of his family and his neighbours, sits eagerly in the room of his landlady, Amar Vati, waiting for the announcement. Everyone there looks gloomy and embarrassed. The thought of Pakistan and the tragedy that would come in its wake shakes them. Then comes the much awaited, much feared announcement. It is in English but every one hears it attentively; perhaps they can know the meaning. The Partition comes as a shock. The moment Arun explains the Viceroy's speech in a word, the audience feels sad. They are shocked :

Arun had understood it all only too well, and in a shaken voice he said, 'Partition!' and made a gesture with his hands of chopping a thing in two. 'Partition!' many voices shouted out aloud and the mouths remained open. 'Yes, partition!' said Arun ?"⁹

People hears Nehru with utter disbelief. They question his sense when he talks of peace and non-violence. His ignorance about the Muslims is lamented. The beloved leader sounds dull and dry that evening. His thought of peace and peaceful transaction looks a complete nonsense. His voice has lost its effect and charm. Nahal writes:

This day he said no abrupt words to them. He sounded meek and gentle, he sounded in sorrow. And in spite of that he could win no sympathy from this group gathered in the mirror-studded living room of Bibi Amar Vati. What stupid things was he talking about? Was he really Nehru? The drawl was the same, the emotion in the words was the same, the disjointed, queer Hindi syntax was his alone, but what had happened to his akal, his

mind? Have partition if there is no other way, have it that way – we're willing to make sacrifices. But what nonsense was this of no panic, no violence, full protection from the government, peace the main object! Had he gone mad? Didn't he know his people? Didn't he know the Muslims? And why the partition in the first place? What of your promises to us, you Pandit Nehru? ¹⁰

By the repeated use of the marks of interrogation, the author emphatically holds Nehru and other leaders responsible for the partition.

The news of the Partition is taken differently by the different communities. While the Hindus and Sikhs of Sialkot read their doom in the announcement of the Partition, the Muslims, who were in joy and grief up to recently, are jubilant and gay. They go wild at the news. They celebrate it by exploding the firecrackers. The noise and light of these crackers torments the Hindu and Sikh population, and makes them lose their appetite. The Muslim homes and their roof-tops are lit with earthen lamps, and more and more lights come on as if the earth had suddenly erupted in a volcanic explosion, cutting so many holes in the surface of the city. They display their joy by dancing, mock fighting and singing and by forcibly taking the procession through the Hindu Mohalla where Lala Kanshi Ram and his friends live. The Police Superintendent and the Deputy Commissioner try their best to control the situation. The Hindus and the Muslims begin to hate and tear each other suddenly with some rare exceptions like Lala Kanshi Ram and Chaudhri Barkat Ali who had attended Gandhi's speech at Ramatalai in 1929. Both of them are deeply impressed by Gandhi's view on Hindu-Muslim unity, home industry, nationalism, Purna Swarat, non-violence, self-discipline and self-sacrifice and have sworn to be life-long friends and never thought of the communal barrier between themselves:

Both of these police officers are above the politics of the day. In spite of their belonging to two different communities, they remain true to their profession. It is through the conversation between the two senior police officers that Nahal points out how the division of the country into two, of one people into two, is to be executed;

and how the demarcation line is to be marked. Both of these police officers are bewildered by the contents of the Partition; the announcement over the radio is quite baffling to them:

How do you cut a country in two, where at every level the communities were so deeply mixed? There was a Muslim in every corner of India where there was a Hindu. And then so soon, at such short notice? The broadcast had said nothing at all about the fate of the minorities in the two new countries. If the logic behind the creation of Pakistan was accepted, there was no place for a minority anywhere. Pakistan wouldn't solve the problem of a minority; it was going to create new minorities-minorities which would be hounded out with a vengeance. And what of the civil service to which they belonged? And what of the army? How were they going to cut up the machinery of the government? There were Hindus and Muslims at every level of that machinery!¹¹

In fact, the creation of a new nation is as confounding to these police officers as to the millions of people of the country.

Nahal, while writing Azadi, strongly felt that the Partition of India was unfortunate, politically motivated and full of forced exile. Recalling elsewhere those desperate days, he wrote:

...I had been personally exposed to Gandhiji during the last few months of his life. After 1947, he made Birla House in New Delhi his home. Our family by then had migrated from Pakistan to Delhi, and it was possible for me to attend Gandhi's prayer meetings on most evenings. And what caught my eyes was the immense

humility of the man. Many of us amongst his listeners were angry young men who had lost everything in Pakistan, including the dear ones who were assassinated in the riots. And we asked Gandhi angry questions. To which he never gave an answer without making us feel that our pain was his pain too. I also saw how plain and ordinary Gandhi was to look at: short-statured, thin, with rather common features.¹²

Chaudhri Barkat Ali represents sensible and humanistic Muslims, Abdul Ghani, the hookah-maker represents the irrational and fanatical Muslims. As soon as Partition is declared by the government, Abdul Ghani feels ecstatic about it and begins to hate and defy all the Hindus including Lala Kanshi Ram. He asks Lala Kanshi Ram as to when he is leaving Pakistan:

‘Why do you want me to leave, Abdul Ghani?’ said Lala Kanshi Ram. ‘We have been good friends-for years we have been such good friends!’

Abdul Ghani was taken aback at this. He had many other nasty things he wanted to say to Lala Kanshi Ram; he couldn’t bring one of them out. Deflated, he sat on the wooden platform and looked at the ground.

Remembering he was speaking to a kafir after all, he flared up again.

‘I want you to leave because you’re a Hindu, and you don’t believe in Allah’.¹³

Thus, even the good friends begin to drift apart because of the communal hatred aggravated by the partition of the county. The old harmonious co-existence of the Muslims and the Hindus is disrupted overnight by the Partition. Parvati N. Rao observes:

Lala Kanshi Ram and Abdul Ghani's relationship is an example of a disrupted co-existence owing to partition. A man of little knowledge and no education, this petty businessman Abdul Ghani starts suspecting Lala Kanshi Ram because he has been told by the Muslim League to distrust the Hindus.¹⁴

Munir-Nur family, headed by Chaudhri Barkat Ali, is an ideal one. They are good Muslims, who believe in the unity of all religions. Chaudhri Barkat Ali is soaked with the spirit of nationalism. He is a devout Muslim, but he respects the Hindus. He lives a life of friendship and love, and does not distinguish between man and man. "And the Hindu next door was as much his brother, more his brother than an unknown Muslim living elsewhere. Chaudhri Barkat Ali is, thus, a strong critic of religious fanaticism. He is the right man with the right kind of ideas. The locality he lives in – Mohalla Mianapura – stands for harmony. Munir shares the goodwill of his father. He reads the pulse of the moment, the excitement of newly announced Azadi correctly. The eternal friendship between Chaudhari Barkat Ali and Lala Kanshi Ram and the harmonious relationship between the two families, belonging to the two different communities, is well-known. The Partition has torn people into pieces emotionally and intellectually. Munir wants Arun to stop meeting Nur altogether. If it is not possible, he can meet her only in his presence, preferably at home and never in public. The advice certainly is given in the interest of Arun. The agony of the young lovers, created by the situation, can be easily felt.

Thus the emotional relationship between man and woman is not at all affected by the communal hatred. The love between Arun, son of Lala Kanshi Ram and Nur (Nurul Nisar), sister of Munir remains pure and unaffected by the communal disturbances happening around them. Both of them are students in the same (Murray) college. They meet secretly and frequently, kiss and hug each other. They declare their love for each other. Arun even goes to the extent of being ready to marry her. Being a helpless girl, Nur has no courage to convert herself into a Hindu. She, therefore suggests to Arun to become a Muslim in order to marry her. Thus their love remains pure.

But Munir, Nur's brother, suspects that the inter-caste love affair between Nur and Arun may trigger off communal clashes and even endanger the life of Arun. He, therefore, warns Arun to stop seeing Nur and moving about with her. But the young lovers dream of uniting with each other in spite of all the barriers.

Munir and Arun go to meet their English friend, Sergeant Davidson, in the cantonment to know his views on the Partition. The British Sergeant declares that division of country "was the most stupid, most damaging, most negative development in the history of the freedom struggle here."¹⁵

He blames the British for this development, and warns that for the Indians the hard days are ahead. He looks at the situation in the right perspective, and fears the Partition and its dreadful consequences.

The communal hatred between the Hindus and Muslims which was latent so far becomes blatant and expresses itself in so many details. The Muslims burn down countless houses of the Hindus, burgle their houses, rape the Hindu women and murder the Hindu population indiscriminately and ruthlessly. But unfortunately Hindus cannot retaliate strongly and properly because of lack of solidarity among themselves. There is a similar hatred between Muslims and Sikhs also. The Sikhs murder many Muslims. Some times they compromise with the situation by shaving their beard and removing the paraphernalia of Sikh symbols like turban and kangan etc. Thus there is a general atmosphere of mutual hatred, fear and distrust among the Muslims, the Hindus and the Sikhs. All of them suffer from some kind of psychological restlessness, anxiety and insecurity.

The traumatic experience of psychological separation between Hindus and Muslims is inevitably followed by the physical separation between the two. Politically the border between India and Pakistan has to be fixed. The Hindus of newly created Pakistan have got to leave for the newly created Pakistan. The government appoints a Boundary Commission to decide the precise boundaries of Pakistan and India. Lala Kanshi Ram wishfully hopes that Sialkot may never go to Pakistan. The Sikh demand

and hope that the boundary line will be at the Chenab basin. But Arun knows realistically that boundary is going to be at the Ravi basin and not at the Chenab. Lala Kanshi Ram and his companions are deeply disappointed by the geographical line of partition. Once the boundary line is decided, the pent up anger and hatred are vented out vehemently and shamelessly everywhere. The Muslims of Sialkot begin to disturb the peace and happiness of the Hindus by stabbing them, looting their houses and shops and raping their women. The life of Hindus becomes utterly miserable and infernal. Although Kanshi Ram has been a harmless merchant, he is deeply upset when his shop is looted by Muslims at night. Lala Kanshi Ram and his Hindu neighbours have to undergo the painful experience of displacement and migration. In spite of their deep emotional attachment to their land, home, shop, and region, they are compelled to leave them and go in search of new places for final settlement. The government has arranged many refugee camps to facilitate the process of mass migration from one country to the other. Lala Kanshi Ram feels a terrific anxiety for having to become a landless, homeless and rootless man. He feels an inexplicable agony at having to be severed from his roots:

Lala Kanshi Ram could not sleep at all that night. It became clear to him how vulnerable the minority community was and that soon he too might have to leave. It hurt him, he thought of it, and he paced his room restively. ‘Refugee, refugee, indeed!’ he shouted, when he understood the word, ‘I was born around here, this is my home-how can I be a refugee in my own home?’

‘Father, we’ll have to leave—’ Arun said.

Before he could finish sentence, Lala Kanshi Ram cut him off. ‘Why will we have to? Why?’

‘Well, the government seems unable to protect us, and we’ll have to go to save our lives.’

‘Why can’t the government protect us? I’ve seen communal riots before in this country. How were the English able to put them down?’

‘Let’s say the government is incapable or unwilling to control the situation. What then? Shall we wait here and perish?’

‘He is right,’ said Prabha Rani, fear gripping her heart.

‘Aha! Incapable or unwilling – which precisely?’ Lala Kanshi Ram ignored his wife and addressed himself to his son: ‘If unwilling, the government is a party to murder. If incapable, we Indians had no right to ask for freedom’.¹⁶

Lala Kanshi Ram is so sorrow-stricken that, in spite of himself, he begins to cry. “His eyes filled with tears as he felt so unprotected and forlorn”¹⁷. In spite of the pressure of the members of his family, he is so reluctant to leave.

Lala Kanshi Ram refused to accept his family’s suggestion that they pack up and leave. How could he leave? He would rather die here¹⁸

He further worries about his future destiny and place of settlement. Whereas his displacement is certain, his relocation is not known exactly. Everything appears to be bleak and uncertain to him:

He was young, though, he was only fifty, he could start a business somewhere else, in some town on the other side of the border. But could he? Could he, really? He looked at his wife and Arun, and he knew how tired his arms and shoulders were. You mean, to begin right from scratch? Wasn’t that asking a little too much – now wasn’t that asking a little too much of a middle aged man? And where precisely would he begin? In what city? How much capital did he have in cash? How early, at how short a notice, could he withdraw it from the bank? What of the shop-the grain stored there? How

would he dispose of it? Would anyone give him any price for it in such times?

‘Arun’s mother, I’m an old man and I cannot begin all over again!’¹⁹

Lala Kanshi Ram’s worry is not merely about the immediate practical difficulties that he has to face but about his deep seated emotional entanglement with his roots:

No, that was not all – that was nothing; that was only a small part of the whole story. The pinch was he should have to give up this land, this earth, this air. That’s where the hurt lay! He breathed deep, filling his lungs with the air of the town to their utmost capacity, and tears welled up in his eyes. How could he give this earth up?²⁰

Lala Kanshi Ram feels crestfallen and grows pale. He is forced by the circumstances to leave Sialkot. His good friend Barkat Ali who thinks of Lala Kanshi Ram’s safety advises him to leave the town. It is now clear to Lala Kanshi Ram, his family and their neighbours that they must leave Sialkot and the residences which had been their homes for many decades. Paul Love writes:

Freedom, “Azadi”, has become an occasion of crisis and catastrophe for them. For Lala Kanshi Ram this is a particularly bitter catastrophe, and he accepts the necessity of migrating only after much persuasion from his more practical-minded son, Arun.²¹

But Abdul Ghani, the fanatic Muslim enjoys the sight of Lala Kanshi Ram’s plight. The communal disturbances continue in the city. Individual appeals for solidarity by the important Muslims are of no avail. Violence is widespread on both

the sides of the border. This fact is made clear by Chaudhari Barkat Ali when he states:

....that everyday hundreds of refugees from India continue to arrive with tales of terror and disgust. Whatever is happening here in Sialkot, things very much like that are happening on the other side too-let's make no mistake about it. It is not the collapse of Congress Muslims in Pakistan; apparently it is the collapse of Congress Hindus in India also. When refugees with stories of personal misfortunes land here, the politicians use them to their advantage to fan up further hatred.²²

The Hindu Deputy Commissioner is shot dead by his Muslim bodyguard. Compelled by the insecure atmosphere, Lala Kanshi Ram decides to leave his house and move to the Refugee Camp. Consequently all the members of his family like Prabha Rani and Arun and his neighbours like Bibi Amar Vati, Suraj Praksh, Sunanda, Padmini and Chandni etc., accompany him in the truck which takes them to the Refugee Camp. Mukunda's mother refuses to go with them and creates a scene. Bill Davidson brings two trucks in the evening and transports them to the Refugee Camp. Thus the process of Lala Kanshi Ram's dislocation has started. He has become totally homeless and rootless and forced to undergo the experience of insecurity and uncertainty.

Lala Kanshi Ram is given a separate tent for his family in the Refugee Camp. But he cannot live peacefully even there. His sorrow is aggravated by the news that his daughter Madhu Bala and her husband are killed by the Muslim fanatics in the train when they are returning to Sialkot. Sorrows keep crowding in Kanshi Ram's life. His tragedy paradoxically provides a fine comedy to Abdul Ghani who says: 'I'm one of the Khaksar volunteers sir, helping to keep our city clean by cremating the kafir dead' ²³. He further expresses his communal hatred:

And cynically, showing his teeth which lit up eerily in the light of the fire he had said to Arun: 'Who told you your sister was killed, my boy? But don't worry. I put her and her husband into the fire with my own hands, and they're now on their way to dozakh, to hell- where I hope they rot for ever!' He made no effort to disguise his venom.²⁴

Barkat Ali who is a good Muslim and a friend of Lala Kanshi Ram takes Abdul Ghani to task. But it is of no avail. Kanshi Ram, Prabha Rani and Arun are really heart-broken about the unexpected and premature death of Madhubala and her husband. Their friends try their best to console them. Arun nostalgically remembers his affectionate relationship with her.

In addition to Lala Kanshi Ram's personal tragedy, he has to bear the public tragedy also happening around him. The communal riots and murders do not cease in spite of the governmental efforts to maintain peace in the region:

What in the end broke Lala Kanshi Ram's heart was the inability of the Boundary Force under General Rees to maintain peace in the province. An Englishman unable to keep law and order! Lala Kanshi Ram reeled when he thought of it. It was like the sun rising in the West. He soon saw how helpless Rees Sahib was though. Most of his men and officers were Indians, and they had their separate communal loyalties. These loyalties were openly and unashamedly expressed, and Lala Kanshi Ram heard innumerable accounts of how the minorities in East Punjab and West Punjab were slaughtered while men of the Boundary Force looked on. In such a vicious atmosphere, what could one or a few Englishmen do? That brought Lala Kanshi Ram to the end of his hopes. Desperately he looked around; desperately he searched

his mind, if there was something else he might hang on to. There was nothing. The two new governments were parties to the fratricidal war, and how could unarmed men and women withstand organized slaughter? The death of Madhu was the last blow to his shattered psyche. He now did not want to consider the possibility of staying²⁵

Although Kanshi Ram has undergone the traumatic experience of displacement, humiliation and despair, he tries to bear it with a sense of dignity and nobility. He grows more and more withdrawn but never gives up his regular prayer. Perhaps his deep faith in religion and past karma helps him keep his mental balance. In the Refugee Camp, Lala Kanshi Ram and his family have to live on the dry ration supplied to them by the government.

While they are staying in the Refugee Camp, Arun happens to meet his classmate Rahmat Ullah Khan who has now become the army officer and who professes his loyalty to Pakistan openly. Rahmat Ullah Khan treats Arun with tea and drinks and exchanges amicableities with him. He impresses Arun as a lover and an admirer of Ghalib's poetry. But Arun is shocked and angered when Rahmat Ullah Khan asks him to bring Sunanda, a beautiful married lady, to his bed. Arun realizes with discomfort how the Partition has created a wall between the Hindu psyche and the Muslim psyche. He excuses himself without any promise to Rahmat Ullah Khan. Later Rahmat Ullah Khan visits the Refugee tent to attract Sunanda's attention to him, but is simply ignored by her. But Rahmat Ullah Khan cherishes a hope of having sex with her sooner or later.

While staying in the Refugee Camp, Lala Kanshi Ram has to see many happy and unhappy natural events taking place around him. For example, Sardar Jodha Singh dies after a brief illness of diarrhea and is cremated quietly by his family. The Sikhs experience a special threat by the Muslim population. They, therefore, resort to shaving their beard to hide their identity and for safety. They renew their faith in Sikh religion especially in Guru Maharaj. In spite of all these disconcerting events

happening to and around them, Lala Kanshi Ram and Prabha Rani maintain calmness because of their faith in religious fatalism. Kanshi Ram wonders at how religion created by man for the betterment of life in general has degenerated into mad communalism. He broods over the human folly in a philosophical fashion. Having been reconciled to his tragic lot, Kanshi Ram decides to leave for the next place i.e. Dera Baba Nanak in the truck. He is made the leader of his group. By this time another tragedy happens around him. Niranjjan Singh who cannot face the harsh reality of dislocation and humiliation, sets fire to himself and dies. They conduct his cremation ceremony with great sorrow and proceed with their march ahead.

When they leave the camp, the Muslims jeer at the Hindu men and women and shout insults. Captain Rahmat Ullah Khan hands over charge of the convoy to Major Jang Bahadur Singh. Sufficient military protection is given to the refugee until they leave the camp. While Lala Kanshi Ram is leaving along with his family and neighbours, a shocking event takes place. Gangu Mull, Amar Vati's husband refuses to leave Sialkot as much because of his attachment to his property as because of his dislike for his wife: "You know what a bitch she is – foul mouthed and always quarreling. I was sick of her as it was"²⁶. He further tells Lala Kanshi Ram: "I'm also thinking of taking a Muslim wife."²⁷. Amar Vati initially laughs at her husband's absurd decision, but is finally crestfallen by his betrayal. Bibi Amar Vati who was like a lioness once upon a time, has now become helpless like a beaten warrior. Political partition has created a matrimonial partition also in Amar Vati's life. Lala Kanshi Ram has to bear with other unhappy event. He learns that Mukanda's mother has been killed and that "a mass killing of Hindu prisoners did take place inside of the city prison"²⁸.

They pass the Ramalila ground of Sialkot and march for six miles and halt at Gunna Kalan. Chaudhri Barkat Ali and Munir have walked six miles along with Kanshi Ram's family. Now comes the time for final separation of life-long friends. All separation is painful:

'Khuda hafiz, brother Kanshi Ram,' he said, folding his hands.

‘These have been good years,’ said Lala Kanshi Ram, taking Chaudhri Barkat Ali’s hands in his own.

There were tears in the eyes of both men.

They had nothing more to say, having exhausted themselves of emotion in all these weeks.

‘You took a lot of trouble for us.’

‘Now brother Kanshi Ram!’

Facing Prabha Rani, Chaudhri Barkat Ali said, ‘Sister, Khuda hafiz.’

‘If not in our life-time, Insha-Allah in the life-time of our children this folly will surely be undone,’ said Chaudhri Barkat Ali, looking at Lala Kanshi Ram. ‘We are one people and religion cannot separate us from each other’²⁹

Thus Nahal’s purpose is to describe the impact of the historical tragedy of the Partition on ordinary people. Lakhmir Singh states:

Azadi is, in fact, the story of millions of people uprooted from their homes for no fault of their own and this story is symbolized in the person of Lala Kanshi Ram and his family and the pain that they go through during the process of this upheaval in their lives and their alienation from their own home-land.³⁰

Munir also says goodbye to Arun and embraces him. Arun knows that the Partition of the country has put an end to his love affair with Nur. After thus being painfully separated from the dear friends, Lala Kanshi Ram and his family wait at the open fields outside Gunna Kalan to pass the night. The whole camp hears of the horrible communal atrocities inflicted on Hindu population of Sialkot by the Muslims:

A number of abducted Hindu and Sikh women were in their custody. Many of the kidnapped women

disappeared into private homes. A lone Muslim dragged a woman away, and kept her for his own exclusive use. Or he took her with the consent of other Muslims, converted her to Islam, and got married to her. The rest were subjected to mass rape, at times in public places and in the presence of large gatherings. The rape was followed by other atrocities, chopping off the breasts, and even death. Many of the pregnant women had their wombs torn open. The survivors were retained for repeated rapes and humiliations until they were parceled out to decrepit wrecks- the aged, the leftovers who couldn't find a wife, or those Muslims who wanted an additional wife. In the meantime more women were abducted and the cycle was repeated all over again.³¹.

The whole camp grows dumb with shock when they hear the news of variegated atrocities practiced by the Muslims on Hindus. The climax of communal hatred and meanness could be seen in the parade of naked women forced by the Muslims at the bazaar of Narowal in the afternoon. Suraj Prakash and Arun walk upto Narowal to watch the hateful, shameful and grotesque scene. The Muslims of Narowal are dirty, mean, vindictive and sensual:

The procession arrived. Arun counted them. There were forty women, marching abreast. Their ages varied from sixteen to thirty, although to add to the grotesqueness of the display, there were two women, marching right at the end of the column, who must have been over sixty. They were all stark naked. Their heads were completely shaven; so were their armpits. So were their public regions. Shorn of their body hair and clothes, they looked like baby girls, or like bald embryos one sees preserved in methyated spirit. Only the breasts and hips gave away the age. The women walked awkwardly

looking only at the ground. They were all crying, though their eyes shed no tears. Their faces were formed into grimaces and they were sobbing. Their arms were free, but so badly had they been used, so wholly their spirits crushed, their morals shattered, none of them made any attempt to cover themselves with their hands. They swung their arms clumsily, often out of coordination with their legs. The bruises on their bodies showed they had been beaten and manhandled. Their masters walked beside them and if any of the women sagged or hung behind, they prodded her along with the whips they carried. At the head of the procession marched a single drummer with a flat drum, thumping heavily on it and announcing their arrival

The procession moved through the bazaar, and along with the procession moved a river of obscenities – foul abuses, crude personal gestures, spurts of sputum, odd articles like small coins, faded flowers, cigarette butts and bidis that were thrown at the women. As soon as the women came near, that section of the crowd became hysterical. ‘Rape them.’ ‘Put it inside of them.’ ‘The filthy Hindu bitches.’ ‘The Kafir women.’ Some said worse things. Then came the shower of spittle. Almost everyone spat... Many men in the front rows of the crowd lifted their lungis to display their genitals to them. Others aimed small articles at them and tried to hit them... And almost to the last man, whether they spat or shouted or threw things or just stood with their mouths open, they stared at the public regions of the women. Through indelicate exposure those areas had lost their glory, lost all magic, and there was only a small slippery aperture you saw there. But men’s eyes were settled on these apertures. And the moment the

women had passed ahead, the eyes were settled on the bruised buttocks...³²

Though Suraj Prakash enjoys the sight of the parade of the naked women, the good Muslims feel deeply ashamed of their fanatic counterparts. The next night again a large group of Muslims come and attack the Hindu refugees in the camp, with gun-firing. Many Hindus scatter here and there to save their lives. Arun also runs away into a nearby field and enters a barn to hide himself for safety. But there he is shocked to see that Sunanda is being raped by Captain Rahmat Ullah Khan. Initially he is not able to identify who is raping whom. The scene runs thus:

Arun's heart was beating very fast and he could hear it thumping in his head. Then he heard Sunanda weeping. But it was the weeping of a person drained of all strength, a completely subdued weeping.

Standing behind the wall, leaning against it with his hands, Arun looked through the passage. First he saw the hay stacked ceiling high in one corner, then he saw a number of farm implements, including a wooden plough, and in the far distance he saw the large, iron door of the barn. It was only then he saw Sunanda or what must be Sunanda. She was lying on the ground on an improvised bed of hay, in the far corner. Her head was away from Arun and he saw her legs. Between her legs and on top of her, was lying a man.

The moonlight was coming through the window in the larger room and Arun could see clearly. She was still weeping. Softly and tamely. Her breath was choked with convulsions. 'Get off me now,' she said in a tired voice. The man did not move. Instead he started laughing. He laughed smugly, a high pitched shrill laughter. The sound reverberated in the barn and the inner door rattled slightly. 'I knew I'd have you one

day,' he said conceitedly. And he laughed again in triumph and satisfaction. 'You are beauty,' he was saying. 'But you made me wait a long time'³³

Arun is shocked and exasperated to see that Sunanda is raped by a man. Slowly he recognizes that the raper is none other than his own classmate Rahmat Ullah Khan. Righteous indignation surges within him.

Arun knew who he was before he had spoken. The strong slender back. The tall frame. The familiar sound of the laughter. The shock of it singed him— as recognition shot into him like a leaping flame. He did not stop to think. He did not even know what he was doing. Quietly, step by step, he walked into the other room and picked up a sharp wooden spike from among the farm implements. Step by step holding the spike firmly in his hands and raising it above his head, he walked to the distant corner. He walked gingerly, as though he were sleep walking at the top of a precipice. He still did not know what he was doing. The spike was raised above his head and his hands were trying to get a firmer hold on it. He made no sound whatsoever, but somehow he did not worry about sound. And yet he walked step by step, very carefully. And going near them, while he still heard sobs and the laughter somewhere, he brought the spike down with all his force on the man's head.

He had seen the mass of black hair and he had taken a careful aim. Lying atop her, the man was still holding her in his arms. With the blow his arms slackened and rolled off to the side. His body twitched but the man did not move after that. Arun hit him repeatedly on the head...³⁴

Thus Rahmat Ullah Khan's murder by Arun becomes part of wild justice and balance between Muslim hatred of Hindus and Hindu hatred of Muslims. Rahmat Ullah Khan has paid a heavy price of losing his life not only for lusting after a married woman, but also for raping a Hindu woman. Arun consoles Sunanda and tries to help her recover from the sense of being shocked of being raped by a Muslim. Sunanda escapes from the barn along with Arun by dressing himself in Rahmat Ullah Khan's garments. Sunanda requests Arun not to publicise the ugly traumatic experience that has happened to her. She feels that death would have been preferable to the loss of her marital chastity. She sobs and says that, "I should have let him shoot me" ³⁵. Arun takes up Rahmat Ullah Khan's gun and leaves the barn along with Sunanda. He promises her to keep it a secret and takes her back to the Refugee camp.

When both Arun and Sunanda Bala return to the Refugee camp, they are shocked to hear other disconcerting news. Arun is very sad to learn that Chandni has been kidnapped and Suraj Prakash has been stabbed to death by the Muslim sensualists and fanatics. Padmini, Chandni's mother is heartbroken and hits herself all the while in despair. Arun hears about the Muslim atrocities inflicted on Padmini. When the Muslim fanatics came to snatch away her daughter Chandni, Padmini "offered herself to them if they would spare her daughter. But they hit her with a stick and left her unconscious. She also thinks she was dishonoured while she lay unconscious" ³⁶. Arun who loves Chandni searches for her in vain. Padmini goes on waiting and crying for her lost daughter.

On the whole, the refugees are physically and psychologically shattered. When Arun returns to the Refugee camp, he feels terribly depressed.

The women that were discovered were led away silently by their families. None showed joy at the reunion; some seemed sorry the girls had come back at all, soiled and dishonoured ³⁷.

Some refugees were missing. However, the surviving refugees move from Narowal to Dera Bada Nanak. "There was hardly any discipline. There was not a

family which had not been hit in some manner, and the refugees were totally dispirited”³⁸. They continue their march swallowing all the insult and humiliation. “A list of abducted women was prepared, and arrangements were made with the local authorities for their repatriation to India if they were recovered. A list of the dead and the missing was also prepared. And then the refugees started walking the last eight miles of their march”³⁹. Padmini is reluctant to go ahead until she has recovered her daughter Chandni. Arun worries secretly about his permanent separation from Nur and Chandni. Finally they cross the bridge of the Ravi river and enter the Indian territory. Now all of them have realized that India is their true motherland and wish to greet her. “Vande Mataram,” repeated his father, crushing the earth in his hand and letting it slowly fall to the ground. Arun saw his mother fold her hands and bow to the earth”⁴⁰. They develop a religious reverence to Mother India.

Lala Kanshi Ram’s family moves swiftly from Dera Baba Nanak to Amritsar. After having suffered from a traumatic displacement, they now have to worry about their relocation. Prabha Rani suggests that they may go to Kanpur, or Jullunder, or Ludhiana or Ambala. But Kanshi Ram knows the difficulty of not having close relatives in those cities.

Only now did Lala Kanshi Ram discover the meaning of blood relation. If you were a blood relation, you could shout and force your way in. But, as was the case with them, if you were a distant relation, you could only whine and wait by the outer door”⁴¹.

Obviously, Lala Kanshi Ram suffers from a sense of forlornness and unbelongingness. But finally he yields to Arun’s suggestion of going to Delhi to relocate themselves. Padmini decides to stay on in Amritsar whereas Bibi Amar Vati, Sunanda, Isher Kaur and Teja Singh agree to accompany Lala Kanshi Ram. They are surprised to learn that there is a Sikh/Hindu retaliation for the Muslim atrocities committed in Pakistan. He learns that the people of Amritsar “are taking out a procession of Muslim women through the bazaar”⁴². When they go to the railway station, they are shocked to see a train with hundreds of slaughtered Muslims. There is thus a wild balance between Muslim atrocities and Hindu atrocities in the two parts of

the nation. Finally they board the train to Delhi. But on the way, the poor Isher Kaur begins to suffer from delivery pains. The womenfolk including a lady doctor from a neighbouring compartment rush to help her. She is, finally, delivered of a female baby in the moving train. Isher Kaur, thus, undergoes a hellish experience in her life. Lala Kanshi Ram is, further disconcerted to see a train accident at Ambala in which ninety-four passengers were killed. When they are passing through the region called Kurukshetra, Lala Kanshi Ram is easily reminded of the Kurukshetra war in the Mahabharata. One may easily see a parallel between Kurukshetra war and the modern conflict between Hindus and Muslims.

What is really admirable in Lala Kanshi Ram is that he has developed a philosophical and almost a yogic calmness of vision in spite of all the traumatic experience he and his family have undergone. He knows that Muslims alone are not to be blamed and that Hindus are equally guilty. Although Prabha Rani is very furious with Muslims for killing her daughter, Madhu, Lala Kanshi Ram tries to silence her by his yogic vision: I can't hate the Muslims any more...⁴³ Lala Kanshi Ram has obviously grown from the worldly level to the yogic level, which helps him to take the future troubles and inconveniences in his stride.

When Lala Kanshi Ram reaches Delhi, he has to face many practical problems of relocation. He meets the Rehabilitation Officer and feels deeply humiliated. He is to face criticisms for going to Delhi instead of settling down in East Punjab. The Officer treats him rather callously and says, "You have all lost someone!"⁴⁴. Lala Kanshi Ram feels terribly depressed and surrounded by darkness. However, swallowing the insult, he pleads meekly, "Sir, I'll be ruined if you don't come to my rescue. I only want a small flat and a small little shop, to be allotted to me"⁴⁵. Lala Kanshi Ram requests for a house and a shop i.e. Refugee property left behind by Muslims. The Officer simply laughs at Kanshi Ram's request and directs him to Kingsway Camp. Kanshi Ram swallows all the humiliation silently and takes rest in the Waiting Hall of the Railway Station. He broods about how he has lost everything. He does not know whom to approach at the capital city of Delhi. As the last resort, he decides to meet Jawaharlal Nehru. When he goes to Nehru's residence, he is

disappointed to learn that Nehru has gone out of station. His hopelessness is complete now.

Kanshi Ram's companions like Sardar Tej Singh and Isher Kaur find some shelter with some acquaintances in Shahdara, a suburb to Delhi. Although he is happy about their settlement, he suffers from the agony of separation, "It was another bond that had snapped. One by one, he was losing his limbs, and he touched his two arms reminiscently"⁴⁶. After separating from these companions, Kanshi Ram goes to the office of the Area Custodian of evacuee property and requests the officer for a refugee flat and a shop. But he is shocked when he is asked to pay a bribe of two thousand rupees for the same. Unable to pay a heavy amount of bribe, he starts searching of a roof above his head. He has become totally 'homeless.' "He wanted a home where he could be alone with Prabha and see his two children"⁴⁷. Besides, the people of Delhi are not willing to help Kanshi Ram as he is a Punjabi and tell him to his face that Punjabis are too quarrelsome. Kanshi Ram goes to the Refugee Office once again and tries in vain to get some shelter. His despair grows so deep that he is on the brink of tears. When Arun enters the office, "His father was stunned to find him there, and he tried to conceal his tears. Had he been weeping? His father, weeping openly?"⁴⁸. Even the Officer is touched by Kanshi Ram's depth of frustration and advises Arun, "Take care of your father. He has been weeping. I've told you people. There is nothing that I can do! There simply aren't any more houses"⁴⁹. Arun tries to control his father and takes him to Master Hotel and order for some food. But Lala Kanshi Ram decides to have only tea and biscuits. Observing the plight of his father, even a young man like Arun realizes that there is "So much sorrow for a house! Such prostration! Such weariness of the spirit!"⁵⁰. Kanshi Ram re-remembers his lost daughter Madhu and suffers from a chasm of pain. Perhaps there cannot be greater tragedy than the one that has happened to Kanshi Ram. He is at the climax of his tragic insecurity, dislocation, rootlessness and homelessness now.

Finally an unexpected surprise awaits Lala Kanshi Ram. When he goes to the Kingsway Camp on Alipur Road, he is happy to find the luxury of living in a brick hutment. "After about four months of irregular living under canvas they found this a luxury"⁵¹. He settles down in the brick hutment along with Bibi Amar Vati and

Sunanda. His problem of relocation is finally solved. He begins to adjust himself to the life of Delhi which is full of excitement. To that extent, he feels Delhi to be better than Sialkot. When he slowly begins to strike roots in Delhi, he is disconcerted by the news of Mahatma Gandhi's murder.

When they were playing devotional songs over the All India Radio. A news bulletin came on and it confirmed what the man had told him. It said that Gandhiji that evening had died at the hands of an assassin. He was walking to the prayer meeting from his room in Birla House, when a man approached him and fired three shots. Gandhiji's last words were 'Hey Rama' before he fell. The assassin, the announcement said, was a Hindu. To remove any misgivings, it was repeated the assassin was not a member of a minority community"⁵².

Lala Kanshi Ram does not pay much attention to the news because of the irreversibility of the sad event and the inevitability of darkness in the subsequent life of India.

Lala Kanshi Ram heard all that but paid no serious attention to it, though a part of his mind said, wake up, these are good words. Gandhiji was dead-fully dead, completely dead. He found anything after that irrelevant and insignificant"⁵³.

Lala Kanshi Ram, Prabha Rani, Bibi Amar Vati and Arun pay their respect to the late Mahatma by mourning his death by not lighting their ovens and not eating their food.

After a few days, Lala Kanshi Ram starts a small grocery shop to earn his livelihood. Because of all the humiliations that he has suffered in life due to the Partition of the country, he has stopped wearing his turban.

It hurt Lala Kanshi Ram no end. From the time he set up this little shop, he had stopped wearing a turban. A turban was a sign of respect, of dignity. He had no dignity left. He now wore of a forage cap. Or he sat bare-headed, advertising his humble position to the world⁵⁴.

Like him, Bibi Amar Vati and Sunanda also have grown mellow and tragic. Sunanda acquires an old sewing machine and starts doing odd tailoring jobs.

Lala Kanshi Ram realizes the extraordinary importance of political freedom that India has achieved in spite of the horrible and traumatic experiences that he has suffered.

Arun went to the bazaar several times to listen to the radio. Lala Kanshi Ram went with him. For the first time Lala Kanshi Ram became aware of a blessing azadi had brought them⁵⁵.

Lala Kanshi Ram knows that political freedom and the consequent feeling of security and fearlessness are always preferable to slavery to the British rule. The picture becomes very clear to him when he thinks of the contrast between colonial and post-colonial India.

He thought of the pre-Independence days, before the nation was free. How self-conscious the people were then! An Indian leader dying and the crowd feeling openly for him? It was unthinkable. They sorrowed and they came out on the roads, but there was no dignity in it. They were afraid of persecution at the hands of the British, they were afraid of violence, they were afraid of their own people who might betray them. And in reaction to those fears, they went into excesses. They

wept too loudly or they shouted too loudly. Today the men stood in pride – evenly balanced, firm sure of themselves. Unlike the past, there was no leader urging them to demonstrate their feelings. The feelings had their own recourse. Lala Kanshi Ram raised his head with pride and stretched back his shoulders. He was unrestricted now, he was untrammelled”⁵⁶

Lala Kanshi Ram realizes the extraordinary importance of freedom and emergence of national consciousness in India. He feels proud of himself as an Indian. But his relocation at Delhi has unfortunately severed all his connections and communication with people including his own wife and son. Lying on his bed late in the night, he thought:

What of the loss of personality he had suffered? What of the material losses? What of Madhu? That could never be made good, never atoned for. And he saw years of bleakness before him, years of desolation... He felt himself standing before a tunnel, where he could not see the other end. How long was the tunnel? And it all looked so unnecessary, so superfluous, to him – what they were going through. Freedom was on its way and nothing could have stopped it. If only they had not given in so easily to the partition”⁵⁷.

He broods over the uncertainty of his future. “He wanted to talk about it to Prabha Rani or to Arun. That was another ruin azadi had caused. He had lost the ability to communicate with his family. He couldn’t establish a contact either with his wife or with his son”⁵⁸. Thus the members of Kanshi Ram’s family suffer from a psychological partition from one another and feel unable to communicate mutually. All of them suffer from a sort of existential loneliness. Perhaps all the material suffering like displacement, loss of land, home, roots, friends and relatives, death of his daughter and so on have awakened in him the deep seated Hindu philosophical

feeling of 'vairagya' or detachment. A member of the Arya Samaj and an ardent believer in Vedic and Vedantic philosophy, Kanshi Ram experiences the essential spiritual loneliness of man and the final encounter with his own self which is part of the Absolute. However, he continues his life in Delhi with a sense of resignation. His son Arun starts going to a local college of Delhi.

Azadi is, thus, an important novel which deals with various aspects of the traumatic experience of Partition of the country into two. Chaman Nahal shows his remarkable powers of observation of the human nature in general and the political behaviour of Hindus and Muslims in particular. Though the novel is tragic in its tone, it is epical in its vast canvas. The greatness of Chaman Nahal's version of partition lies in his balanced and impartial picture of the Hindu-Muslim hatred and love, their emotional and political relationships and the ambivalent relationship between Indians and British people in a very realistic and elaborate manner. In this regard, Parvati Rao opines:

What makes Azadi memorable is the faithful, realistic and sincere documentation of the situation in the Punjab during the time of partition. Among the numerous partition novels in Indian English literature, Azadi, with all its structural and other flaws is easily one of the most outstanding.⁵⁹

Nahal's role in the novel is like a political historian who carries his personal opinions and presents them through the characters, whom he makes his mouthpieces. While giving an interview to B.S.Goyal once, Nahal stated:

I think that historically, politically, ethnically and morally partition was wrong. I believed and still believe that we are one nation, one culture."⁶⁰

Himself being one of the participants in the action through the medium of the Lala Kanshi Ram, the protagonist, Chaman Nahal has the difficulty to keep himself off the action. His compellingly authentic depiction of the Partition tragedy is too true to believe in. There is objectivity in delineation of the character. And there lies the greatness of the novel.. In this regard, A.H.Tak opines:

...Nahal retains an astonishing aesthetic objectivity, particularly while portraying his characters both good and bad. If the world contains such demonic creatures as Abdul Ghani, Inayat Ulla Khan and Captain Rahmat Ullah Khan, it does also contain such enlightened beings as Bill Davidson, Chaudhari Barkat Ali and the Hakim of Narowal, the last praying to Allah and weeping for the naked Hindu women who are being paraded in the local streets.⁶¹

Even Lala Kanshi Ram who has seen both the Hindus and the Muslims committing heinous crimes in the name of religion says what could have been said by Nahal himself.

I can't hate the Muslims any more...whatever the Muslims did to us in Pakistan, we're doing it to them here! We are all guilty... We have sinned as much. We need their forgiveness.⁶²

In this way Nahal not only objectifies the personal experience but also presents a deliberate contamination of the historical with didactic and situational discursive elements

Since Nahal's concerns are not only the socio-economic and humanistic implications of Partition, but also the deep psychi disturbances and emotional transformations, the usual narrative methods would not have suited his purpose. He

has, therefore, employed what may be called multiple of shifting points of view. It is Lala Kanshi Ram and Arun's points of view which form the major part of the novel. The mixing up of points of view of the protagonist, Lala Kanshi Ram and that of Arun in the main seems not to destroy the unity of impression. When political exigencies take control of events characters tend to become inferior to the works of art. However, Nahal harnesses the point of view to characters so as to amplify the personality of the characters. It may be said that Nahal employs this technique which helps him overcome a limited vision.

Nahal's Azadi seems to be different from all the other Partition novels as it makes an effort to encompass all the evils that Partition has brought forth. It does not terminate with the minorities fleeing to India. Perhaps the novelist seeks to continue the plot in India in order to catch the ominous effects of the aftermath on the lives of a few individuals in particular. The novel seems to be very significant because here Nahal's vision is very expansive which enables his protagonist to cease hating his counterparts in Pakistan. Indeed, in its probe into historical complexities, in its capturing the delicate feelings of the minority of refugees, and in its attempt to grasp their trauma, Azadi proves to be a classic. As "the comprehensive fictional accounts of the partition holocaust"⁶³ and the novel appears to be unrivalled.

Thus Nahal's version of Partition is not only impartial but also factual. In other words, he narrates with fidelity of a historian what had happened and the manner in which it had happened.

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Chapter-6
AMITAV GHOSH'S VERSION OF PARTITION
IN
THE SHADOW LINES

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Amitav Ghosh, a leading contemporary fiction writer of acclaimed genius, was born several years after Midnight's Children made their tryst with destiny on 15th August, 1947. He was born in Calcutta in 1956 but grew up in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), Sri Lanka, Iran and India that cultivated cosmopolitan, secular and comprehensive attitude. As a youngster, he was greatly influenced by the stories of Partition, Independence and the Second World War. These stories and anecdotes of such epochal events related by his parents, family members and neighbours made an indelible impression on his mind and later on found expression in his fictional works.

Recalling childhood memories about his mother in an article in the New Yorker, Amitav Ghosh said:

My mother grew up in Calcutta, and her memories were of Mahatma Gandhi, non-violence, civil disobedience and the terrors that accompanied Partition, in 1947.”¹

Recalling his childhood, Ghosh admits that his mother's stories were very appealing, as they had a straightforward, compelling plot line and in Mahatma Gandhi, an incomparably vital and endearing protagonist.² Yet, unlike the fiction of an earlier Indian English novelist, Chaman Nahal, Mahatma Gandhi does not figure prominently in the four published novels of Amitav Ghosh.

History is Amitav Ghosh's prime obsession and his fiction is imbued with both political and historical consciousness. However, when evaluating a segment of history, like India's Independence movement there is little mention of Mahatma Gandhi in Ghosh's fictional framework. So, despite the charismatic appeal of Mahatma Gandhi and the impact of stories he heard from his mother, the legendary 'father of the nation' and his tactics of 'satyagraha' and non-violent struggle do not recapture prominently in his writings. The major influences on him were the stories of

his father, which dealt with Second World War (1939-1945) and the Indian soldiers of the British Indian Army who fought against the Germans and the Japanese. About his father, Ghosh said:

My father came of age in a small provincial town in the state of Bihar. He turned twenty-one in 1942, one of the most tumultuous years in Indian history. That was the year the Indian National Congress, the country's largest political party launched a nationwide movement calling on the British to quit India: it was when Mahatma Gandhi denounced the raj as a "poison that corrupts all it touches." And in that historic year of anti-imperialist discontent my father left home to become an officer in the British colonial army in India.³

From his father, Ghosh learnt that many Indian officers and soldiers had ambivalent feelings about serving in the British colonial Army. Many of them realized that without their active collaboration, the British would struggle to rule over such a vast subcontinent. History shows that there were many failed mutinies, the most well documented being the great Sepoy uprising in 1857, which nearly pushed the British out of north India. During his formative years, Ghosh learnt through conversation and silences about the subterfuges and silences of his father's generations. It is this aspect of historical reality, which has fascinated Amitav Ghosh. He has used these memories to construct the concept of freedom and its numerous connotations in the modern world, which is the dominant theme of his most well-known novel The shadow Lines. In a way the quest in this novel is quite universal as it examines and investigates the meaning of freedom for human being in the modern world. It is a complex novel, interweaving memory, history and contemporary life. Thus, it can be seen that the narratives of his parents and the socio-political changes in India in the turbulent decade of the 1940's had a deep impact on Ghosh and form an integral part of his fictional landscape.

Amitav Ghosh graduated from St. Stephen's College, University of Delhi. For a short period during the Emergency, he worked with The Indian Express newspaper. There is a reference to his stint as a journalist, in The Shadow Lines, when the narrator as a research student reads newspaper reports in the Teen Murti House library about the causes of the 1964 communal riots in Calcutta. Later he joined the Delhi School of Economics as a lecturer in the department of Anthropology. After some years he received a scholarship to do a D. Phil. in social anthropology at Oxford University. In 1980, he went to Egypt to do field work in the Fellaheen village of Lataifa. The work he did there resulted in In an Antique Land. Ghosh has done fieldwork in Cambodia, lived in Delhi and written for a number of publications. Starting in Fall 1999, Amitav joined the visiting faculty at Queens College in the City College of New York as Distinguished Professor in the Dept. of Comparative Literature. He currently lives in Brooklyn, New York with his wife Deborah Baker.

His novel The Calcutta Chromosome (1996) won the Arthur C. Clarke Award for 1997 and is soon to be filmed by Babriale Salvatores, the Oscar-winning director of *Mediterraneo*. He was a finalist in the reporting category for the National Magazine Awards, the most important magazine prizes in the U.S. in 1999 for a story he wrote the previous year for The New Yorker. He is the winner of the 1999 Pushcart Prize, a leading literary award, for an essay that was published in the Kenyon Review.

Ghosh has admitted that campus life and his constant travels have contributed to his ability to move his characters in and out of their native settings with confidence and ease. As G.R.Taneja remarks::

His experience as a social anthropologist at the Universities of Delhi and Oxford shows in his handling of the characters and the context in which they exist. He reveals a sense of history and a firm grasp of socio-cultural and historical material that underlies his narrative.⁴

Till now, Amitav Ghosh has written four novels, a travelogue and a booklet exposing the nuclear arms race in both India and Pakistan. He published his first novel, The Circle of Reason (1986), when he was teaching at the Delhi School of Economics, at the University of Delhi. This novel has been translated into many European languages. Its French edition, received the *Prix Medici Etranger* a prestigious literary award in France.

His next book The Shadow Lines (1988) considered by many critics as his best work of fiction till date. It is an acclaimed masterpiece and evokes postcolonial situations, cultural dislocations and anxieties in the period between 1962 and 1979. In this novel, the interpretation of fractured nationalities is both vivid and intriguing. For this outstanding novel, he was awarded the coveted Sahitya Akademi Award in 1989.

Amitav Ghosh's third book In an antique Land (1992) shows that he is not a mere fiction writer but a serious researcher, social anthropologist and a traveller as well. This novel bears testimony to Ghosh's interaction with at least four languages and cultures spread over three continents and across several countries.

In his fourth novel, The Calcutta Chromosome (1996), Amitav Ghosh amalgamates literature, science, philosophy, history, psychology and sociology. It is unique experiment in the post-modernist form and the result is a complex, and imaginative story of quest and discovery that weaves past, present and future into an intricate texture.

Besides these four books of fiction, Ghosh has written a gripping and meticulously researched travelogue Dancing in Cambodia, At Large in Burma (1998). It is a travel book that reveals the writer's perceptions about the socio-political situations in both Cambodia and Burma, two countries, which practiced the politics of extreme isolation in the recent past. This recent publication shows Ghosh as an excellent socio- historical chronicler.

His latest work is a booklet, Countdown (1999), in which he exposes the unclear lobby in both India and Pakistan. The book also challenges and questions the

views of George Fernandez, then Defence Minister of India in the cabinet of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Thus, Amitav Ghosh is essentially concerned with history and its relevance with the present. As his sensibility is basically Indian, we find his quest for Indian values very significant and that is why his interpretation of Partition as the shadow line is of great significance.

The Shadow Lines is the story mainly of two families of Mr. Justice Chandrashekhar Datta Chaudhury and Lionel Tresawsen who became friends despite the fact that they belong to different religions, race and regions. Lionel Tresawsen left his native village, Mabe, in Southern Cornwall, to work as an overseer in a tin mine in Malaysia. Then he went all over the world- Fiji, Bolivia, the Guinea Coast, Ceylon- working in mines, warehouses or plantations doing whatever work came his way. The turn of circumstances born him to Calcutta and finally to Barrackpore where he started a small factory of his own. When he was past his youth, he set up a homoeopathic clinic in a village near Calcutta. In his old age he developed interest in spiritualism and began to attend meetings of Theosophical Society in Calcutta, where he got chance to meet a number of leading nationalists. He also began to attend meeting conducted by a Russian medium. He met Mr. Justice Chandrashekhar Datta Chaudhury in one of these meetings, and struck friendship with him which continued by the succeeding members of the two families.

Lionel Tresawsen went to England where his daughter married a man named Price who had taught her in college, but Mr. Price was nick named as Snipe because his full name was S.N.I.Price. Mrs. Price had a son, named Nick Price and a daughter named May Price. This family of Prices got settled in London, but they continued to have a cordial relations with Datta Chaudhurys.

A family living in Dhaka had two sons, both of whom were lawyers by profession. After the death of the father, the elder brother failed to maintain unity in the family. Consequently, the walls were erected to divide the house, and the two families even stopped having any communication between them. The family of the younger brother had two daughters Mayadebi and her elder sister. Mayadebi was married to Shaheb who was in the diplomatic service in the Government, and her

elder sister was married to an Engineer, but she became widow at an early age of 32. She became a teacher in a school in Calcutta and retired from the post of a principal of that school. She had a son who started his career as an Assistant Manager of a firm and rose to be its General Manager. Mayadebi was married to the son of Mr. Justice Datta Chaudhury with the help of her aunt. Mayadebi had three sons, Jatin, Tridib and Robi. Jatin was an economist with the U.N. Hence he was transferred from one country to another and Ila, his daughter travelled to several countries with him. Chaudhury family consisting of Shaheb, Mayadebi, their three sons, the eldest of whom Jatin and his daughter Ila and affluent and progressive family, while Mayadebi's widow sister who had been a teacher throughout became conservative and reactionary perhaps because she did not have the chance to see life in England and other countries, nor had she any interaction with the foreigners.

The story of this novel is narrated by the unnamed grandson of Mayadebi's elder sister. He is the youngest person in the family and has been in contact with all the members of Chaudhury family, mainly Tridib who is his friend, philosopher and guide, and also with his grandmother, who is rooted in old values. He has the required wisdom to observe and make comments on every character and incident. It will not be an exaggeration to say that he is the mouthpiece of the novelist himself. But he was born after much of the action of this novel had already passed. Therefore the incidents are narrated not in the chronological order, but in a strange intermixing of the past and the present.

The narrative begins in 1939, when the second world war broke out, and ends in 1964 when violence erupted in India and Pakistan. In 1939 Tridib, the cousin of narrator's father, was eight years old, and was murdered in 1964 by a street mob in Dhaka where he had born to bring his mother's grand uncle to India. The narrator was born in 1952, thirteen years after Tridib was born, and Mayadebi had gone to England with her husband. The narrator therefore delves into history to sketch a character and comments on the contemporaneous events to highlight the attitude of the people.

As has been said above, this character has grown in close contact with his grandmother whom he calls Tha'mma and Tridib, cousin of his father. These two

characters provide him with the opportunity to see for himself what is right and what is wrong. His grandmother thinks that Tridib is wasting time mixing with the loafers of the street corner *addas*, missing opportunities, and is a good-for-nothing fellow. Therefore she has instructed the narrator not to mix with Tridib. But the narrator makes his own observation to find that Tridib is a recluse, a scholar, doing Ph.D. in Archaeology, with knowledge of far-off places, having intense power of imagination, and can activate the imagination of others. Therefore he does not miss the opportunity of meeting Tridib whenever he gets one. Eventually Tridib becomes his mentor.

He has his grandmother who has old and out-dated ideas and attitude towards modern world. His grandmother thinks that a good man is one who worked hard for his livelihood, as she has done, gets married and leads a settled and comfortable life at home without concerning himself with the social or political problems. Therefore she condemns persons like Ila who is living frugally in England though she can have all the comforts at home. She fails to appreciate her aspirations. She thinks that one goes to the foreign countries only for money. She has asked the narrator not to have anything to do with such girls as Ila. But the narrator knows that Ila is a brave girl and a devoted wife. As the grandmother has lived an austere life of a Bengali widow, she does not approve of fashionable, modern life of Shaheb, her brother-in-law. The narrator takes opportunity to tell her that drinking, smoking and dressing in modern way is the necessity of the status and the job of Shaheb. His grandmother wants that people should live in their own way, according to the old code of conduct. His grandmother has distanced herself from other characters by her old notions of life and morality.

The Shadow Lines presents the universal truth that human society is divided into several sections and sub-section though human beings are the same in nature and emotions all over the world. Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs have shown exemplary unity time and again, but the fanatics have turned them into enemies. So is the case of nationalism. The Home planet has been divided by national boundaries drawn on a map, but the cultural unity cannot be divided by these shadowy lines. People in Bangladesh and Bengal have regard for Tagore and other Bengali heroes. They have the same language, same dresses and the same thought process.

Bangladesh was carved out of Bengal but this man-made division has not affected the cultural unity of the people. Bengalis are Bengalis in both the countries. Even religions cannot restrain people from being united, since love does not admit of any obstacles. The Chaudhurys and the Princes get united in the bonds of marriage in spite of their different religions. Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims evinced spirit of unity on several occasions. When Mu-i-Mubarak, a hair of Prophet Mohammad was brought to Kashmir and installed at the picturesque Hazratbal mosque, Kashmiris of all faiths and religions, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, marched in thousands from every part of Kashmir to get a glimpse of the relic. They would flock to Hazratbal on the occasions when the relic was displayed to the public. Over the years the shrine became a symbol of the unique and distinctive culture of Kashmir. Two hundred and sixty three years after it had been brought to Kashmir, the Mu-i-Mubarak disappeared from Kashmir. Thousands of people, including hundreds of waiting women, took out black flag demonstrations from Srinagar to Hazratbal mosque. There were incidents of rioting, but the targets of rioters were not people, but Government buildings. There was not one single recorded incident of animosity between Kashmiri Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs. They ascribe this to the leadership of Maulana Masoodi who persuaded the first demonstration to march with black flags instead of green and thereby drew the various communities of Kashmir together in a collective display of mourning when Mu-i-Mubarak was recovered; the city of Srinagar erupted with joy. It was an example of brotherhood which dwells naturally in the hearts of human beings all over the world.

The writer observes that the planet earth is one entity. It is divided into states and countries and regions by politicians (by creating shadow lines). Life goes peacefully and smoothly all over, except when a war breaks out. The narrator drew a circle with Khulna as the centre in Srinagar on the circumference, to discover that the map of South would not be big enough. He drew another circle which had Milan as its centre and 1200 miles as its radius. These circles revealed the truth that within this circle there were only states and citizens; there were no people at all. Thus the writer has proved historically and geographically that the world is a home of all the people.

Only politics and politicians have divided it into small water-tight compartments in which the humanity is being choked to death.

In The Shadow Lines the development and growth of Tha'mma's character encapsulates the futility and meaninglessness of political freedom which was otherwise supposed to usher in an era of peace and prosperity for all. During the days of her childhood and youth, she had her sympathies with all those who were fighting for the cause of freedom. In fact, she too wanted to earn small portion of the glory enjoyed by some of her classmate 'terrorists' by running secret errands for them or even cooking for them and washing their clothes. The aim was to be associated with such a group of persons, actively involved in fighting for a 'pious cause'. In response to a question by the narrator, "Do you really mean Tha'mma, that you would have killed him?"⁵. We are told thus:

She put her hands on my shoulders and holding me in front of her, looking directly at me, her eyes steady, forthright, unwavering.

'I would have been frightened....But I would have prayed for strength, and God willing, yes, I would have killed him. It was for our freedom I would have done anything to be free.'⁶

Her formative years have taught her the need, necessity and desirability of political freedom which is a sort of pre-requisite for economic, social, cultural and intellectual freedom and development. As Novy Kapadia points out, the theme of the novel encompasses all these experiences:

By exploring connections, distinctions and possibilities Amitav Ghosh shows that in a changing world, different strands of nationalist and ideology will exist and even compete. The force of nationalism in the quest for freedom or ideology is often a source of violence....So the 'shadow line' between people and nations is often

mere illusion. The force and appeal of nationalism cannot be wished away (so easily), just as death by a communal mob in the bye-lanes of old Dhaka.⁷

Dhaka has been Tha'mma's place of birth, but her nationality is Indian. As a young girl, she had thought of fighting for freedom in East Bengal. But those very same people for whom she had been willing to lay down her life are enemies now in 1964. Feelings of nationalism had after all motivated the fight against the British in Khulna. But in 1964, the group of Indians travelling in the embassy car is the enemies to be hunted down and killed.

However, Tha'mma disillusionment increases when she has to mention her birthplace on the passport-form during her visit to Dhaka. Home ought to be the place where one was born and brought up, sealed by an emotional bond, where one can claim one's right without a thought and without any hesitation. And if there was a basic confusion on this score-about the very roots of one's origin-an individual's identity would be in question. Leaving Dhaka during the Partition had obviously meant severing all roots and groping for a new kind of stability and identity. Therefore, years later, on her visit to Dhaka, she is distressed to write 'Dhaka' as her place of birth:

She liked things to be neat and in place-and at that moment she had not been able to quite understand how her place of birth had come to be so messily at odds with her nationality.⁸

Finally, the fact that "The border isn't on the frontier: its right inside the airport"⁹ puzzles Tha'mma all the more and she feels that her sacrifice has been in vain:

But if there aren't any trenches or anything, how are people to know? I mean, where's the difference then? And if there is no difference both sides will be the same; it'll be just like it used to be before, when we

used to catch a train in Dhaka and get off in Calcutta the next day without anybody stopping us. What was it all for then-partition and all the killing and everything-if there isn't something in between? ¹⁰

Tridib's death bewilders her further. She finds her idealism fast turning into helplessness as the anarchic tendencies within and without her gather force. There is obviously need for an order, a new order, but what kind of an order, remains an unanswered questions. Tha'mma lies in bed, weak and helpless. Even as she realizes that war, partition and violence are meaningless if they create no visible borders between two countries, she never accepts and understands Ila's desperate urge to settle in England. Her orientation may be apparently that of a 'war- mongering fascists' as Ila terms it, it is nevertheless a harsh truth or at least a harsh partial truth that marks the psyche of the modern nation-states. The likes of Tridib have to die. So that a comprehensive view of real freedom may find favour and flourish with the help of personal relationships. Ultimately, the responsibility of achieving and sustaining real freedom rests with every individual as it lies with every nation too within the larger framework.

In fact, The Shadow Lines questions prevailing precepts and ethics which man inherits blindly. The value of political zeal and social freedom is no longer stable, exclusive, permanent and immutable as The'mma and Ila had believed. The apparent stability which is offered by such ideas often proves to be illusory. With Tridib, however, the novel emphasizes the relevance and significance of human relationships. This alone can lead to an attainment of genuine freedom. Man is free to decide on a course of action which is found to affect a whole group of people, a nation and mankind. Every individual shares the responsibility of establishing a code of values which would ensure peace and solidarity for mankind. As the great French philosopher Sartre said:

Every one of our acts has at its stake the meaning of the world and place of man in the universe. Though each of

them, whether we wish it or not, we set up a scale of value which is universal.¹¹

It has to be remembered that freedom is not just the absence of external pressure; it is also the presence of something else. The struggle for freedom is not without its darker side. If the fight for political freedom aims at ensuring peace for a particular community, it may also arouse and mobilize diabolical forces in man-forces which one would have believed to be non-existent, or at least to have died out long ago. If social and moral freedom is unlimited, it may unleash the numerous problems of excess and the lack of restraint. Taking all this into account, the question that arises whether there is such a condition as complete freedom? Is freedom for the individual and for the society linked to and compatible with each other? And is absolute freedom a possibility for an individual, a community or for a nation? Should there be sufficient essential preparation, orientation and education of the individuals and of the society to enable them to digest their freedom, realize its full potential and cope with this freedom with dignity and rationality? Fortunately the novels Train to Pakistan and The Shadow Lines raise these significant questions in all their various dimensions and the narratives of the two obliquely explore and subtly answer these questions with the much needed flexibility of interpretation especially with reference to the pluralistic, multilingual, multicultural, multi-religious and multi-ethnic character of the vastly-spread society of India in its widespread regions and teeming with paradoxes and contradictions at several levels.

It is the story of three generations of the narrator's family spread over Dhaka, Calcutta and London. It lines up characters from different nationalities, religions and against the backdrop of the civil strife in post-partition East-Bengal and riot-hit Calcutta. The events revolve around Mayadebi's family, their friendship and sojourn with their English friends, the Prices and Tha'mma, the narrator's grandmother's links with her ancestral city, Dhaka. The riots in 1964 claimed the lives of Jethamshoi (father's elder brother) Khalil and Tridib. Jethamshoi's actual name is Shri Goshtobihari Bose and he worked as a lawyer in the Dhaka High Court. These deaths raise questions and pose a challenge to the concept of intercultural understanding and

friendship in contemporary society divided by arbitrary demarcations of national boundaries. Such boundaries are called the shadow lines by Amitav Ghosh.

Beginning in colonial times, the story is woven around two families, the Datta-Chaudhurys of Bengal and the Prices of London. The relationship between these two families spans three generations and involves several passages to and from India on both sides. As A.N.Kaul explains:

“Towards the end the story also crosses the newly created frontier between India and East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), engaging or acknowledging along the way the proximate presence of other foreign countries and continents through the Indian diplomatic and the UN postings of the Datta-Chaudhuris.”¹²

The narrative begins in the year 1939. This is an important year in the history of mankind and particularly in the West as it was the year, in which the Second World War commenced. The novel ends essentially in 1964 with the eruption of a cycle of violence in both India and Pakistan. Explaining the importance of these dates, A.N.Kaul says,

In 1939 Tridib, the narrator’s father’s cousin, then aged 8, is taken to England, and in 1964 he is murdered by a street mob near his mother’s original family home in Dhaka. His boyhood experiences in war-time London and his violent death twenty-five years later in Dhaka constitute the end points of the novel’s essential narrative.¹³

The novel has a large group of characters that are interconnected to each other either as friends or by family relationships. The narrator’s family consists of his grandmother, Mayadebi’s elder sister and his parents. Mayadebi and her diplomat husband have three sons, Jatin an economist with the UN, Tridib and Robi who later

joins the Indian Administrative Service (IAS). Jatin's daughter Ila is always travelling to various countries with her parents. In contrast the narrator's family is settled in Calcutta where his grandmother was a schoolmistress. The only member of Mayadebi's family who spent a long time in Calcutta was Tridib who lived in his ancestral house in Ballygunge that is in the vicinity of the narrator's house. Tridib is doing research for a doctorate in medieval archaeology.

The search for invisible links ranging across the realities of nationality, cultural segregation and racial discrimination is the central theme of The Shadow Lines. The author questions the validity of geographical boundaries and celebrates the union of aliens pulled together by self-propelling empathy and attachment. Tresawsen and Mayadebi, Tridib and May, Jethamshoi and Khalil transcend the prevailing passion of war, hatred and communal acrimony. The first section of the novel ends, with Ila realizing that she infatuates the narrator with her looks and body. The narrator's hopes are shattered when Ila says:

You were always the brother I never had. I'm sorry. If I'd known, I wouldn't have behaved like this. Really believe me.¹⁴

The narrator now knows that his days of secret admiration and hopes are over. Yet as he admits:

I knew she had taken my life hostage yet again; I knew that a part of my life as a human being had ceased: that I no longer existed, but as a chronicle.¹⁵

In the second section of the novel, Ghosh returns to the Indian subcontinent, to Calcutta and Dhaka. In this section, the narrator as chronicler tries to understand the various meanings of political freedom. Nationalism and political freedom acquired different shades of meaning after Independence and Partition. Earlier Indian nationalism was a weapon utilized by the freedom fighters in their struggle against

foreign rulers. However, this struggle could not even ensure the territorial integrity of India. Partition was viewed as the price for political freedom from British colonial rule. After Partition, nationalism in the Indian context changed its meaning to exclude people on the other side of the border, both in East and West Pakistan. So different view points of Partition, nationalism and political freedom emerge in this section.

In Indian English fiction, the division of Bengal and suffering caused by Partition is first highlighted by Amitav Ghosh in The Shadow Lines. It is mainly portrayed through the grandmother Tha'mma's story.

The second part of the novel entitled as "Coming Home" starts with the retirement of the grandmother as headmistress near Deshapriya Park. She had taught in this school for twenty-seven years and had worked as headmistress for six years. The year of the retirement is 1962, when the narrator is ten years old. After a description of the touching farewell ceremony, the rest of the opening chapter of the second section shows the grandmother readjusting to a life of retirement. It is noticed that with age she has become nostalgic of the past. It is an eventful year for the narrator's family. His father is promoted to become General Manager of his firm and the family moves from Gole Park to a house on Southern Avenue, opposite the Lake. Staying in this new house makes the grandmother reminisce about her ancestral home in Dhaka:

It was very odd house. It had evolved slowly, growing lime a honeycomb, with the very generation of Boses adding layers and extensions, until it was like a huge, lop-sided step-pyramid, inhabited by so many branches of the family that even the most knowledgeable amongst them had become a little confused about their relationships.¹⁶

She impresses the narrator with stories about her ancestral home and early life. She narrates the numerous anecdotes, such as the time when her husband caught a chill while "supervising the construction of a culvert somewhere in the Arakan

Hills.¹⁷ The chill led to pneumonia and his untimely death. The grandmother was just thirty two year old then. In order to become independent, she opts to be a teacher and gets a job in a school in Calcutta. Her life changes:

She had no time to go back to Dhaka in the next few years. And then in 1947, came partition, and Dhaka became the capital of East Pakistan. There was no question of going back after that. She had never had any news of Jethamshoi and her aunt again.¹⁸

Amitav Ghosh presents the grandmother's early life as a story told by her to the narrator. Born in 1902 in Dhaka, she grew up as a member of "a big joint family with everyone living and eating together."¹⁹ But when her father died, the ancestral home was partitioned because of a family strife. Whilst at college for her B.A. in history in Dhaka, she became familiar with the terrorist movement amongst nationalist in Bengal. She tells the narrator "about secret terrorist societies like Anushilan and Jugantar and all their off shoots, their clandestine networks, and the home made bombs with which they tried to assassinate British officials and policemen."²⁰

Now the story teller's grandmother who was born and brought up in Dhaka came to Calcutta, many years before the Partition of Bengal into East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and West Bengal which is part on India. So she did not undergo the trauma and physical loss of being uprooted from a place of birth during the turbulent days of Partition. The author shows that people like the grandmother, even though she did not suffer materially, the emotional wound had the big impact. When seventeen years after Partition, the grandmother was going to visit her sister Mayadebi at Dhaka, she realizes when filling the disembarkation card that "her place of birth had come to be so messily at odds with her nationality".²¹ This dichotomy in the situation upsets the grandmother and the author shows that it is bewilderment shared by many people. Emotionally they could hardly accept the Radcliffe line and in their own minds wondered like the grandmother "whether they would be able to see the border between India and East Pakistan from the plane."²² When told otherwise, they were

more confused and like the grandmother would wonder, “What was it all for then- partition and all the killings and everything- if there isn’t something in between?”²³

Amitav Ghosh also realizes this query in this novel. As a liberal humanist, he tries to understand the human loss caused by drawing a line on the map right through the home land. People suffered intentionally due to the Partition of the country. This novel examines the impact of Partition in Bengal. It shows the numerous Hindu families had to leave their ancestral home land in erstwhile East Pakistan and settle in the suburbs of Calcutta. The fate of Muslim refugees as exemplified by the mechanic Saifuddin is similar. Many Muslim families were also uprooted from Bihar, Bengal and Assam and had to migrate to the cities of the eastern wing of newly formed Pakistan. The novel cleverly shows that people of the grandmother’s generation were often bewildered about how places of birth had become at odds with their nationality. The dichotomy in the situation gave rise to confusion and bewilderment in the minds of people long after Partition became a part of the history of the subcontinent.

The Radcliffe line refers to the division of both Punjab and Bengal by Sir Cyril Radcliffe, a London based barrister. The burden of carrying out the most complex task involve in India’s Partition was given to Sir Cyril Radcliffe in June 1947. As Nehru and Jinnah could not agree on a line, the task of a boundary commission was placed in the hands of a distinguished English barrister. Radcliffe was chosen for his admirable legal reputation and for his ignorance of India. Any-one who knew the country was certain to be disqualified as prejudiced by one side or the other. Radcliffe had two choices. Either he followed population as his sole guide, creating a host of unmanageable enclaves or he followed the dictates of geography and a more manageable boundary. He opted for the latter cause of action and thus the Partition of India was the pencil line drawn on a map-the shadow lines. Radcliffe had barely a month to make his decision based on maps, population tables and statistics to guide him. His hasty act of Partition of the country, especially in the villages of Bengal and Punjab condemned numerous people to live as minorities within a hostile majority. Ghosh examines in his novel the subsequent psychological problems which such an arbitrary division caused. There was crude, barbarity and demonstration of the noblest sentiments on both sides of the border. What did political freedom mean to

such people? This is the question that the author probes whilst presenting the grandmother's story of her life.

An important reason for the grandmother to visit Dhaka was her desire to see her old house. As is shown in several instances in this novel, the grandmother's vision of her ancestral home is very nostalgic. She is also motivated to visit Dhaka to bring her uncle Jethamshoi back to India. During the few days she spends in her sister's house in Dhaka, she is restless. Soon accompanied by Mayadebi, Tridip, May Price and Roby, she sets out in Mercedes car with the driver and a security guard of the high commission. The car has to stop at a particular point in the by-lands of Dhaka and they walked to the old house. The house has changed. There is an automobile workshop in what was the luxuriant garden of the house. It is no more a magnificent edifice but is crumbling and inhabited by a large number of people. Their uncle Jethamshoi is now called Vakilbabu. He is weakened and is looked after by Khalil, a cycle rickshaw driver in his family. The old uncle fails to recognize them and speaks ill for his relatives when they are mentioned. Above all he refuses to move to India. His mind is rambling, his memory has faded with age but his pertinent rejoinder when asked to move to India raises several important questions on the nature of political freedom.

Delving into the past, he tells the story teller's grandmother, "once you start moving you never stop."²⁴ He justifies his belief by stating that freedom is a concept created in the mind. He recalls what he told his sons when they took the trains to India, during the year of Partition:

I don't believe in this India-Shindia. It's all very well. You're going away now but suppose when you get there they decide to draw another line somewhere? What will you do then? Where will you move to? No one will have you anywhere. As for me, I was born here, and I'll die here.²⁵

Amitav Ghosh here shows that there is a 'shadow line' between sanity and dotage, imagination and facts, the whole ideology of nationalism which creates boundaries and causes separation. He also raises pertinent questions on the concept of freedom. The old Jethamshoi seems more secure and mentally at peace with himself in his ancestral home than the narrator's grandmother who has confused loyalties by befriending the Muslims in his area and even giving them a place to stay in his huge mansion, the man seems secure and content. By this idea of inclusion rather than exclusion, the old man achieves a form of communal harmony and peace of mind that is denied to others of his generation like grandmother. Khalil's family cooks for him and takes care of him. In old age he has found a 'family' to look after him.

Critics have often pondered why Amitav Ghosh condemned man made boundaries and frontiers. Some suggests that may be the author is advocating larger culture collectivity as is shown in the life style of old uncle. This is a very important section of the novel, as it puts fourth various views on nationalism, history and freedom and undercuts the prevailing concepts. No wonder eminent playwright Girish Karnad made the following observation:

The grandmother's visit to the ancestral home is surely one of the most memorable scenes in Indian fiction. Past and future meet across religious, political and cultural barriers in a confusion of emotion, ideals, intensions and acts, leading to a shattering climax.

The climax occurs as the grandmother and Mayadebi are returning in their Mercedes from their ancestral home. Jethamshoi is following them in Khalil's rickshaw. When they approach the bazaar area they find the shop closed and the road deserted except for a few stragglers. The mob encircles the car, breaks the wind screen and the driver gets cut on his face. The car lurches and comes to a halt with its front wheel in the gutter. Then, the security man jumps out and fires a shot from his revolver and the crowd begins to withdraw. After this incident, the attention of crowd is distracted by the creak of Khalil's rickshaw with Jethamshoi in it. The frenzied mob surrounds the rickshaw. The sisters could have driven away but May Price and Tridip jump out of the car and try to save Khalil and the old uncle. They get lost in the

whirling mob. The mob hacks to death Khalil, the old man and Tridib. Recalling the gruesome deaths, May Price tells the narrator years later,

When I got there, I saw three bodies. They were all dead. They'd cut Khalil's stomach open. The old man's head had been hacked off and they'd cut Tridip's throat from ear to ear.²⁶

The horror of the act is branded for ever in the memories of Robi and May Price who witness the whole catastrophe from close range.

As in Greek tragedies, the violence comes in a terrible manner as it is conveyed through choric characters like Robi, May Price and the narrator who is Amitav Ghosh's alter ego. The violence is also dramatized. Even after fifteen years, Robi trembles "like a leaf"²⁷ when he recalls Tridib's death. The death is a fear that haunts him in his nightmares. In his adult consciousness, Tridib's death signified the futility of freedom. In a dispassionate and analytical manner he relates his plight with that of many others in the subcontinent.

Robi realizes that the concept of freedom is a mirage. After Independence and Partition, many idealists believed that the religious communalism would sink into oblivion. But the euphoria evaporated, as nobody seemed to realize the meaning of freedom. Intolerance mushroomed in the name of freedom and this led to killings in Assam, the North-East, Punjab, Sri Lanka and Tripura, all in the name of freedom. Recalling such feelings in front of a derelict church at Clapham in London, Robi says:

And then I think to myself why don't they draw thousands of little lines through the whole subcontinent and give every little place a new name? What would it change? It's mirage, the whole thing is a mirage, the whole thing is a mirage.²⁸

In contrast, Tridib's death in the 1964 riots arouses animosity and anger in the grandmother. This personal loss transforms the meaning of border for the grandmother. Previously it was just a confused line, now it is something that defines her nationality. When the 1965 war between India and Pakistan breaks out she views it as a threat to the freedom of her grandson and the future of the nation. The meaning of freedom for her is not a mirage but includes fighting against the Pakistanis who barely twenty years ago were her own countrymen.

The novelist sets up connections between the violence in East Pakistan in 1964 and the violence of the Second World War. He vividly evokes the death and destruction of war-torn London in the first section of the novel. However this violence is shown as a conflict against an alien power. However the communal riots in the subcontinent described in second section of the novel are seen as a defiance of artificially created national boundaries. The nationalism of people like the grandmother causes the breaking up of a larger cultural continuity.

The novel upholds the imperatives that ensure empathy and unimpeded flow of friendship. It mocks the conception of militant nationalism, exclusive national pride and identity. The outbreak of communal strife in Dhaka following the disappearance of the prophet's hair in Srinagar exposes the fragile demarcation of political frontiers. Tha'mma's ideals of nationalism, nurtured since the Swadeshi movement do not stand the test of time. The author shows that her misplaced sense of pride and drawing national borders with blood is likely to be undone by the inherent logic of separateness. Ultimately the message of the novel is the need for co-existence and humanitarian ties despite cultural and political differences. The narrator with his expanded horizons and imaginative understanding of the world, stresses on the need to preserve memories of sanity and humane feelings for this will help in cultural self-determination and inter-personal communication. According to the author the media and public memory must keep alive the "indivisible sanity" of communities to prevent a recurrence of insane frenzy. G.R.Taneja aptly says that the novel is:

...an eloquent critique of colonial hangover and cultural dislocation on a postcolonial situation as also the

psychological make up of the contemporary man who thrives on violence.²⁹

The Shadow Lines attempts to highlight the fact that human race is divided by shadow lines drawn by persons of narrow outlook. The considerations of country, class, race, religion, et al have put the people in fetters, but fortunately human race continues its strife for freedom. The story of The Shadow Lines is an effort in the direction of making people free of all baneful customs and beliefs which have divided the human race.

In conclusion, it can be said that the Partition of the Indian subcontinent was the single most traumatic experience in our recent history. The violence it unleashed by the hooligan actions of a few fanatics, the vengeance that the ordinary Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs wreaked on each other worsened our social sense, distorted our political judgments and deranged our understanding of moral righteousness.

The real sorrow of the Partition, however, as portrayed in the novels under study, was that it brought to an abrupt end a long and communally shared history and cultural heritage. The relations between the Hindus and the Muslims were not, of course, always free from suspicions, distrust or the angry rejection by one group of the habits and practices of the other; but such moments of active malevolence and communal frenzy were a rare and transient exception to the common bonds of mutual goodwill and warm feelings of close brotherhood. Even if there were some disruptions on some rare occasions, the rich heterogeneity of the life of the two communities was never seriously threatened. The Hindus never ceased from paying homage at dargahs; the Muslims continued to participate in Hindu festivals, and traders of both the communities continued their usual exchange of goods and services in the bazaars, etc. Indeed, one can assert with confidence that the dominant concerns of the Hindu and Muslim intellectuals throughout the nineteenth century and till about 1935, were more with creating free spaces for enlightened thought than with confining people within their narrow religious identities. Organizations which nurtured violent hatred towards each other and incited communal passions did exist, but at the very margins of the solidly and healthily functioning social and cultural

order. It is the thoughtless decision of partition and hollow love of 'nationalism' that let the mischief off and out.

Thus, in The Shadow Lines, Amitav Ghosh has very artistically given expression through plot, characters and narrative technique to his perspective of futility of borders and how they fail to affect basic human values of love and brotherhood which are imbibed in sensibility of writers as well as common man due to our ancient culture of unity in diversity. Though the novel deals with multiple themes, the thoughts of partition dominate the memories of Tha'mma in the last section of this great novel of Amitav Ghosh.

The novelist has comprehensive vision of internationalism, but he attempts to prove it by proving meaninglessness of borders between nations. He just does not confine his discussion to physical borders but he extends it to mental borders and religious and racial lines. The narrow outlook of politicians creates borders that are not acceptable to common humanity that is the conclusive opinion of the novelist Amitav Ghosh. This can be rightly regarded as the Indian version of partition rendered by Amitav Ghosh in The Shadow Lines.

It would be appropriate to make a comparative and analytical study of theme of partition and freedom in Khushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan and Amitav Ghosh's The Shadow Lines. In Train to Pakistan, Khushwant Singh brings to the centre stage the fact of the partition of the Punjab while Amitav Ghosh adopts wider universal approach to the theme of borders as the shadow lines. But both of them shared the identical concern in their novels.

As the plot of Khushwant Singh's novel Train to Pakistan progresses towards its concluding part, one of the main characters viz. Hukum Chand, the magistrate of Chundunnuger, is a disillusioned man as he feels the sting of his helplessness to do much to stop the communal violence that erupted in the wake of the Partition of the country. Such helplessness is felt in a different way by Tha'mma at the end of the novel when she arrives at the airport of Dhaka.

Political freedom had been achieved apparently through ‘non-violent’ means but Hindu-Muslim riots had erupted in several parts of India and also in the newly created Pakistan. Hukum Chand’s words of self introspective rumination quietly proclaim the futility of this political freedom without proper orientation of the people:

What were the people in Delhi doing? Making fine speeches in the assembly! Loudspeakers magnifying their egos; lovely looking foreign women in the visitors’ galleries in breathless admiration: ‘He is great man, this Mr. Nehru of yours. I do think he is the greatest man in the world today, And how handsome! Wasn’t that a wonderful thing to say? ‘Long ago we made tryst with destiny and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure but very substantially.’ Yes, Mr. Prime Minister, you made your tryst. So did many others.”³⁰

The two novels, Khushwant Singh’s Train to Pakistan and Amitav Ghosh’s The Shadow Lines attempt to grapple “inter alia” with this question of ‘the tryst of others’ i.e. ‘the tryst of the common people’ caught between the greed of self-seeking politicians, fanatic religious leaders and their cohorts, power wielding corrupt bureaucrats and anti-social elements always looking for opportunities to exploit any situation to their own advantage; and unseemly haste with which the labour government in Britain decided to transfer power and to divide the country into two new nations.

The subsequent hasty implementation of their plan without much foresight, farsightedness and the much-needed preparedness at several levels, led to unprecedented holocaust of communal frenzy. Before the people could realize the political and social implications of the partition, they were swept off their feet by a wave of violence that swiftly became a tide. Hundreds of people were killed, raped and butchers on either side of newly created two nations. For those who survived the catastrophe, the experience was so traumatic that their memories of those grief-

stricken days haunted them for years to come. For millions of people, the independence of the country brought terrible but avoidable suffering and humiliation, a loss of human dignity and frustrating sense of being uprooted. This is not what they had aspired for in the name of freedom-the partition was a dirty trick.

In The Shadow Lines the development and growth of Tha'mma's character encapsulates the futility and meaninglessness of political freedom that was otherwise supposed to usher in an era of peace and prosperity for all. During the days of her childhood and youth, she had her sympathies with all those who were fighting for the cause of freedom. In fact, she too wanted to earn small portion of glory enjoyed by some of her classmate 'terrorists' by running secret errands for them or even cooking for them and washing their clothes. The aim was to be associated with such group fighting for 'pious cause'. But Ghosh does not forget to point out that such thinking was source of violence and partition that created borders or the shadow lines. So they –shadow lines- between the people and nations are often mere illusions.

This is what people feel after recent terrible earthquake that devastated entire valley in 2005.

Tha'mma's disillusionment increases when she has to mention her birth place on her passport-form during her visit to Dhaka. Her birth place becomes an odd with her nationality then fact comes "the border isn't on the frontier; it is right inside the airport.

Thus the common concern of Singh and Ghosh is the reflection of Indian value and feeling of common man and sensitive writers that partition was a game that was unwanted element for the common man. Khushwant Singh made the following comments which seem to be very pertinent even several decades after the unfortunate tragedy of Partition took place.

Should the partition be forgotten? Has it any relevance to us today? My answer to both the questions is an emphatic yes. We must not forget the partition because it is relevant today. We must remember that it did in

fact happen and can happen again. That is why I keep reminding people who clamour for an independent Kashmir, Khalistan or Nagaland to remember what happened to Muslims when some of them asked for a separate Muslim state. I keep telling my fellow Sikhs that the worst enemies of Khalsa Panth are Khalistanis, and of the Nagas those who ask for an independent Nagaland. Reminding ourselves of what happened in 1947 and realizing the possibilities of its recurring, we should resolve that we will never let it happen again.³¹

Thus Amitav Ghosh presents very liberal and scholarly intellectual Bengali version of Partition with a touch of internationalism.

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Chapter-7

Conclusion

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The detailed study of various versions of Partition rendered in Khushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan, Attia Hosain's Sunlight on a Broken Column, Manju Kapur's Difficult Daughters, Manohar Malgonkar's A Bend in the Ganges, Chaman Nahal's Azadi and Amitav Ghosh's The Shadow Lines provides ample and apparent proof that the common concern of highly sensitive writers, who had the first hand experience of the Partition of this subcontinent inspired them to give powerful expression in the above mentioned fictional works. The study in the six preceding chapters reveals some similarities, dissimilarities and individuality of the writers. The thematic preoccupation of all the writers is identical but the versions are so unique and different that display the genius of the authors selected for the study. Though they deal with the one and the same event of the Partition, they have adopted different perspectives.

All these novelists depict inhuman cruelty, brutality and holocaust witnessed during Partition in their fictional discourse. They also depict the agony and the plight of dislocated people who had been the victims of the larger religious and political game. There is almost identical concern about the organized and random violence that occurred during the freedom struggle and the aftermath of Partition. Khushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan is confined to one Punjabi village Mano Majra where this tragedy occurred while Amitav Ghosh refers to wider impact of communal riots that encompass entire subcontinent including cities like Karachi, Calcutta and Dhaka. Similarly Manju Kapur's Difficult Daughters vividly presents the communal bloodshed occurred in Amritsar, Lahore and Calcutta. Thus all these writers discussing the issue of Partition have different geographical locations as far as the setting of their novels is concerned. But all the writers unanimously condemned basically violence and holocaust caused by dirty political game. Their description of traumatic experiences of all characters is heart-rending, very touching and realistic that inspired maga TV serials like Buniad and Humlog and film like Train to Pakistan, 1947-The Earth. etc.

These writers belong to India and are from families directly affected by Partition. They have witnessed inhuman brutality and violence occurred during the period before Partition, during Partition and after Partition. Their fictional works selected for the present study brings out vivid effects of Partition, but their treatment of theme and choice of characters, setting and style differ so basically that their versions of Partition can easily be categorized. The novel selected for the study can be regarded as historical novels deal with political events but Khushwant Singh's novel Train to Pakistan mainly deals with Muslim and Sikh relationship cultivated for centuries in a small village of Punjab. Hence his interpretation can be considered as Punjabi or Sikh version of Partition. But his message is obviously universal that it is a warning to the people of the subcontinent that repetition of such event would prove highly destructive and devastating. In fact all these writers emphasize that some specific human values are to be maintained at any cost. If human values are not maintained; communal disharmony springs up from everywhere, it is beyond doubt that one's life becomes almost meaningless.

Attia Hosain's Sunlight on a Broken Column and Manju Kapur's Difficult Daughters are novels written by two sensitive women writers. Hosain presents agony of divided Muslim families on account of Partition. She also refers to the cultural loss suffered by the Muslims. Her views express Muslim psyche with feminine colour. Hence her approach can be called Muslim version of Partition from the rich Muslim feudal class point of view. It is also story of divided family. Even today the impact of Partition has been experienced by the Muslims of entire subcontinent as they have divided families in three countries-India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Manju Kapur's Difficult Daughters presents the story of three generations represented by Kasturi, Virmati and Ida. The story is based on the background of Partition. Right from the first chapter to the last page there has been a strong undercurrent of the politics of the Partition of the Indian subcontinent. The daughters as well as all other characters fight unitedly against the British. All communities come together for the fight. But when the independence comes the family disintegrated and they are found in their separate camps and the final result is the Partition of the subcontinent. This novel It deals with the suffering and struggle for Independence of women like Virmati and Ida. But there is parallel story of India's struggle for freedom and pangs of Partition. The story of

Virmati is the story of India also. It is out right feminist version of Partition of the subcontinent.

Manohar Malgonkar's A Bend in the Ganges deals with the relevance of basic Gandhian principles of non-violence. Thus his version can be called idealistic Gandhian version of Partition. The theme of the novel is made clear in the epigraph that shows Gandhiji's worry about the prospect of violence which would be unleashed in the wake of freedom that followed the Partition of India. Through the background of Partition, Malgonkar has narrated the story of Debi Dayal, Mumtaz, Gyan Talwar and Sundari. The political background of non-violent movement led by Gandhiji and the terrorist movement were in full swing at that time. This contradiction is the base of entire novel and Manohar Malgonkar is keen to point out that it is not the failure of Gandhiji's non-violent movement that caused Partition but there are several other factors like political ambition of all leaders and their deliberate negligence of Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence which contributed to the Partition of the country. The Partition is dominant theme of his great novel which is a bold experiment in artistic blending of personal and political perspectives. That makes a quite different type of version of Partition which reminds us of Malgonkar's objectivity in the treatment of complex themes of non-violence and Partition gives a Gandhian touch to the version.

Chaman Nahal's Azadi presents Partition in the light of Gandhian philosophy of non-violence. It seems to be different from all the other Partition novels as it makes an effort to encompass all the evils that Partition brought forth. It does not terminate with the minorities fleeing to India. Perhaps the novelist seeks to continue the plot in India in order to catch the ominous effects of the aftermath on the lives of a few individuals in particular. Unlike the other novels, Azadi probes into the motives of national leaders succumbing to Partition under pressure. It scrutinizes, in detail, the causes of Partition and the subsequent tragedy. To crown it all, it makes a very fine study of the psychological change effected by Partition in the lives of Lala Kanshi Ram and others. In a detached manner the novelist shows the accountability of the Hindus in India who were as much guilty as the Muslims on the other side of the

border. The novel seems to be very significant because here Nahal's vision is very expansive which enables his protagonist to cease hating his counterparts in Pakistan.

The evil, the futility and the stupidity of hatred are shown by the whirring of Sunanda's machine, a symbol of creative action and unfailing hope. She suffered a lot. She was brutally raped and lost her husband in the riots in Pakistan; she was made poor. Despite all these pains, it is she who makes a final gesture of endurance in the novel. She is no longer a passive victim but she can stitch out her own destiny. Love and creative action as shown in the lives of Lala Kanshi Ram and Sunanda respectively are the supreme values which presents the moving drama of violence and malevolence. Without love collective action is merely compulsion, breeding antagonism and fear, from which arise private and social conflicts. Through self knowledge alone is there freedom from bondage, and this freedom is devoid of all belief, all ideologies. This is Chaman Nahal's comprehensive version of Partition that makes Azadi an unrivalled novel.

Amitav Ghosh's The Shadow Lines deals with larger issues of national and international borders. So his version has very comprehensive and cosmopolitan touch. His characters move from Bangladesh to India and hence like other Bengali writers, his approach is very universal and international. He rightly considers border as a shadow line or an illusion. In his view, border lines never solve the problems of human beings. Some of the characters of Amitav Ghosh express this view quiet significantly.

The novelists under discussion have been very careful and conscious about selection of appropriate titles for their fictional works. Khushwant Singh has aptly chosen the title Train to Pakistan that reveals Jugga's self-sacrifice to allow the train carrying Muslims including his beloved Nooran to Pakistan. It refers to the theme and characters and the chief event of the novel. Similarly Sunlight on a Broken Column that refers to the divided family and divided country that has turned into a ruin but sunlight is suggestive of hope and new aspiration and light after darkness. Similarly, the title of Manju Kapur's novel Difficult Daughters is related to the three main female characters-Kasturi, Virmati and Ida whose lives are identical with the struggle

suffering, independence and Partition of India. Manohar Malgonkar selection of the title A Bend in the Ganges refers to the theme of exile in the title itself. The novel takes its title from a quotation from the Ramayana used as epigraph: “At a bend in the Ganges, they paused to take a look at the land they were leaving behind”. The title refers to the scene of Ram, Laxman and Sita taking a last glance at the outskirts of Ayodhya at a bend in the Ganges. Though the novel deals with many other themes like revenge, a dispute over violence and non-violence theory, marriage, relationships and the out come of Partition at length, the title however is devoted to the agony of being uprooted that is revealed through a character, Tekchand. Similarly Manohar Malgonkar considers Partition a turning point in history of India and imparts epic dimension to the theme and title of the novel. Chaman Nihala’s title Azadi is self-explanatory as it directly suggests the freedom of India from the British rule followed by the pangs of Partition. We got “Azadi” at the cost of vivisection of the great country with rich past. Amitav Ghosh’s The Shadow Lines is very ironical, satirical and highly appropriate title. Ghosh does not accept borders dividing nations and people but he calls them mere lines on map which are illusionary. He scoffs at national leaders who had believed that problems could be solved by drawing lines across the land. Both Bengal are historically, culturally and geographically one and a division was not a solution to the traditional Hindu-Muslim animosity.

All the writers share some similarities in portrayal of characters. For instance, the major characters of these novels come mainly from Hindu-Muslim-Sikh communities. There are also British characters The major and minor characters are directly involved in agony and plight of Partition. Jugga-a Sikh lover and his Muslim beloved Nooran are victims of communal hatred In Train To Pakistan. The minor characters like Hukum Chand give expression to the futility of Partition. Khushwant Singh’s characters are the villagers. They belong mainly to two communities- Sikhs and Muslims, the only Hindus being Lala Ram Lal, the moneylender who is murdered by the beginning of the novel, and Hukum Chand, the magistrate and deputy commissioner. Dealing with a limited number of characters, Khushwant Singh takes care to integrate them with their background which he knows very well.

The range of characters in Sunlight on a Broken Column and Difficult Daughters is confined to families of Laila and Virmati. Though the two novels depict female characters with profound understanding, the characters of Laila and Ida are focal point. Both are the narrator of the stories of the novels. Malgonkar's characters, though they are drawn from all walks of life, are 'conventional.' They are Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Englishmen, Japanese and the Gurkhas. They hardly leave any impression because they are not individuals. They are made to change their point of view and attitudes to suit the exigencies of the melodrama just as the scenes of sex and violence are introduced to compel the readers' attention, rather than to develop his convictions. One such example is Gian, the disciple of Mahatma Gandhi and 'the noblest creed of non-violence', who kills Vishnudutt and is sentenced for life. This character remains sketchy and confused till the end. His actions lack motivation. Others like Mumtaz, Mulligan, Bak, Shafi Usman, Hafeez Khan, Gopal Chandidar, Malini, Tekchand and Balbahadur merely conform to certain types.

The authors and their novels selected for the dissertation are Indians and their works are written and published after Partition. They are well conversant with milieu of India before and after Partition. Their grassroots are found in families affected by Partition. So their rendering of situation is highly appealing and profoundly moving. They react to historical phenomena of Partition alike while their individuality gives their novels a unique touch. The subject of Partition is commonly shared by them. Such theme has its own demands from the novelists and at the same time each novelist feels free to give expression to his own views on the event from a different perspective. Therefore we have various versions of Partition.

The title Train to Pakistan is suggestive of the plight of Muslims who are migrating to Pakistan by train as a result of Partition. But the human concern of Khushwant Singh is very obvious. It raises him successfully above the narrow levels of politics and religion at the same time he exposes the evils of Partition as well. So the novel can be categorized as Punjabi version that finally reaches to the greater height of Indian version. Manohar Malgonkar's novel A Bend in the Ganges also manifests its prime concern with the theme of exile or migration in the title itself. Taken from *The Ramayana*, the title refers to the scene of Ram, Laxman and Sita

taking a last glance at the outskirts of Ayodhya at a bend in the Ganges. Though Malgonkar deals with multiple themes like revenge, a dispute over violence and non-violence theme, marriage relationship, and the outcomes of Partition, the title however is devoted to the agony of being uprooted that is revealed through the character of Tekchand. The Kherwad family belongs to rich upper middle class taking part in freedom struggle that resulted into freedom as well as the Partition of the country. The novelist depicts two symbolic characters to narrate the story of suffering of people affected by Partition.

Manohar Malgoankar is concerned mainly with the basic Gandhian values of non-violence as means of solving all human problems including huge divide between two religions. He attempts to depict fundamental Indian value of 'ahimsa' as the final solution to the problem of hatred. The novel narrates horrors of Partition in its barest nature yet he endeavours to prove that Gandhian value of non-violence is the right weapon to solve our problems. The novel A Bend in the Ganges can be appropriately considered as Malgoankar's Indian version of the partition.

Our analysis of the themes, characterization, dialogue and plot of the novel concentrates upon the painful drama of the Partition comprehensively and suggestively. It shows convincingly how the 'terrorist movement'-a symbol of national solidarity-designed to oust the British from the Indian soil, degenerated into communal hatred and violence, and how the emphasis from the struggle between Indian nationalism and British colonialism shifted unfortunately to the furious and malicious communal hatred between the Hindus and the Muslims, throwing into shade the basic Indian fight for freedom from the British rule. The double conflict that led to dual impacts of freedom and the division of the country, but before it happened, a hell was let loose in many provinces of the nation.

The novels depict powerfully the horrible developments resulting in the Partition, the triumph and tragedy of the hour of freedom, the screams of the victims rent the morning air, the dawn of freedom greeting the sub-continent in the pools of blood, the barbarous cruelties heaped on men and women, catcalls of the crowd and innumerable women being carried away naked, struggling and screaming at the top of

their voice. The Muslims fear of being ruled by the Hindus in the absence of the British rule in the country where they had been the rulers, their notion that the Hindus were more dangerous than the foreigners and ought to be their real target and their subsequent striding at them, their struggle for a sage homeland separate from India leading to the Partition, and the terror and pity of it.

Amitav Ghosh has imparted at great length his perspective of the Partition in the third section of his great novel The Shadow Lines. The novel depicts multiple themes of Internationalism, nationalism, violence, love, marriage, human relationship, racial and communal hatred, communal riots and the Partition. He deals with great care the reaction of Tha'mma to the Partition in the last phase of his novel. He attempts to prove meaninglessness of all kinds of borders, boundaries and lines dividing human race on levels of race, religion, nation, color and country. The artistic genius of Ghosh is exhibited profusely in his design of plot, themes, characterization and narrative technique of The Shadow Lines.

Tha'mma's character, her visit to Dhaka, the communal riot, the murder of Tridib and the memories of the Partition are skillfully and artistically employed to expose the futility of boundaries created artificially by the Partition of the country. Hatred between the Hindus and the Muslims is meaningless when she finds that a very common rickshaw driver had been looking after her brother-in-law in Dhaka after Partition. Religious and communal hatred were fanned by the narrow-mindedness of politicians. Tha'mma feels that her nationalism is of no importance to her when she finds that though she was born in Dhaka, it had become a foreign capital for her in her Indian passport. Ghosh has adopted the narrative technique that erases even the border lines of memories which are just the shadow lines.

All the novelists make it very clear that people belonging to the subcontinent were painfully conscious of their superfluous differences. They are completely oblivious to the act that they had common ancestors, history and heritage.

All versions given by the novelists under study convey that history has a moral. One of the major refrains in the novel is that in spite of the creation of the two

nations a bond of oneness can clearly be discerned among the divided. Differences are always there whether religious, regional or others. It is wrong to make barriers out of them. Rather bridges have to be built as all hailed from the same stock. An optimistic note of prevalence of healthy human relations is sounded through episodes of love, compassion and friendship despite the chaotic conditions of violence, bloodshed and deterioration of human values.

The human dimension of the division of the subcontinent is well represented in the six novels analyzed for the dissertation. The study sincerely attempts to bring out the totality of the experience often missed by the historian. The all the writers of Partition novels show us that in spite of the creation of two nation and after 1971 a third nation (Bangladesh), there is a bond of oneness among the divided, and a kind of nostalgia for the undivided past.

All the writers reaffirm their faith in humanistic values and deplore the communal and divisive politics. For instance even in Azadi when the protagonist Lala Kanshi Ram of Sialkot has to leave his home with his family, his friend Barkat Ali and his son go to bid them good bye in the refugee camp.

All writers under discussion have rightly emphasized the significance of communal harmony, common cultural heritage, peace and prosperity. They also lament the increasing threat to harmony. They rightly believe that communal unity in the Indian subcontinent will herald a new era of peace. They also believe that the loss of communal harmony is something that can never be compensated. Their fictional discourse makes it quite clear that no nation can make progress until and unless it has a very sound communal harmony among its citizens irrespective of their different caste, creed and colour. In fact Partition of India has divided the Muslims more than the Hindus and the other communities. Even today the Muslims are scattered in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The leaders advocating for Partition had very high ambitions for the prosperity that Partition would avail them, but it has never been fulfilled. By making use of history in their fictional creations, the writers selected for the study have not only narrated untold his/stories but have provided their versions of different events by re-narrating them in their works. By doing so with much success,

these writers have given a purposeful direction and vitality to Indian English novels. Through this process, these writers serve as a bridge between Indian literature and world literature with their fictional contribution.

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