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Violence and History in South Asian Partition Literature

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VIOLENCE AND HISTORY IN SOUTH ASIAN PARTITION LITERATURE

By

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In this dissertation I examine literary texts of Saadat Hasan Manto, Khushwant Singh, Chaman Nahal, Bhisham Sahni, Bapsi Sidhwa, and Amitav Ghosh in order to explore the historical sense of South Asian Partition writing that exhibits less and less the pain of diaspora, and opens up more and more to a cosmopolitan mode of living. I argue that in a first phase of response to Partition, writers concentrated on the depiction of overwhelming violence; in the next phase, they gave space to reconstruction as well as loss; and in the third phase, represented here by Ghosh, they have concentrated on cosmopolitan modes of diasporic existence and tried to bridge the boundaries of national, cultural, and religious differences.

In the fictional works of these writers, I examine the treatment of violence, attitude toward history, use of literary form, and the ways characters react to violence. I use the theoretical works of Gyanendra Pandey and Ranajit Guha to explore historical sense, and for reading Partition history from the subaltern point of view; Cathy Caruth and Dominic La Capra to understand the traumatic mind of the characters who suffered the violence of Partition; Vijay Mishra to analyze the subjectivity, identity, and allegiances of the characters; and Kwame Anthony Appiah to perceive their cosmopolitan consciousness.

After the Introduction, which discusses the theorists and historians, Chapter One analyzes the stories of Manto who concentrates on the actual physical and mental pain of people amidst scenes of violence, conflict, and chaos. In the vignettes in *Black Margins*, and short stories such as "Open It," "Colder than Ice," and "Toba Tek Singh," Manto captures the suddenness, specificity, and immensity of Partition-related violence.

Chapter Two and Three examine Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, Sidhwa's *Cracking India,* Sahni's *Tamas,* and Nahal's *Azadi,* observing that these writers attempt to achieve an objective representation of the riots and other forms of violence. Through their brilliant structural form and craft, *Train to Pakistan*, *Cracking India*, *Tamas,* and *Azadi* produce an affective form of history that serves as an alternative to the official history of Partition.

Chapter Four studies Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines,* which takes up the case of Partition violence, and communicates the idea that nationalism, based on geographical borders and boundaries, makes no sense. What starts as a preparation for re-location and reconstruction for the displaced characters in Nahal's *Azadi*, moves on to a relatively comfortable living in alien worlds in Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines.* Ghosh not only shows the ability of his characters to live with some degree of satisfaction in different cultures, but also produces a revisionist history by exploring the history of local riots, and making use of characters' personal memory.

The Conclusion suggests that Ghosh's cosmopolitanism provides a useful model to study the post-Partition condition. In the last sixty years or so of Partition writing, we can perceive a development in which global and planetary cosmopolitan consciousness has replaced the representation of communal violence and trauma.

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Introduction:
Shifting Focus of Partition Fiction

Almost all South Asian writers consciously or unconsciously touch upon the issue of the cataclysmic violence of 1947 when the subcontinent of India was cut into two parts—India and Pakistan. The emergence of the two nations gave birth to two contending and contesting diasporas. The division of the country and the violence and displacement that ensued has been a topic of discussion and debate among scholars and writers ever since, leading to the production of a vast body of literature. Some scholars, writers, and theorists concentrate on the causes of violence, others concern themselves with the trauma and loss associated with the division of India, and still others focus on the reconstructive work undertaken by the dispossessed and the displaced. Consequently, over the last sixty years we find a shifting focus among authors who write of the history of Partition and related literature. While the creative writers of the Partition have written about the unprecedented violence and the resultant trauma of displacement and dislocation, they have also depicted the ability of the victims/survivors of the cataclysmic violence to relocate themselves by reconstructing their individual and collective lives. My main argument is that in a first phase of response to Partition, writers concentrated on the depiction of overwhelming violence; in the next phase, they gave space to reconstruction as well as loss; and in the third phase, some writers such as Amitav Ghosh have concentrated on cosmopolitan modes of diasporic existence and tried to bridge the boundaries of national, cultural, and religious differences.

The present study explores the fiction of Saadat Hasan Manto, Khushwant Singh, Bhisham Sahni, Chaman Nahal, Bapsi Sidhwa, and Amitav Ghosh so as to bring to light the nature and causes of communal/ethnic violence, and its representation in fictional writing. I have selected these writers not only because of their stature and importance in Partition writing, but also because they make the most determined effort to remain neutral in their representation of characters and situation. Manto, who is considered to embody "cosmopolitan humanism," writes about his experiences with an unflinching faith in humanity and without trying to "glorify or demonize any community;"[1] Singh, as a committed secular writer, tries to present the tragic events of partition in a neutral manner. Similarly, famously addressed as "a gentleman communist," and a staunch advocate of secular ideals, Sahni tries to remain above communal and national politics to give a balanced view of the country's tragedy. Both Sahni and Nahal wait for more than two decades to write about their experiences of Partition to produce a thoroughly objective account. If Sidhwa belongs to a minority community, and is not much affected by Hindu-Muslim conflicts, Ghosh representing another (younger) generation of Partition writers, only indirectly inherits the pain and writes with utmost objectivity. These writers show a marked tendency not to provoke any community for further violence; for instance, Singh strategically uses rumors, gossips and newspaper report to talk about communal violence so that he is not directly blamed, and Ghosh carefully presents the horrifying reality always mindful that his writing does not reduce it to a mere spectacle. Nahal, Sidhwa and Sahni try to balance and recognize that charitable deeds were performed as well as atrocities committed by both of the contending communities.

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[1] Ayesha Jalal, *Pity of Partition*, 23.

My study differs from Rituparna Roy in *South Asian Partition Fiction in English: From Khushwant Singh to Amitav Ghosh*, in the sense that she is concerned more with "the evolution of the Partition theme itself," whereas my concentration is on the changing focus of representation of Partition violence.[2] Her canvas is wider to include discussion of different theories and background history of the Partition of Punjab and Bengal, including the contemporary social, political, and cultural realities of India. Besides, by including two women novelists--Bapsi Sidhwa and Anita Desai--, Roy discusses women's perspective in more detail. However, she excludes the discussion of Manto, one of the greatest names in Partition literature, who finds a special place in my dissertation.

Manto was the greatest among his contemporaries such as Krishan Chander, Ismat Chughtai, Rajinder Singh Bedi, Khwaja Ahmad Abbas, and Amrita Pritam who also wrote on Partition artistically by exploiting their finest talents. Most writers in this phase concentrated on "descriptions of blood and gore," but Manto did more. He empathized with the poor and the downtrodden, the neglected and the marginalized, exposed the lunacy of the leaders, and championed the cause of humanity.[3] Writers at this time depicted Partition as a time of insanity, which, for Manto, was also a "metaphor for human depravity."[4]

Partition research for a long time confined itself to political subjects; scholars devoted their time and attention finding out the causes and culprits of the country's tragedy. After the initial response to Partition, people kept a long silence as if they could

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[2] Rituparna Roy, in her introduction to *South Asian Partition Fiction in English: From Khushwant Singh to Amitav Ghosh*, 24.
[3] Ravikant and Tarun K. Saint in Introduction to *Translating Partition*, xvi.
[4] Ravikant and Tarun K. Saint in Introduction to *Translating Partition*, xviii.

not face the pain and trauma associated with it. Moreover, as Gyanendra Pandey argues, they were more interested in the larger march of history towards science and progress. Except for a few novelists, the general public seems to have found speaking or writing about the human cost involved in Partition too painful to bear and tried to forget it. Few people dared to remember. Although there had been communal tensions in the society, people tried to falsify them by relegating Partition at the background and treating it as if it had been an aberrant time in Indian history which was now over and gone. However, the recurring tensions in the society gave intimations that Partition was not yet over. M.S. Sathyu's movie *Garam Hawa/ Hot Winds* (1973) created waves of strong controversies. Similar was the effect of Govind Nihalani's *Tamas* (1988). Violence of 1984 in which thousands of Sikhs were massacred further triggered the interest in Partition and communal violence.

Recent Partition research deals more with the study of pain and trauma of the victims. Children and grandchildren of the survivors of Partition started digging into the suffering and loss caused by the holocaust. They probe into the role of the subalterns with special emphasis on sexual violation of women and their oral testimony. In a sense, interest in Partition begins afresh after the publication of Urvashi Butalia's *The Other Side of Silence* in 2000. Granddaughter of a victim of Partition violence, Butalia finds that the history of Partition "seemed to lie only in the political developments that had led up to it," and sidelined the more important human dimension to it--traumatic memory, divided hearts, and struggle of communities to rebuild their life and relationships. Therefore, Butalia particularly focuses on the oral stories-personal and collective memories of "smaller, often invisible people, women, children, schedule castes"--to

provide a more comprehensive history of Partition.[5] She rightly remarks that we cannot understand Partition unless we look at "how people remember it."[6] In *The Other Side of Silence, Butalia* gives much space to the violence upon women including the stories of abduction and rape, kept suppressed for a long time.

I have not included poetry, prose, films, and TV serials made on Partition, which also provide valuable information on the subject. For example, I did not have space here for important works of fiction such as Amrita Pritam's *Pinjar/The Skeleton* (1950), Raja Rao's *Waiting for the Mahatma* (1955), Balachandra Rajan's *The Dark Dancer* (1958), Manohar Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges* (1965), Raj Gill's *The Rape* (1974), Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1980), Mukul Keshavan's *Looking through Glass* (1987), and Meera Arora Naik's *About Daddy* (2000).[7] I am aware that the study of these works can contribute much toward Partition scholarship, and hope that some scholars will certainly pursue the task in the future.

The study shows that the tendency of Partition writers has significantly changed in the last sixty years or so, exhibiting less and less the pain of diaspora, and opening up more and more to a cosmopolitan mode of living in the contemporary world. To arrive at this conclusion, the study draws upon works on Indian history by historians (Gyanendra Pandey, Ranajit Guha), trauma theorists (Cathy Caruth, Dominic La Capra), postcolonial and diaspora theorists **(**Vijay Mishra, R. Radhakrishnan), and theorist of cosmopolitanism

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[5] Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence,* 9.
[6] Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence,* 10.
[7] Neither could I examine non-fiction work such as *Freedom at Midnight* (1975) by Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre, or the short stories of Khwaza Ahmed Abbas, Attia Hosain, and others. For reasons of space, I have also excluded from my study Oral Narratives/Personal narratives such as Urvashi Butalia's *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* (1998), Anish Kidwai's *Azadi Ki Chhaon Mein/In the Shadow of Freedom* (1990), and Meenakshi Verma's *Aftermath: An Oral History of Violence* (2004). I did not include *Tamas* (1987), a televised serial based on Sahni's novel, or significant films such

(Kwame Anthony Appiah). For instance, Caruth and La Capra to contribute insights into the trauma of the characters who suffered the violence of Partition; it uses Pandey to read the history of Partition from the subaltern point of view; Mishra to understand the subjectivity and identity of diasporic people; Radhakrishnan to analyze the multiplicity of allegiances and identities of fictional characters, and Appiah to understand their cosmopolitan consciousness.

Gyanendra Pandey rightly points to the need to write the history of Partition from the victim's point of view and to focus on the trauma and loss suffered by millions, instead of recounting the story of the march of progress and modernity as official historiographers do. He recognizes the role of cultural politics as crucially important for the rewriting of Partition history which finds no space in the nationalist histories (Indian, Pakistani, British). The official histories, Pandey says, not only remain indifferent to the popular construction of Partition as the division of linguistic communities, villages, houses and families, but also ignore the meaning of Partition for those who lived through it, and the trauma it produced. For Pandey, textbook histories merely concern themselves with the shadow of Partition. He emphasizes the inclusion of "little histories," long neglected by the academic history so as to have a better insight into Partition. The novels analyzed in this study can furnish good source materials for Pandey's revisionist history. Pandey is well aware that in their representation of violence, some writers use the "prose of otherness" to demonize the people from the other community but he seems to overlook

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as *Earth* (1988), based on episodes in Sidhwa's *Cracking India*; *Train to Pakistan* (1998) based on Singh's novel; *Pinjar* (2003), on Amrita Pritam's novel *Pinjar*; and *Partition* (2007) to name a few.

the politics involved in the narration of the victims themselves who consciously or unconsciously valorize their own community, people or nation while disparaging the other.

Another revisionist historian, Ranajit Guha argues that the colonial state in South Asia was fundamentally different from the metropolitan bourgeois state which produced it. If the metropolitan state was hegemonic in character, and persuasion outweighed coercion in its dominance, the colonial state was non-hegemonic because coercion was paramount in its structure of dominance. For Guha, the colonial state was a paradox--dominance without hegemony. In its nationalist version, too, the colonial state exhibited coercion rather than persuasion, as Indian politics was structurally divided into two domains--the elite and subaltern--and the Indian bourgeoisie was unable to integrate the life and consciousness of the mass into an alternative hegemony. Although Guha rightly describes the dictatorial nature of British rule and historiography, this is not the entire truth. Guha overlooks the role played during the British Raj by communal violence, indoctrination, and false discourses of knowledge termed Orientalism by Edward Said. A member of the subaltern studies group of scholars like Pandey, Guha maintains that Indian historiography suffered, because like the British who did not represent the voice of the Indian masses, the Indian nationalist elites marginalized the masses and did not allow their voice to be heard. I consider that the fictional works in this project provide access to the kinds of "little histories" called for by subaltern historiography.

These theories undoubtedly provide a strong basis for reading many of the Partition novels productively. However, I think, another fruitful approach could be to

consider R. Radhakrishnan's theory of the more open kinds of identities of diasporic characters. His theory takes us beyond binary of colonized and colonizer and addresses a wider range of characters that come from diverse social locations. His theory that diaspora has created rich possibilities for understanding different histories and backgrounds will help us analyze, understand, and interpret the actions and motives of characters under study (especially, Ghosh's characters who have many roots and many pasts), leading towards the consideration of their cosmopolitan qualities.

Cosmopolitanism refers to the ideology that all human beings belong to a single community and emphasizes the need to conceive of a political, economic, and cultural entity larger than their nation or country so as to embrace all human beings on the globe. It represents a desire to construct global communities of citizens for peaceful and harmonious coexistence. Amanda Anderson calls cosmopolitanism a flexible term for the distance a person maintains from his or her cultural affiliations and helps develop a broad understanding of other cultures and customs together with a belief in universal humanity.[8] A cosmopolite (Gk, citizen of the world) is supposed to raise him or herself above all social, cultural, political, and religious borders and boundaries and communicate with people with a positive attitude towards difference.

However, there is no single cosmopolitan vision. An array of competing and contesting cosmopolitanisms abounds the contemporary world scenario. While theorists such as James Clifford, Martha Nussbaum, Julia Kristeva, Judith Butler, Paul Rabinow, Jacques Derrida, K. A. Appiah, Homi Bhabha, and Bruce Robbins advocate different kinds of cosmopolitanisms, other scholars such as Antonio Gramsci, Frantz Fanon, and David Harvey write against cosmopolitan ideas. If Mitchell Cohen opts for "rooted

cosmopolitanism," Homi Bhabha suggests "vernacular cosmopolitanism," James Clifford advocates "discrepant cosmopolitanism," and Bruce Robbins speaks in terms of "already existing cosmopolitanism." Tom Lutz remarks that some theories of counter cosmopolitanism, such as that of David Harvey come up with ideas so similar to cosmopolitanism that they easily confound ordinary readers.

Despite their insistence upon equality and justice for all, some cosmopolitan theorists and writers display misogynist, racist, nationalist, religious, or class-based biases in their writings. Others conflate cosmopolitanism with nationalism and globalism, and advocate for hegemony and homogenization rather than respecting and encompassing the human variety of local, national and universal ideals. Due to the shortcomings in their stands, cosmopolitanism has been criticized by many. Marxists accuse cosmopolites of being rootless citizens indifferent towards the political welfare of any nation. Gramsci and his followers consider cosmopolitanism a handmaiden to capitalism that serves the cause of the urban elites and uncommitted, irresponsible, and detached intellectuals. Fanon too considers cosmopolitanism as a kind of "intellectual laziness," and "spiritual penury" of middle-class people.

Unlike Gramsci and Fanon, Kwame Anthony Appiah suggests the possibility of a cosmopolitan community of individuals who come from various geographical locations and diverse social and economic backgrounds to enter into relationships of mutual respect despite their differing religious beliefs and political ideologies.[9] Appiah advocates a "rooted cosmopolitanism," which aims to balance our local ties and our universal obligations, and which recognizes both the (universal) "value of human life" and

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[8] Amanda Anderson, "Cosmopolitanism, Universalism, and the Divided Legacies of Modernity," 267.
[9] All quotations of Appiah are from *The Ethics of Identity*, 2005.

the(specific/local) "value of particular human lives, the lives people have made for themselves, within the communities that help lend significance to those lives" (222-223). It entails caring for the distant people in the globe though caring more for your relations nearer home: "I can give you your due and still treat my friend better" (221). In his opinion, cosmopolitanism pursues a formula of "universalism plus difference," an ideal followed by many in the contemporary times. Appiah's cosmopolitan ethic seeks to balance universals with respect for particulars: "A citizen of the world can make the world better by making some place better, even though that place need not be the place of her literal or original citizenship" (241), because " one's national loyalties aren't determined solely by the geography of one's nativity" (242). The balance between the universal and the local comes through "conversation"--encounters and engagements across national, religious, and cultural forms of identity. Thus, Appiah's *rooted cosmopolitanism* "is a composite project, a negotiation between disparate tasks" (232) that involves "debates and conversations across nations" (246). For Appiah these dialogues are very important as they mean "a shared search for truth and meaning" (250). A cosmopolitan shows inclination to learn from others and possesses a sense of "a shared concern" (256), despite safeguarding his/her "individual autonomy" (268). *Rooted cosmopolitanism* upholds the dignity of others through one's own dignity (269).

Appiah maintains that even a poor, rural citizen can be cosmopolitan in his/her own attitude of respect towards others. Appiah basically argues against the clashes of ideology, culture or civilization, and sees cosmopolitanism as a dynamic concept based on two fundamental ideas--that we have responsibilities to others who are not tied to us by kinship or citizenship, and that we must recognize their values, customs and beliefs,

and try to reach mutual understanding even if we do not agree with them. His cosmopolitan ideals urge that "we should know others, with their differences" (247), which might lead to "toleration, even to 'mutual love'" (247). He believes that cosmopolitanism is a universal trait of human beings, and postulates that despite being full of strangers and societies with differing customs and morals, the world contains more binding similarities than differences. Appiah believes that humanity, though diverse, has much in common than the Enlightenment philosophers imagined about (258).

It is doubtful, as Appiah maintains, that cosmopolitanism is for all because material conditions mean that cosmopolitanism is only available for the rich and educated few. Both James Clifford and Bruce Robbins seem to support Appiah's idea. If through "discrepant cosmopolitanism," Clifford tries to fill up the gap left by Appiah concerning the question of how much hospitality and respect one can grant to strangers, Bruce Robbins further endorses Appiah's ideas that one should take care of "a density of overlapping affiliations."

Since most characters in the novels to be examined undergo traumatic suffering, it will be right to discuss trauma theory briefly here. Cathy Caruth argues that trauma must be recounted so as to understand one another's history. In *Unclaimed Experience,* she states that there is a deep link between history and trauma: "history, like trauma, is never simply one's own, [...] his-tory is precisely the way we are implicated in each other's traumas" (192). One's understanding of one's own trauma leads to the understanding of others' trauma because trauma of the other becomes visible only with the help of our trauma.[10] Kali Tal discusses the need of trauma survivors to relate their stories to the

[10] In "Trauma and Experience: Introduction," Caruth observes that since one's own trauma is always tied with another's, "trauma itself may provide the [...] link between cultures," and indicates at the possibility

collective cultural memory of the community at large. They are of the opinion that violence must be acknowledged, and traumatic tales must be told so as to establish a healthy community and personal life. In the words of Dominic La Capra, trauma needs to be "worked through," in a therapeutic situation that re-traumatizes the victim with the witnessing and experiencing of the earlier scene of violence (119). The situation should enable the victim to recognize the symptom and the trauma as his or her own, to acknowledge that the trauma is still active, and that he or she is implicated in its destructive effects. Hiding or suppressing the traumatic feelings does not end them. They remain latent only to re-emerge later in more dangerous forms.

While Pandey is in agreement with the theories of Caruth, Tal and La Capra, historian Javed Alam takes a different view. Alam maintains that Partition violence should not be talked about, so that people may live in peace, socially and politically, individually and collectively by forgetting the trauma they have gone through (101). Recounting of trauma re-opens the almost healed wounds of suffering and harms the communities living together in amity. Alam puts forth this view of violence and trauma not only because of the experience of the past, but he also thinks that to discuss violence is morally unsustainable.[11] For him, Partition is something unnamable, something not to be mentioned. While Alam may have a point, Caruth, Tal, La Capra, and Pandey argue better for healing of wounds. The novelists discussed here, like Pandey, Caruth and La Capra seem to favor working through traumatic events so as to come out of the latent trauma before it is manifested in devastating form.

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that recounting of one's trauma or listening to the trauma of another can lead to cross-cultural s understanding and formation of new communities (11).

[11]Javed Alam in "Remembering Partition," 98-103.

Although Saadat Hasan Manto, Khushwant Singh, Bhisham Sahni, Chaman Nahal, Bapsi Sidhwa, and Amitav Ghosh write on Partition violence, their writings show some differences in their treatment of violence, their attitude toward history, the ways their characters cope with or give in to violence, and their uses of literary form. The study will briefly touch upon the writers' stance while analyzing their particular texts.

Chapter One of this study deals with the short stories of Manto who, without analyzing the causes of Partition, concentrates its effect on the characters by graphically representing scenes of violence, conflict, and chaos. In his story "Toba Tek Singh," Manto creates a character who is so confused by the absurd notion of dividing a land into two halves and sending citizens to a new/alien location, and so much affected by the trauma of displacement that he collapses in a no-man's land between India and Pakistan. The painful feeling of loneliness, alienation, and being an outsider in a foreign land that Manto experienced when he was in Pakistan finds expression in Manto's essay " Zaroorat Hai" (Wanted), which shows discrimination by insiders (local Pakistanis) against outsiders (the new migrants from India). Living a diasporic life himself, in "The Dog of Titwal" and "The Last Salute," Manto respectively depicts the plight of uprooted and displaced people and the dilemma and devastation caused by the absurd notion of nationality.

Likewise, Manto paints the sufferings of abducted or raped women in his stories such as "Khol Do" (Open It), in which a Muslim character Sirajuddin not only is displaced from Pakistan, his home but also loses his wife in the bloody riots of the time. In addition, he loses his daughter Sakina amidst the violence only to find later that she has been raped repeatedly by predatory males and has become socially dead. Women had

a very precarious or vulnerable position during the violent times; they were raped or abducted by the men of both nations in order to prove their masculinity and the effeminacy of the other community. Many young girls and married women were left to their fate after they were raped. These women were not accepted by their families as they were considered to be disgraced and lived the life of the living dead. The story suggests how Partition cost human lives, killing not only individuals but also their family ties and social relationships.

The short story form provides Manto with a fitting vehicle to represent the eruptions of violence during the genocide of 1947. Using scathing irony, avoiding the use of an authorial voice and adopting the victim's point of view, refraining from detailed characterizations and the use of cultural markers for his characters, Manto objectively and honestly depicts the brutal violence perpetrated by humanity gone mad. Blaming neither Hindus nor Muslims, he represents the cruelty of the 1947 violence with a sad understanding that there is a capacity for inhumanity in all people during terrible times. The form of the short story, as the name suggests, seems to have helped him to present just the naked reality without much ado. Some of his stories are just a line or two in length describing inhuman brutality: a way of mirroring the suddenness of the violence. The compressed expression enables Manto to capture the specificity and intensity of the violence, adopting the perspective of a detached observer, and also grants him moral intensity. Most of his longer short stories have very powerful ironic endings that not only recreate scenes of violence but also of shock the readers by transmitting the trauma to them.

Cathy Caruth states that traumatic experience suggests a kind of paradox because the most direct seer of a violent event has no ability to know it at the moment but knows about it belatedly. Many of Manto's characters cannot comprehend their situation fully and either go mad or remain dazed. Without much narrative detail, Manto communicates their trauma through the short story form as if the form were the objective equivalence of their situation.

Chapter Two examines Khushwant Singh and Bapsi Sidhwa, whose novels *Train to Pakistan* (1956) and *Cracking India* (1988/1991), concentrate on the Partition of Punjab. Although Singh was a mild victim of Partition, and Sidhwa was not, both of them write about Partition as witnesses.[12] If *Cracking India* deals substantially with the politics of the day, *Train to Pakistan* only briefly touches the subject. They make serious attempts to keep themselves above personal and national prejudices and to achieve the highest standard of objective representation of Partition violence. They show some inclination to favor their particular community, or even nation. Sidhwa presents a more favorable picture of Jinnah than the books by Indian authors do; Singh represents Sikhs as peace loving civilized human beings.

Singh, in *Train to Pakistan* represents the holocaust of 1947, describing the communal tension and violence in Mano Majra, a small northwestern village of India. Friendly Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs live in peace until the arrival of a train from Pakistan, which is full of the corpses of Hindus and Sikhs. Communities soon become suspicious of each other, grow antagonistic and segregate. Plans are made not only to evacuate Muslims from Mano Majra, but also to kill them on a moving train. However, a Sikh Jugga's extraordinary act of sacrifice for his beloved Nooran, saves the Muslims from

extermination. Singh presents the scenes as a detached onlooker, artistically and faithfully recording the massive havoc. Distancing himself from individual suffering, Singh writes *Train to Pakistan* keeping himself close to the actual facts of history and performing the task of a historical witness. A rather thin novel in volume, *Train to Pakistan* provides a historical survey of the times through its simple, linear, structure and form.

Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India*, the first novel on Partition by a female novelist from Pakistan tells the story of Partition from the perspectives of Lenny Sethi, an eight year-old Parsee girl. The novel narrates the events of Lenny's family and native Lahore for over ten years, and through Lenny's naïve voice, Sidhwa depicts the ruin caused by Partition in the lives of the minority in India/Pakistan.

Presented in the first person by the little Parsee girl, the novel places family life alongside national chaos and represents an insider's observation and interpretation of daily life of individuals as well as the country passing through an uncontrollable frenzy of violence. It shows how Lahore, a city that has welcomed differences and encouraged variety, suddenly turns into a bloody battleground for Hindu, Muslim and Sikh communities. Sidhwa juxtaposes innocence and experience, focalizing them through the vision of the little girl who experiences violence, fear, hatred, and love, in order to show the extremely confusing and disturbing times in Indian history. The child's vision is seemingly naïve but her voice is rather objective.

Sidhwa deliberately presents layers and layers of plots and subplots and leaves many of them unresolved, as if she wants to present a mirror image of the experiences of the people in those days. *Cracking India* is a semi-autobiographical novel that

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[12] Khushwant Singh had to leave his job in Lahore to settle with his parents in Delhi.

emphasizes the link between individuals and nations. Sidhwa conveys the sense of the problems and transformation of the national bodies of India and Pakistan through sickness, erotic feelings and aggression experienced by the bodies of many of the characters. The novel significantly marginalizes the British Raj, and places at the center, the neutral community of Parsee women.

Chapter Three studies Bhisham Sahni's *Tamas* and Chaman Nahal's *Azadi,* which also focus on the Partition of Punjab. Written by the victims of Partition, these novels deal in detail with the nature and working of riots; they discuss national politics of the time, and present a critique of the leaders while enumerating the suffering of individuals. Like Singh and Sidhwa, these authors also make honest efforts to represent Partition violence in a neutral manner.

Like Manto, In *Tamas* (1974), Sahni represents graphically the communal tension and violence in an Indian town just before Partition. In *Tamas*, Nathu, a laborer, is tricked into killing a pig by a cunning politician and the pig's carcass is thrown at the entrance of a mosque. This act triggers one of the worst communal riots during the time of the South Asian Partition. Hindus and Muslims, who earlier led a harmonious life together, start hating each other so intensely that they have no qualms about killing their friends and neighbors and desiring to wipe out entire communities. *Tamas* is against fundamentalism and extremism. To a great extent, Sahni tries to praise both communities--Hindu and Muslim--or to blame both and presents himself as against communal hatred.

In structure, *Tamas* is episodic and moves slowly, making reference to stray acts of inconsequential violence and presenting the view point of a passionate but reflective character. However, its form serves an important purpose—that of providing a rhetorical

equivalent to the working of the mind of the rioters and the triggering of the riots themselves. The novel builds up tension for a long time and releases it at the end. The stray acts of violence in the novel and its episodic structure are in consonance also with the relationship of four groups of characters, that is, Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and British, who work at different places and in different groups spreading rumors and planning and executing riots.

In *Azadi* (1975), Chaman Nahal focuses on the tragic experiences of a Hindu family in Pakistan. Like Manto, Sidhwa, and Sahni, Nahal also describes the complexities of social, religious and political life of the time. Nahal takes much space in *Azadi* to discuss his personal experiences of Partition along with various facets of South Asian violence in 1947. He provides a detailed analyses of characters and their minds. He waits for two decades to produce a largely neutral testament of Partition. As a Hindu forced to leave Pakistan, he finds the Muslim leaders, and the British rulers mainly responsible for the Partition of the country and the resultant suffering of the South Asian mass of humanity, and yet does not shy away from pointing the faults of Hindus and Congress leaders, too. Although Nahal's writing is sometimes marred with the prose of otherness, as Pandey would have it, *Azadi* is more objective and secular than many other texts written on the subject of Partition. The technique of narrating trauma of characters such as Lala Kanshi Ram and Arun in detail makes *Azadi* close to the genre of psychological novel.

Chapter Four analyzes Amitav Ghosh, who writes about the Partition with a cosmopolitan spirit. He writes about violence in clear terms, communicating his idea that nationalism, based on geographical borders and boundaries, makes no particular sense.

His novel *The Shadow Lines* paints the borders as mere shadow lines unable to divide people's minds and hearts. Many of Ghosh's characters cross geographical and mental borders and live comfortably in alien worlds. They have acquired a cosmopolitan and global consciousness and do not undergo the trauma suffered by Manto's characters; though they are disturbed, they are not as distracted as those of Manto.

On the surface, Ghosh appears to give representation to Partition violence and death in *The Shadow Lines* in consonance with Javed Alam's idea that Partition violence must not be talked about so that the wounds are forgotten and forgiven. However, closer examination of *The Shadow Lines* reveals that Ghosh follows the other side of the argument that trauma needs to be discussed so as to heal the wounds of tortuous memories. The wounds of Partition cannot be healed unless they are faced. Therefore, aligning himself with theorists such as Caruth, Tal, La Capra and Pandey, Ghosh makes his narrator dig up the facts of history and memory, and disclose the details of the central character Tridib's death in the final pages of the novel.

Ghosh invests characters with the ability to live with some degree of satisfaction in different cultures. Most of his protagonists are travelers like himself, straddling many countries and continents, leading cosmopolitan lives. *The Shadow Lines* contains characters such as the nameless narrator and Tridib, who are endowed with a cosmopolitan spirit and can lead happy life either travelling or rooted in a place. Even the female characters who are supposed to lack the cosmopolitan characteristics of their male counterparts, cross geographical borders and boundaries, move freely in foreign countries, and try to make a comfortable life.

All the writers discussed so far--Manto, Singh, Sahni, Nahal, Sidhwa, and Ghosh--adopt their own perspective on history. Their understanding of history may help explain their employment of different literary forms, techniques, and rhetorical strategies. Making use of personal memories in their own distinctive ways, they all write histories that differ from the official history. According to Pandey, the master-narrative of Partition or official history gives short shrift to the terrible violence of 1947, either designating it as non-narratable, as an aberration, an accident, or a mistake. The narrative rather focuses on the causes or the culprits of Partition and fills pages with writing about the march of civilization, equating it with peace, progress, modernity, and nationalism, and treating violence as civilization's "Other." For Pandey, the essence of Partition is violence and the resultant human cost, so overlooked by the textbook historians. The subaltern theorists also argue for a more authentic alternate history, one written "from below," or from the point of view of the victims.

Pandey praises Manto for producing a more truthful and authentic history in his Partition stories. He finds Manto's Bishen Singh representing the millions of suffering people whose stories go untold in the establishment history. We may add that Singh, Sahni, Sidhwa, Nahal, and Ghosh also tell stories of individuals and families that go untold in the histories. Sahni deals in detail with riots and the psychology of the rioters which are never granted any space in the textbook history of either India or Pakistan. Sidhwa gives voice to the most marginalized of all subalterns—the women. Herself a member of minority Parsee community, she presents the view point of women and children from the Pakistani side. Aiming for poetic truth, Sidhwa does not strictly follow

chronology of dates in history.[13] Nahal shows not only the long lines of thousands of uprooted people forcibly moved to an unknown destination, but also the most disgraceful scenes of women paraded naked on the streets before the lewd gaze of their victimizers and the helpless presence of their people, events which do not receive even a paragraph in the official histories. Since Nahal believes in endless choices of a fiction writer to write about a situation, he makes use of his creative imagination to change some historical details to serve his purposes. His novel serves as a more authentic text than the ones written by the people in power. The same can be said for Singh, Sidhwa, Sahni and Ghosh. These writers try to "write into the history of modernity the ambivalences, contradictions, the use of force, and the tragedies, and the ironies that attended it" (Chakrabarty 288). The form of the novel provides them a greater access to many aspects ignored or unrepresented by historians, and enables them to produce affective histories of the marginal people by recovering their voices silenced by history.

In a certain sense, Ghosh is like Manto. Like Manto he writes from the victim's point of view. He not only valorizes the marginalized, but also parodies the official historians by seeming to avoid what they tend to avoid in their texts, such as riots, peasants revolution, or the tragic tales of millions of refugees. The most important event in the family story--Tridib's death--is never mentioned or discussed until the end of *The Shadow Lines,* which creates a narrative gap, as does the word "Partition" which is always avoided or only appears trivially: "And then, in 1947, came Partition, and Dhaka became the capital of East Pakistan."[14] However, through his research on the riots that were not even reported in the national newspapers or recorded by the government, Ghosh

[13] Sidhwa places Gandhi's Salt March fifteen years after the actual historical event.
[14] Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines*, 123.

emphasizes their importance, and not only writes a revisionist history in line with the notion of subaltern theorists, but also gives voice to the voiceless marginal people. Also, he shows in his writing that collective memory has a tendency to overlook the local, as in the case of the riot that kills Tridib—no other character acknowledges the importance or even the existence of the riot which received just a little space in a local newspaper.

Manto, Singh, Sahni, Sidhwa, and Nahal--all describe the complicated social, political and religious situation including scenes of violence. However, Nahal adds one more dimension--the preparedness for re-location and construction. He presents his characters as men and women possessing the capacity to face their fate, and march forward. Consequently, his characters are shown starting to reconstruct their lives in a new country. Ghosh goes one step further in depicting the cosmopolitan consciousness of characters who have accepted their fate and started living a more or less contented life in foreign countries.

All of these writers--Manto, Singh, Nahal, Sidhwa, Sahni, and Ghosh--write about events around the Partition of the Indian subcontinent with its terrible impact on the lives of millions with much feeling. This is because all of them experienced a diasporic life and they understand the plight of people who have been leading their lives away from their motherland either of their own volition or under duress. Manto, Nahal, and Sahni were direct victims of Partition violence, and Ghosh has indirectly inherited the pain of dislocation. Singh and Sidhwa were witnesses to the cruelties of their times. Manto writes his stories and even a few essays as a survivor/victim of the traumatic experience of being torn away from India, and similarly Sahni and Nahal had to leave the present Pakistan in 1947 to settle in India. These three writers describe scenes of violence and

their impact on the body and psyche of their characters. Manto, and more particularly Nahal, describes most poignantly the miserable life of refugees in the aftermath of Partition. Despite his wide human sympathy, Manto does not seem to be attracted by the idea of a borderless cosmopolitan life. Though *Cracking India* was published as *Ice-Candy-Man* in 1988, the same year *The Shadow Lines* was published, and although it depicts cosmopolitan Lahore, it does not portray cosmopolitan characters like Ghosh perhaps because it confined itself to the representation of the subcontinent for about ten years until just after Partition.

Ghosh, being a cosmopolitan citizen of the contemporary globalized world, does not seem to focus as much on the physical scenes of tension and trauma, and directs his pen towards wider historical realities. His characters may be seen constituting or constituted of many different circumstances and realities and living their diasporic life in a satisfactory manner. They come from different social, political, geographical, and historical backgrounds, and embody cosmopolitan consciousness. While it can be argued that the female characters in *The Shadow Lines* linger in a phase of cultural dislocation, the central male characters lead fully cosmopolitan lives, rooted or not within any geographical boundary. Tridib's best European ideal is Tristan, "a man without a country." He has attained the heights of an ethical, political and social cosmopolitan.

The **Conclusion** of this dissertation suggests that Ghosh's figure of the cosmopolitan provides a highly satisfactory model to describe and discuss the post-Partition condition when refugees have been actually involved in redefining and reconstructing nations. His characters do not suffer the trauma of dislocation as much the characters of Manto or Nahal. In the half-century of Partition writing, we can see the

direction of development that leads to the representation of global and planetary cosmopolitan consciousness in place of communal violence and trauma of the earlier texts. The characters in Partition literature today move across borders of many nations, religions and cultures, and can feel at home in the wide open world but have they really been able to forget their past?

Chapter One:
Violence and Representation in Manto's Short Stories

This Chapter deals with the short stories of Saadat Hasan Manto who concentrates on the actual physical and mental pain of people amidst scenes of violence, conflict, and chaos. One of the greatest Urdu writers, Manto, in his short stories and vignettes, recreates the cataclysmic violence of the South Asian Partition of 1947. He celebrates neither the birth of Pakistan nor the independence of India. Many of his characters are left confused by the two-nation theory. For them, as for the writer himself, separate identities or nationalities of India and Pakistan make no sense. They identify themselves with their native place, and suffer much when they are forced to migrate. Manto looks at the event of Indian independence as the tragedy of Partition and writes about the pain it caused to the millions both in India and Pakistan. He does not much care for the causes and the culprits of the division of the subcontinent as the historians do, but rather focuses on the actual scenes of violence and their effect on the people.[15]

How paradoxical it is, Gyanendra Pandey says, in his classic essay "The Prose of Otherness," that, although Partition's history is constituted of, surrounded, and accompanied by violence, this very fact has been overlooked by most historians for decades.[16] The historian's history has discussed the causes or the origins of the ruthless violent deeds rather than describing the specific events of violence. The causes are attributed to outsiders, criminals, political reactionaries, fanatics, or communalists and so

[15] Gyanendra Pandey, "The Prose of Otherness," 188-221.

on, simply eliding the issue of human carnage. The historians create the "prose of otherness" while blaming the other community or people, or leaders or attitudes, and try to present their own community or people, or leaders or attitudes as pure, innocent and free from blemishes (Pandey, "Prose" 213).

Pandey further says that by using the language of "othering," the historians have always marginalized violence in their writing. They do not describe the actual acts of abduction, uprooting, train raids, trauma, madness, suicide, killings, and other acts inflicting death and destruction, thus doing injustice to the very craft of historiography. The high point of the nationalist history of India is the campaign for the achievement of independence from colonial British rule in 1947. It rejoices at the self-rule of the Indians as the crowning glory of the almost century-old aspiration for freedom. It appears as if "historian's history were concerned not with partition but the shadow of partition" (Pandey, "Prose" 205). It does not discuss the history of rape and abduction, killing and the state-sponsored drive that followed to evict aliens and recover the abducted women and children without regard for their personal wishes, all of which "disturbingly capture the meaning of partition" (Pandey, "Voices" 234).

Much praised by Pandey, Manto is highly objective in rendering the violent and traumatic scenes of the South Asian Partition in 1947. He focuses on the very issues neglected by the official historians, assimilating the truth that the history of partition is the history of violence. His writings are free from stereotyping, disparaging, or demonizing of the other community in terms of religion, culture, politics, or nationality. In comparison to other writers of the period, Manto to a great extent avoids nationalist

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[16] Gyanendra Pandey, "The Prose of Otherness," 204.

biases on the partition violence of 1947. He shows the consciousness of the sufferers as witnesses, survivors, and victims by remaining outside the narrow perspective of the nationalist historians.

Son of Maulvi Ghulam Hasan, an authoritarian father and a barrister by profession, Manto was born in Ludhiana in 1912. A Kashmiri Muslim by conversion of his Hindu forefathers, Manto spent most of his life in Aligarh and Bombay, where he worked for a number of years as a film writer and editor of literary journals. For a brief period around 1942 he worked in Delhi at the All-India Radio, writing a large number of plays and stories. Bored with Delhi, he returned to Bombay to find that tension gripped both the Hindu and Muslim community there. Alienated from his friends in the Progressive Writers' Movement of which he was a member, Manto became depressed and disillusioned with the literary and political life of Bombay. He was criticized as a writer by his friends, leading to his quarrel with them and to his ultimate expulsion from the movement. When Partition took place in August 1947, his wife Safiyah and her family moved for Pakistan. Manto remained in Bombay for several months but due to the increasing tension between Hindus and Muslims, he went to Pakistan later. A person deeply attached to Bombay and India, he missed the place of his roots, suffered much from nostalgia, physically settled in Lahore, mentally became unsettled and faced a very uncertain and disorienting future. Exiled from Bombay with which he was in love throughout life, and living in poverty, Manto was unable to reconcile himself to his new life in Lahore.[17] He was clearly disturbed by the events leading up to his arrival in the newly created country of Pakistan. "His early days in Pakistan were bewildering.

Everything was out of joint. . . . A sense of terrible insecurity" haunted the people and some of them lived in Pakistan "as if there was going to be no tomorrow."[18] Rich people were on the streets and all human values sustaining the society "had been destroyed in the conflagration of independence . . . . The country had gone through such a terrifying baptism of blood and fire."[19]

Manto was completely dumbfounded when he had to migrate to Pakistan for he could not see the dividing line between reality and nightmare. He was distracted not so much by the geographical divide as by the cultural chasm created by the split of the Indian nation. For a time, he was shocked into a state of numbness and complete inaction. The cataclysmic nature of Partition affected this man of great sensibility. Although for a long time he carried his beloved Bombay in his head, later he became confused and could not separate India and Pakistan.[20] He found it impossible to decide whether India or Pakistan was his real homeland.[21] Questions kept troubling him such as: what would be the circumstances of the Indians and Pakistanis after Partition, what would Pakistani literature be like, and who would claim the literature written by people who had lived in Pakistan or India, and had been forced to move to the other side of the border?

Apparently, Manto's situation was like that of his own unforgettable character, Bishan Singh, who finds himself stranded between India and Pakistan--in no man's land that demonstrates the irrationality of the division of his country into two parts. Only after

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[17] Khalid Hasan, in "Saadat Hasan Manto: Not of Blessed Memory," quotes Manto saying: "I am a walking Bombay" (89).
[18] Khalid Hasan, "Saadat Hasan Manto: Not of Blessed Memory," 89.
[19] Khalid Hasan, "Saadat Hasan Manto: Not of Blessed Memory," 89.
[20] Harish Narang quotes Manto [from a forward to the collection Thanda Gosht ("Cold Flesh"), published in 1950]: "I found my mind divided. In spite of trying hard, I could not separate India from Pakistan and Pakistan from India" (77).

a long time did Manto find that his creative faculty had returned. He started writing with a new vigor and produced a prolific body of writing mostly in the satiric vein of an unsatisfied man. He died of alcoholism in 1955 at the age of 43.

Needless to say, Manto opposed Partition and considered it to be an absurd, irrational and inhuman act of madness that led to genocide. Ayesha Jalal, in *The Pity of Partition,* rightly states that for Manto, Partition "was not an aberration to be dismissed as a fleeting collective madness. It was part and parcel of an unfolding drama that gave glimpses into the best and worst in humankind "(24).[22]

He saw the absurdity of the people on both sides and wrote stories from the victims' point of views, recreating the trauma suffered by the unknown and unidentified millions on the margins. He, too, was one among the suffering millions. As a sufferer himself, he very well realized that the history of Partition was the history of dislocation, separation, competing loyalties, loss of self or identity, religious intolerance, communal hatred, riot, rape, arson, plunder, irrationality, absurdity, and madness. He expresses all the pain and trauma suffered by the victims of partition in his short stories.

It is somewhat difficult to write about Manto's stories because he leaves out so much for the readers to comprehend. The anecdotal stories written around disturbing situations read like painful riddles and present a challenge to the readers. They have a quality of incomprehensibility in them perhaps because of their brevity, the disparity between the narrative tone and situation it describes, and the irony embedded in the action, language, and situation themselves. Despite the enigmatic quality, however,

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[21] Khalid Hasan, in "Introduction" to *Selected Stories*, xi.

Manto's stories convey a clear sense of the time they describe and constitute an unbiased record of a critical juncture in South Asian history. Stories such as "Open It," "Cold Meat," "Khuda Ki Kasam," "Akhri Salute," "The Dog of Titwal," "Mozail," "Toba Tek Singh," and the vignettes in "Black Margins" provide stark, honest representation of the violent history of Indian subcontinent. They "give a more immediate and penetrating account of those troubled and troubling times than do most journalistic accounts of partition" (Jalal 23).

I consider it worthwhile to begin the discussion of Mantos stories with *Black Margins* because they show most clearly his neutral depiction of human savagery during the Partition violence of 1947. In *Black Margins,*[23] Manto produced thirty-two vignettes of scenes that bear witness to the cataclysmic event when the contending nationalisms of India and Pakistan were at a highly provocative juncture. The anecdotes are narrated in an impassive tone, and a minimalist style, and disallowing character development at all. Told by a distant third person narrator, some of the stories--which are no more than a few sentences long--represent in a most poignant manner the cruelties of the time. Some of these stories are apparently funny and grotesque and produce a chilling effect on the readers. They "create a nightmare landscape of random violence; a scandalous world where victims and predators interchange places endlessly and unpredictably."[24] The victims and the victimizers here belong to all communities—Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs and do not mostly inhabit the same story. Read together they give us the impression of

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[22] Ayesha Jalal, in *The Pity of Partition,* further maintains that Manto perceived Partition "an ongoing process whose inner and outward manifestations have neither a clear beginning nor a conclusive end" (150).

[23] *Black Margins* is a collection of Manto's stories which contains a section "Black Margins" that also consists of various vignettes titled separately.

[24] Alok Bhalla, "A Dance of Grotesque Mask," 21.

the monstrosity of the most crucial phase of south Asian history.[25] In the story "Sorry" translated as "Mishtake" by Khalid Hasan, Manto writes:

> The knife slashed his stomach all the way to his navel.
> His pyjama cord was severed.
> Words of regret escaped the knifewielder's tongue,
> "Tsch, tsch, tsch … I've made a mistake!" (Manto, *Black Margins,* 186)

The lines seemingly very casually record a grotesque incident as an example of the eccentricity of Partition days. The mistake here is related to the identity inscribed in the genitals of the person who is killed, an identity that is realized after the brutal killing. The person killed can belong to either community--Hindu or Muslim--, or the killers, too. The mistake may have occurred because the killers are Hindus and the man is not circumcised or because the man is circumcised and the killers are Muslims. In "Appropriate Action," a Muslim couple seeks shelter in a house whose new occupants are Jains. The couple, fed up with the life of confinement and fear, asks the host to kill them: "We've come to surrender, please kill us" (Manto, *Black Margins,* 183). The host/custodians out of reverence for their non-violent, peace loving religion declare, "Killing is a sin in our religion" (Manto, *Black Margins,* 183), refuse to oblige, and hand over the couple to the neighboring non-Jain residents for appropriate action, i.e., cold blooded murder. In "Aaraam Ki Zaroorat," ("A Respite Needed"), the victimizer desires to let go of the victim because he is exhausted from attacking the latter and needs some respite:

> 'He isn't dead yet. See, see, he is still gasping for breath.'
> Let it go, yaar (my friend). I am already exhausted. (www.rediff.com)

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[25] Alok Bhalla, in "The Politics of Translation," mentions that the stories are designed to be read together (21).

In “Out of Consideration” a wretched person's daughter is spared her life only to be raped. Manto writes:

> ‘Don’t kill my daughter in front of me.’
> ‘All right, all right. Peel off her clothes and throw her in with the other girls!’
> (www.rediff.com)

In “Jelly” the innocence of a child turns macabre when the child says “Look Mummy, jelly!” pointing at the coagulated blood of the ice seller that mixed and merged with the ice cream (Manto, *Black Margins,* 187). In “Correction,” Dharamchand, a Hindu is killed by his own brothers because he underwent circumcision in order to save his life from the Muslims. Despite his struggle to prove his Hindu identity by shouting Hindu slogans and claiming to know the *Vedas* (ancient Hindu religious text), he is asked to show his lower body. When he confesses that being a Hindu, he had committed the sole mistake of undergoing circumcision, one of the Hindu mob leaders orders his men to “Chop off his mistake,” leading to Dharamchand’s instant death (Manto, *Black Margins,* 184). In “What's the Difference,” Manto writes “And the one who had slaughtered in the prescribed manner (i.e., Islamic *halaal* way) was himself slaughtered in the *jhatka* way” of the Hindu/Sikh (Manto, *Black Margins,* 187). In “Safai Pasandi” (“Concern for Cleanliness”), when one man suggests that his friend slash a victim’s throat inside a stationary train, the friend replies:

> “Are you crazy!” cut in his friend.
> “You want to mess up this nice carriage? Slaughter him on the platform.”
> (http://www.sajjanlahore.org)

The man who is ready to kill a human being without compunction advises against committing murder inside a railroad car for fear of dirtying it.

These vignettes together with others, presented with stark realism by Manto, show the utter cruelty of humanity at the time of crisis. The "mistake" in "Sorry," or the chopping off of the mistake in "Correction" for example, remains a part of the genocide, an act of violence committed by humanity gone terribly mad.

Most vignettes in *Black Margins* are bitterly ironic. The effect of the fragments lies in the gap between what the characters understand about their situation and what the readers perceive of it.[26] For example in the capsule story "Sharing the Loot" the owner of a building, a frail middle-aged man," apparently helps the looters to raid his own house telling them " Brothers, this house is filled with wealth, innumerable, priceless objects. Come on, let's take it over and divide up the booty" (Manto, *Black Margin,* 180). The looters, plundering the house in great commotion, are slowly directed towards a big Alsatian dog of the owner. It holds the collar of one of the looters in mouth whereas the others run away. When the man notices that the dog answers the command of the frail looking man, he asks: "who are you?" To a great shock of the looter the frail man answers, "The owner of the house" (Manto, *Black Margins*, 180). The story has a powerful effect because long before the owner of the building announces his identity, the reader has guessed who he is, and when his large dog suddenly attacks the looters at the end, the reader is not surprised whereas the looter is. This point is poignantly felt in "Karamat" ("Miracles"), in which people light lamps in thanksgiving for the miracle of sweet water on the grave of a man who fell into their well trying to hide a looted bag of sugar. At the end of the vignette, Manto writes:

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[26] Leslie Flemming makes this point in "Riots and Refugees": "The real effect of many of these stories lies in the contrast between the characters' understanding of the events in which they participate and our deeper (and, on reflection, horrified) understanding of both characters and events" (100).

> Water drawn from the well the next day tasted sweet.
> The night candles were lit at the man's grave. (www.rediff.com)

In "Mourning the Dead," Manto writes another vignette with powerful irony that represents the madness of the times. It tells of a man who tries to hang a garland of shoes on the statue of Sir Ganga Ram. He is shot and is taken to the very Sir Ganga Ram hospital for treatment. Similarly, "An Enterprise" presents the bizarre human acts at the time of Partition violence with a touch of irony. Manto writes:

> Fire broke out. The entire mohalla (hamlet) went up in flames.
> Only one shop escaped. The signboard on the shop read,
> 'A complete range of building materials sold here.'
> (Manto, *Black Margins*, 184-185)

In "Warning," after the owner of the house is dragged outside by the rioters, he points his finger toward them and says, "You can kill me, but I am warning you, don't dare you touch my money" (http://www.sajjanlahore.org). The irony in the warning here sounds bizarre and grotesquely funny.

In some of the very short vignettes, the irony and humor turn on the puns skillfully employed by the author. The pun is usually found in common words and phrases of Urdu, used most often in the very last line of the anecdote. In "Taqsim" ("Partition"), for example, two partners (*hissedars*) about to divide the contents of a stolen trunk, are themselves divided into four parts (*hisse-hisse)* when a fugitive leaps out of it and chops them up. In "Hamesha Ki Chhutti" ("Vacation Forever"), a man chased by two murderers is called *shikar* (a prey). He is granted *hamesha ki chhutti* (vacation forever) when he asks the assailants not to kill him because he was on his way to his home on *chhutti*, i.e., vacation/leave. "Ghate Ka Sauda" ("Losing Bargain") shows two men who by mistake buy a girl of their own religious community rather than of the other.

The *sauda* (bargain) turns out to be of *ghata* (loss) here. Once they realize that they are cheated, one of them says: "That bastard doublecrossed us. He palmed off one of our own girls! Come on, let's take her back" (Manto, *Black Margins*, 185). In "Pathanistan," a guard questions a man intending to cross the border whether he is a Hindu or a Muslim. After the man replies he is a Muslim, the next question put is: "Who is your Prophet?" The answer that lets him cross the border to Pathanistan/Pathan Land is most surprising as the man says that his prophet is "Mohammad Khan." Just the first name Mohammad that is identical with Prophet Mohammad gives him permission to pass as the guard orders: "Let him go." (Manto, *Mottled Dawn*, 194). These anecdotes depend for their effect on the readers' understanding of the puns and verbal ironies which they embody. Manto speaks most pointedly in the language of irony as if his ironic writing is the verbal equivalent of the scene of violence.

Manto does not write with an aim to appeal to the emotions of his readers. He rather depicts the essential human condition and aims at the intellect of the readers. Almost all his stories are capable of conveying the trauma to the readers because of the tension between emotional and intellectual appeal and the ironic treatment of the subject. His literary works force people to confront anew the shocks of the original trauma. Manto thus recreates the partition violence in the text to enable the readers to experience it visually and vicariously and to receive an intellectual and emotional shock.

All thirty-two "capsule stories" in *Black Margins* contain this ability to shock. We can say that in these vignettes, Manto has exactly recreated the gruesome scenes of violence with the intensity in which they had occurred. "Sorry," "Fifty-Fifty," and "Correction" are the supreme examples of the exact depiction of the violent scenes. Here

as elsewhere, Manto's ironic technique gives the readers a glimpse of the true history of the violent Partition when millions of Indians and Pakistanis experienced the trauma of dislocation, madness, rape, and looting, and he registers their revulsion against it, too.

One may argue that Manto's longer stories have not exactly recreated the monstrous scenes of inhuman violence, but they also vividly communicate the effect of violence with stark realism. In his story "The Assignment," Manto depicts a sinister situation of the violation of trust and love. Santokh Singh, son of Gurumukh Singh, paves the way for the rioters with torches in their hands to set fire to the house of Mia Abdul Hai, a retired judge. Mia Abdul had helped late Gurumukh Singh in a court case and the latter used to bring a gift for the judge every year for the last ten years, This year, as promised to his father on his death bed, Santokh hands over the gift to Sughra, daughter of the ailing judge. As he leaves the house completing his "assignment," the following conversation takes place between him and a member of the mob:

> "Sardarji, have you completed your assignment?"
> The young man nodded.
> "Should we then proceed with ours?" he asked.
> "If you like," he replied and walked away. (Manto, *Selected Stories*, 11)

The readers understand that these men will now do their duty of setting fire to the house, and the family will probably die in the fire. This story on the one hand shows the breach of trust and on the other hand shows the very complicated situation involved at the time of crisis: Santokh at a personal level meets the Muslim family, exchanges sweet words, shows concern and executes his duty of presenting the gift as desired by his dying father. However, he is also implicated in assisting the mob of Sardarjis who were fighting against the Muslims, their communal enemies.

In "Toba Tek Singh," Manto creates a character who is so confused by the absurd notion of dividing a land into two halves and sending citizens to a new, alien location, and so much affected by the trauma of displacement, that he collapses in a no-man's land between India and Pakistan. At the end of the story, Manto writes:

> Just before sunrise, a deafening cry erupted from the throat of a mute and immovable Bishan Singh. Several officials rushed to the spot and found that the man, who had remained on his legs, day and night for fifteen years, was now lying on his face. Over there, behind the barbed wire, was Hindustan. Over here, behind identical wires, lay Pakistan. In between, on a bit of land that had no name, lay Toba Tek Singh. (Manto, *For Freedom's Sake,* 148)

After showing the protagonist's rejection of an absurd and artificially constructed identity through nationhood, which is expressed time and again in the question--Where is Toba Tek Singh, in Pakistan or in India?--, Manto leads Bishan Singh toward this pathetic end.

Bishan Singh stretches on the ground and the piece of ground itself becomes, at that moment for him, the place Toba Tek Singh where Bishan Singh most wants to be. Manto characterises Bishan Singh in such a way that it is difficult to distinguish him from the place he comes from and in his death Bishan Singh finally seems to reach his home in Toba Tek Singh, with which he is now totally identified. Bishan Singh remains immobilized between the two nations illustrating the traumatic state of those uprooted by the absurd division of the Indian subcontinent. Bishan Singh's confusion about Toba Tek Singh's exact location and the prisoners' confusion about Pakistan and India portray the exact situation faced by millions of people during the Partition. The Mountbatten Plan and the Radcliff Award responsible for drawing the line of division between the two nations in a hasty and whimsical manner left people completely in a muddled state, unable to know for days, or even months, where exactly their province was located. In

that ambiguity and in Bishan Singh's ear-splitting cry and death are focused all the pain and grief of the millions, who, like Bishan Singh, were forced to leave their homes.[27]

It may thus be said that dislocation leading to madness and death is most poignantly described in "Toba Tek Singh" in which the protagonist, Bishan Singh dies in a most pathetic manner. At the same time, Bishan Singh is shown resisting/defying the artificial line of division drawn by the leaders of the nation, which caused death and destruction, tension and trauma to millions, and relegated about a million to the status of homeless refugees. Bishan Singh's death takes place in the no-man's land where the writ of neither nation--India or Pakistan--prevails.

In "The Prose of Otherness," Gyanendra Pandey reads "Toba Tek Singh" at the simple level of irony explaining that the leaders outside the prison are more insane than the lunatics in the asylum.[28] The story does not seem to concern much about the ironic resolution of the tension between the insane and sane as Pandey argues. If this paradox is the point of the story, then it is long resolved by the storyteller--much before we come to the end of the story. Some of the lunatics' identification with Jinnah, the Muslim leader, Tara Singh, the Sikh leader, and *Khuda*, who announces himself as God, bear testimony to it. The identification of the mad prisoners with the leaders and the act of shutting the prisoners in separate cells as dangerous beings who can incite communal tension suggests Manto's opinion about them. It looks funny that these lunatics are separated for fear of causing disturbance in the jail community whereas the so-called leaders had caused devastation to the society at large outside the walls of the jail. For Manto, the leaders are

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[27] Leslie Flemming, "Riots and Refugees," 107.

[28] Ayesha Jalal, in *Pity of Partition,* too conveys a similar opinion when she says that the message of the story is "searing but clear: the madness of partition was greater than the insanity of all the inmates put together" (186).

more dangerous than and at least as insane as the prisoners in the asylum.[29] As an answer to the question of Bishan Singh where his native Toba Tek Singh is, Khuda's announcement "neither in India nor in Pakistan, because, so far, we have issued no orders in this respect," further endorses the idea of confusion among the leaders (including God?) themselves in the aftermath of Partition (Manto, *Selected Stories,* 14). However, Manto is doing more than this. In fact, it is the resistance of the subaltern against the insane decision to transport the lunatics across the Radcliff line, that provides the crux of the story, rendered through the "ironic gaze" of the author and which is communicated to the readers with a powerful effect. This is particularly evidenced in the story's ending when Bishan Singh refuses to move towards Hindustan or Pakistan and rather prefers to die on the boundary, or when a lunatic earlier in the story says with rage, "I wish to live neither in India nor in Pakistan. I wish to live in this tree" (Manto, *Selected Stories,* 11).

Several incidents in "Toba Tek Singh" clearly illustrate the way Manto produces his powerful effect on the readers. To give an example, we may look at the scene between Bishan Singh and Fazal Deen where the latter narrates what has happened to the Sardar's family:

> Your people have all reached Hindustan safely. I did whatever I could for them. Your daughter, Roop Kaur . . . He stopped in the mid-sentence. 'Daughter Roop Kaur?' Bishan Singh tried to recall something. Fazal Deen went on haltingly, 'Yes, yes she too is quite well. She too has gone away with the others.' (Manto, *For Freedom's Sake,* 146)

The way Fazal Deen utters his words haltingly, or his incapability to speak smoothly, suggests, to the shock of the readers, the violence perpetrated upon Roop Kaur. It was a common feature of the calamitous time that a young girl like her was mercilessly raped.

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[29] In this regard Asaduddin in his introduction to *Black Margins* remarks, "It is the madness of the sane which is a million times more destructive than the madness of the insane" (34).

Readers can also feel a powerful shock when Bishan Singh frequently talks about his native place Toba Tek Singh saying, "Opar di gurgur di annexe di bay dhiana di mung di daal of Toba Tek Singh and Pakistan" (Manto 148). Though incomprehensible in its entirety, some of the words in this sentence are sensible. Words like "daal" (preparation of pulses such as lentils, peas, beans), "mung" (a kind of lentil), "government of Pakistan/Toba Tek Singh" suggest how attached he is to his native place and how disturbing it is for him to be dislocated.

Bishan Singh's death in the no-man's land creates a kind of bond of empathy among the victim, the writer, and the readers obliterating all the gaps whatsoever. The tragedy in "Toba Tek Singh" not only shocks the dislocated Bishan Singh and the writer, but also the readers. Although an art form, the story does not merely tell and show the readers the tragedy of the dislocated; it appeals to their intellect and implicates them in the tragedy creating at the same time an ironic distance. By breaking the boundary between art and life, it forces readers to come out of their complacency, bear witness to human tragedy of a large scale, and to share the trauma of the uprooted with all its monstrous horrors.

"Toba Tek Singh," a "powerful and disturbing" story enables the writer to send powerful shock waves to the readers recreating and recapturing "the misery-ness of misery."[30] Manto produces this effect also in two other famous short stories--"Akhri Salute" and "Titwal Ka Kutta"--which particularly deal with the peculiar conflict of loyalties felt by the soldiers on each side while fighting over Kashmir in the aftermath of Partition.

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[30] Gopinath Narang, "Manto Reconsidered," 7.

"Akhri Salute" ("The Last Salute") is the story of two soldiers, a Muslim and a Sikh. Though fast friends from childhood and formerly members of the same regiment, they now find themselves on opposite sides of a mountain stronghold, shooting at each other's platoons. As he fights, the Muslim Subedar Rabb Nawaaz, keeps recalling old faces from his battles during World War II and cannot understand why he has been told to fight for his "homeland":

> This was his country before the establishment of Pakistan and it was his country now. This was his land. But now he was fighting against men who were his countrymen until only the other day. Men who had grown up in the same village, whose families had been known to his family for generations. These men had now been turned into citizens of a country to which they were complete strangers. (Manto, *Mottled Dawn,* 39)

Rabb Nawaaz is in utter confusion about his motherland and its citizens. He does not understand how a part of his own land has turned into a foreign country, and how his former friends have become aliens.

In the midst of the fighting, Rabb Nawaaz is hailed from across the valley by his old friend Ram Singh, who asks for a respite from the fighting so that his men can have their tea in a safe place. Rabb Nawaaz agrees, but mistakenly thinking that Ram Singh was protected by rocks, he fires and mortally wounds him. In the fighting that follows, Rabb Nawaaz's platoon captures the position of Ram Singh's platoon. As Ram Singh lies dying, he and Rabb Nawaaz exchange memories of their childhood and years together in the army. In his last moments, Ram Singh sees his former commanding officer, a Major Aslam who is Muslim, and salutes him; then realizing the gulf that has come between them, drops his hand in confusion and dies looking questioningly at Rabb Nawaaz. In its delineation of Rabb Nawaaz's doubt of his identity as a Pakistani, its depiction of the brief but touching exchanges between the two soldiers, its portrait of the human

relationship that transcends religious and national boundaries, and its expression of the poignancy of Ram Singh's last act of confusion, "Akhri Salute" is a moving testament to the pain of divided loyalties felt by many after Partition.[31]

The beautiful hills of Kashmir provide the setting also for "Titwal Ka Kutta" ("The Dog of Titwal"). More sarcastic in tone than "Akhri Salute," "Titwal Ka Kutta" illustrates the absurdity of the military and political situations in India and Pakistan. It is a story about the plight of the victims of nationhood, showing the fatal dangers caused by human notions of national boundaries and national identities. The boundaries are made so sacrosanct that they not only deprive ordinary masses of their free movement but also reduce them to the status of homeless refugees, causing immense suffering and death.

A stray dog representing the millions of refugees meets its end by getting caught in the cross-fire between the Indian and the Pakistani troops--formerly comrades-in-arms fighting a common enemy--the British. Although they faced a serious dilemma, they had to make a choice to belong to a specific national army based on religious affiliation or denomination and to fight for their respective nation and geographical boundaries. The artificial national boarder--the Radcliff line--became all important for them, more important even than their fellow beings, their former friends, allies, comrades and compatriots.

The dog is explicitly described as a displaced creature. Banta Singh says, "He is only a poor refugee" (Manto, *Short Story,* 884). The dog occupies the position of all the confused, displaced, dislocated, uprooted, and hungry millions on both sides of the boundary in the aftermath of partition. Its vagabond status not only recalls that of the

[31] Leslie Flemming, "Riots and Refugees," 85.

many refugees wandering about, looking for shelter and food, but the dog also symbolizes the soldiers themselves who are no less confused and anxious about their own "belongingness" as well as "identity."[32] The dog is shot by both armies at the end. Manto mocks the foolish gullibility and mindlessness of people in relation to discourses of power and authority that create confusion and ambiguity, which are causes enough for suffering. Despite the confusion, however, Manto makes it clear that the canine dies "a dog's death."[33]

The dog's situation embodies the dilemma of all people who faced such a closure of choice because of Partition as evidenced in the writings not only of Manto but also of Bapsi Sidhwa, Chaman Nahal and others. Millions faced this problem, including Manto himself who could never forget his Indian root as he lived the life of an exile in Pakistan until his death. Through his own experience as well as the general experience of millions of nameless people during the genocidal violence of 1947, Manto achieves a searing critique of the oppressive structure that came into being with the division of the subcontinent through the allegorical presentation of the dog's plight and its ultimate death.[34]The story not only allegorizes the predicament of the uprooted and exiled people but also comments on the dehumanization of war which fostered irreconcilable mutual hatreds. For Manto, the end of British Raj was an occasion not for celebration but for mourning. He always talked about the breakdown of a civilization into mutually hostile and warring nation states. Hence, the story illustrates his deep hatred for nationalism and

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[32] Ravikant and Tarun K Saint, "The Dog of Tetwal in Context: The Nation and its Victims," 97.

[33] Sashi Joshi, in "The World of Saadat Hasan Manto," remarks that it is hard to say whether the dog "died a noble death" or "he died a dog's death" (152). Those who believe that that the dog died noble death might argue that he died for the cause of nationalism as a loyal patriot; however, it is evident in the text that nationalism, patriotism and loyalty in this case are all vague concepts. The dog does not die for any clear noble reason, and even if it had, the death would ultimately be irrational and miserable in the context.

the meaningless hatred and violence it generates and perpetuates.[35] "The Dog of Titwal," together with "The Last Salute," depicts the plight of uprooted and displaced people and the dilemma and devastation caused by the absurd notion of nationality experienced by Manto himself.

Manto sees himself to be an exile-cut off from his home, his *vatan*, and his cultural roots just because he happened to be born in a family that followed a different religion. He has nostalgia for his native land, which he cannot forget. Bombay remains always in his heart and mind. Despite his loyalty to the newly formed nation, he feels himself a foreigner, an alien and an outsider in Pakistan. This feeling finds expression in one of his essays, "Zaroorat Hai" ("Wanted"), which shows discrimination by insiders (local Pakistanis) against outsiders (the new migrants from India). Differences between insiders (locals) and outsiders (migrants) have been a perennial social and political problem in many South-East Asian societies causing death and destruction.[36] Manto's trauma of dislocation might have been intensified by this bitter reality, too.

A champion of the disadvantaged, Manto never lost sight of the plight of women during the carnage of Partition. He paints the sufferings of abducted or raped women in stories such as "Khol Do" ("Open It"), "Xuda Ki Kasam," and "Mozail." During Partition, the female body became a kind of contested territory for assault and conquest. The opposing community vigorously attacked the body and honor of the women of the other community. A woman's body served as "a trophy of victory or a blot on the

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[34] Ravikant and Tarun K Saint, "The Dog of Tetwal in Context," 98.
[35] Ziauddin Sardar, in "Coming Home: Sex, Lies and All the 'I' in India," observes that Manto never talked about independence but about the Partition that gave rise to contending nations and nationalities (891).
[36] Tarannum Riyaz, "Saadat Hasan Manto: Ideologue and Social Philosophy," 206.

collective honour."[37] Many young girls and married women were raped and killed, bought and sold, or made mistresses by the males of the other community.

Manto uses the method of irony in "Khol Do" not only to shock but also to affect the readers by the trauma either of the victim/survivor or the perpetrator of the violence. "Khol Do" depicts most powerfully how Manto comes to grips with the human pain of Partition, exploring with a combination of anger, sarcasm, and tenderness the effects of the violence and dislocation on its victims. An old man attempts to find his only daughter, from whom he has become separated while escaping looters. When he wakes up in a crowded refugee camp, Old Sirajuddin at first feels completely numb, unable to recollect anything about the night in which Sakina disappeared:

> At ten in the morning when Sirajuddin opened his eyes in the camp and saw the tumultuous crowds of men and boys around him, he almost lost his wits. For a long time he kept staring at the sky. The camp was filled with noise but it seemed as if old Sirajuddin's ears were sealed. He couldn't hear anything. . . . But he had become senseless. It was as though he was suspended in space. (Manto, *For Freedom's Sake,* 131)

When he comes back to his senses, the father engages the help of eight volunteers, who cross the border in search of the lost and abandoned. After ten days of praying and waiting, Sirajuddin is present when the corpse of a girl found on the roadside is brought into a make-shift hospital. When the doctor turns on the light, Sirajuddin recognizes the girl as his daughter. On the heels of this discovery, however, comes yet another discovery no less disconcerting than the first one.

> The doctor looked at the body lying on the stretcher and felt its pulse. Then he pointed toward the window and said to him, 'Open it.'
> The body stirred slightly on the stretcher.
> The lifeless hands untied the waistband.

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[37] M. Asaduddin in "Introduction" to *Black Margins*, 31.

> And lowered the *shalwar.*
>
> 'She's alive! My daughter's alive!' Old Sirajuddin shouted with joy.
> The doctor broke into a cold sweat. (Manto, *For Freedom's Sake,* 134)

Trauma-afflicted Sakina, at the end of the story, is in such a state of mind that she cannot distinguish the voice of a rapist from the voice of a doctor. The father seems happy to find his daughter alive, but the doctor knows better the future of a girl raped and left to live. She is not going to be accepted by her family or society. Manto's rhetorical strategy particularly in these last few lines of the story dramatizes the grisly aspect in humanity–enabling the writer to greatly shock the readers.

Likewise, Manto paints the woes of an abducted woman in "Xuda Ki Kasam" (God's Promise). Told in the first person by a liaison officer involved with the recovery of "abandoned" women, the story portrays an old Muslim woman in search of her only daughter. The mother has braved all the sufferings of Partition and survived only by hoping to find her daughter alive. When one day she comes across the daughter, the latter averts her face and walks by. The old woman shouts after the young woman and tells the liaison officer that she has seen her daughter. However, the officer replies:

> "Your daughter is dead." . . . .
> "I swear on God your daughter is dead." (Manto, *Orphans of the Storm*, 170)

When she hears the response of the officer, the old woman drops down dead, because the daughter does not acknowledge the identity or the presence of her mother. The daughter refuses to recognize the mother and reveal their relationship because as an abducted woman, she would not be accepted either by her mother or by the society. The concept of family or national honor associated with women has caused her social death after her abduction by a member of the opposing community. This story thus conveys all the pain

of broken relationships that followed the Partition violence, especially the social death of the raped or abducted women. “Khol Do” and “Xuda Ki Kasam” suggest how Partition cost human lives, killing not only individuals but also their family ties and social relationship. Bishan Singh’s pathetic death in no- man’s land in “Toba Tek Singh,” Sakina’s reflexive action of untying the waistband at the command of male voice in “Khol Do,” and the tragic death of the old mother in “Xuda Ki Kasam,” not only upset the readers, witnesses, and survivors but also make them question the very decision of Partition.

Manto uses the short story form as a fitting vehicle to represent the violence of 1947. In a highly balanced manner, he depicts the cruelty of human beings and the violence perpetrated by them. He raises himself above the cultural and religious barriers of the time and portrays the grim realities of the day. He is “able to construct a text which is more immediate and incisive than most journalistic accounts of Partition.”[38] Some of his very short stories faithfully capture and mirror the sudden violent eruptions of the times.

Manto constructs his longer stories such as “Naya Qanoon,” “A Woman’s Life,” “Black Shalwar,” “Mozail,” and “Xuida Ki Kasam” with a view to well-structured plot and inevitable denouement. He successfully invests his characters with some psychological depth in stories such as “Naya Qanoon,” “Cold Meat,” and “Mozail.” Stories such as “Cold Meat,” “Khuda Ki Kasam,” and “Khol Do” bear ironic endings that recreate scenes of violence. Together with the ironic ending of “Toba Tek Singh,” these

[38] Stephen Alter, “Madness and Partition: The Short Stories of Saadat Hasan Manto,” 99.

stories produce a kind of analogue to the trauma of the characters in the readers, a kind of mild secondary shock as if the trauma were transmitted to them.

Cathy Caruth states that traumatic experience suggests a kind of paradox because the most direct witness of a violent event has no ability to know it at the moment but knows about it belatedly. She describes trauma as "the response to an unexpected or overwhelming violent event or events that are not fully grasped as they occur, but return later in repeated flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena"(Caruth, "Unclaimed Experience," 208). Many of Manto's characters cannot comprehend their situation fully while they experience or witness the traumatic events. A good example can be seen in Sirajuddin when he shouts with joy: "She's alive! My daughter's alive!" (Manto, *For Freedom's Sake,* 134). Manto suggests that the full implication of the situation will become clear for Sirajuddin only later when he will neither be able to appreciate her being alive nor accept her as his daughter. Happy though he is now, he is going to be traumatized throughout life. Sakina herself acts as if in reflex action now. We can only imagine her traumatic condition later, provided she remains alive. Many of these characters go mad, remain dazed, or die; Bishan Singh in "Toba Tek Singh" goes mad and dies. Manto's effort at translating the inability of his characters to comprehend their situations lends a kind of incomprehensibility to the stories themselves. Some of the stories are presented as painful puzzles. Without much narrativization, Manto transmits the trauma through the short story form as if the form were the objective correlative of their situation.

By adopting the victim's point of view, Manto's short stories silence the authorial voice and help the author objectively describe the scenes of violence. The vignettes are

told in a distant third person narrative voice employing minimalist style of using few words, avoiding character development, concentrating on a short single action, and renouncing authorial intervention. Most vignettes present the point of view of faceless, nameless characters. Even the longer short stories avoid authorial voice. "Toba Tek Singh," for instance, presents the trauma of the dislocated millions on both sides of the border through a lunatic Bishan Singh's point of view; "Cold Meat/Flesh" presents the point of view of a Sikh young man carried away by the sinister wave of Partition violence; and "Mozail" presents the point of view of a lower class woman of dubious character.

The short story form also gives a better opportunity for the writer to make sparing use of characterization devoid of religious, ideological or cultural markers. Manto makes no effort to describe characters in detail nor does he identify them by religion, culture, or any communal group. At the extreme of brevity and concentration, the anecdotal stories in "Black Margins" graphically paint the picture of the eruption of violence in South Asia without any descriptions or explanations. In this collection of vignettes, Manto usually refers to the characters as "a boy," "a man," "Kashmir laborer" ("Wages of Labor"); "a man," "another man," "the first man" ("Fifty-Fifty"); "two friends," "the girl," "the other religious community" ("A Raw Deal"); an unruly crowd of forty or fifty "lathi-wielding men," "a frail middle-age man," "four looters" ("Sharing the Loot"), "the passengers," "those who belonged to the other religion," ("Humility") and so on.

Although we can observe cultural visibility of characters in "Yazid" and "Mozail," this form of representation serves as a step toward the discarding of the narrow confines of cultural norms. Manto soon moves beyond the cultural specificity of people

belonging to different communities to discuss in general--humanity. In the process he creates powerful characters that reject limiting cultural markers, or creates situations that refute or change the stereotypical images of ideas, beliefs and rituals. In "Yazid," for example, Karim Dad names his new-born son Yazid (meaning "tyrant") so as to change the very stereotype embedded in the psyche of his Muslim readers. In Muslim legend, Yazid had been a most hated character who closed a river so as to deprive his enemies of water. Muslims in "Yazid" call Indians Yazid because there was a rumor that India was going to stop the course of rivers so as to deprive Pakistani's of water, and thereby their life. Karim Dad, however, names his newborn Yazid explaining that it is only a name, and, "It's not necessary that the little one here should be the same Yazid. That Yazid damned the waters; this one will make them flow again" (Manto, *Mottled Dawn,* 108**).** Karim Dad's remark tries to give a new meaning to the word "Yazid" and also suggests a kind of hope for the future generation. His villagers, including the village-chief Choudhary Nathoo, shower abuses on India and its Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru on this score, but Karim Dad tells them not to abuse others. He argues with the villagers saying: "I just don't think it right to call the Indians mean, bastardly and cruel" (Manto, *Mottled Dawn,* 107). He suggests them to think about the problem "carefully and coolly" to ensure that Partition and the ensuing riots will not be repeated. Knowing well that both sides have committed mistakes and both sides have been treating the other as enemy in the present he objects to calling Indians as petty and unscrupulous.

The story illustrates Manto's refutation of two-nation theory, and also shows how human desire is more important than religion and identity: "the claims of human desire

are far more worthy than the claims of religious texts and tribal identities." [39] Instead of worrying about Hindu-Muslim riots, the protagonist in "Yazid" shows interest in his marriage. Manto rejects the idea that Muslim re-location was a "hizrat" (migration) in search of an Islamic homeland free from the threat of contamination by the Hindu "kafirs" (infidels), another meaning of Yazid. For Manto, Yazid exists in all--it is a part of each one of us. Further, he rejects here the assertion of history that Hindu-Muslim relations were based on hatred from the very beginning. He says that the history of relations between the two people has been one of harmony and antagonism, not of hatred alone.

Similarly, in "Mozail," Manto makes use of cultural symbolism and differences, but only in order to discard them later. Mozail, the protagonist of Jewish descent, refuses to marry Tarlochan for the latter is a Sikh. She makes fun of his hair, turban, and other cultural paraphernalia associated with his religion. She, in her short hair, ugly lipstick and frocks is a cultural stereotype of a bohemian girl. Tarlochan is another stereotype with his long hair, beard, and turban, and so is his wife Kirpal Kaur, the virtuous and religious Sikh girl. However, later, the same Tarlochan who earlier fumed at Mozail for ridiculing his religion gets his beard shaved. Mozail also saves Tarlochan's fiancée/wife, rising above the sanctions of religion, and in the process she is killed at the hands of rioters. Just before she dies, pointing toward Tarlochan's turban, Mozail says: "Take away this rag of your religion" (Manto, *Selected Stories*, 49). Manto diminishes the importance of the Sikh religious symbol through the words and acts of Mozail, which place the humanitarian ideas of love, help, and sacrifice above any ritual.

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[39] Alok Bhalla, "The Politics of Translation," 33.

In a similar vein, in "Two-Nation Theory," Manto depicts the problem created by nationalism based on religious identity when two lovers Sharda (Hindu) and Mukhtar (Muslim) have to part with bitter feelings. At the critical time of Partition, the two lovers decide to marry. Mukhtar calmly proposes that Sharda formally become a Muslim. Unable to digest the idea, she in turn suggests that Mukhtar become a Hindu. At this, Mukhtar states: "The Hindu religion is no religion. Hindus drink cow urine; they worship idols. I mean it's alright in its place, but it cannot compare with Islam. If you become a Muslim, everything will fall in place" (Manto, *Selected Stories*, 290). Sharda is greatly upset at the abuses directed at her religion, but insists that Mukhtar should become a Hindu if he wants to marry her. At this Mukhtar says, "Are you mad!" This statement fills Sharda with hatred and she orders Mukhtar to leave immediately threatening, "they will be here," and suggesting that the Hindus may arrive and he will be in trouble. Manto ends the story with the following lines: "She went into the other room and shut the door. Mukhtar, his Islam tucked inside his chest, left the house" (290). The ending not only suggests the pain of lovers' separation caused by Partition but also Manto's dislike for division among people in the name of religion or nationality based on religion.

In "The Price of Freedom," Manto seems to voice his opinion about religious markers in a clearer voice when he makes the veteran freedom fighter, ready to sacrifice his life for the freedom of India, utter these words: "You can be virtuous without having your head shaved, without donning saffron robes or covering yourself with ash" (Manto, *Selected Stories*, 306). For Manto, religion has to do not with the external paraphernalia but with the heart and the spirit. In "A Tale of 1947," Mumtaz clearly says, "faith, belief, devotion, call it what you will, is a thing of the spirit; it is not physical (Manto, "*Orphans*

of the Storm, 158). Like his creator Manto, Mumtaz does not grant value to the religious marks, religious dress, or the manner of prayers and worship, and the external codes of conduct.

The erasure of geographical, political and national boundaries contributes to the unprecedented neutrality of Manto's writing in the history of Partition literature. He takes no sides: he writes neither as a Pakistani nor as a Hindustani. Manto does not recognize the imposition of any political boundary.[40] His characters "travel across blank geographical space."[41] Hence we find his rapists to be Indians and Pakistanis, Hindus/Sikhs and Muslims, and his victims too come from both communities and countries. A Sikh, Ishar Singh, in "Cold Meat" rapes a Muslim girl, and in "Xuda Ki Kasam," Hindu rioters abduct a Muslim girl, but in "Khol Do," Muslim volunteers themselves rape a helpless Muslim girl. Similarly, in "Ghate Ka Sauda," a particular male of a religious community is cheated into taking a female of his own community. Only after he spends a night with her does he realize that he has been double-crossed. Even the trains raided in his stories could belong to either India or Pakistan. A few lines from "Humility" defy not only the sense of place but also erase national and religio-cultural markers:

> The moving train was forcibly brought to a halt. Those who belonged to the other religion were dragged out and killed with swords and bullets. The rest of the passengers were treated to 'halva', fruits and milk. (Manto, *For Freedom's Sake,* 120)

Without pinpointing whether the passengers were Hindus or Muslims, Manto simply refers to them as "those who belonged to the other religion."

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[40] Tarannum Riyaz, "Saadat Hasan Manto: Ideologue and Philosophy," 202.
[41] Alok Bhalla, "The Politics of Translation," 33.

The following lines from "Sorry," quoted earlier, provide an instance of Manto's objectivity at his neutral best: "The knife slashed his stomach all the way to his naval. His pajama cord was severed. Words of regret escaped from the knife-wielder's tongue: 'Tsch, tsch, tsch, tsch…I have made a mistake!'" (Manto, *Black Margins,* 186). The victim here has no identity. He is left unacknowledged and "merely strays into a lethal historical time"[42] transcending all communities, beliefs, nationalities, and culture. Similarly, in delineating Rabb Nawaaz's doubt of his identity as a Pakistani, portraying of human relationship between the two soldiers in "Akhri Salute," Manto creates a literary piece that transcends religious and national boundaries.

Manto is "neither a moralist nor an ideologue, neither a sermonizer nor a nationalist"[43] He writes neither to teach nor to preach, and so he prescribes nothing and proscribes nothing.[44] Manto "blames no one, but he also forgives no one."[45] Without sparing either side—India or Pakistan--he represents the breakdown of trust, the atmosphere of suspicion and paranoia, the hostility and rigidity of thought that percolates down even to the common man. He only portrays what his observant eyes see around him, and what he sees is a civilization gone mad. He presents the picture of humanity gone wild with unprecedented candor, courage and objectivity, particularly in his very short stories.

Manto retained a strong attachment to the land of his birth. Often he had the feeling that he was trapped in between India and Pakistan. However, he shows no nationalist bias in his writing, perhaps because of his love-hate relationship with the

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[42] Alok Bhalla, "A Dance of Grotesque Mask," 22.
[43] Alok Bhala, "The Politics of Translation," 37.
[44] Sashi Joshi, "The World of Saadat Hasan Manto," 157.

countries, his diasporic life, and his existence in Pakistan with "double-consciousness." In fact, Manto's plight was no different from that of the dog of Titwal or of Bishan Singh. He lived in Pakistan as an exile. Partition of the country deeply pained him. The pain never allowed him to experience the pleasure of being free from the brutal British Raj. Manto talked not about independence but about Partition.[46] The end of British Empire gave no joy to Manto; it meant for him more an occasion for mourning than celebration. He always talked about the breakdown of a civilization into mutually hostile and warring nation-states.

Manto was much pained by the killings in the name of religion. Organized religions such as Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam did not interest him much, although he knew that they were deeply ingrained in human heart and could not be wiped out by guns and bullets. In "A Tale of 1947," Manto describes the futile attempt of Hindus and Muslims to exterminate the religion of the other. He writes, "Only the naïve can believe that religion can be eliminated with a gun" (Manto, *Orphans of the Storm*, 158). After killing hundreds of thousands of Hindus and Muslims, people can still see both religions "alive and well." No one, in Manto's opinion, can destroy or kill anybody's religion even by killing the person physically: as Mumtaz says, "assuming that he was a Muslim, you wouldn't have killed his Muslimness, but him" (Manto, *Orphans of the Storm*, 161). Therefore, in Manto's view, killing millions in the name of religion is meaningless, for it proves nothing: "The great tragedy is not that two hundred thousand people have been killed, but that the enormous loss of life has been futile" (158).

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[45] Alok Bhalla, "A Dance of Grotesque Mask," 28.
[46] Sardar, Ziauddin, "Coming Home: Sex, Lies and all the 'I' in India," 891.

Manto stands apart from his contemporaries in his belief in and his deep love for humanity. Despite the portrayal of human violence at its worst, Manto never lost hope in humanity, and always found a space to include the fact in his stories. In his writings, he refuses to look at people as Hindus, Muslims, Christian or Sikhs, or as Hindustanis or Pakistanis. To Manto, "they were all human beings."[47]

Significantly, despite being cynical, Manto has full faith in humanity.[48] As a humanist of highest order, he seems to say that humanity is still beautiful despite its ugliness. Leslie Flemming quotes Aksari who says, "Man, even in his real shape, is acceptable to Manto, however he may be. He has already seen that man's humanity is tenacious enough so that even his becoming a wild animal cannot extinguish this humanity. Manto has confidence in humanity ("Riots" 101). "Cold Meat" foregrounds the trauma of Ishar Singh, the perpetrator of violence. At the end of the story, Ishar Singh has become an ice-cold lump of flesh--having sexual intercourse with the dead body of a Muslim girl. "She . . . she was dead…a corpse . . . a lump of cold flesh. *Jaani*, give me your hand. Kalwant Kaur placed her hand on his. It was colder than ice" (Manto, *For Freedom's Sake*, 140). The ending suggests that Ishar Singh is transformed into the state of a human being from the state of a vampire. He is shaken to the core at his own bestiality and impotency. The shock not only awakens the humane quality in the perpetrator but also helps him in "working through" the trauma. This is evidenced in Isher Singh's request to Kalwant in a "heartrending tone" not to swear at the other woman: "Don't call her a bitch" (139). He is repentant of his earlier misdeeds. A further

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[47] Khalid Hasan in "Introduction" to *Selected Stories*, *xii-xiii.*

[48] Ayesha Jalal, in *Pity of Partition,* observes that Manto's story convey the message that, "human depravity, though real and pervasive, can never succeed in killing all sense of humanity" (24).

proof of the realization of his mistake is that Ishar Singh twice utters the following words: “Man is a damned mother fucking creature” (139-140). Ishar Singh is shown not totally depraved of moral qualities and the sense of right and wrong. Manto thus shows the redeeming qualities at least in the recognition of human values in Ishar Singh.

Through the following passage in “Toba Tek Singh,” Manto more clearly shows the essential goodness of humanity. The speaker here is Fazal Deen, Bishan Singh’s old Muslim friend from Toba Tek Singh. He has come to see his friend Bishan Singh in jail after Partition and the expulsion of the latter’s family to India. Fazal Deen says:

> Give my salaams to brother Balbeer Singh and brother Vadwa Singh and to sister Amrit Kaur, too. Tell brother Balbeer Singh that Fazal Deen is happy. The two brown buffaloes he left here have both calved, one male calf and the other a female that died six days after birth. And tell me if there is anything that I can do for you. I'm always at your service. And here I've brought some home-made sweets for you. (Manto, *For Freedom’s Sake*, 146)

Here, Manto conveys the sense of human love, warmth and the intimate sense of fellow-feeling. Fazal Deen’s concern for his Sikh friends goes beyond the narrow confines of religious and national boundaries. With all his powerful depictions of violence, he does not forget to awaken the slumbering humanity or the humanity gone mad at the time of crisis.

Humanity itself was Manto’s religion and faith. He did not believe in any religion except humanity. The organized religions such as Hinduism, Islam, or Christianity were “infections” for him. In “A Tale of 1947,” Mumtaz remarks: “When I say religion or faith, I do not mean this infection which afflicts ninety-nine percent of us. To me, faith is what makes a human being special, distinguishes him from the herd, proves his humanity” (Manto, *Orphans of the Storm,* 161). This belief of Mumtaz well sums up the idea of Manto’s religion of humanity.

Manto exhibits his subalternist politics by making the marginal characters his centre of attention. These characters "are impoverished, dispossessed and disenfranchised members of society—prostitutes, beggars, coolies and tonga drivers."[49] Ishar Singh, Mozail, Sirajuddin, Sakina, Jugal, Sehai—all belong to the lower strata of society. Sehai is a pimp and Mozail engages in sexually promiscuous activities. Even though Bishan Singh is a landlord, he is mad and living in an asylum. Clearly, Manto invests moral strength in these poor and dispossessed characters. Actually, their moral character outshines that of the so-called upper class people in the society. Ishar Singh feels great compunction after he realizes that he has copulated with the body of a dead woman. The rowdy in "Ghate Ka Sauda" feels cheated after he comes to know that he has had sexual relation in ignorance with the girl of his own community. Although a free-style girl of dubious virtue, Mozail demonstrates her real love for her Sikh lover Tarlochan. At the end of the story, she sacrifices her life for him and his fiancée, Kirpal Kaur. She disarms a policeman and a potential murderer, and when she lies dying, she urges Tarlochan to take his turban with him so that the chaste Kirpal Kaur will not discover the shortness of his hair. Through Mozail's courage and sacrifice, Manto asserts his hopeful idea that amidst the scenes of violence of loot and murder, individuals are capable of great sacrifice for others.

"A Tale of 1947," recounts the story of Sehai, a "die hard" Hindu pimp, who is "a wonderful man" because of his humanity. Though professionally he is a procurer of girls, he takes care of all their day-to-day requirements, arranges holidays for them on their respective religious days, helps them save money for future, and sacrifices his life to help Sultana, a poor Muslim prostitute. He dies helping her at the hands of Muslim mob but

[49] Stephen Alter, "Madness and Partition: The Short Stories of Saadat Hasan Manto," 95.

without blaming anybody but the "bad times." Manto makes the humanity of this subaltern character shine when Jugal, a Hindu friend of the narrator says, "I wish I were Sehai" (Manto, *Orphans of the Storm*, 164). Jugal says this with a desire to give company to his Muslim friend Mumtaz who was leaving India for Pakistan. In a sense Partition violence made it possible for some individuals, even in the lower levels of society to act in ways that showed great courage and sacrifice.

Similarly, in "A Woman's Life," Saugandhi, a prostitute, serves even those clients who cannot pay her on the spot. Despite exhaustion and the need and desire to rest, she prepares herself to serve a client so as to help a needy woman with the money she is going to earn by selling herself. Saugandhi wants to help a recently widowed Madrasi woman living in the next *kholi* by providing her train fare to go back to Madras with her adult daughter. Manto shows self-sacrifice in the actions of a prostitute. Ramlal, the pimp in the story, is also endowed with humane character. His concern for the welfare of Saugandhi is a case in point. He not only procures clients for Saugandhi, but also warns her in time against the exploitation of Madhu, a man who takes away Saugandhi's money by pretending that he loves her.

Mozail and Saugandhi can be considered as prostitutes with golden hearts. Sultana and Mukhtar in "Black Shalwar" (sometimes titled as "The Gift") belong to the same category of noble humanity. Although both Sultana and Mukhtar live on the fringes of society alienated from the mainstream of society, they retain their innate goodness. They live quite a moral life, have special regard for religious festivals like Moharram, have great reverence for religious images and icons, and observe religious rituals, too. Their lonely life of social denial and deprivation has not made them morally depraved.

Sultana says to her friend Shanker, "Muharram is not too far and I do not have any money to get a new black shalwar stitched" (Manto, *Selected Stories*, 123). With the help of her friend Shanker, who also is penniless, Sultana procures a black *shalwar* so that she can attend the festival of Moharram. Khuda Bakhsh, a pimp in this story, is also a god-loving man who visits the shrines of holy men seeking their blessings. These characters from the lower strata of society have no less reverence for religion and God than any member of respectable society. Actually, the morality and humanity of these people very often exceed that of the people from the so-called respectable world.

Clearly Manto's sympathies lie with subaltern characters like Sehai, Saugandhi and Mozail. However, since he is neither a didactic nor a sentimental writer, Manto writes not with the aim of appealing to the emotion of his readers, but in order to arouse their intellect. Manto may be seen to write "with a view towards not only questioning the majority discourse about them [the subalterns] but also subverting it."[50] The sacrifice of a character such as Mozail, and the camaraderie of Bishan Singh with Fazal Deen or Rabb Nawaaz with Ram Singh, can provide instances of cross-faith human solidarity and point to the enlightened ethical vision that Manto possessed. Together with these instances, the tragic death of Bishan Singh in no-man's land, Sakina's reflexive action of untying the waistband at the command of male voice, the positive transformation in Isher Singh from the state of a "hot iron" to that of an "ice-cold substance," and the tragic death of the old mother in "Xuda Ki Kasam," have the power to prompt readers, witness, and survivors to question not only the establishment history and historians but to change their own attitude

[50] M. Asaduddin, in "Introduction" to *Black Margins*, 25.

toward the violence of 1947.[51] Manto brings a moral vision to this project; he does not try to "perpetuate the cycle of revenge and recrimination through general accusations;"[52] he rather shows the horrible sight of violence so that people understand its nature and consequence.

In the tradition of Partition literature, we generally observe that writers try to blame either one community or another for the eruption of violence. Most writers in India blame the Pakistani side and the Pakistanis blame their Indian counterparts. Often those who find it wiser to blame neither the Hindus nor Muslims, neither India nor Pakistan, put the entire blame on the British administration. Manto does not do so. He does not specify any one group to castigate.[53] He blames all, sparing none. All are objects of his ironic indignation: Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Indians, Pakistanis, and British. In "1919 Ki Ek Bat" ("It Happened in 1919"), the narrator relates the events leading to the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre of 1919 in Amritsar, beginning with the acts of Sir Michael O' Dyer, Lieutenant Governor of Punjab, who had not only banned Gandhiji's entry to Punjab but also arrested him. The narrator, obviously not a pro-British man, calls Sir Michael "half-mad, and "like a pharaoh" but goes on to remark: "Some people say that what happened in that great city in 1947 was also the fault of the British. But if you want my opinion, we ourselves are responsible for the bloodshed there in 1947" (Manto, *Selected Stories*, 155). Manto acknowledges that the British officers were responsible for

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[51] Harish Narang, in "Ideology, Aesthetics and Architectonics of Manto," writes that the endings of most of the stories of Manto have a special objective of "slapping his readers into a new social awareness for subverting the status-quo and bringing about fundamental changes into the societal set up" (88).

[52] Stephen Alter, "Madness and Partition: The Short Stories of Saadat Hasan Manto," 93.

[53] Alok Bhalla, in "Dance of the Grotesque Mask," comments that Manto "blames no one, but he also forgives no one" (28).

the violence in 1919, but puts the blame not only on them but the Indians too for the events thirty years later. In "Naya Qanoon" ("New Law"), Mangu Kochwan, a cart driver detests the English and holds them responsible for the suffering of the Indians, by saying, "They came to borrow fire, and became masters of the house! They've made life miserable, these sons of monkeys, ordering us around as though we were their servants for generations," (Manto, *Black Margins*, 46). However, he too is not content to blame the British alone and tells his friends at the *adda* that, "There is surely a *pir*'s curse behind Hindus and Muslims drawing knives at each other every second day" (46-47). He further believes that as the curse of a *pir* on Emperor Akbar, "Hindustan will forever be plagued with strife" and that "Hindustan will always remain enslaved" (Manto, *Black Margins*, 46).

Manto does not spare his criticism even of his Socialist brethren. He was impressed by Socialism, but he never considered it to be "the sole prescription for the political and economic problems of India."[54] In fact, he hated the armchair communist leaders as impostors. He never made his ideology his agenda for writing because Manto "saw through the falsity of . . . political rhetoric, particularly in the context of Partition."[55] Besides, an ardent believer in individuals, he could never put his social commitments above an individual with his innate capacities and hidden potential; hence he had an uncomfortable relationship with the members of the Progressive Writers' Association.

In his love for the underprivileged and denunciation of social injustice, he goes even to the extent of criticizing the policy of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in an open

letter. In "Pandit Manto's First Letter to Pandit Nehru," Manto shows his loyalty both to his former country, India, and the latter, Pakistan, as he makes strongly ironic comments about Nehru's policy about Kashmir.[56] Not only does he criticize Nehru for trying to occupy Junagarh in Kashmir without caring for removing the poverty and hardship of the people there, but he also castigates him for listening to Sardar Patel, his political friend and a Minister in the Government of India. He says, "You have illegally occupied Junagarh, which a Kashmiri could do only under the influence of a Maratha. I mean Patel (god forgive him!)" (Manto, *Black Margins*, 273). Manto further denounces Nehru for trying to stop the waters of Ravi from flowing into Pakistan and adding to the misery of the people there.

Most writers of Partition literature suffer from the tendency of "othering." The dialogue of their stories is studded with the terms "us" and "them," "we" and "they."[57] Manto, however, never suffers from this tendency. He does not stereotype Hindus, or Muslims, or Sikhs on any basis. He neither deifies nor demonizes any community or country. For him, at the time of spiritual crisis, any man, irrespective of caste, creed, religion or nationality, could be as irrational and inhuman as his characters. So, he describes the acts and scenes of "communal violence, without taking sides."[58] Manto's stories are about bewildered people, about confused and lost individuals in the face of

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[54] Tarannum Riyaz, "Saadat Hasan Manto: Ideologue and Social Philosophy," 202.
[55] Stephen Alter, "Madness and Partition: The Short Stories of Saadat Hasan Manto," 93.
[56] Although "Pandit Manto's First Letter to Pandit Nehru" is not a story, I discuss it here to show Manto's concern for the poor, and his fearless criticism of all including the Prime Minister of his former country.
[57] Sashi Joshi, "The World of Saadat Hasan Manto," 150.
[58] Stephen Alter, "Madness and Partition: The Short Stories of Saadat Hasan Manto," 93.

violent power beyond their control.[59] Neither does he try to strike a "phony balance" or what Veena Das and Ashish Nandy refer to as "inauthentic balance."[60] He never deliberately tries to "match Sikh/Hindu atrocities with Muslim ones to arrive at some phony balance" because he was above such easy and obvious artifice.[61] Neither does Manto depict scenes of "retaliatory revenge" that would justify one community's violence against another, a practice adopted by many others who wrote about Partition violence. Manto wants to "render it impossible to pretend that its own acts of violence were merely acts of retaliatory revenge."[62]

Since his Partition writing describes events beyond the realm of official history, Subaltern historians find his literary oeuvre to be useful for writing revisionist histories of India. Not only have the stories provided material for discussing the human dimension, but they also record instances of resistance and rebellion. "Naya Qanoon" furnishes a good example of a critique of British administration and law; "Toba Tek Singh" resists the absurd decision to divide a country into two, and so do "Akhri Salute" and "Tetwal Ka Kutta." Stories such as "The Return," "Xuda Ki Kasam," "Mozail," sharply etch the suffering of humanity caused by the hasty division of the country. The thirty two vignettes in *Black Margins* go even further to record the darkest recesses of human heart and some of the cruelest acts it is capable of committing.

Manto is sometimes known as a realistic chronicler of human tragedy. He was a realist and depicted in his stories what he saw as real; realism for him is very bitter. He

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[59] Saros Cowasjee, in "Introduction" to *Orphans of the Storm* observes, "Manto is Pakistani simply by an accident of history. His stories, like himself, belong to neither India nor Pakistan; they are about people, lost and confused, as he himself was for a time" (xx).
[60] Veena Das and Ashish Nandy, *The Word and the World,* 189.
[61] Keki N Daruwalla, "The Craft of Manto: Warts and All," 55.

ridiculed the values of society, punctured its hypocrisy and exposed its lies. He found the society in which he lived a society without clothes and wrote unashamedly about it. For this reason he had to face trial in court half a dozen times. Like some of his contemporaries, such as Rajinder Singh Bedi, Krishan Chunder, and Ismat Chugtai, he avoided romanticism and didacticism in his stories but unlike them he had greater sympathies with the poor and downtrodden. He has created many memorable characters from the lowest rung of society. His stories are judged to be better than those of his contemporaries perhaps because of his rational approach to violence, his moral vision, effortless diction, unsentimental realism, and highest neutrality.

Thus we see Manto's writings accommodate his moral vision of goodness devoid of lies and hypocrisy, his sympathy for the unprivileged, and his belief in the essential goodness of humanity. His writing embodies intellectual rather than emotional elements, strikes no phony balance, and contains no scenes of retaliatory revenge. Highly realistic in mode, it achieves remarkable objectivity because it neither shows any bias for the contending nationalisms of the traumatic times, nor his own socialism, nor the specific cultural visibility of most characters, nor any geographical, political or religious markers. Minimalist in style, Manto's writing avoids detailed characterization and grants no authorial voice to his narrators. His stories exhibit remarkable neutrality with the employment of the victim's point of view, and remain free from the tendency of "othering" of all sorts.

Despite these accomplishments, however, Manto leaves out many important aspects of Partition. He neither tries to delve deeply into the causes of Partition nor tries

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[62] Alok Bhalla, "The Politics of Translation," 33.

to write on the serious issues facing India and Pakistan.[63] He seems content with bearing the witness to the violent scenes and presenting a few examples of resistance. Despite recording the traumatic episodes in a shocking manner, his vignettes by themselves seem inadequate responses to the momentous event of Partition. Even the longer stories cannot accommodate elaborate psychological study of characters and their motivations. The affirmation of humanity amidst the scenes of violence that Amitav Ghosh writes about at length in "The Ghosts of Mrs. Gandhi"[64] does not find adequate space in Manto's stories. That task is undertaken by writers such as, Chaman Nahal, Bapsi Sidhwa, Bhisham Sahni, and to some extent by Khushwant Singh-- authors to be discussed in the next two chapters. They discuss in detail the causes behind Partition, the nature and consequence of violence, and the human cost involved in it. Their novels provide a detailed analysis of the characters, the motives behind their actions, and the leanings—religious, national, communal, or gendered—of their creators. Though otherwise remarkable works of art, the novels of Singh, Sahni, Nahal and Sidhwa, however, slightly suffer from the case of "othering" like many literary texts on Partition.

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[63] Ayesha Jalal, in *The Pity of Partition,* rightly states that Manto "was not interested in analyzing the causes of partition" (142).

[64] Amitav Ghosh, in "The Ghosts of Mrs. Gandhi," while writing about the communal violence in Delhi in the aftermath of the assassination of Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi in 1984, suggests that writers should not only describe violence but also "the civilized, willed response" to violence (62).

Chapter Two:
History and Politics in Singh's *Train to Pakistan* and Sidhwa's *Cracking India*

Chapter Two and Three of this Dissertation examine the novels of the writers Khushwant Singh, Bhisham Sahni, Chaman Nahal and Bapsi Sidhwa, who have concentrated their attention on the Partition of Punjab. All of them witnessed the history of their countries and document the bloody events. These two chapters present mixed communities living in harmony in almost idyllic environments before their peace is shattered. External forces, gossips and rumors begin to strike the community and they lose their balance giving way to unprecedented violence of all sorts in which women and children are terribly abused. However, all these writers describe some events which show that even in the midst of madness, some people maintain their capacity to treat their fellows as humans. Singh, Sahni and Nahal write from the Indian side of the border, Sidhwa from the Pakistani side. If the first three novelists portray the time and its impact mainly on male characters, the last author presents the thoughts and experiences of a girl. In their novels, these writers attempt to represent the riots and other forms of violence in a most objective manner and produce a balanced and authentic version of affective history.

This Chapter examines Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (1956) and Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India* (1991), published first in England as *Ice-Candy-Man* (1988), chronologically the first and the last novel to be considered here. These novels together present a holistic picture of the violent days of the subcontinent in 1947. Singh witnessed

the events as a youth whereas Sidhwa was a child of just nine when Partition occurred. Both the writers include scenes of peaceful existence and violence in rural and urban areas; they employ the trains as a site of violence; they include the humanitarian acts of individuals at difficult times; they show aversion to the politics of Congress; and both of them include the elements of love and romance in their novels. However, if love becomes a redemptive force for Singh, it works as an instrument for violence for Sidhwa.

As a member of one of the major groups, i.e. of Sikhs, Singh writes *Train to Pakistan* remaining a little aloof from politics of the day, whereas Sidhwa, a member of the minority Parsee gives much space to the discussion of politics that involved the British, Hindus and Sikhs. If Singh basically focuses on the violent events leading up to the Partition, Sidhwa describes its impact on the characters in its aftermath. Both of them depict the peaceful life of citizens before the massive violence, and try to blame all communities for the consequences. The first novel to be examined in this chapter is Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, which also happens to be the first English novel written on the theme in English. This chapter and the next will discuss, in each novel, Partition violence, especially violence against women, acts of charity, the author's attitude toward history, and the politics of the time to show how the form of the novel allows the novelist to represent the human dimension of Partition missed out by the historians.

Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*

Singh is one of the finest historians and novelists, a political commentator and a social critic known for his clear-cut secularism and outstanding wit.[65] Sometimes

[65] Singh was born on Feb. 2, 1915 in West Punjab. He was educated in Delhi, Lahore and London. He published his short story collection *The Mark of Vishnu* in 1950 and the first novel *Train to Pakistan* in

regarded as a "cultured humanist," Singh was proud of his British education, his command of the English language and his knowledge of English culture (Tank 44). During an interview with *Mahfil*, Singh remarks: "I think I'm among the exceptions because I'm really English, although I'm a Sikh. I've spent so many years in England" (*Mahfil* Interview 35).

Singh was thirty at the time of Partition.[66] The barbarities of 1947 made Singh suffer intensely from "disillusionment and crisis of values" (Tank 44). Singh himself says:

> The beliefs that I had cherished all my life were shattered. I had believed in the innate goodness of the common man. But the division of India had been accompanied 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 the autumn of 1947, I could no longer subscribe to this view. I became… an angry middle-aged man, who wanted to shout his disenchantment with the world… I decided to try my hand at writing**.** (Dhawan 12-13)

Shocked and shaken by the acts that shattered his cherished values, Singh produced *Train to Pakistan.* In the interview with *Mahfil,* Singh reveals that *Train to Pakistan* "is a documentary of the partition of India, an extremely tragic event which hurt me very much" (28). Singh had been a witness to the momentous events of the time. His knowledge and experience of the time give a sense of authenticity to the novel.[67]

1956. The *Voice of God and Other Stories* was published in 1957 and then followed his second novel *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* in 1959. Singh published two volumes of *A History of the Sikhs* in 1963 and received a Rockefeller Foundation grant for extensive travel and research on Sikh history and religion. He joined Princeton as a researcher in 1966, and worked as a visiting professor at Swarthmore College, Pennsylvania, and later became the chief editor of *The Illustrated Weekly of India.*

[66] Paul Brians, in *Modern South Asian Literature in English,* mentions that Singh "was living and working in Lahore when Partition came, and he had to abandon his home and property and flee for Delhi, where his parents lived" (51).

[67] Arthur Lall, in his introduction to *Train to Pakistan,* remarks that the novel is a "highly relevant piece of writing by a person who, as a Punjabi whose family was uprooted from its ancestral home, experienced at

Train to Pakistan is a novella (about 180 pages) covering about four months' time, from June to September 1947, and containing less than a dozen characters. Divided into four parts--Dacoity, Kalyug, Mano Majra, and Karma--[68]the novel has a conventional structure that follows a linear sequence of time, and focuses mainly on the events before during and immediately after the Partition.[69] Singh attempts to see the events from the point of view of the people of Mano Majra, which lies between Delhi and Lahore in India. Singh explores what happens in microcosmic world of Mano Majra, which seems to represent the vast subcontinent, through a skillful creation of atmosphere, employment of irony and symbolism, and gradual increase of suspense in the plot much resembling that of a traditional realist novel.[70]

Like Saadat Hasan Manto, Singh in *Train to Pakistan* represents the holocaust of 1947 graphically. When the novel opens, Mano Majra, a small village in northwestern India, populated by peasants, mostly of Muslims and Sikhs, has already been disturbed by the news of communal violence in Bengal and Punjab, but despite the news, its various communities maintain harmony for a while. As news of murders and rapes and arson becomes more common, one morning, a "ghost train" loaded with corpses of Sikhs and Hindus arrives from Pakistan, upsetting the lives of the villagers as well as those of the incompetent and manipulative police officers and administrators. This event along with the murder of a Hindu merchant in the village creates intense suspicion, enmity, and

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close quarters the terrible tragedy that overcame the northwestern part of the Indian subcontinent in 1947" (Introduction).

[68] Tarun Saint, in "Witnessing Partition," observes that the novel's symbolically divided four parts, move the plot straight towards climax in a "formulaic pattern" (103).

[69] Suvir Kaul in *The Partitions of Memory,* also observes that the novel is "thin in character and event" (14).

[70] In this regard, Prafulla C. Kar, in "Khushwant Singh: *Train to Pakistan,*" states, "Singh weaves a narrative around life in this village, making the village a microcosm representing a larger world" (91).

violence. Sikhs and Hindus on one side and Muslims on the other start a communal war, massacring train loads of people trying to decimate entire communities. The novel ends with the heroic sacrifice of a young Sikh who gives his life in an effort to save his Muslim beloved.

Train to Pakistan documents, sometimes symbolically, the gory violence unleashed in the village of Mano Majra and its neighborhood. With almost equal numbers of Sikhs and Muslims, Mano Majra, has only about seventy families including that of the Hindu Ram Lal (Singh 2). At first, the villagers, who have been living together for centuries, and who have only simple wants and desires, are not even aware of what is happening outside their village. They follow their religion and tradition and carry on with their daily chores. When it is time for Morning Prayer, the mullah at the mosque "has a quick wash, stands facing west towards Mecca and with his fingers in his ears cries in long sonorous notes, 'Allah-ho-Akbar' (Singh 4). The Sikh priest waits until the Muslim prayers are over. "Then he too gets up, draws a bucket of water from the well in the temple courtyard, pours it over himself, and intones his prayer in monotonous singsong to the sound of splashing water" (Singh 4). Of this multi-religious society where people show mutual respect for each other and their deities, Singh writes:

> But there is one object that all Mano Majrans even Lala Ram Lal--venerate. This is a three foot slab of sandstone that stands upright under a *keeker* tree beside the pond. It is the local deity, the *deo* to which all the villagers--Hindu, Sikh, Muslims or pseudo-Christian--repair secretly whenever they are in special need of blessing. (Singh 2)

By praying to the sandstone *deo* during hard times, the villagers thus enact the basic unity of faiths.

The novel employs the train as the central symbol of Mano Majran life and activities. Mano Majrans regulate their lives according to the schedule of the trains as they cross the bridge nearby. They wake up, go to work, return from work, and go to bed in time with the arrival or departure of trains at their station. By the time the night goods train comes in, Mano Majra goes to sleep with the echoes of the prayers of the mullah and the Sikh priest in the air (Singh 4-5). The train thus signifies the rhythm of life, as well as the emerging splintering, displacement, and movement of a community. Intimations of tragedy come to the routine life of Mano Majrans in the form of a disruption of the train schedule.[71]

Thus, when the "ghost train" laden with fifteen hundred dead bodies arrives, "The village was stilled in a deathly silence. No one asked anyone else what the odour was. They all knew. They had known it all the time. The answer was implicit in the fact that the train had come from Pakistan" (Singh 84). People have heard about the bloody acts on the frontiers and sense the impending catastrophe in the village: "People barricaded their doors and many stayed up all night talking in whispers. Everyone felt his neighbour's hand against him, and thought of finding friends and allies" (Singh 117). The bond of brotherhood that knit together the village Sikhs and Muslims for centuries gives way to distrust and hostility.[72]

The sight of the dead bodies of their Sikh and Hindu brethren, the stories of Sikh refugees in their village, who have fled Pakistan to avoid persecution by Muslims, and

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[71] Suvir Kaul, in *The Partitions of Memory,* states that disruption of the train schedule brings about "social chaos" and "a vexing of reality into nightmare" in the otherwise routine life of the Mano Majrans (15).

[72] Twinkle B. Manavar, in "The Theme of Partition," maintains that "Partition touched the people of Mano Majrans at both levels—at the community level and at the individual level" (31).

rapidly spreading rumors in the village about Muslim cruelty fan the fire of communal hatred in the local Sikhs, leading them to acts of violence against their erstwhile Muslim friends. Partition violence thus separates the Muslim population from the Sikhs and Hindus. Having decided to send the Muslims to Pakistan to maintain order in the village, the local administration makes preparations first to place them temporarily in a refugee camp nearby. With the administration offering to provide security to the Muslims (Singh 134-136), they are gradually forced to leave to avoid bloodshed in the village. The split is completed by the village administration, which cuts the villagers into two halves for the evacuation of the Muslims. Singh writes: "The head constable's visit had divided Mano Majra into two halves as neatly as a knife cuts through a pat of butter" (Singh 120). The Sikhs in the village later take steps so that "not one Muslim family is left in Chundunnugger," but all flee to Pakistan (Singh 157).

The two-nation theory deprives the Muslims of Mano Majra of their property and makes them homeless. Those who decided to take temporary shelter in the refugee camp hoping to return once the violence ended come to realize that they will be taken to Pakistan almost empty-handed, with only the luggage they can carry in their hands (Singh 135). Having lost their house, land and property, they become victims of forced dislocation. Displacement is also the fate of the Sikh refugees forcibly expelled from Pakistan and temporarily lodged in the refugee camps in the neighborhood of the village.

Three "ghost trains" play crucial role in the novel by plunging the villagers into the whirlwind of violence and despair. By the time the third train appears, the Muslims of Mano Majra have already been ordered to evacuate. The Hindus and Sikhs in the village are ordered by the army to prepare for an attack on the next train to Pakistan. When Mano

Majrans realize that this particular train will be carrying their own former friends and neighbors, they are shocked, but the violence of the time carries them along and they massacre the very people they earlier addressed as family members. Most so-called sensible, responsible, and educated people are paralyzed by the enormity of the violence: only the village troublemaker Juggut Singh/Jugga plunges into action, protects the train, and saves the life of his beloved Nooran along with a group of Muslim refugees while he himself dies in the action. The three trains and three major characters in the novel--Hukum Chand, the cunning district magistrate, Juggut Singh, the village rogue, and Iqbal, the passive communist social worker--are instrumental in driving the narrative of *Train to Pakistan*. The actions of these three characters and the situation created by three trains test the ties of friendship, loyalty and love among the members of both Sikh and Muslim communities.

Like other novels related to Partition, Singh in *Train to Pakistan* tries to give a balanced view of the Partition history as it unfolds in Mano Majra.[73] He realistically depicts both the peaceful atmosphere of understanding among the villagers and the frightening situation of violence when social and religious groups separate themselves to clash violently**.** Singh shows atrocities committed by both communities, trying to present the facts objectively refraining from overt judgments to be fair to and not to hurt the feelings of any community as he knows that the violent activities are the result not just of one single community. For example, Singh shows that amidst the growing ill-will between communities, both sides revert to stereotypical images that degrade members of the other community. He does not directly describe all acts of violence; many come in the

[73] O. P. Bhatnagar, in *Indian Political Novels in English,* points out that "the tone and the spirit of the novel is secular and it is a testimony of the novelist's impartiality and sanity as an artist" (165).

form of news and rumor. For instance, Bhola, the tonga[74] driver, reports about mob violence, "when the mobs attack they do not wait to find out who you are. Hindu or Muslims; they kill" (Singh 68). Bhola stresses that ordinary people turn into blood-hungry, mad beings. Similarly, Jugga narrates the barbarity of the Muslim soldiers on their way to Lahore from Amritsar. He says that when the soldiers neared the Pakistani border, they "began to stick bayonets into Sikhs, stabbing a cyclist or a passing pedestrian: "They killed many people like this and were feeling happier and happier as they got nearer Pakistan" (Singh 67). Bhola also reports of four Sikhs, who opened fire with their machine guns: "God alone knows how many they killed" (68).

Buses, like trains become the sites for the enactment of human cruelty in the novel. Singh captures one such moment in the novel: "Everyone was ordered off the bus. Sikhs were just hacked to death" (Singh 177). This casual hacking to death tells about the utter degradation of human value at the time of Partition. In another sign of the extent of cruelty among human beings, the river Sutlez becomes choked with human corpses. In addition to the bloated carcasses of bulls still yoked to the carts, and dead bodies of horses, there are also dead bodies of men, women and children, constantly pecked by kites and vultures hovering over them: "They pecked till the corpses themselves rolled over and shooed them off with hands" (143). Arms of old men and heads of little boys float side by side.

Like Manto, Singh presents the painful experiences of women during the time of Partition. He writes: "Sikh refugees had told of women jumping into wells and burning themselves rather than fall into the hands of Muslims. Those who did not commit suicide were paraded naked in the streets, raped in public, and then murdered" (Singh 121). This

[74] A popular light horse-carriage used for transportation in India and its neighboring countries

report comes in the form of a rumor that circulated during Partition times. In another report, Banta Singh, the village lambardar (head man) is informed of women's breasts being sliced off (144). During Partition women's bodies were treated as "territory to be conquered;" women's body symbolized manhood and its destruction meant shame and dishonor that invited revenge. [75]

Since the uneducated villagers acquire much of their information through rumor and word of mouth, they become susceptible to manipulation by political opportunists and corrupt officials. Likewise, Singh shows the role played by religious and communal leaders or gangsters who incite simple folk in the name of religion, or solidarity with one's community. They inflame the minds of people with the idea of revenge and honor; they use fiery speeches to sow the seeds of communal bitterness and bloodshed. For example, some external religious agitators fill the minds of local Sikhs with hatred of Muslims and even convince a local gang to attempt mass murder of the Muslims on their train to Pakistan. A fanatic Sikh youth asks the Sikhs of Mano Majra,

> 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 Sheikhupura? What are you doing about it? You just eat and sleep and call yourselves Sikhs--the brave Sikhs! The martial class! (Singh148).

This speech, fraught with sarcastic remarks and hatred, incites the Hindus and Sikhs with desire for revenge. The youth continues:

> 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! (Singh 149)

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[75] Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, in *Borders & Boundaries: Women in India's Partition,* state that women were victims of sexual violence that included "stripping; parading naked; mutilating and disfiguring; tattooing or branding the breasts and genitalia with triumphal slogans; amputating breasts; knifing open the womb; raping, of course; killing fetuses… shocking not only for its savagery, but for what it tells about women as objects in male constructions of their honour" (43).

The young man rouses the gathering for retaliation: “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” (Singh149). Singh makes frequent reference to retaliation and revenge. Members of one community blame the other for triggering the violence, and justify their own violence as a retaliatory self-defense. Unlike Manto, Singh depicts the scenes of “retaliatory revenge” as justifiable of the Sikh violence against the Muslims.[76]

Singh shows how during times of genocidal violence the voice of reason becomes too feeble to produce any meaningful response. The villagers lose their heads when they take up arms against their fellow villagers. Once violence usurps the place of human reason, there is nothing but anxiety, restlessness, fear, death and destruction. Rightly Singh makes Hukum Chand, the District Magistrate, remark, “The whole world has gone mad” (Singh 155). Finding the situation out of control, the Magistrate says, “Everyone has gone trigger happy” (156). Seeing “a bloody holi,” Bhai Meet Singh, a reasonable Sikh, who finds it absurd to punish the Muslims in India for the crimes committed by Muslims of Pakistan, expresses his view that only the guilty should be punished (156). However, his thin voice of reason is drowned out by the clamorous outbursts of the fanatic youths: “What had the Sikhs and Hindus in Pakistan done that they were butchered? Weren’t they innocent? Had the women committed crimes for which they were ravished? Had he children committed murder for which they were spiked in front of their parents?” (Singh149). Influenced by such fiery speech, many villagers become hostile to their neighbors. Some, such as the Hindu police Inspector

even go to the extent of telling the Muslims shamelessly: "You are a Muslim. You go to Pakistan" (72). Some Sikhs too confide to their fellows not to trust a Mussulman" (121). The Muslims in Mano Majra have to bear the hostility of their Hindu and Sikh neighbors for simply being Muslims.

People kill each other in the name of religion, forgetting that all religions teach love and that no religion in the world advocates violence.[77] Even God is made irrelevant by the warring communities. When the local Hindus and Sikhs have come out of their houses with all kinds of weapons to attack their Muslim friends on the train to Pakistan, Iqbal searches for a way to prevent the violence but soon realizes the impossibility of doing so. Incapable of performing the task, and overwhelmed by the situation, he philosophizes on right and wrong, good and evil for a long time, even dismissing the importance of the divinity: "And God—no, not God; He was irrelevant" (Singh 170).

Despite the violence and bloodshed of Partition, however, some human fraternity and love survives. Some villagers take care of each other during hard times. For example, the Sikhs address old and blind Imam Baksh as Chacha (uncle) and help his family. As M. Tarinayya rightly observes, the unity among these Sikhs and Muslims is a "living actuality" as the "Sikhs made their Chacha's sorrows their own" (115). Characters such as Bhai Meet Singh desire peace, and try to drive home the message of love and understanding. Because he finds killing or displacing one's neighbors to be unthinkable, Bhai Meet Singh tells Uncle Imam Baksh: "We die first and then you can look after

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[76] Alok Bhalla, in "The Politics of Translation," observes that Manto wants to "render it impossible to pretend that its own acts of violence were merely acts of retaliatory revenge" (33).

[77] As in *Tamas,* in *Train to Pakistan*, a temple turns into a scene of violence. Megan Rohr, in "Converting a Temple into a Fortress," comments that slowly and gradually, the *gurudwara* that lodges Iqbal "becomes less of a religious icon than an object of readers' disgust and loathing" (97).

yourselves" (Singh 126). The lambardar also assures the Muslims: "We will defend you with our lives" (127). When Imam Baksh is asked to leave Mano Majra for Pakistan lest he be tortured by Sikh refugees, he breaks down and cries. Iqbal finds himself in a helpless mess but never once thinks about violence. Even the crafty magistrate Hukum Chand works incessantly for the maintenance of law and order. Believing that "Nobody really benefits by bloodshed," he resorts to all sorts of tricks to establish peace (21).[78]

But the most memorable act of love is performed by Jugga, Budmash number ten so called because his name is the tenth number in the police record. His final sacrifice to save his beloved Nooran shows that humanity is powerful. His act of sacrifice not only redeems "Jugga the Budmash" but also saves many lives. As a train load of Muslims leave their native place for Pakistan, the plan of the "avengers" is to kill the passengers on the roof: if the train is moving fast enough, a rope "stiff as a shaft of steel" might cut many people in two "like a knife slicing cucumbers" (Singh 180). Since many passengers are sitting on the roof of the train, they are sure to be swept away or killed by the strong rope. Jugga, however, thwarts the plan of the gang, realizing the danger of his beloved Nooran too:

> He [Juggut Singh] 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. . . . There was a volley of shots. The man shivered and collapsed. The rope snapped in the centre as he fell. The train went over him, and went on to Pakistan. (Singh 181)

Cutting the rope at the cost of his life, Jugga saves his beloved and other Muslim passengers.

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[78] Paul Brians, in *Modern South Asian Literature in English,* considers Hukum Chand as "clearly an opportunist who seeks tranquility rather than justice. He wants to rid the village of its Muslim population quietly, without undue violence, and to place the blame for the attack on the moneylender on a convenient scapegoat: Jugga" (54).

A confirmed gangster, Jugga saves the lives of hundreds of people in the end.[79] Jugga's heroic sacrifice proves that if cataclysmic violence, cruelty, and madness are let loose by events such as Partition, they also show that humans are capable of kindness, love and sacrifice.[80] And Singh's title emphasizes the latter potential: it does not designate the trains from Pakistan, but the train to Pakistan, which is saved.

In his novel, Singh makes it clear that many people were involved in Partition violence, and that people from all communities were responsible for the chaos.[81] Speaking particularly about Muslims in an interview, Singh says: "I had no animosity against either the Muslims or the Pakistanis; but I felt that I should do something to express that point of view" (*Mahfil* Interview 28). In a similar vein, he writes in the novel: "Muslims said the Hindus had planned and started the killing. According to the Hindus, the Muslims were to blame. The fact is, both sides killed. Both shot and stabbed and speared and clubbed. Both tortured. Both raped" (Singh 1).

With the belief that members of all communities were implicated in violent activities, Singh, as he writes about the impact of violence upon characters, tries to maintain an objective standpoint.[82] Although a few characters sometimes make

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[79] K. S. Iyengar, in *Indian Writing in English,* maintains that "the simple uncalculating love of a man for a woman asserts itself," averts the catastrophe, cuts across religious barriers, and seeks to bridge the wide gulf of communal hatred redeeming the character himself (501).

[80] Vasant A Shahane, in *Khushwant Singh*, makes a similar observation when he says that *Train to Pakistan* "reaffirms the novelist's faith in man and renews artistically his avowed allegiance to the humanistic ideal" (104).

[81] Bilquees Dar, in "The Theme of Partition in Khushwant Singh's Novel," makes this point: "Every citizen was caught up in the holocaust" (22).

[82] S.S. Prabhakar Rao, in "Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*," through a detailed and meticulous study of some crucial passages of the novel in terms of their stylistic features, suggests that the novelist is objective and impersonal in his presentation of events (83).
Similarly, in "The Writer as Historical Witness," C. N. Srinath argues that by focusing "on the ghastly incidents" themselves and not so much on the "effects of partition on the individual," Singh writes in a "neutral tone of voice" not as a man who suffered the tragedy of Partition, but as a chronicler of history (65). Firoz A Shaikh, in *The Partition and its Versions in Indian English Novels,* takes a similar position: "Khushwant Singh's version of Partition in this novel [*Train to Pakistan*] is very balanced"

derogative comments on the members of the other community, Singh shows an admirable balance while representing the warring communities. Hukum Chand, Juggut Singh/Jugga, the head constable and others belonging to Hindu/Sikh community each has a tale to tell of Muslim atrocities. Hukum Chand for instance, thinks about a Muslim mob that attacked a bus and raped and killed his orderly's daughter Sundari and reflects that the Muslims kill all Sikhs who have not been circumcised (Singh 177). He also comments: "Muslims have no respect for the weaker sex" (21). Besides, Hukum Chand uses the discourse of othering in the pronouns he uses, which relegate the Muslims to the margin. For instance, Hukum Chand says, "Our Hindu women are like that: so pure that they would rather commit suicide than let a stranger touch them (21). The fact that these comments come from Hukum Chand, an educated man, who is responsible for the impartial administration of the village affairs gives them some authority, and speak about the general feeling of Hindu/Sikhs about the Muslims.[83]

However, the barbarity of Hindus/Sikhs also find equally represented as when the Muslim trains attacked by the Sikhs is mentioned (Singh 19). It may not be right then to say that Singh elides the outrages of Hindus and Sikhs, and concentrates more on Muslim barbarities.[84] Members of both communities are shown as helpless victims on the surge of violence around them. Although at some places Sikh atrocity is described as an act of retaliation, nevertheless Singh gives expression to the violence perpetrated by his

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(74). These critics are partially right but a closer examination reveals that the author shows slight preference over the members of a community to those of the other while representing the violent events.

[83] In this regard, M. Tarinayya, in "Two Novels," observes rightly that Khushwant Singh's achievement in *Train to Pakistan* is "remarkable for the extraordinary detachment (though it shows signs of failing him once or twice)" (113).

[84] Mohammad Ayub Jajja, in "Portrayal of Partition by Bapsi Sidhwa and Khushwant Singh," argues that Singh "does not provide the reader with the pictures of Muslims killed and women raped by the Sikhs but picture after picture of Muslim atrocities against the Sikhs" (217).

community, too: "Do you know . . . 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!'" (19). Alok Bhalla partly agrees with the view that Sikhs become violent only when incited by incomprehensible violence:

> *Train to Pakistan* present[s] images of Sikhs as bewildered people who watch with helpless dismay their familiar social and religious spaces crumble before ruthless violence, or as men and women suffused with religiosity who refuse to initiate a cycle of murder and revenge by making angry denunciations of the Muslims and, or as angry mobs who can be tempted into evil especially when the mind and the body are pushed to the extreme limits of endurance by events which are incomprehensible. (Bhalla 112)

Bhalla describes Sikhs as "bewildered people" who do not go for violence even in extreme situations and explains their atrocities as retaliation.

Although it is clear from the study so far that like all Partition novelists, Singh was unhappy with the decision to divide the subcontinent, yet he does not much discuss the politics of the time. Unlike many other of his contemporaries, he does not point out any specific culprit for the Partition perhaps because he finds all parties responsible for it. Unlike Nahal and Sidhwa, who consider the British to be mainly responsible, Singh says nothing against British actions at the end of their empire. Neither has he made any comment on the British policy of divide-and-rule that intensified communalism in India.

Most characters in the novel are devoid of any political consciousness. They know nothing about either two-nation theory or the India-Pakistan divide, nor about political leaders. They have merely heard the name of Mahatma Gandhi but know nothing about his life and action, and perhaps they have not even heard of Mohamad Ali Jinnah. Endowed with some political knowledge, the sub-inspector of police confidently reports to Hukum Chand, that "no one in Mano Majra even knows that the British have

left and the country is divided into Pakistan and Hindustan" (Singh 22).When a Muslim learns that the government is planning to transport Muslims from Mano Majra to Pakistan the next day for their safety, he says, "What have we to do with Pakistan? We were born here. So were our ancestors. We have lived amongst you [Sikhs] as brothers" (126). Another Muslim asks Iqbal, "Tell us something what is happening in the world? What is all this about Pakistan and Hindustan? We live in this little village and know nothing" (47). These villagers do not understand even the meaning of India's freedom from British rule. The village headman believes that freedom must be a good thing because it might provide better jobs for the educated Indians and more land or buffaloes for the uneducated masses like himself (Singh 48). Actually, the Mano Majrans think of freedom not in political but only in economic terms. They have no sense about national honor, or self-rule.

Through the actions and speeches of Hukum Chand, Police Inspector and sub-inspector, the novelist shows the absence of law and the inability of administration to tackle the problems faced by the nation. Hukum Chand arrests Jugga and Iqbal as suspects on Ram Lal's murder and releases both of them later for no particular reason. He acts merely to impress his seniors and to give a false impression to the public. He becomes utterly helpless before the enormity of the situation.[85] Through Hukum Chand, Singh makes an ironic reference to Jawahar Lal Nehru's famous phrase "tryst with destiny" and thereby the nationalist discourse of freedom and progress. Hukum Chand remarks:

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[85] Gillian Dooley, in "Attitudes to Political Commitment in Three Indian Novels," rightly remarks that Hukum Chand is "virtually paralyzed" and "almost reduced to helplessness by the force of events" (37).

> He is a 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 a 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. (Singh 176)

Through this satiric remark, Hukum Chand tries to drive home the point that Nehru made a tryst with destiny and became the Prime Minister, but what about the millions of people who lost their everything; their tryst with destiny has been most shocking.

Similarly, through Iqbal Singh, Singh shows the helplessness and inability of communist ideology to solve the gigantic problem of the Partition days. Iqbal is so overwhelmed by the chaotic situation that he decides not to take any action for he believes that he will be making futile efforts. "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" (Singh 155). Besides, he thinks that his sacrifice will be unnoticed, unappreciated, and useless. For him, an act of sacrifice becomes worthwhile only if there are people to see it, and the act has a moral lesson to convey to them (170).

Singh makes some light remarks on the ignorance of Congress leaders about the situation in Punjab and their indifference toward the victims through the sub-inspector of police who says:

> 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, sisters and daughters raped and murdered in the streets. (Singh 21)

Similarly, O. P. Bhatnagar, in *Indian Political Novels in English*, observes, "what unsettled Hukum Chand was the hitherto unseen and unexpected vitality of man for mass destruction" (154).

The sub-inspector enumerates the hardships and sufferings of the mass of Punjab including those of women who jumped into wells along with their children to preserve their honor. However, his remarks may also be read as ironic because he himself knows nothing about what being a victim of Partition means. Apart from this passing comment on the Congress leaders in Delhi, and an ironic remark on Nehru, Singh has nothing much to say overtly on the politics of the day. Singh reserves his political comments perhaps because he wants to suggest that not an individual or a community or a single political party was responsible for the massive chaos; it involved the participation of many.

While not much politics is discussed in the novel, *Train to Pakistan* certainly gives a better understanding of the history of India during the time of Partition.[86] The novelist presents the scenes as a detached onlooker and faithful recorder. As "the historian who is witness-turned-writer,"[87] Singh presents the details of Partition violence in an artistic manner. He gives graphic description of violence, remaining close to the facts and performing the task of a "historical witness."[88] However, its very form lends it affective qualities, which enable the readers to engage more and receive an alternative version of Partition history.

Kavita Daiya rightly remarks that the novel "negotiates the tension between history, whose subject is the nation, and memory, whose subject is the individual, to articulate an imaginative resolution of the contradictions of postcolonial freedom and dispossession, national independence and a deathly failure of homeliness" (39). The

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[86] K. S. Iyengar, in *Indian Writing in English,* observes that *Train to Pakistan* is an "imaginative record" of the times--albeit it is a history of simple villagers in a remote village (324).
[87] C. N. Srinath, "The Writer as Historical Witness," 58.

novel certainly portrays the traumatic history of India at a most critical junction. In the novel history meets fiction to address a crisis in Indian history. Singh makes every character's speech distinct and significant so as to make the work an authentic record of the times."[89] They speak in "Punjabi idiom" directly translated into English.[90] For instance, Jugga's mother tells him: "Go, go wherever you want to go. If you want to jump in a well, jump. If you want to hang like your father, go and hang. It is my lot to weep. My *kismet* (fate/destiny) . . . it is all written there" (Singh11). The passage not only sounds like a translation from Punjabi but also includes vernacular vocabulary.

Thus, as Vasant A. Shahane maintains, *Train to Pakistan*, is no "mere realistic tract" or "bare record of actual facts," the novel is "a recreation of the real" in an artistic form (104). As a literary work, it recreates the history of Partition.[91] Yet we can say that Singh does not use as much creative freedom as do Nahal in *Azadi,* Sidhwa in *Cracking India,* or Sahni in *Tamas*. Sidhwa and Nahal focus more on the personal tragedies of characters, highlighting their physical as well as mental suffering. In their novels, the victims' point of view finds expression more clearly and with greater intensity than in Singh's *Train to Pakistan.*

Train to Pakistan despises communalism and violence, and is written by an appalled author who is deeply hurt by human barbarity of 1947 in India. In *Train to Pakistan*, Singh employs irony as one of the most significant devices to drive home the

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[88] C. N. Srinath, "The Writer as Historical Witness," 66.
[89] Shakti Batra, in "Two Partition Novels," observes that "in striving for realism and authenticity, Khushwant Singh adopt[s] English in such a way as to bring out the individuality of the characters, the social and cultural milieu they belong to, and their motivations" (86).
[90] Shakti Batra, "Two Partition Novels," 86.
[91] Rituparna Roy, in *South Asian Partition Fiction in English*, expresses a similar opinion when she says that Khushwant Singh's "instinct as a historian, together with his own experience at the time of Partition, combined with his budding skills as a fiction writer, all came together to produce *Train to Pakistan*" (34).

irrationality and inexplicability of the violence let loose during Partition. Jugga, the confirmed rogue turns out to be the savior at the end, while the so-called educated and responsible citizens do nothing significant.[92] In the mayhem when almost everyone is after the life of Muslims, a young Sikh sacrifices his own life to protect them, and he is shot by his own co-religionists.[93] Notorious Malli and his gang are given the responsibility of taking care of the property of evacuated Muslims. Although considered weak and helpless, women--Nooran and Haseena--become instrumental in saving the lives of hundreds of Muslims.

To a great extent, Singh tries to present a balanced view of both groups—Sikh or Hindu and Muslim--and identifies himself as an opponent of communal hatred and xenophobic tendencies. *Train to Pakistan* is short, direct in plot, style and choice of words.[94] It contains no complicated subplots or embedded subtexts, nor does it represent any political or intellectual debates of the time. With its simple, linear structure and form, and its distancing from individual suffering *Train to Pakistan* inclines toward being a journalistic historical novel. Its simple form and plain, unadorned language establishes the affinity of *Train to Pakistan* with historical narratives. In *Train to Pakistan*, Singh presents in a short compass a broad historical survey of the Partition of the Indian subcontinent.

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[92] Rafiya Sultana, in "The Agony of Partition in Khushwant Singh's 'Train to Pakistan,'" rightly comments that "Jugga shows the ray of light in the cruel world of darkness and despair" (21).
[93] Paul Brians, in *Modern South Asian Literature in English,* observes that when "others were ready to risk their lives to kill; only he [Jugga] was ready to risk his life to prevent killing" (57).
[94] Chhote Lal Khatri, in "Trauma of Partition," rightly observes that "*Train to Pakistan* differs from most of the novels on partition, in respect of canvas and unity of time, place and action. It has greater unity of time and place" (38).

Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India*

Sidhwa's *Cracking India* (1988),[95] the first novel on Partition by a female novelist from Pakistan tells the story of the bloody Partition through the eyes of an eight year-old girl, Lenny Sethi. Set in the 1940s, the novel in Lenny's naïve voice recounts the events of her family and native Lahore for over ten years ending just after Indian independence and the Partition. The novel depicts not only the plight of a small minority in India and Pakistan but also the unfortunate incidents in the lives of women and children. Like Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, *Cracking India* provides an alternative version of Partition history that foregrounds human aspects neglected by the official historians.

Sidhwa has produced four novels in English—*The Crow Eaters* (1978), *The Bride* (1982), *Cracking India* (1988/91), and *An American Brat* (1993). While and *The Crow Eaters* is about her experience of membership in the Parsee/Zoroastrian community, *The Bride* discusses the issue of abuse against women, and *An American Brat* is about her personal experience of immigration to the US.

Sidhwa[96] was nine when the Indian subcontinent was divided into two nations. As a young girl, she witnessed first-hand the division of the country and the ensuing bloodshed in Lahore, a border city of Pakistan. In this city of plural cultures, young Sidhwa saw the plight of thousands of refugees including victims of rape and torture. She

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[95] I use this date because *Cracking India* was published as *Ice Candy Man* (1988) in England.

[96] Bapsi Sidhwa was born on August 11, 1938 in Karachi, in Present day Pakistan, and was brought up in Lahore. A Zoroastrian girl born with polio, Sidhwa received her education at home until she was fifteen years old. She later went to Kinnaird College for Women in Lahore and received her BA degree in 1957. After her marriage to a Zoroastrian husband, she lived in Mumbai for five years. She began her literary career after she had three children to become one of the finest Pakistani novelists. Sidhwa has produced four novels in English—*The Crow Eaters* (1978), *The Bride* (1982), *Cracking India* (1988/91), and *An American Brat* (1993). Although her first two novels *The Crow Eaters* and *The Bride* were rejected several times by publishers, her literary fame grew out of them and she has been the recipient of many awards and honorary professorships. Some of her works have been translated into languages such as Russian, French and German. A women's rights activist, Sidhwa is devoted to the cause of the welfare of women and makes

also witnessed looting and arson, abduction and murder, and the miserable life of the refugees. In an interview with David Montenegro, she mentions that while she was going to classes, she happened to see "the dead body of a very good looking man" in a gunnysack at the side of the road, which made her feel "more of sadness than horror" (31-32). The scenes of Partition violence she witnessed in Lahore prompted her to write: "So these images and emotions were in my mind, and I wanted to write a story of Partition."[97]

Sidhwa's *Cracking India* (1991), which was named "Notable Book of the Year" by the *New York Times*, and which won for Sidhwa the German Literaturepreis, offers a unique perspective on Partition as it is narrated by a girl from the Parsee community. At the time of Partition, there were only two hundred Parsees in Lahore (Sidhwa, *Cracking India,* 26). Being such a minority, the Parsees had no say in political or religious matters. They considered it wise to remain apart from Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims. Voicing their situation in the novel, Colonel Bharucha, the president of the Parsee community in Lahore, states,

> We have to tread carefully . . . we have served the English faithfully, and earned their trust….So, we have prospered! But we are the smallest minority in India….We have to be extra wary, or we'll be neither here nor there….We must hunt with the hounds and run with the hare (Sidhwa, *Cracking India,* 26).

In order to avoid violence and save themselves from the anger of the dominant communities, the Parsees try to maintain their neutral position.

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frequent public statements in Pakistani media in favor of protecting their rights.

[97] Feroza Jussawalla and Reed Way Dasenbrock (Eds), *Interviews with Writers of the Post-Colonial World*, 200.

In *Cracking India*, Sidhwa uses the legend of milk and sugar to describe the survival strategy adopted by the Parsees. She notes that when the Parsees arrived on the coast of India in the seventh century, their leader promised the Indian Grand *Vazir* that the Zarathusht refugees "would get absorbed into his country like the sugar in the milk. . . . And with their decency and industry sweeten the lives of his subjects" (Sidhwa, *Cracking India*, 47). Accordingly, Colonel Bharucha clearly articulates the code of noninvolvement for the community: "Let whoever wishes rule! Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian! We will abide by the rules of their land . . . . As long as we do not interfere we have nothing to fear! As long as we respect the customs of our rulers—as we always have—we'll be all right!" (48). Thus, the Parsees continue their life and business in India without interfering with the politics of the majority.

Unlike many other novels written on Partition by Hindu, Sikh or Muslim writers from the Indian perspective and dealing with major group in terms of ethnicity, religion, or politics, *Cracking India* forwards the perspective of a minority, "a microscopic minority" in Pakistan (http://expertspages.com). As a writer of fiction from a community at the margin, Sidhwa has to tread carefully.[98] In an interview with Feroza Jussawala, she says, "As a Parsi, as a Pakistani, as a person who was brought up among the Muslims—all these influences molded my voice" (207). While the novel does not present a strictly Pakistani perspective, it does offer some viewpoints from the Pakistani side. Through the child narrator, Sidhwa offers a Pakistani point of view as opposed to an Indian or British perspective, but she also critiques Pakistani nationalist rhetoric from the

[98] Ambreen Hai, in "Border Work, Border Trouble," observes that "She [Sidhwa] face[d] the tricky position of having at once to justify speaking for-and to-the nation, and to build a critique of the Muslim nationalism that includes non-Muslims as citizens but in fact grants them only second-class status" (387).

position of the minority Parsees. So, as a minority writer in Pakistan, she expresses multiple perspectives. Sidhwa's voice gains credibility not only because she belongs to a microscopic minority community but also because she is a member of another marginal community--of women--and a first-hand witness to the violence of 1947.

Through Lenny's naïve questions, Sidhwa interrogates the idea of dividing a country into two separate halves as her very title suggests: "There is much disturbing talk. India is going to be broken. Can one break a country? And what happens if they break it where our house is? Or crack it further up on Warris Road? How will I ever get to Godmother's then?" (Sidhwa, *Cracking India*, 101). Lenny's innocent questions to her cousin about the breaking of India mostly relate to her personal fear of losing her relations. Her cousin dismisses the idea as rubbish for India is "not made of glass," whereas her caretaker Ayah tells her: "If they want two countries, that's what they have to do—crack India with a long, long canal" (101). The idea of breaking a country seems absurd even to the uneducated Ayah.

Like Singh's *Train to Pakistan, Cracking India* gives a glimpse into village life of pre-Partition India in which the Muslims, Sikhs, and Hindus live together peacefully as brothers and sisters. When a Muslim Iman Din warns the villagers about potential troubles, he is contradicted by the Sikh *granthi* (priest) who emphasizes solidarity across racial and religious lines: "Brother," the Sikh says when the tumult subsides, "our villages come from the same racial stock, Muslim or Sikh, we are basically Jats. We are brothers. How can we fight each other?" (Sidhwa, *Cracking India*, 64). The Sikh's argument is echoed by the Muslim Chaudhry (village headman), who remarks: "The city folk can afford to fight . . . we can't. We are dependent on each other: bound by our toil. .

. . To us villagers, what does it matter if a peasant is a Hindu, or a Muslim, or a Sikh?" (64). Different communities live an interdependent peaceful life in this rather utopian world. Religion makes no difference to their shared social and economic life. As in *Train to Pakistan*, when they face impending calamity, they promise to help and protect each other. When the Muslim Chaudhry declares in the name of *Holy Koran* "that every man in this village will guard his Sikh brothers with no regard for his own life!," the equally enthusiastic Sikh Jagjeet Singh remarks, "If needs be, we'll protect our Muslim brothers with our lives!" (65).

However, the act of Partition does not allow such commitments be fulfilled. Suddenly everything changes as land and people are divided according to religion. Sidhwa writes:

> Within three months seven million Muslims and five million Hindus and Sikhs are uprooted in the largest and most terrible exchange of population known to history. The Punjab has been divided by the icy cardsharps dealing out the land village by village, city by city, wheeling and dealing and doling out favors. (Sidhwa, *Cracking India*, 169)

Cities and towns are distributed like cards randomly to one side or the other.

> The Radcliffe Commission deals out Indian cities like a pack of cards. Lahore is dealt to Pakistan, Amritsar to India. Sialkot to Pakistan. Pathankot to India. I am a Pakistani. In a snap. Just like that. (Sidhwa, *Cracking India*, 150)

The Governor General of India formed the Boundary Commission for Punjab and Bengal three weeks after the Partition Plan had been announced on June 30, 1947. Sir Cyril Radcliffe, a lawyer from England, chaired the Commission consisting of four members—two Hindu and two Muslim. In about five weeks' time Radcliffe decided the

fate of about 35 million people creating utter confusion and consternation.[99] Because of the hasty division of the subcontinent by the British administration, Indians are suddenly divided into the citizens of two opposing nations. Hostility grows between the members of Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh community leading to misunderstandings and fights.

At first, even in this chaotic world, Shanta, Lenny's Hindu caretaker, lives a pleasant life surrounded by friendly suitors and admirers belonging to different ethnicities and religions. A beautiful and lusty woman of about eighteen, Ayah allegorically represents the multicultural space of Lahore, and by extension, the whole of the subcontinent. Even when neighborhoods see an increase in tensions and riots, her world remains peaceful for a long time. Lenny observes, "Only the group around Ayah remains unchanged. Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Parsee are, as always, unified around her" (Sidhwa, *Cracking India*, 105).

However, Ayah's suitors, who earlier had behaved like friends start wavering: "One day everybody is themselves—and the next day they are Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian**.** People shrink, dwindling into symbols" (Sidhwa, *Cracking India*, 101). Religious differences divide the people of India,[100] and although sometimes they all behave like Indians, the next moment they behave as if they are different people. Lenny observes that while the Sharmas and the Daulatrams and the Brahmins like Nehru are "dehumanized by lofty caste and caste marks," her relations and her family are "reduced to irrelevant nomenclatures--we are Parsee" (102). Her secular family from undivided

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[99] Urvashi Butalia, in *The Other Side of Silence,* observes that Radcliffe "had little time, no familiarity with the land or the people, and census statistics which were, by now, quite old and almost certainly outdated" (66).

[100] Niaz Zaman, in "Bapsi Sidhwa: 'I am Pakistani,'" makes a right claim that sidhwa was against the creation of two nations on the basis of religion because "*Ice-Candy-Man* suggests that religious and cultural differences are artificially created and deliberately fostered" (112).

India is suddenly assigned a religious denomination. Even her "all-encompassing Ayah," from Amritsar (Punjab), has become a token. She is now only a Hindu, a vulnerable object with whom the Muslim mob will play at will; as if to conform to her new, more limited identity, Shanta starts buying incense sticks and lighting them before gods and goddesses in temples.

With Partition, religion turns friends into deadly foes, who start looting, raping, burning and killing. The Ice-candy-man, an admirer of Shanta, is transformed into an active participant in communal violence after the women of his family are mutilated and slaughtered on a train as they flee to Pakistan (Sidhwa, *Cracking India*, 159).[101] He has witnessed violence against other Muslims as well, including women and children. The Ice-candy-man reports: "a train from Gurdaspur has just come in. . . . Everyone in it is dead. Butchered. They are all Muslim. There are no young women among the dead! Only two gunny-bags full of women's breasts!" (Sidhwa, *Cracking India,* 159). The Ice-candy-man no longer respects friendship but enjoys himself secretly when Sikh women are molested by the Muslims. He finds pleasure in observing and reporting how the Muslims "played with one of Sher Singh's sisters" (166). Possessed by the idea of revenge, he says: "that night I went mad, I tell you. I lobbed grenades through the windows of Hindus and Sikhs I'd known all my life! I hated their guts. . . I want to kill someone for each of the breasts they cut off the Muslim women" (166).

Erstwhile friends look for opportunities to take revenge as people are filled with bitterness, rage and hatred. They form their own groups, segregate themselves, and

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[101] Novy Kapadiya, in "Communal Frenzy and Partition," observes that after the incident, "revenge becomes the major motivation for the Ice-Candy-Man and his friends" (44).

indulge in harmful gossip. Insanity becomes the order of the day. The Ice-candy-man kills Masseur, his good friend and Ayah's lover. No one can trust anybody. Sidhwa writes: "Ayah has stopped receiving visitors. Her closest friends have fled Lahore. She trusts no one. And Masseur's death has left in her the great empty ache" (Sidhwa, *Cracking India*, 188). "A symbol of the composite culture that India is," Ayah is also betrayed by her close friends (Jagdev Singh, *Ice-Candy- Man,* 170), molested by her friends and lovers, who abduct and rape her repeatedly over a period of several months. The narrator observes: "They have shamed her. Not those men in the carts—they were strangers—but Sharbat khan and Ice-candy-man and Imam Din and Cousin's cook and the butcher and other men she counted among her friends and admirers" (Sidhwa, *Cracking India*, 266). Ice-candy-man, her lover, is responsible for destroying her more than anybody else. Although he will marry her later, he installs Ayah as a "dancing girl" (a prostitute) in Lahore's red-light district, himself taking up the role of pimp and reciting verses like a love-lorn Urdu poet.

Like most Partition novelists, Sidhwa includes scenes of brutal violence in her novel. One of the worst victims of violence she presents is a small boy named Ranna. "Ranna's Story" provides the little boy's eye-witness accounts of several instances of intense (extreme) violence. Sidhwa writes about the attack on Pir Pindo, a Muslim village, in which his family has been annihilated:

> Ranna saw his uncles beheaded. His older brothers, his cousins. The Sikhs were among them like hairy vengeful demons, wielding bloodied swords, dragging them out as a sprinkling of Hindus, darting about at the fringes, their faces vaguely familiar, pointed out and identified the Mussulmans by name. He felt a blow cleave the back of his head and the warm flow of blood. Ranna fell just inside the door on a tangled pile of unrecognizable bodies. Someone fell on him, drenching him in blood. (Sidhwa, *Cracking India*, 213)

Ranna also sees horrible crimes committed against women, including the body of a naked woman, full of cuts, her head hanging from a ceiling fan. Besides, he sees babies snatched from their mothers and smashed against walls, and their mothers raped and killed (Sidhwa, *Cracking India*, 218-19).

Thus, Sidhwa also portrays Partition violence through the traumatized bodies of women. They became easy victims and were abducted, raped, mutilated and tortured in thousands.[102] Sidhwa shows the vulnerability of women and children during the times of mob that has been documented by social historians such as Urvashi Butalia, Ritu Menon and others.[103] *Cracking India* also depicts the plight of the so called "fallen women" who are not accepted by their families. Her grandmother explains to Lenny about her new nanny: "Hamida was kidnapped by the Sikhs . . . . She was taken away to Amritsar. Once that happens, sometimes, the husband or his family—won't take her back" (Sidhwa, *Cracking India*, 227). Considered to be socially dead, the "fallen women" are condemned to a life of oblivion. They are psychologically dead too, having been defiled by the males of the enemy community.

In Sidhwa, however, women are not always portrayed as a vulnerable lot. Lenny, Mrs Sethi, Lenny's mother and Godmother—all are invested with certain power at some points of time. Even subaltern women like Ayah have agency at certain points in the narrative—for instance her power to attract suitors and admirers from all religious

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[102] A. J. Kabir, in "Gender, Memory, Trauma," observes that "[W]omen were raped and mutilated during the mayhem of partition because their female bodies provided a 'space over which the competitive games of men were played out" (179). Pin-chiya Feng, in "Birth of Nations," agrees with Kabir's statement when she says that "the abduction and subsequent forced prostitution of the Hindu Ayah by the Muslim mob exemplify such a symbolic warfare played out on the female body" (232).

communities before the Partition violence. Women such as Godmother and Mrs. Sethi display moral strength in the novel. Godmother[104] is presented as a morally and intellectually strong woman who rescues the Ayah from the clutches of the villain, Ice-Candy-Man. Lenny's mother, along with other Parsee women, not only helps Hindu and Sikh families safely enter India but also assists in the rehabilitation of the abducted and dislocated women.[105] Notably, however, lower income group women (like Ayah and Hamida) fall prey to sexual violence more often than women from rich and educated backgrounds and often become silent, after the experiences.[106]

Like Manto and Singh, Sidhwa deplores the division of the subcontinent: Partition of the sub-continent is inhuman, unnatural, atrocious, undesirable and a pointless act of brutality comparable to the "partitioning" of a Hindu *banya* (shop-keeper) by the Muslims in the novel.[107] Once, when Ice-candy-man takes Lenny out to see the burning of Gowalmandi and Shalmi in Lahore, she sees a man tied to two jeeps whose body is torn apart:

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[103] Urvashi Butalia, in *The Other Side of Silence,* and Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin in *Borders & Boundaries,* provide a detailed description and analysis of the victimhood of women in children during Partition violence.

[104] Subhash Chandra, in "*Ice-Candy-Man*: A Feminist Perspective," considers that Rodabai, one of Lenny's aunts, the vibrant Godmother, remains "towering high above the women protagonists" (179). Similarly, Robert L Ross, in *Cracking India*: A Feminine View of Partition," maintains that eventually in the novel, Lenny realizes that "it is the ordinary person, a woman like Godmother, who 'battles wrongs' not the remote, icy men in power" (186).

[105] Jacquelynn. M. Kleist, in "More than Victims," observes that Lenny's mother "steps outside the role of traditional woman and of impartial Parsi community member to affect change in the lives of women who have been injured or abused (74).

[106] Jacquelynn. M. Kleist, "More than Victims," 79.
Mohammad A. Jajja, "Portrayal of Partition by Bapsi Sidhwa and Khushwant Singh," 211.

[107] Mohammad A. Jajja, "Portrayal of Partition by Bapsi Sidhwa and Khushwant Singh," 211.

> [Her] eyes focus on an emaciated Banya wearing a white Gandhi cap. The man is knocked down. His lips are drawn away from rotting, paan-stained teeth in a scream. The men move back and in the small clearing, his legs sticking out of his dhoti right up to the groin--each thin, brown leg tied to a jeep. (Sidhwa, *Cracking India,* 145)

This Banya wearing a Gandhi cap is torn into two parts symbolizing the tearing of India into two nations. Though frightened at first, Lenny is curious to know the meaning of what she has seen and after she returns home, she "selects a large lifelike doll" and begins to fiercely tear it apart until "the cloth skin is ripped right up to the armpits spilling chunks of greyish cotton and coiled brown coir" (148). Lenny rips the doll's legs "up to its armpits" mimicking the violence she has witnessed in her surroundings.

Sidhwa is intolerant of the politicians who, she thinks, are responsible for Partition. Except for a few positive strokes, she paints leaders such as Nehru, Bose, Gandhi, Patel, Bhagat, Tara, and Jinnah as corrupt, self-centered, and callous characters, lumps them together, and equates them with Ice-candy-man--a rapist, pimp and murderer.[108] In "Why Do I Write?" Sidhwa says: "In *Ice-Candy-Man*, I stressed a central concern--the evil done in the name of religion by politicians, and located in the ordinariness of the people who so mercilessly preyed on the victims of Partition" (32). Sidhwa shares the opinion of the general mass, who hated Partition and considered it to be the outcome of the dirty game of political power.

To some extent, Sidhwa holds the British responsible for Partition. In her analogy between the division of Punjab into villages and cities and the dealing of cards by "icy

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[108] Robert L. Ross, in "*Cracking India*: A Feminine View of Partition," rightly observes that the political leaders such as Nehru, Jinnah, Mountbatten, Bose "do not fare much better [than Gandhi] in the novel, identified as they are with Ice-Candy-Man" (185).

card-sharks," she condemns the callous, uncaring attitude of the leaders of the time (Sidhwa, *Cracking India,* 169). She draws attention to the British policy of divide-and-rule that plays a major role in the Partition through the Government House gardener who says: "It is the English's mischief . . . They are past masters at intrigue. It suits them to have us all fight" (100). Though characters such as this gardener and Ice-Candy-Man may not directly convey the author's views but they certainly communicate the general thoughts of the people. As a Pakistani citizen, Sidhwa feels discriminated against by the British rulers and says: "the British favor Nehru over Jinnah. Nehru is Kashmiri; they grant him Kashmir. Spurning logic, defying rationale, ignoring the consequence of bequeathing a Muslim state to the Hindus, while Jinnah futilely protests" (Sidhwa, *Cracking India*, 169). Sidhwa accuses the British of favoring the Hindus and the Congress and depriving Pakistan of its rightful share of land and assets.

Declaring that while writing the novel, she was "politically motivated," Sidhwa includes much of the politics of the time in *Cracking India* (Montenegro 35). Unlike Singh in particular, she expresses her anger at the political leaders of the time who, she believed, played with emotional and religious sentiments of people to appease their lust for power. In an interview with Alok Bhalla, she expresses her opinion that the country was divided because "many of the rioters were motivated by greed" (Bhalla, "Partition Dialogues," 225). Apart from greed of the people, she finds the actions of Indian National Congress, especially those of Jawahar Lal Nehru, responsible for the division of the country. She further thinks that "Gandhiji's use of religion to rouse people to political action" exacerbated Hindu-Muslim differences leading to Partition (Bhalla 228). In the same vein, Sidhwa holds the Sikhs to be responsible for the national tragedy along with

the Hindus because, as Shanta's Muslim lover Masseur says, the Sikhs are "the fighting arm of the Hindus" (Sidhwa, *Cracking India*, 140). Sidhwa's attitude towards the Sikhs here contradicts Singh who presents them in a comparatively favorable light.

As a member of a minority community, Sidhwa tries hard to keep herself away from involvement in the communal politics of the day and represent Partition in an objective or neutral manner. To a certain degree, she achieves her purpose, as she neither conforms to a Pakistani nationalist perspective, nor singles out a particular community as responsible for the violence. She shows both victims and perpetrators to belong to Hindu, Sikh, and Muslim communities, and also registers the acts of charity performed by members of the warring communities. However, despite her claim that she presents events in a balanced manner, she falls short of her avowed objectivity. Her Pakistani point of view comes to the fore when she paints the Sikhs as guilty of more atrocities than other groups and tries to damage Gandhi's image while improving Jinnah's.

Sidhwa's Muslim characters mock Indian political leaders such as Gandhi and Nehru and constantly disparage the Sikh characters. For instance, not content with maligning the present day Sikhs, Masseur refers to the remote past in declaring that "The Sikhs . . . butchered every single Mussulman from Ambala to Amritsar a century ago, during the Mogul empire's breakup" (Sidhwa, *Cracking India*, 140). As in the case of the characters of Singh and Nahal who subtly favor the Sikh and Hindu and malign the Muslims, Sidhwa's characters slightly disparage Hindus and Sikhs, in return projecting a better image of the Muslims. *Cracking India* represents Sikhs particularly as sexual monsters and the worst perpetrators of communal riots.

Cracking India attacks Nehru through Ice-Candy-Man: "But that Nehru, he's a sly one. . . He's got Mountbatten eating out of his one hand and the English's wife out of his other what-not. . . He's the one to watch!" (Sidhwa, *Cracking India*, 141). When another character tells him not to "underestimate Jinnah," Ice-candy-man retorts: "Jinnah or no Jinnah! Sikh or no Sikh! Right law, wrong law, Nehru will walk off with the lion's share. . . And what's more come out of it smelling like the Queen-of-the-Kotha!" (Sidhwa, *Cracking India*, 141). Sidhwa shows Nehru not only as a sly and opportunistic politician but as the owner of a brothel. Not even Mahatma Gandhi, adored by many other novelists, is spared Sidhwa's ironic lash. A "heftily moustached policeman" glibly talks about Gandhi and his famous fasting thus: "That wily Banya [merchant] is an expert on fasting unto death without dying" (71). While we can argue that these characters do not represent any influential view of the time, and also that they do not speak for Sidhwa, nevertheless, we can infer that they can damage the reputation of the leaders. Moreover, Sidhwa's selection of characters, who would speak derogatively of a person like Gandhi, gives the readers some reason for suspicion of the author's intent.

Although Sidhwa tells Bhalla, "I had no intention of being disrespectful towards him [Gandhi]," she also admits that she was depreciating Gandhi in reaction to Richard Attenborough's *Gandhi*, a film which almost deified him and dehumanized Jinnah (Bhalla 231). Further, Lenny describes Gandhi as "this improbable toss-up between a clown and a demon" (Sidhwa, *Cracking India*, 96). However, Sidhwa also extols Gandhi through Lenny:

> [A]nd suddenly his eyes turn to me. My brain, heart and stomach melt. The pure shaft of humor, compassion, tolerance and understanding he directs at me fuses me to everything that is feminine, funny, gentle, loving. He [Gandhi] is a man who loves women. And lame children. And the untouchable sweeper--so he

> will love the untouchable sweeper's constipated girl-child best. I know just where to look for such a child. He touches my face, and in a burst of shyness I lower my eyes. This is the first time I have lowered my eyes before man. (Sidhwa, *Cracking India*, 96)

Here, through the narrative voice of Lenny, Sidhwa acknowledges the saintly, loving qualities of Gandhi; perhaps she caricatures Gandhi at other points to bring him on a level with Jinnah, or to criticize, or provoke Gandhi's followers, or just to present the real game played between the members of opposing communities who hurled insults on each other.

Sidhwa feels that history has done an injustice to Jinnah; her research shows him to have been not "a religious fanatic," or "an evil man," but a thorough gentleman with the highest political credentials (Bhalla 230). In an interview, she tells David Mantenegro: "And, I felt, in *Ice-Candy-Man*, I was just redressing a very grievous wrong that has been done to Jinnah and Pakistanis by many Indian and British writers. They've dehumanized him, made him a symbol of the sort of person who brought about the partition of India" (50). In order to put the record straight, she seeks to rehabilitate Jinnah in *Cracking India*:

> And today, forty years later, in films of Gandhi's and Mountbatten's lives, in books by British and Indian scholars, Jinnah, who for a decade was known as "Ambassador of Hindu-Muslim Unity," is caricatured, and portrayed as a monster. (Sidhwa, *Cracking India*, 171)

Far from being a monster, Jinnah was--as India's poetess Sarojini Naidu believed--a practical, rational, idealistic, and humanitarian man (Sidhwa, *Cracking India*, 171). Niaz Zaman is right when he claims that Sidhwa "establishes her political identity in two significant ways: first, by focusing on the worst Indian atrocities committed in the Punjab, and secondly, by reappraising the character of Jinnah and attempting to improve

his image by suggesting that the British were less than fair to both Pakistan and Jinnah" (Zaman 108-109).[109] This political inclination of Sidhwa reveals her Pakistani perspective.

Unlike Singh, Sidhwa's *Cracking India* thus discusses political issues and overtly tries to refurbish the image of the Pakistani leader in an effort to correct the historical record. However, Sidhwa does not adopt the method of professional historians. As Kavita Daiya remarks, while history deals with "the subject of nation," and attempts to record the facts about significant events, memory concentrates on individual experiences and addresses their responses and reactions to events (39). In accord with this observation, *Cracking India* portrays the events of Partition and describes their impact on the life of several individuals belonging to different ethnicities, classes, religions, and creeds. Historians do not concern themselves with these events which they consider to be outside their scope; they focus rather on the grand sweep of the nation's progress. Navin Patwa observes that the historian presents only the events "important from a political, social or national perspective" whereas a creative writer like Sidhwa freely "paints the details left out by the historian. . . with a coating of fiction" so that the events become not only interesting but appealing to the readers of all times and places (1). Patwa is right about the timeless quality of historical novels as well as the painting of details by creative writers; it should be noted, however, that novelists like Sidhwa or Nahal also include much of the information of the official historians. They try to look at it through the perspective of the general mass and not through the one of the rulers. Events that are not spectacular for the nation, and stories of ordinary masses that cannot attract the attention

[109] Paul Brians, in *Modern South Asian Literature in English,* perceptively remarks that, "Sidhwa is eager to rebut Indian views of Jinnah,…by portraying him more rational and responsible than has been common

of the writers and admirers of Grand narratives urge these authors to write. They may not be abided by strict chronology of events and the sense of place, but they certainly include these elements in their writing. Unlike the official writers of history, the [hi]story of common man and woman interests them, and these authors write about the individuals in a particular historical setting. In the backdrop of history, these writers unfold the consciousness of characters whose lives have been seriously influenced by the times in which they lived.

Cracking India is thus an attempt to recreate history in the form of fiction. As in the case of other Partition novels such as *Train to Pakistan*, *Azadi*, and *Tamas, Cracking India* is "an imaginative response to the traumatic events of the partition of India in 1947."[110] A novelist such as Sidhwa does not rely on the mere facts but ponders their implications in a creative manner because for her, "novels are more truthful than historical accounts."[111] They convey the emotional truths of individuals that are absent from historical accounts which mainly focus on the platitudes of the politicians. Sidhwa brings to light the human dimension of Partition violence conveniently sidelined by the official historians. The traumatic stories of characters she describes make powerful appeal to the readers to look into the other side of Indian independence and to think twice about communal violence erupting along religious lines. While doing so, Sidhwa treats the novel as "a quasi-historical register" that serves as a platform upon which to base her imaginative thoughts.[112] Through fiction, she re-writes the history of the millions

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in earlier Indian accounts of partition, and humanizing him by telling of his marriage to a Parsi" (106).
[110] Tariq Rahman, "*Ice-Candy-Man* by Bapsi Sidhwa," 732.
[111] Alok Bhalla, *Partition Dialogues: Memories of a Lost Home*, 237.
[112] Madhuparna Mitra, "Contextualizing Ayah's Abduction," 24.

forgotten by the nation.[113] Sidhwa does not strictly maintain the chronology of historical events as in a historian's history because for the creative writer emotional truth carried by memory is even more important.

Madhuparna Mitra is of the opinion that *Cracking India* is "a piece of fiction that seeks to represent the psychological and social realities of a specific place at a specific time (Lahore ca. 1942-1948)" (24). We may agree with Mitra but bearing the fact in mind that the events described in the novel can have lasting consequences. Also, we should remember that the events in the novel have political consequences as well. The novel includes similar incidents that occurred in 1964—the partition of Bengal--and in 1984--the assassination of Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi. What happened in Lahore was repeated in Calcutta, Dhaka, and Delhi. Novy Kapadia rightly asserts that Sidhwa "reveals that riots are contemporaneous and that those who do not learn from history are condemned to repeat it" (46). As the novel shows, riots can occur at any time in any part of the subcontinent. Sidhwa herself suggests that history teaches people lessons and urges them not to repeat old mistakes: the "agenda of the Partition is still alive" (Bhalla 237).

Lenny has a faulty knowledge of textbook history, but her version provides an alternative history to set against the British or the Nationalist version of Indian history. Like the works of other Partition novelists, Sidhwa's novel can be considered as an alternative to the official histories of India or Pakistan.[114] However, it cannot be conveniently accepted as "a Pakistani version" of history as claimed by Ralph Crane

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[113] Ralph Crane, in "A Passion for History and for Truth Telling," rightly says that fiction, for Sidhwa, is "a shaping force of history" (59).

[114] Asha Sen, "Child Narrators in *The Shadow Lines*, *Cracking India* and *Meatless Days*," 201.

because Sidhwa's novel does not represent the Pakistani nationalist views but accommodates the voice of the most marginal in the country (59).

Cracking India is "semi-fictional, semi-autobiographical" novel.[115] By employing a child narrator from a minority group, Sidhwa tries to maintain a distance and represent the horrors of Partition in a neutral manner. She herself has said: "Because the Parsees were not directly involved in the struggle. I felt I could bring dispassion to the subject" (Sidhwa, Butalia and Whitehead 237). Narrating the events of Partition through Lenny "allows Sidhwa to negotiate the delicate issue of sensitively representing violence."[116] She can remain aloof from the activities and ideologies of the contending forces and carefully show their failings while simultaneously giving voice to the subalterns. Sidhwa herself claims that *Cracking India* presents "a fair point of view, which does justice to the suffering of both the communities" (Sidhwa, Butalia and Whitehead 237). To the extent that she brings to focus the suffering of the minority from both sides, we may agree with Sidhwa, but she does not seem to keep her word of fairness consistently because as the text reveals, she is more inclined to improve the image of Pakistan.

Sidhwa adopts a realistic mode of writing to portray the violence of 1947 and its aftermath, as well as a linear pattern for the violent events unfolding in her novel. With a clear-cut plot and an absorbing story, the novel moves step by step towards its climax. From the beginning, the novel juxtaposes the personal with the national and considers the idea of violence and nation building. Lenny's loss of innocence coincides with the nations' loss of peace, humanity and love, and its plunge into a series of scenes of

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[115] Kamran Rastegar, "Trauma and Maturation in Women's War Narratives," 26.
[116] A. J. Kabir, "Gender, Memory, Trauma: Women's Novels on the Partition of India," 182.

violence and bloodshed. Sidhwa gradually unfolds events that move toward the birth of Pakistan as well as the tragedy of 1947. Lenny, however, is from an upper-class family and thus has a limited perspective. Moreover, "by situating Lenny's narrative in the present, Sidhwa imposes limits upon her perspective."[117] As a result, much remains to be seen and told about the violence, and therefore, Sidhwa includes another perspective--Ranna's perspective—in order to represent the suffering masses at the margins. "Ranna's Story" is told from a third-person narrative point of view and recounts the experiences of several characters outside the purview of Lenny. This switch not only allows the novelist to present another point of view but also fragments the flow of the novel as if to accommodate the wide ranging confusion of the time. Its graphic detailed presentation of the Partition riots takes readers directly into scenes of bloodshed and atrocities. Ranna's narrative provides a testimony of what Lenny cannot possibly have witnessed because of her sheltered middle-class life. Inserted into the middle of the novel, "Ranna's Story" attempts to speak for thousands of lost and traumatized children belonging to the lower classes and the ethnic majority.

However, since Lenny frequently meets and interacts with Ranna, she keeps learning about the other perspective too. Besides, Lenny has access to characters such as Ayah, Ice-candy-man, Masseur, Mrs. Sethi, Godmother, Inspector Rogers, Mr Singh, Ranna, Hamida, and Papoo (a girl almost of Lenny's age who is a victim of domestic violence), from different strata of society and belonging to different social or religious groups who gradually impart their perspectives to her. This new knowledge, to a large

[117] Shirley Chew, "Tearing the Punjab," 171.

extent, "allows her to comprehend and resolve the trauma of Partition."[118] Lenny is given a kind of double perspective--that of a child and that of the author. *Cracking India* is a *Buildungsroman* that presents a historical account in the voice of a child with the added consciousness of the author.[119] It employs allegory and symbolism to portray Partition violence so that the readers can comprehend its enormity clearly. Sidhwa represents human bodies to allegorize Partition: the Ayah's body, subjected to violence and violation, resembles the condition of the subcontinent in 1947; the tearing of the body of the Hindu Banya into two re-enacts the tearing of India into two nations; the rending apart of the body of the banya together with the ripping of Lenny's doll give a pattern to *Cracking India.*

To conclude, like the fictions of Manto and Singh, Sidhwa's *Cracking India* recreates the traumatic history of Indian Partition. The novel marginalizes British characters, gives priority to Parsee community, and sympathizes with the victims of Partition. Although Sidhwa at times takes the side of her community and allows her nationalist feelings to appear, making room for her characters to mock Gandhi as a villain while others raise Mohammad Ali Jinnah to the level of a hero, she paints a realistic picture of the time. Unlike Singh, who focuses on broad tragic facts of Partition history in his novella, *Train to Pakistan*, Sidhwa in her more expansive novel devotes much time and space to analyzing the political and historical causes of the Partition and its impact on individuals belonging to several religious groups and strata of society. Sidhwa's symbolic

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[118] Kamran Rastegar, "Trauma and Maturation in Women's War Narratives," 32.
[119] Feroza Jussawalla, in "The Location of Bapsi Sidhwa's Culture," claims that as "it is the coming of age of Lenny," *Cracking India* is "the truest bildungsroman in Bapsi Sidhwa's Parsi trilogy" (83).

representation of India in the form of Shanta, the Hindu Ayah, makes the novel at once a rich work of art, and a piece of memorable history with much emotional power.[120]

Like Nahal's *Azadi,* Sidhwa's novel provides a variety of characters inhabiting the cosmopolitan city of Lahore and like Nahal again, she addresses most poignantly the suffering of the victims (especially women) of Partition. Except for Nahal, no other novelist discussed here covers as wide variety of issues and tries to give a composite and comprehensive picture of the times in South Asian history. *Cracking India* spans the longest period of time and provides ample space for analysis of the events of the time. Singh's *Train to Pakistan* mostly focuses on the tragic historical facts; Sahni concentrates on the mechanics of riots along with the physical and mental impact of Partition on individual life and property. Sidhwa does this and more by juxtaposing the personal history of an individual with that of the nation and also taking us across the actual Partition up to the recovery and rehabilitation of the lost people during the bloody times**.** In doing so, she produces an alternative history of Partition with much of the content absent in the works of academic historians.

[120] Jennifer Yusin and Deepika Bahri, in "Writing Partition," rightly comment that both *Train to Pakistan* and *Cracking India* "break open the literary space in which fiction has the potential to become testimony" (85).

Chapter Three:
Rioters, Rulers, Victims in Sahni's *Tamas* and Nahal's *Azadi*

This Chapter examines Bhisham Sahni's *Tamas* (1974) and Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* (1975) both of which, like Singh's *Train to Pakistan* and Sidhwa's *Cracking India* concentrate on the Partition of Punjab. Published almost at the same time, these novels are also the outcome of the authors' personal experience of Partition. Having both been members of the Indian National Congress, Sahni and Nahal present insiders' views of the party politics played at the time. Sahni idolizes Gandhi, whereas Nahal shows his respect but also criticizes the leader.[121] Both Sahni and Nahal criticize the Congress, but mostly blame Muslim leaders and British imperialistic policy for the events that unfolded in the aftermath of Partition. Bearing an ambivalent attitude toward the British Raj Nahal only slightly comments on its shortcomings, but Sahni strongly critiques the British policy of divide and rule. Although *Tamas*[122] gives extensive attention to British characters such as Richard and Liza, Sahni marginalizes the British Raj by caricaturing and belittling a British magistrate. While Sahni[123] focuses on events before 1947, and presents the

[121] Sudarshan Sharma, in "Gandhian Ideology and Some Novelists," goes to the extent of saying that Gandhi is merely discussed in *Azadi* for "ensuring historical authenticity. . . . His being introduced personally on a tour of the Punjab is absolutely factious" (370).

[122] Winner of the 1975 Sahitya Akademi Award (the highest literary honor for literature), *Tamas* has been translated to English, and several Indian languages. It was made into a tele-film by Govind Nihalani, a noted film director, in 1986. The tele-version of *Tamas* critiques the communal violence aroused especially by leaders to achieve their political goals. The serial was an immediate success as it was shown in India in the 1980s when communalism was on the rise again.

[123] Bhisham Sahni, a distinguished Hindi fiction writer, playwright, translator, teacher, polyglot, and actor, was born in Rawalpindi (present Pakistan) on 8 August 1915. Son of a devout Hindu reformist, Sahni attended school in Rawalpindi and later joined Government College, Lahore, from where he earned a Master's degree in English Literature. A member of Indian National Congress, and an Indian freedom

psychology of the rulers, rioters and victims; Nahal provides a panoramic view of events before, during and after Partition, concentrating intensely on the psychology of the victims of violence.

Like Singh and Sidhwa, these authors attempt to distance themselves from personal and national prejudices and to represent the riots and other forms of violence in an unbiased manner, but with mixed success. This chapter, like the previous one, will discuss, in each novel, Partition violence, especially violence against women, acts of charity, the politics of the time, and the author's use of history, and try to highlight the content the novelistic form provides as alternative history.

Bhisham Sahni's *Tamas*

Like Singh's *Train to Pakistan* and Sidhwa's *Cracking India*, Sahni's *Tamas* (1974)[124] represents riots and carnage, scenes of exodus, emigration, violence, and suffering, but it is much more a politically motivated novel than the other two. Set in a small unnamed Indian town of North India and based on actual events, *Tamas* opens with a slaughtered pig placed on the steps of a local mosque. A low caste sweeper, Nathu has been paid a small sum to kill a pig by a local Muslim politician, Murad Ali. Assuming

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fighter, Sahni was jailed for his participation in the Quit India Movement of 1942. In the late 1940s, he worked with his brother Balraj Sahni as a stage performer in Mumbai and joined the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA). No sooner had he started teaching in Lahore, "the bastion of social radicalism," than the event of Partition occurred, bringing about a great change in his life. His family was forced to leave native Rawalpindi. Deeply affected, Sahni moved to India after Partition. Uprooted, Sahni joined Delhi College as a lecturer of English in 1950. He lived in Moscow from 1957 to 1963, and translated twenty-five books from Russian into Hindi, including Tolstoy's *Resurrection*. Actually, Punjabi was Sahni's mother tongue and Urdu the language in which he received his education. He worked as the general secretary of the Progressive Writers Association and also acted in several Hindi movies including his own *Tamas* (1984). In the film, Sahni performs the role of the Sikh character Karmo. Recipient of Padma Bhushan for literature in 1988, Sahni died on July 11, 2003 in Mumbai, India.

[124] The word "Tamas" has a rich connotation: it means ignorance, darkness, or evil. In *India-Pakistan: Partition Perspectives in Indo-English Novels*, V Pala Prasada Rao, K. Nirupa Rani, and D. Bhaskar Rao,

that the offense has been committed by Hindus, the Muslims in revenge kill a cow and attack Hindus and Sikhs. Revenge invites further revenge. Frightened by the communal riots, Nathu runs away to another city with his pregnant wife and elderly mother but Nathu's family is safe nowhere. His mother dies on the journey. They live for some days in a *gurudwara* (Sikh temple) with a Sikh couple—Harnam Singh and Banto—who are also fleeing their riot ridden village. Their journey ends when one day Nathu's body is discovered at a refugee camp.

Once the pig and the cow have been killed, riots erupt everywhere—in towns and villages--dividing people, isolating communities, inflaming hatred and conflicts. The town becomes lifeless because of looting, arson and killings: roads are blocked, shops closed, and public activities such as prabhat pheris (morning rounds by Congress workers for spreading information, and performing services), come to a halt (Sahni, *Tamas*, 162). Hundreds of people--Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh—lose their lives. The novel is built on a simple frame of revenge, and counter revenge, leading to massive violence.[125] Although the army under British rule is able eventually to suppress the violence, the distrust and enmity created in the minds of the survivors lingers, affecting the lives of millions.

Like other Partition writers, Sahni describes the harmonious existence of two communities for centuries. Nostalgia made many Partition writers romanticize the pre-Partition days. Sahni reverts to nostalgia partly to bridge the mental gulf among the members of warring communities created by Partition violence and to recover the good

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write: "as the title suggests, it is an attempt to depict and condemn the ignorance and darkness involved in communal violence on the eve of the partition of India" (63).

[125] Arjun Mahey, in "Partition Narratives: Some Observations," rightly points out that "an entire village goes up in flames because a single, minor episode (a pig slaughtered and left outside a mosque) invites revenge, which in turn attracts counter-revenge" (142).

old days. As in *Train to Pakistan*, the distinctive activities of the Hindus and Muslims constitute the rhythm of life in the town:

> It was to the same rhythm that people were born, grew up and become old, that generations came and went. This rhythm or symphony was the creation of centuries of communal living, of the inhabitants having come together in harmony. One would think that every activity was like a chord in a musical instrument, and if even one string snapped the instrument would produce only jarring notes. (Sahni, *Tamas*, 115)

Prodded by Murad Ali, Nathu's action breaks the harmony of life, and turning the former friends and neighbors into enemies, violent mayhem ensues in the town. Only later does Nathu realize that he has been used as a mere "decoy."[126]

Religion becomes the cause for growing bitterness among friends and neighbors. Social relations deteriorate as people from each community start talking against the other, spreading rumors and forming communal groups. "Residents of Gawalmandi said that many people had been killed in Ratta, while those in Ratta said that a lot of killing had taken place in the Committee Mohalla" (Sahni, *Tamas*, 161). Sahni writes about the changed atmosphere:

> Overnight, dividing lines had been drawn among the residential localities. No Muslim now dared go into a Hindu locality, nor a Hindu into a Muslim locality. Everyone was filled with fear and suspicion. At the entrance to the lanes and at road-crossings, small groups of people sat hidden from view, their faces half-covered, holding lances, knives and lathis in their hands. (Sahni, *Tamas*, 162)

Partition lines are drawn between Hindu and Muslim *muhallas* (locales/hamlets); they grow suspicious and fearful of each other, both groups start living and moving separately, carrying weapons and not daring to enter into the other community's area. Their own majority area fills them with a sense of immense power, which they exploit to terrorize

the members of other community.[127] While Muslims shout slogans such as: "Pakistan Zindabad!" (Long live Pakistan), and "Qaiyad-e-Azam Zindabad" (Long Live Jinnah), the Hindus retort by "Bande Mataram!" (Hail to Mother India) (Sahni, *Tamas*, 33). Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus assemble in mosques, *gurudwaras,* and temples to plan their course of action, turning places of worship into places of war. For instance, the Hindus hurriedly form committees and volunteer groups, contact other Hindu and Sikh organizations, repair the alarm bell at Shivala temple, appoint Gurkha watchmen, and store oil, sand, and water (79).

Acting opportunistically, politicians, religious leaders, and community leaders incite members of their communities to rebuff members of the other community.[128] Politicians and fanatics alike exploit the psychology of riots for their petty gain. They incite people to revenge and blood feuds on the pretext that they are serving the interest of their community. They invent stories of far-off murders of their people and influence the young people to take arms against the members of the other community.

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[126] V. Pala Prasada Rao, K. Nirupa Rani, and D. Bhaskar Rao, *India-Pakistan: Partition Perspectives in Indo-English Novels,* 71.

[127] Sahni's famous story "Amritsar Aa Gaya Hai" ("The Train has Reached Amritsar" (2007) in Bhalla's translation), illustrates the point. Like *Tamas,* the story is based on Partition. Set in a moving train, "The Train has Reached Amritsar" tells about the psychological impact of communal riots at the time of Partition. The atmosphere of the train turns gloomy and sinister as passengers learn of the riots while still on their journey. People start leaving their compartments to join their own community members in other compartments. When the train crosses Harbanspura, communal rage so clouds the mind of a frail Hindu Babu that he starts shouting at his Pathani co-passengers. Crossing into the Hindu area of Amritsar fills him with wild courage and he brutally murders a Muslim who is merely trying to board the train. His act suggests that having a majority in an area not only granted a sense of power to the people belonging to that community, but also that violent times turned an ordinary man into a murderer. In this story, Sahni, like Manto, finds people acting senselessly and irrationally once they are caught by communal fury. Like Manto again, Sahni blurs the boundary between aggressor and victim as in the case of the Babu.

[128] Raju Jayasing Patole, in "The Reflective Response to the Partition," rightly views that *Tamas* "as a literary document opens windows to India on the eve Partition and also sarcastically comments on the politico-economic alliances of the leaders based on their hostile interests and their willingness to control the mob for disturbing the social solidarity" (2).

Innocent people, manipulated by powerful extremist forces, become victims of either fast spreading rumors or indoctrination. Early in the novel, Sahni creates a powerful scene of indoctrination of right-wing Hindu ideology among young people. Ranvir, a boy of fifteen and the son of a philanthropic merchant is told by his mentor that the *Vedas* contain passages discussing the art of bomb making. Brought up on tales of Hindu heroes such as Shivaji and Maharana Pratap, and taught to hate the non-Hindus or *mlechchas,* Ranvir is ordered to kill a hen without flinching as a rite of initiation (Sahni, *Tamas*, 83-85). Having learned that shedding blood is manly and heroic, he realizes that "Killing is not difficult. . . . One has only to raise one's hand and it is done. It is fighting that is difficult, particularly when the other person stands up against you. To stab a man to death is far easier. It poses no problem, killing poses no problem" (90). Teenagers such as Ranvir become pawns in the hands of communal and sectarian forces. Inspired by the indoctrination, Inder, another young recruit, stabs a Muslim incense-seller to prove himself worthy to join the group (202). These young recruits grotesquely define their masculinity by killing members of other community.[129]

Communal polarization works upon the individual psyche in such a way that people from one community start viewing friends from other community as their deadly enemies, as happens in the case of Shah Nawaz, a friend of the rich Hindu merchant Raghu Nath, and an otherwise balanced man. Raghu Nath seeks the help of his friend to secure his personal safety and also asks the Muslim to protect his other belongings and rescue a box of jewels from his house in a riot-ridden locality. Nawaz secures the box and safely delivers it to Raghu Nath; however, while in Raghu Nath's house, something snaps

[129] Tarun K Saint, in *Witnessing Partition,* observes that Sahni's "ironic representation of the modalities of indoctrination amongst the Hindu right led to a major controversy, after the screening of the film version of

in Shah Nawaz's mind and he gives "a sharp kick to [the servant] Mikhi on his back" (Sahni, *Tamas*, 177). Feeling "like lifting his foot and hitting Milkhi on the face so as to crush the centipede," he kicks to death the Hindu's innocent servant (177). Unable to kill the rich friend, Nawaz seems to kill the innocent servant as revenge on the opposing community.[130] The act also involves him in further communal violence.[131]

An irrational urge to hurt and kill drives some Muslims to torture others, such as Iqbal Singh, who is utterly humiliated even after he is forcibly converted to Islam and named Iqbal Ahmed. Singh is waylaid by a few young Muslims, who spare his life for accepting Islam. His hair is cut, his beard is trimmed, he is asked to recite Kalma, and he is circumcised. Although the Muslims call him their brother now, they cannot show love or sympathy for him (Sahni, *Tamas*, 278). They make him a constant butt of ridicule. Even during the conversion ceremony, the young people humiliate him. One force opens his mouth and shoves in it a big chunk of raw meat dripping with blood (279).

Averse to forced conversion and other humiliations, many Hindus and Sikhs opt for self-immolation, or honor killing. The story of Harnam Singh and Banto exemplifies the practice of honor killing. Sahni also enacts a scene of group suicide of Sikh women led by Jasbir Kaur, who commit suicide by jumping into a well in order to protect their

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Tamas by Govind Nihalani on national T.V. in 1988" (160-61).

[130] Charu Sharma, in "Compassion vs Communalism," perceptively remarks that Shah Nawaz does not harm…the rich Hindu, for economic interest, but he "pushes Milkhi his servant, down the stairs, out of sheer communal hatred generated after viewing a tuft of hair on his head, an identity marker of his being a Hindu" (www.shodh.net). In this regard, Rajendra Sharma, in "A Life of Commitment," also rightly observes that Sahni saw "haves versus have-nots divide lurking behind the periodic eruptions of communal madness" (www.hindu.com/fline).

[131] Virender Pal, in "Anatomy of Communal Violence," convincingly argues that Milkhi's murder is "an initiation for Shah Nawaz into the violence" (151).

individual as well as family and community honor.[132] These Sikh women proudly give up their life rather than yielding themselves to the Muslim males, which they considered a situation worse than death.[133]

In Partition novels, women's body generally serves as the site of family and national honor, where the males of opposing community play the game of power. As they try to defile the women of the other community to establish their honorable status, women have to undergo much suffering. As in the works of other Partition novelists, Sahni highlight the pitiable condition of women in *Tamas.* Jasbir, Banto, Karmo, Prakasho—all suffer untold miseries. Pregnant Karmo has to wander from place to place without food and sleep in constant fear of attack by communal fanatics. Banto at the age of sixty has been torn from her native place with almost nothing in hand. Prakasho is exploited by her Muslim master, Allah Rakha who kidnaps her, takes her to his home and marries her without her consent. For many days Prakasho lives in his house without eating anything in fear both of her husband and her father. However, the truth dawns upon her that she is helpless before Allah Rakha and surrenders herself to him (Sahni, *Tamas*, 330-335). No one from her family or community knows where she is living, nor is there any chance for her to return as she will not be accepted by the Hindu community. She is socially dead. Her mother says peremptorily, "Of what use is her coming back to

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[132] This and similar incidents of suicide find much place in the works of Urvashi Butalia, Ritu Menon and others. Butalia, in *The Other Side of Silence*, particularly writes in detail about an incident in Thoa Khalsa (Rawalpindi in Punjab) in which more than ninety women are reported to have saved their chastity and religion by drowning themselves into a well (155). Singh makes only a passing reference to the incident whereas Sahni describes it in detail.

[133] Anubha Sharma, in "The Psychological Condition of Women during Partition in Bhisham Sahni's *Tamas*," observes that Jasbir Kaur and other women "were horrified to think about the situation that, if in any case they were kidnapped or abducted by the rioters [here Turks/Muslims], suicide was the easiest way to avoid the terrible situation" (76).

us?" (330). Prakasho's father, a Hindu priest, remarks, "She is lost forever" and does not attempt to trace her even after the riots are over and lost women are being recovered.[134]

Sahni includes an episode where some Muslim youths sit on the terrace of the Sheikh's house and share their stories and experiences of sexual exploits. One of them relates that he and four or five of his friends together raped a Hindu girl to her death. Laughing a hollow kind of laughter he says, "When my turn came there was no sound from her; she wouldn't move. I looked at her, she was dead. I had been doing it to a dead body" (Sahni, *Tamas*, 288). Reminiscent of Manto's story, "Cold Meat," this episode not only indicates the monstrosity of human beings but also illustrates the victimhood of women during Partition riots. Another Muslim youth tells the group how they killed a *bagri* woman (low-caste Hindu woman from northern India) who begged for her life: "Don't kill me. . . All seven of you can have me as your keep" (288). This incident becomes a "counterpoint" to the voluntary drowning of "tens" of Sikh women in a well, and challenges the nationalist discourse that women chose death to escape the dishonor of rape by the Muslims.[135]

Like Nahal in *Azadi*, Sahni depicts a sad picture of refugee camps, too. At one point he writes that there are only two camps for the refugees from forty villages burnt in the communal riots. The refugees undergo a hellish experience when they meet the stolid "Statistics Babu"(so called because of his demands for statistics), a functionary of the Relief Committee, who presides over one of the camps and acts like a highly charged

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[134] Urvashi Butalia, in *The Other Side of Silence,* discusses the many abducted women who were either lost, recovered, or disowned by their families. Nahal in *Azadi* brings in a similar issue where the family members of the "dishonored" woman show no concern for her.

[135] Kavita Daiya, in *Violent Belongings: Partition, Gender, and National Culture in Postcolonial India*, rightly observes that through this testimony Sahni "challenge[s] the nationalist ideology that suggests that for a Hindu woman raped by a Muslim man or its threat, suicide is the only desirable and honorable option" (98).

machine asking: "I want figures, only figures, nothing but figures" (Sahni, *Tamas*, 316). He has neither time nor patience and heart to listen to the tales of the refugees.[136]

As a man and author who cherished the values of universal humanism, Sahni draws his subaltern rural characters so that some imbued with human decency try to help others even when their own life is at risk.[137] For instance, the Muslim Maula Dad respectfully assures the Hindu Lakshmi Narain: "Rest assured, Lalaji, as long as we are there, nobody dare touch even a hair on your head" (Sahni, *Tamas*, 106). Mir Dad keeps reminding Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs to avoid violence and live together united and strong (241). And the Muslim Rajo, Ehsan Ali's wife, escorts an old Sikh couple away from her village. To the old couple, she says: "You knocked at my door with some hope and expectation in your heart. We shall see what happens" and offers the most needed service at the time (258).[138] Rajo offers food and shelter to the old Sikh couple while her own son Ramzan seeks to take their life. She also returns the jewelry looted by her husband Ehsan Ali from their house. Rajo's actions, rising above revenge and retaliation,

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[136] Anjali Gera Roy and Nandi Bhatiya, in their Introduction to *Partitioned Lives* observe rightly that the Babu's "quest for minimal information wipes out the human dimension of the stories of refugees" (xvii).

[137] These characters "display exemplary courage and humanity at the face of all the violence that was meted out to them. Their attempts to save themselves are not devoid of their concern to protect their neighbours" ("*Tamas*: 'An Unacceptable History?'" (http://edhwani.com). In this regard, Anuparna Mukherjee, in "Reading Women's Journey," avers that "within the macro-narrative of violence in an atmosphere charged with religious hatred, we have some human moments, or counter-narratives of love which kept people's faith alive in humanity" (101).

[138] Alok Bhalla, in "Bhisham Sahni (1915-2003)," notes that Tamas asserts that "even during the darkest hours of Partition, there were a number of heroic and fallible people, who continued to abide by the covenant of a civil society, which always places greater value on 'well-doing' than on religious fatwas" (12).

provide an example of strength and courage.[139] Her humanity becomes radiantly visible when she puts aside the thoughts of religion to help the people in distress.[140]

Rajo's husband Ehsan Ali reluctantly joins her in sheltering the old couple for a while. Even their son Ramzan, proves unable to strike the old man whom he knows well and whose shop he visited a couple times.[141] Sahni has said in an interview that in relation to neighbors "a different value system prevailed," and even highly communal people who went to loot and kill in other localities protected their old neighbors. He adds that Harnam Singh and Banto are forced to leave their place not by their "older friends but by the communalized young" (Sahni in Alok Bhalla 129). Violent times can also bring people from different communities and classes together to forge a bond of love. Dislocation, for example, unites the untouchables Nathu and Karmo with the Sikh couple to make a family.[142] United by their pain, they share their lives and sorrows.

Tamas presents not only the gruesome violence of the times in rural and urban areas, including the riot infested city streets, but also the politics of the ruling class and the opportunistic moves of the rich and the elite of the warring groups. Sahni takes the readers to the British administrator's house and office as well as to the meetings of the members of Congress and Muslim League, as well as the training center of the Youth Wing of the Indian National Congress to show their plans, strategies, actions, and psychology. The novelist deftly shows the British attitude towards Indians through Richard, the Deputy Commissioner of Punjab. As the representative of the British

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[139] Sukrita Paul Kumar in "Re-membering Woman" (http://pratilipi.in).

[140] Deler Singh, in "Tamas: A Tale of Humanity and Sacrifice," with regards to Rajo's charitable act, observes that "religion cuts across all barriers to be more humane and compassionate" (5). In fact, by being altruistic she follows the true religion of love.

[141] McCaulay Singer-Milnes, in "Fractioned, Fissured, and Framed," rightly comments that Rajo's action is a proof that "politics that dictate hate do not necessarily mirror individual relationships and actions" (27).

Empire, Richard never once considers the effects on native people of the policies he implements that were formulated in England. He tells his wife, Liza: "These people know only what we tell them . . . . Most people have no knowledge of their history. They only live it" (Sahni, *Tamas*, 41). Exploiting the inability of Indian masses too see anything beyond the present for the lack of their sense of history, instead of trying to establish peace between the warring communities, Richard provokes them for division.

Liza rightly characterizes his treatment of the Indians when she says: "In the name of freedom they fight against you, but in the name of religion you make them fight one another. Isn't that right?" (Sahni, *Tamas*, 50). Instead of trying to resolve Hindu-Muslim conflict, Richard pays attention to their differences.[143] Keeping faithfully with the British policy of divide-and-rule, he tells Liza, "If the subjects fight among themselves, the ruler is safe" (54). Richard's indifference partly fans the communal or religious riots in the novel.[144] Had Richard taken firm steps, the riots would have stopped long before. Richard reveals his character when he replies to his wife that he is not going to see the 103 burning villages because "this is not my country, Liza, nor are these people my countrymen" (Sahni, *Tamas*, 314). Sahni implies that a foreigner can never love and serve his/her people as a native can. Patole quotes Sahni in his interview with *Indian Literary Review* in 1979:

> The British exploited our religious differences and were largely responsible for working up the communal frenzy. I have not gone into the long process by which,

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[142] Similar bonding of people from different religious groups can be found in Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*, where the Hindu Jethamoshai and Muslim Khalil live like a family in Dhaka after the Partition.

[143] V. Pala Prasada Rao, K. Nirupa Rani, and D. Bhaskar Rao, in *India-Pakistan: Partition Perspectives in Indo-English Novels,* point out that in *Tamas,* the conversation between Richard and Liza "introduces the theme of Partition" (64).

[144] In this regard, Sadashiv Pawar, in "Partition Perspectives in B. Sahni`s Tamas," rightly observes that "the conversation between Liza and Richard reveals that the British rulers did play an important role in the promotion, spread, growth and ultimate success of communalism" (http://www.academia.edu/4180539/PARTITION_PERSPECTIVES).

> starting from the early twenties, or even earlier, the entire policy of the British Government was directed towards creating an atmosphere of communal bitterness. It is culminated in the frenzy of 1947. It is deplorable that we played into their hands . . . *Tamas* portrays the British administration at work through the manoevres of Richard. (3)

Sahni correctly judges strategy: the rulers exploited the religious differences between Hindus and Muslims, playing the card of communal antagonism to prolong British rule in India. In the novel Mir Dad, Sohan Singh, Jarnail Singh and others express their realization of the role played by the British in starting the riots. For instance, "It is entirely the mischief of the British. Sohan Singh's voice grew louder. It is in our interest that the riot does not break out" (Sahni, *Tamas*, 239). Jarnail Singh takes a similar stand when he asserts: "I say, our real enemy is the Englishman. Gandhiji says that it is the Englishman who makes us fight one another. We should not be taken in by what the Englishman says" (190).

However, Sahni shows the wavering position of the Indian National Congress. As a member of the Congress, he was acquainted with the quarrelsomeness, dishonesty, hypocrisy and greed of the local and national Congress leaders. Disagreements among the members fragmented the party from within**.** Dubious acts of some Congress members had created in some Muslims a suspicion that the party was acting not as a secular national party but as a sectarian party.

Suspicion in the Muslim League in the 1940s that the Indian National Congress was not an all-India organization for people of all faiths and beliefs, led them to declare that only the Muslim League stood for the welfare of Muslims.[145] A member of Muslim

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[145] Rao, V. Pala Prasada, K. Nirupa Rani, and D. Bhaskar Rao, in *India-Pakistan: Partition Perspectives in Indo-English Novels,* observe that the opportunistic and communal policy of Congress leaders made the Muslims think that "success of national movement led by Congress would mean a Hindu Supremacy in Indian politics" (71).

League tells Bakshiji, that "the incontrovertible truth is that the Congress is the body of the Hindus and the Muslim League of the Muslims" (Sahni, *Tamas*, 34). Referring to all the Muslim Congress workers as "the dogs of the Hindus," this League member calls the great Indian patriot Maulana Azad Kalam "the biggest dog of Hindus who goes wagging his tail before you" (34). Muslim supporters of Pakistan claim, "Freedom of Hindustan will be for the Hindus. It is in sovereign Pakistan alone that Muslims will be really free" (34). People like Hyat Baksh take the position: "We shall not rest till we have achieved Pakistan. . . Pakistan will become a reality" (179). In consonance with the politics of the day, Congress members such as Jarnail retort, "Pakistan shall be made over my dead body" (190). This heated debate shows that even before Partition, people were already so divided on political grounds that death and destruction were a part of their conversation. In fact, later the Jarnail is killed in the mayhem following the killing of the pig by what Tarun K Saint calls "the politics of hatred" (154).[146]

Expert at portraying stray, seemingly random acts of violence, Sahni represents many instances: in the riot, a poor Muslim is murdered (Sahni, *Tamas*, 166), five *kafirs* (people having no faith in Islam) are reported to have been killed (167), and communalists like Baldev Singh demand blood for blood (251). While the Muslim communalist declare "to kill a kafir is a virtuous act" (241), and threaten "if one of our men is killed, we will kill three of theirs" (183), a Hindu spiritualist such as Dev Vrat instructs young boys how to stab and kill without compunction (203). Invoking God's names, people shout slogans such as "Har Har Mahadev," (Hindu slogan invoking Lord

[146] Sadashiv Pawar in "Partition Perspectives in B. Sahni`s Tamas," notes that Jarnail and Bakshiji are "the representatives of Gandhian ideology" (http://www.academia.edu/4180539/PARTITION_PERSPECTIVES). It is ironic that Partition kills both Jarnail and the Gandhian ideology of non-violence.

Shiva, the God of gods) "Allah-O-Akbar," (Muslim slogan that invokes the great God, Allah) and "Sat Sri Akal" (Sikh slogan beseeching the truthful Master) and excitedly loot, burn, rape, and kill.

Administrators such as Richard and political leaders such as Murad Ali take advantage of mob mentality to achieve their selfish ends.[147] *Tamas* clearly shows that when leaders play with the religious sentiments of people to achieve their political goals, they will lead the society toward violence and destruction.[148] Like Manto and Sidhwa, Sahni drives home the point that the poor and downtrodden suffer most during the times of sectarian violence.[149] The subalterns in this society bear the brunt of the tragedy, irrespective of ethnic, social, communal, or religious differences. The subalterns in the narrative cannot speak individually or collectively for themselves.[150] They are manipulated by the politicians and other people in power. Hence in the novel, the subalterns not only become the victims but also the perpetrators of violence.

In its attempt to achieve a neutral point of view, *Tamas* portrays inhuman acts performed by both Hindus and Muslims, as well as charitable acts of characters belonging to both the groups. It is true that the novel condemns sectarianism, communalism, fanaticism, and fundamentalism in its commitment to secular humanism

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[147] Raju Jayasing Patole, in "The Reflective Response to The Partition," rightly observes that *Tamas* "sarcastically comments on the politico-economic alliances of the leaders based on their hostile interests and their willingness to control the mob for disturbing the social solidarity" (2).

[148] Virender Pal, in "Anatomy of Communal Violence," rightly points out that *Tamas* "delivers a stern warning against the use of religion for achieving political goals" (151).

[149] Nahal, in *Azadi,* conveys the same idea when he shows the plight of the refugees through Lala Kanshi Ram, Bibi Amar Vati, Sunanda Bala and others.

[150] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" observes, "The subaltern cannot speak" (308). They have to be represented by others; they can only speak through the intervention of well-intentioned intellectuals.

in all groups and communities.[151] Although written by a Punjabi Hindu member of Congress, the novel represents the admirable deeds of the Muslim Rajo while denouncing the acts of the Hindu extremist Dev Vrat. Yet the novel cannot consistently attain its own standard of objectivity because of its slight favorable inclination towards the Hindus and Sikhs. Like Singh in *Train to Pakistan*, Sahni presents Muslims, mostly as rioters and propagators of violence, especially sexual violence. Unlike Singh, however, *Tamas* shows the prejudiced attitude of the British administration toward all the Indians, and the crucial role of the departing imperial power as instigator and unconcerned observer of violence.

However, Sahni does not discuss in detail the cause of Partition violence as he himself says in an interview with Alok Bhalla, "I did not try to analyze the cause of the Partition in *Tamas*."[152] Rather, he tries to show a "mirror to our narrow minded society," that "reflects the cracks in the foundation of our secular democracy."[153] Sahni recalls the inception of the novel thus: "I do not clearly recall when the Hindu-Muslim riots broke out in Bhiwandi, a town near Mumbai. But I do remember that I began writing *Tamas* after those riots."[154] His imagination activated by the Bhiwandi riots, the author produces

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[151] Rajendra Sharma, in "Bhishm Sahni," argues that Sahni, an ardent believer in India's Sanjha (synchretic) culture and tradition, "abhorred communalism for what it does to human beings and this includes turning common people into their own enemies" (88). However, in "*Tamas* (Darkness) by Bhisham Sahni," Feroza Jussawalla comments rather harshly that Sahni's text chronicles history by creating new religious tensions and new antagonisms as "*Tamas* seeks to assign blame, in a manner in which neither Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* nor Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man*. . . assign blame in their chronicle of the Partition" (195).

[152] Bhisham Sahni with Alok Bhalla in *Partition Dialogues*, 132.

[153] Radhika Purohit, "An Androcentric and Gynocentric Perspective of Women as Victims in Partition Fiction," 441.
Nandi Bhatiya, in "Twentieth Century Hindi Literature," also surmises that in *Tamas*, Bhisham Sahni "narrativizes the history of partition not as a history of communalism but as a problem that tore the moral and religious fabric of the country beyond repair" (147). Rajendra Sharma, in "Bhishm Sahni," also claims that the novel is against fundamentalism and extremism and makes an effort to dispel the "darkness of communal frenzy" that engulfed the Indian subcontinent in the 1947 (87).

[154] Bhisham Sahni, "That Familiar Sound of Silence," (www.outlookindia.com).

a work judiciously mixing fact and fiction, history, reality, memory and imagination. As he contemplates the mass violence he witnessed as a young man in present-day Pakistan, Sahni recalls, "Gradually, the characters picked up from real life become companions of the imaginary characters in the novel. . . . Thus the reality blends with imagination."[155]

Explaining that Nathu, his wife and the pig killing at the beginning are all imaginary, Sahni states that *Tamas* is written by merging imaginary and real characters and situations: "What is essential is that both have to be believable;" a mixing of fact and fiction does not make any difference in the recreation of a lived history (Sahni, "That Familiar Sound"). Actually, Sahni thinks that "the more you base your work on facts . . . the weaker it would become."[156] Many facts and figures check the "unfettered evolution of the work;"[157] fewer facts will make a historical narrative stronger and more authentic. Sahni has no doubt that since historical background is the primary subject, history "itself keeps on unlocking its own doors."[158] For a great work such as *Tamas* to evolve, imagination is more as necessary than the historical facts.

In its form, *Tamas* assumes an episodic structure devoid of sequential narrative. Although written in a "classic realist mode," the novel lacks a unified plot or point of view, as well as "oneness of conception and design."[159] Since it attempts to reconstruct historical tragedy with the help of memory, and since memories arise in fragments and flashes, the author of this historical novel feels the need to accurately represent these fragmentary memories. Hence, he does not concentrate on a sequential plot or

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[155] Bhisham Sahni, "That Familiar Sound of Silence," (www.outlookindia.com).
[156] Bhisham Sahni, "That Familiar Sound of Silence," (www.outlookindia.com).
[157] Bhisham Sahni, "That Familiar Sound of Silence," (www.outlookindia.com).
[158] Bhisham Sahni, "That Familiar Sound of Silence," (www.outlookindia.com).
[159] Bhisham Sahni, "That Familiar Sound of Silence," (www.outlookindia.com).

narrative.[160] Sahni confirms that "novels written under the weight of memories are weak from the point of view of structure. They may be filled with events, and may even have audible heartbeats of life, but the structure of the novel won't be perfect from the point of view of things like sequential development of the narrative."[161] According to Sahni, a novel based on historical recollections "does not have any fixed, predetermined narrative" because memories and mental turmoil, not "self-restraint and patience," drive the pen forward.[162]

Stray incidents of violence, unconnected presentation of the political scene, interspersed with reflections on the nature and consequence of violence, constitute the plot of the novel. *Tamas* "explores the anatomy of a communal riot in an almost clinical fashion."[163] Sahni presents a composite picture of riots by including Congress activities, especially the the prabhat pheries (morning rounds), the constructive programs of the Congress, the role of the low caste people in the riots, the indifference of administrators, the helplessness of ordinary people to quell the riots, the religious frenzy manipulated by communalist politicians, scenes of looting, burning, and killing, and the psychological impact of violent speeches and acts. Ravi Singh rightly observes that Sahni's novel, "in true sense, is a narrative of *riotscape.* It sketches a complete anatomy of riots: from inception to maturity and also the after-math" (7). *Tamas* "capture[s] human tragedy of gigantic proportions in an unparalleled way."[164] Sahni gives a detailed picture of how

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[160] Govind Nihalani, in his introduction to *Tamas* (1988), comments: "As a novel *Tamas* is episodic in structure, which, from the point of view of literary craftsmanship may not exactly be considered flawless" (6).
[161] Bhisham Sahni, "That Familiar Sound of Silence," (www.outlookindia.com).
[162] Bhisham Sahni, "That Familiar Sound of Silence," (www.outlookindia.com).
[163] Daisy Rockwell, "Particularities of Partition Literature: Looking beyond the Archive of Partition Narratives," (http://www.chapatimystery.com).
[164] Rajendra Sharma, "Bhisham Sahni," 87.

riots work and what their impact is on individuals and communities. Through its loosely connected episodes and interrupted storyline, the novel provides a structural equivalence of stray violence depicted in it.

The refrain "It seems kites and vultures will hover over the town for a long time" with its variants, conveying a sense of sinister threat, provides a structure to two-thirds of the text (Sahni, *Tamas*, 70). This line prepares readers for the impending violence and mayhem. Scattered acts of minor barbarism make up the rest of the narrative in which usually sane persons plunge into irrationally cruel acts. Nathu feels guilty about the pollution of the mosque and the widespread violence that follows."[165] Sahni describes his mental conflict at one point: "No one will believe me if I said that I had done the job on Murad Ali's instructions. Murad Ali is a Mussalman. Will a Mussalman get a pig killed so that it can be thrown outside a mosque?" (Sahni, *Tamas*, 205). He tries to explain the events that follow the killing of the pig to calm his mind but he becomes restless time and again.[166] That, as Stein points out, Nathu is "brutally dismissed from the story in one throwaway line in the final chapters"[167] indicates perhaps that Nathu was a mere pretext to create violence, and violence at such time could be triggered by any small incident, or Nathu might also have been dismissed because the novelist does not want to focus his attention on a single individual or an event but to portray the situation as a whole.[168] His disappearance, however, highlights the tragedy of a small, or obscure man caught in the

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[165] Alex Stein, in "What would you Do? Bhisham Sahni's *Tamas*," observes that Nathu remains "the moral and emotional centre of the novel, bemoaning his actions" (falsedichotomies.com).

[166] In this regard, Alok Bhalla, in "Bhisham Sahni (1915-2003)," rightly remarks that Nathu "does not regard the communal frenzy that follows the discovery of a pig's carcass on the steps of the mosque as a triumph of his Hindu identity, but sees it as a sign of the ruin of his ethical self" (12).

[167] Alex Stein, "What would you Do? Bhisham Sahni's *Tamas*," (falsedichotomies.com).

political game of giants such as Richard and Murad Ali.[169] In *Tamas*, Sahni tries to reveal political machinations behind the violence and to drive home the point that politically motivated people have been arranging events and manipulating the minds of the general mass so that atrocities take place; violence for Sahni is not unexplainable eruption of madness. As if a conspiracy novel, *Tamas* lays bare the political drama played by the British and other leaders. While doing so, the novel also focuses on individual psychological suffering of the victims.

The novel does not much provide either a series of lengthy violent scenes or a cluster of cruel deeds by members of the warring communities as Manto, Singh and Sidhwa do. Rather it takes time to slowly build up a tense atmosphere to show the chilling consequence of riots and rumors. In some ways the winding structure of *Tamas* provides a contrast to the brutally swift moving vignettes of Manto,[170] or even the straightforward structure of *Train to Pakistan*. Richard's informal talks with his wife seemingly have no connection with the pig killing and the subsequent riots, but these together with Youth Wing trainings akin to the RSS[171] trainings in the 1940s, and prabhat pheris, and other such apparently unconnected activities gradually build up the sinister atmosphere; the simple frame of revenge and counter-revenge belies the actual structure

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[168] Anil Kinger, in "A Tangible India and the Indian English Novel," makes an insightful comment that *Tamas* tells the story "not of the individuals, but of masses gripped in the woes caused by the partition of the subcontinent" (4).

[169] It is highly ironic that a Muslim, supposed not to touch a pig, is bribed for five rupees to kill the pig.

[170] *Tamas* is also the exact antithesis of Manto's short stories. Most of those short stories never stretch beyond a page or two and have an act of swift – but imaginative violence at their center like a tableau. Tamas – on the other hand – builds tension through the unlikely route of a conversation between the British Deputy Commissioner and his wife, which tries to explain why the Government should not interfere in the "religious matters" of the Indian people (http://diptakirti.blogspot.com).

[171] The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), translated in English as National Volunteer Organization, was founded in 1925 as an educational group to train Hindu males to unite the Hindu community and fight against British colonialism on the one hand and the Muslim separatists on the other. It is a right-wing, para-military group that stresses on character building and selfless service to the nation. They have been notorious for espousing anti-Muslim agenda and inciting communal riots.

of the novel. *Tamas* presents the psychology of the rulers, rioters and the victims, attacks sectarian and communal forces, praises and blames both Hindu and Muslim communities, opposes communal hatred, tries to uphold the values of democracy and secularism, and brings to the fore many facts overlooked by official historians.

Chaman Nahal's *Azadi*

One of the outstanding Indian novelists of the 1970s, Chaman Nahal produced his best novel *Azadi* in 1975, which won for him the prestigious Indian Sahitya Akademi Award.[172] Sometimes considered the best of the Indian-English novels written about the Partition, *Azadi* is epic in scope, providing a much more extensive representation of the holocaust of South Asian Partition of 1947 than the other novels I discuss.[173] Although most Partition novels question the rationality of the division of country, "*Azadi* even more gravely questions the meaning and significance of the kind of freedom that India wins and the price paid for it."[174] While delineating Partition, Nahal discusses the causes, the process of Partition, and the effects of political leaders' tricks on individuals and

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[172] Nahal was born in 1927 in Sialkot, a province formerly in Northern India but now in Pakistan. He received his education at the University of Delhi and the University of Nottingham. He entered the field of teaching in 1949, and has taught at many universities across India, and abroad. In 1980, he became Professor of English at the University of Delhi. He has taught as a visiting Fulbright Fellow at Princeton University, New Jersey (1967-70), and also at several other U.S universities. Also an essayist and journalist, Nahal worked for about seven years as a columnist of "Talking about Books" for the Indian daily *Indian Express* published from New Delhi. Nahal's popular critical writings are *D. H. Lawrence: An Eastern View* (1971), and *The Narrative Pattern in Ernest Hemingway's Fiction.* Nahal began his literary career in 1965 with a collection of short stories, *The Weird Dance.* His first novel, *My True Faces,* came out in 1973; he published *Into Another Dawn* in 1977 and *The English Queens* in 1979. *The Gandhi Quartet* that consists of *The Crown and the Loincloth, The Salt of Life*, *The Triumph of the Tricolor,* and *Azadi,* is highly significant in the history of Indian writing in English, the genre of historical fiction, and Nahal's response to Indian history, and his attitude toward Gandhi.

[173] M. K. Naik, in *A History of Indian English Literature,* remarks that the "account of the migration of Lala Kanshi Ram, a Sialkot merchant and his family to India at the time of the dismemberment of colonial India into two nations in 1947, is easily one of the most broad fictional accounts of the Partition holocaust in Indian English Literature" (243).

[174] M. Prasanthi, "Depiction of Partition and Emergency," 135.

communities in the newly created nations. Successfully fusing "documentary realism and human drama,"[175] in *Azadi*, Nahal depicts in detail the ways that the division of Hindu and Muslim communities in Pakistan, brings with it loss of life and property, massacres in trains, suffering of refugees and scenes of exodus, particularly focusing on the disgrace and death of women. Scenes of violence such as a parade of naked women in the streets combine tragedy and pathos.[176] This section will examine *Azadi* as a psychological narrative, discuss its political point of view, its conception of history, and its representation of characters and situations, and ultimately show that the novel as a form presents an affective history of the Partition.

Azadi dramatizes the effect of the Partition of the subcontinent on seven west Punjabi families living initially in a Muslim-dominated city of Sialkot, and representing the miserable lives of thousands of sufferers like themselves. Nahal particularly focuses on the family of Lala Kanshi Ram, a grain merchant in Sialkot, to portray the tragic effects of Partition.[177] A Hindu citizen and a member of Arya Samaj,[178] Lala lives with his wife Prabha Rani and son Arun in the Muslim dominated village of West Punjab.

Like the novels of Singh, Sidhwa, and Sahni, *Azadi* represents the lives of Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims before Partition as harmonious and peaceful. Hindu Lala, Mohammedan Barkat Ali, and Sikh Teja Singh share the same Punjabi culture and

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[175] K.C. Belliappa, "The Elusive Classic: Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* and Chaman Nahal's *Azadi*," 69.

[176] Rajesh Kumar Sinha, in "Novel as Indian Voice: A Study in Chaman Nahal," describes *Azadi* as "a shattering saga of the colossal tragedy and disruption that accompanied the partition and independence in the Indian subcontinent" (62).

[177] O. P Mathur, in *The Modern Indian English Fiction,* observes that Nahal "dramatises the impact of the momentous events of history on a few individuals, particularly on the members of the family of Lala Kanshi Ram" (147).

[178] Arya Samaj, a Hindu reformist movement, was founded by Swami Dayananda Saraswati in 1875. Based on the *Vedas*, the Samaj emphasized brahmacharya (chastity), and was critical of traditional Hindu

language, consider Sialkot their homeland, and live quite amicably. Lala, an advocate of Sanskrit, does not know that language but speaks Punjabi and reads and writes Urdu, identified as a Muslim language. They regarded each other as friends and established family relationship. Two Muslims, Chaudhri Barkat Ali and Abdul Ghani, are Lala's bosom friends. His son Arun addresses Abdul Ghani as "uncle" and Ghani calls Arun "puttar" (son). Religion does not come in way of their friendship and nationality.

However, Viceroy Lord Mountbatten's announcement about the subcontinent's partition disturbs this peaceful existence. Filled with wild excitement at the creation of Pakistan in 1947, some Muslims turn violent toward the Hindus and Sikhs. In the frenzy of celebration, they shout slogans such as "Pakistan Zindabad," and throw stones at Hindu houses. As in Singh's novel, the Muslims maddened by the arrival at Sialkot from Amritsar, an Indian city of Punjab, of a train full of murdered and wounded Muslims, begin blindly killing Hindus in the bazaar. They loot shops (including Lala's grain shop), burn Hindu houses (mobs attack Bibi Amar Vati's building in which Lala lives), and set fire to entire villages (every night a hamlet is burnt). With the killings of Hindus, making life impossible, the Hindus leave their homes in Sialkot, and move on toward Indian border.[179]

After severe hardships, Lala's family arrives in Delhi, only to lead a hopeless life as refugees. Lala's daughter Madhu Bala has been killed; his son Arun Kumar has to leave his Muslim beloved Nurul-Nisar. Although Arun falls in love again with Chandni, a

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religious practices. Arya Samajists believed in monotheism and opposed the caste system. Many of its followers looked suspiciously at Christianity and Islam.

[179] This scene represents thousands of other such scenes when fifteen million refugees crossed the borders of their familiar homeland to move into regions completely foreign to them.

girl of a lower caste, she too is abducted by the Muslims. Despite all their suffering and hardships however, the novel ends with the family trying to begin a new life in Delhi.

A complex work that has been interpreted by scholars as a historical, political,[180] or politico-literary novel,[181] *Azadi* certainly contains much political content, yet because of its rich treatment of the victims', it can be studied as a psychological novel. Also, though Partition novels such as Sahni's *Tamas*, and Sidhwa's *Cracking India*, try to present the mentality of suffering individuals, *Azadi* aims to show in much more detail how the minds of Lala, Arun, and the others work in times of extreme crisis.[182]

Azadi shows how changed perceptions and communal frenzy turn intimate friends into deadly foes. Abdul Ghani comes to detest Lala and the rest of the Hindus and Sikhs. He leads the procession celebrating Pakistan's creation, hurls insults on Lala and Arun, and even claims to have burnt Madhu and her husband. When Arun tries to locate and identify Madhu's body, Ghani shamelessly taunts him: "Who told you your sister was killed, my boy? 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 forever!" (Nahal 185). Like many other Muslims, he finds a strange joy in inflicting injuries on those who belong to other religions and political groups.

Partition disturbs the relations between young friends--between Lala's son, Arun, and Barkat Ali's son, Munir, for example. They were intimate friends, attending school

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[180] Guna Sekharan, in "Historical Trauma," calls *Azadi* a "predominantly political novel" (49).
[181] Saikat Banerjee, in "Theme of Communalism," considers *Azadi* to be "a politico-literary novel, which uses political insight, objective analysis, and courage of conviction to portray the stark realism of partition in a literary style of rare quality and tremendous power" (121).
[182] Firoz A Shaikh, in his Preface to *Partition: A Human Tragedy*, proposes to read *Azadi* as "a psychological version of partition [which] encompasses all the evils that partition caused."

together and sharing similar interests before Partition. In fact, Arun was even willing to become a Muslim for the sake of Nur, but Munir, Nur's brother, explains that there is no need for that: "Why can't you keep your separate religions?" (Nahal110). However, communal tensions alienate them from each other. when Arun asks whether the Hindus could continue to live in Pakistan, and Bill Davidson, British police officer replies, "It depends on how Pakistan treats the Hindus," Munir immediately responds, "And also how the new India treats the Muslims" (123). The answer reveals Munir's "spontaneous desire to come out in defense of Islam" (123). Religion did not separate them before; now it does because they care more for their religion than their friendship**.**

Beset by fear and tension, people become self-centered and indifferent during times of crisis such as Partition; they do not understand or cannot afford to care for the sufferings of others. People of the same community behave like strangers; close relatives turn their backs; and acquaintances show no recognition of each other. Lala's relations show no concern for his condition, nor do they offer him shelter. Only at this time, writes Nahal: Lala Kanshi Ram "discover[s] the meaning of a 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" (Nahal 325). In *Azadi*, local people deny the presence of the refugees and evade the responsibility of helping them. Rahmat-Ullah Khan, the camp commander and old classmate of Arun, shows no sympathy at the brutal killing of his sister, Madhu; Khan does not even condemn the murder or the murderers.

Some people turn opportunist at such times and exploit others. Instead of working for the protection of the victims, Captain Khan pounces on Sunanda Bala, Amar Vati's

daughter-in-law. Officers at the refugee camp in Delhi treat the refugees with insolent impertinence, and intolerance. They notoriously take bribes to arrange houses for the refugees. When, after a third day's search for a house, Lala is unable to pay a bribe and misses his chance, he shivers at the thought of lodging in one more refugee camp.

In *Azadi,* Partition causes rifts not only between friends and relations but also between lovers. Communalism stains their loving relationship between Arun and Nur leading them to an unfortunate debate concerning which should embrace the other's religion:

> (Arun): "Why should I become a Muslim?" . . . .
> (Nur): "Why *shouldn't* you? That is, if you love me." . . . .
> (Arun): "Why shouldn't you become a Hindu?" (Nahal 96-97)

Not only do the lovers argue about conversion, they even resort to unpleasant stereotypes, as when Nur says: "Oh, go and die somewhere. You're a Hindu, after all—a *Hindu*. Too timid!" (Nahal 97). Their romantic dreams come to a bitter end as Arun eventually leaves her. Partition, thus, causes otherwise good people to behave cruelly. His bitter experiences harden Arun's heart so that he is able to forget Nur and move to India. He even murders Captain Khan, the Muslim police officer**.**

Partition snatches away from its victims their lands and belongings, friends and relations, their loves and lives.[183] When Lala has to move out of Sialkot, he cries out: "I was *born* around here, this is my *home*—how can I be a refugee in my own home?" (Nahal 130). Ironically, though, he does become a refugee in his own land. Through these lines, Lala expresses the mental situation of millions of South Asians. Similarly, when Prabha Rani and Arun are packing to go to the refugee camp, Lala watches them

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[183] In this regard, Narendra Singh, in "A Study on Chaman Nahal's Novel *Azadi,*" rightly remarks, "The Partition has torn people into pieces emotionally and intellectually" (135).

stripping the walls bare; "Lala felt they were stripping the flesh from his body. The bone was showing--whichever ways he turned" (144). Lala identifies himself with his home; seeing it stripped bare hurts him as much as if he were skinned.[184] His pain represents the mental agony of all those who were forced to move to an alien land leaving their native soil.

Amar Vati's husband leaves her planning to take a Muslim wife rather than leaving his native place.[185] During the journey to India, Arun loses his only sister Madhu, his brother-in-law, and Chandni, his second love. After Chandni is abducted by Muslims, Arun experiences some depression finding everything in Delhi unsavory and lifeless, and preferring to live with the memory of Chandni, "who had become his second self" (Nahal 365).

Like other Partition novelists, in *Azadi*, Nahal depicts the plight of women, who become a most vulnerable object of victimization. He represents in detail their physical and mental suffering. He shows the pathetic condition of exploited women who cannot raise their heads for a long time because of the feeling of shame and humiliation. When told by the passerby about a Muslim women's parade in Amritsar, Arun thinks of the afternoon in Narowal and wonders if any Sikh in the Golden Temple in the background is "weeping for these women" (Nahal 327) as he had seen a Muslim hakim with a "look of infinite pain," utter Allah's name, and pray for the Hindu women in Narowal (298).[186]

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[184] Basavaraj Naikar, in "The Trauma of Partition in *Azadi,*" rightly points out that Lala'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" (45).

[185] Basavraj Naikar, in "The Trauma of Partition in *Azadi*," observes that "Political partition has created a matrimonial partition also in Amar Vati's life" (48-49).

[186] Basudeb Chakraborti, in "The Essentials of Indianness," compares this hakim/medicine man with Rajo, Karim and Shah Nawaz in Sahni's *Tamas*, and observes that like them the hakim "stands for light and sanity in this atmosphere of gloom and horror" (10). Chakraborti is right in comparing the hakim with Rajo and hakim, but to compare him with Shah Nawaz seems inappropriate.

Arun dares not look at them. When Lala hears the shouts and abuses hurled at the women in Amritsar, he closes his ears with his hands. Both the father and the son close their eyes and ears unable to see the horrible sight. Those like Sunanda, who became the victims of rape, feel they have lost everything after rape. When Arun asks Sunanda to abandon her sari and dress like a man in order to protect herself, she asks, "What is there left of me to lose?" (311). She loses her peace of mind, is viewed suspiciously even by her family members and shies away from appearing in public. Nahal raises the problem of lost or missing women, too. When some of the missing girls are recovered, he writes: "None showed any joy at the reunion; some seemed sorry the girls had come back at all, soiled and dishonoured" (319). In fact, all refuges are "hit in some manner" by the tragedy of Partition, and are "totally dispirited" (320).

Azadi also depicts the agony that Hindu and Sikh males undergo on seeing their women being tortured.[187] Scenes like the naked parade of women demoralize their helpless brothers. The Sikh Niranjan Singh such sights and the humiliation of being told he must cut his hair and convert to Islam to save his life. He sets fire to himself asserting: "I belong to *Waheguru* (the great Lord) . . . . Life I'll gladly lose, my Sikh *dharma* [loosely equivalent to English religion] I won't!" (Nahal 262). When Arun sees the procession of Hindu women, he feels "his legs giving way," and unable to watch more, sits "weakly" on the shop-front with a vomiting sensation (298). Since he has "seen the very core of evil" he wants to "[despise] the race that could be so barbaric" (299).

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[187] Shumona Dasgupta, in "The Spectacle of Violence in Partition Fiction: Women, Voyeurs and Witnesses," states that *Azadi* is "one of the few historical novels about the Partition which includes a detailed description of the male body in pain" (36).

Politicians, fanatics, and gangsters all provoke the masses to violence so as to achieve their selfish ends. Consequently persons like Abdul Ghani are manipulated by their leaders to commit communal violence. Nahal indicates that the Muslims became all the more violent because of their affiliations to Jinnah and the Muslim League. For instance, a harmless neighbor otherwise, Ghani turns into a wild man after coming under the influence of Jinnah and joining the Muslim League. Unlike Sidhwa who looks at Jinnah as a humanitarian of practical wisdom, and an "Ambassador of Hindu-Muslim Unity," Nahal depicts him as a communally minded leader who brought about much harm to India and its people.

Nahal not only portrays Jinnah's responsibility for the violence of Partition, he also allows some characters to question Gandhi's role. Through Amar Vati, Nahal reveals that some of the victims of Partition violence, although Hindu, blame Gandhi for the Partition. Amar Vati expresses satisfaction at the news that the Mahatma is dead: "It's good he is. He ruined us. . . . He brought nothing but misery to us" (Nahal 362, 366). Nahal similarly explores the dilemma of Lala, who both reveres and criticizes Gandhi. Like many others, Lala thought that through his fasts, Gandhi would be able to save India. Many believed that the weapon of fasting would maintain an undivided India, but when the country is divided, Lala reflects:

> how could it happen? …. For the last thirty years, since that wizard Gandhi came on the scene, it [Congress] had taken the stand that India was a single nation not two. And Gandhi was not only a politician, he was a saint.... He wouldn't give in to such butchery. If nothing else worked, his fasts unto death always did…. that's what Gandhi would do. (Nahal 48-49)

Representing the voice of Indian masses, he raises the question why Gandhi did not use fasting as weapon to abort the plan for Partition. To some extent, Lala seems to agree with Amar Vati that "it was Gandhi who sanctioned Partition" (367).

However, Lala still reveres Gandhi. When Amar Vati reminds him of their misfortune owing to Partition, he responds, "I agree. Yet his death hurts" (Nahal 366). Lala questions Gandhi's role in Partition but his entire family fasts at the death of Gandhi. For Prabha Rani, Gandhi "was a Mahatma, a great soul," and an admirer of Gandhi, Sunanda says: "Men like him come once in centuries" (366). Nahal also considers the feeling of general public about the loss of Gandhi: although they suffered much in the riots, "Yet they looked crestfallen, as if this death was a personal loss" (368).

Lala and the others gathered at Amar Vati's house react to Prime Minister Nehru's announcement about Partition with shocked incredulity. They think that Nehru has gone out of his mind to announce the division of the country and to insist upon peace being 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? (Nahal 65). To these people, the Prime Minister lacks the knowledge of the country's situation, and the ability to solve the problem; Nehru has betrayed them. Lala comments sarcastically on the Prime Minister's independence speech: "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 government, peace the main object! (65). No sensible people could make such a decision as to divide a country into two separate religious communities.

After Partition, as people suffer due to mass violence, the government turns indifferent, and political leaders remain inactive, Lala becomes so frustrated that he

remarks, "We had no right to ask for freedom" (Nahal 131). Later, when as a refugee he has to fill out a form in Amritsar, stating where in Pakistan he has come from, and where in India he is going, he blurts out his frustration in a satiric remark: "What the hell did they think he was going to Delhi for? I'm going there to have a meal with Jawaharlal Nehru—to celebrate azadi [freedom]!" (328). Like millions of Indians, Lala hoped for a peaceful and prosperous India after the achievement of Independence from the dictatorial British rule. He never thought that the desire for freedom would cut his country into two pieces rendering him a hopeless and homeless refugee. When some political aspirants and opportunists celebrate the occasion of Indian independence from foreign yoke, millions like Lala undergo traumatic pain of displacement and dislocation. Homeless they wander from one refugee camp to another. Their desire for azadi has demanded too heavy a price from these people, leaving no room for celebration. They have ironically lost all sense of azadi as they have no freedom to live in their own land and possess their own property. Although Lala has looked for a house for many days, he has not been able to get one; in desperation he has come to Delhi to ask for a modest house to settle down. Therefore, he articulates his frustration through the above remark.

Azadi has not only deprived Lala and others of their belongings, identity, and dignity but also caused a fissure between their family members. Lala meditates:

> 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. The affection was there. The concern was there. Their respect for him was there too. Yet the contact was broken. Something had driven them apart. No, he couldn't reach them. (Nahal 369-370)

Lala and Prabha Rani experience a growing distance between them, as do Arun and Lala—all of them experience a sense of increasing tension and inability to communicate.[188]

Providing detailed analysis of Lala's character and psychology, Nahal dwells upon the aftermath of Partition and ends the novel on a hopeful note. Lala achieves heroic stature--intense suffering endows him with dignity, nobility, compassion and wisdom. After Lala sees Hindu and Sikh atrocities against Muslims in India, he can no longer hate the Muslims: "whatever the Muslims did to us in Pakistan, we're doing it to them here!" (Nahal 338). He is unable to watch the parade of the naked Muslim women; he feels that every young girl paraded there is like his own daughter. Having lost all sense of enmity for the Muslims, he cherishes only one desire: to have a roof over his head. He neither harbors any ill –will toward the other community, nor seeks any opportunity for revenge. Compassion becomes Lala's ruling emotion: he realizes that anger makes one small (331), and he ceases to hate the Muslims. To his wife, who finds it almost impossible to forget the wrongs done to her family the Muslims, he advises, "Forgive, that way alone can you make peace with yourself" (339).[189] Uprooted from his native soil, Lala undergoes many saddening and crushing experiences as a homeless refugee, and yet his spirit remains undaunted: "Many parts of him had died, but there were others still alive, forcefully and affirmatively alive, and he knew he was not defeated" (274). Though frustrated at times, the old man actively engages in daily activities in Kingsway Camp. After four months of irregular living under canvas, he even takes on the burden of caring

[188] Basavaraj Naikar, in "The Trauma of Partition in *Azadi,*" rightly comments that they suffer from a psychological partition from one another and feel unable to communicate mutually. All of them suffer from a sort of existential loneliness" (152).

for Amar Vati. Thus, *Azadi* concludes on a note, not of gloom or pessimism but of "triumph of human will" in surmounting all difficulties, a note of hope.[190]

Lala's growing awareness that azadi/freedom has given the former colonized dignity and enabled them to express their emotions freely further indicates the novel's optimistic message. Despite all that freedom has taken away from Lala, he is elated at achieving freedom from the British. He even feels for some time that he is now "unrestricted," and "untrammeled" (Nahal 369). Freedom has given him joy and pride, and taught him to carry his pain nobly.[191]

Nahal discusses the issue of Partition from various angles. The technique allows the novelist to cast his glance over total holocaust."[192] Using the viewpoints of Lala and Arun enables Nahal to represent the thoughts and actions of two generations.[193] The latter part of the novel concentrates almost exclusively on Arun who grows to be a dependable young man who assumes responsibility for his family and community. When the question arises whether women such as Chandni, dishonored by the males of another community, should be accepted, Arun speaks up: "I mean someone has to accept these women back . . . . We cannot disown them for something that was no fault of theirs" (Nahal 321). Like an adult, he protects the honor of Sunanda before others. When Sunanda asks him not to say

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[189] Lalji Mishra, in "Search for Human Values: A Study in the Partition Novels," observes that Lala "appears as an idol of forgiveness and reconciliation with opposites" (194).

[190] Mukesh Ranjan Verma, "Chaman Nahal's *Azadi*: History as Metaphor," 108-109.

[191] Ram Kumar Chauhan, in "Indian Novel written in English: A Synoptic View in Deconstruction," rightly judges that "Lala Kanshi Ram is beaten, but not broken" (88).

[192] K. S. Iyengar, in *Indian Writing in English,* states that the "total holocaust" includes "suicide, forced conversion, resigned acceptance, precipitate flight, muted despair—all the varieties of horror of the times" (750).

[193] A. H. Tak, in "Historiographic Metafiction and Chaman Nahal's *Azadi*," argues that employment of different perspectives helps the novelist present "total milieu and ethos" and also maintain a "narrative distance that we find in historiographic metafiction… which allows the author to make shifts between the intimacy of fiction and the remoteness of history….in which the author is more concerned with imaginative truth tha[n] with historical accuracy" (119). M.K. Naik, in *A History of Indian English,* however, takes an

a word about what he saw done to her by Captain Khan, he reassures her: "I saw nothing bhabhi [sister-in- law]. You and I have together spent night with a number of other refugees" (315). Arun grows into a strong man hardened by the difficulties he has faced and surmounted in life. Although sad due to his separation from his beloved, he is able to reconcile with the circumstances sooner than Lala and others.[194] A nationalist and a critical supporter of the Indian national congress, early on Arun realizes the mischief of the politicians, understands their motive that they are after some prizes, and therefore hastening toward the division of the country.[195] However, he adores Gandhi, and as a mature man, responds to people who blame Gandhi for Partition. Arun comments that it was not Gandhi but "other Congress leaders like Nehru and Patel" who were responsible for the division of the country (Nahal 367),[196] and that the other leaders did not listen to Gandhi during his final days.

In *Azadi*, Nahal expresses the anger he feel like Manto about the Partition of India.[197] Also like Manto, he questions the rationality of Partition when he asserts that to partition a country and ask its minority population to emigrate is to invite a bloody fight. Lala opposes the division of India as much as Manto's Toba Tek Singh. The absurdity of the situation becomes clearer when we think of how both Hindu and Muslim communities lived in every village of every state in the country and how to separate them was impossible. Nahal writes: "How do you cut a country into two, where at every level

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opposite view and says that "mixing up of the point of view of the protagonist, Lala Kanshi Ram and that of Arun, [which] destroys the unity of impression" (331).

[194] O. P. Bhatnagar, in *Indian Political Novel in English,* rightly remarks that "in Arun, the novelist traces the change and growth of character under stress" (193).

[195] S. C. Singh, in "Chaman Nahal's *Azadi*: An Appraisal," notes that Arun "knew the conspiracy of the politicians behind the whole move" (5).

[196] It is perhaps noteworthy to mention that Singh, Sidhwa, and Nahal—all find reasons to blame Nehru.

the communities were so deeply mixed? There was a Muslim in every corner of India where there was a Hindu" (Nahal 85). The communities lived such an intertwined life that to separate them was not only impractical but also irrational. As Arun muses, "One would have to go around with tweezers through all the villages to separate the Muslims from the Hindus" (Nahal 96). As Arun argues, "the creation of Pakistan solved nothing" (96).[198] Actually, it was an illogical decision taken up by the British, Muslim, and Hindu political leaders.

Thus, Nahal blames all parties--British, Muslims and Hindus for the irrational division of the country. Finding Congress leaders also responsible for Partition, he depicts them as selfish power-mongers, who do not care to redress the problems of the suffering of mass of people, and who do not fulfill their promise to keep India united. He considers the native leaders responsible for the loss of life and property in the aftermath of Partition. Only Gandhi works feverishly to keep peace in the riot-ridden parts of India. The British police officer, Bill Davidson comments that the Indian leaders caused fragmentation of the nation because they were "pushing things too fast" (Nahal 121). Like Arun, Davidson thinks that the Cabinet Mission Plan of 1946[199] would best suit the Indian political situation of the time (122).

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[197] Nahal, in "Introduction" to *Azadi* (2001), has expressed his views on Partition thus: "In *Azadi* I was largely concerned with showing how the Partition of India in 1947 destroyed an existing harmony which had prevailed for centuries" (xii).

[198] Gyanendra Pandey, in *Remembering Partition,* quotes historian Ayesha Jalal's question: "How did a Pakistan come about which fitted the interest of most Muslims so poorly?" to make the point clear that creation of Pakistan failed to cater the very needs of the people who created it (51).

[199] Cabinet Mission Plan entailed a plan for the transfer of power from the British Government to the Indian leadership consisting of members from both the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League, and providing India with independence. The plan was aborted apparently because of Congress members who did not like to work together with the League members.

Although Nahal acknowledges the contribution made by the British in India, he also blames them for the division of the country. Nahal recognizes their military power, administrative skill, and organizational ability through Lala, who respects the British for bringing "some kind of peace" and justice to the war-torn land, and for making India a nation (Nahal 18). Lala admires the British for their protective rule and their power as "an absolutely invincible race" (22), exclaiming at one point, "There indeed was no Raj like the Angrez Raj [English/British rule]" (30). However, Lala's faith in the *Angrez Raj* evaporates when he learns that the British will quit the country after tearing it in two, and criticizes them for their tactical errors, their divide-and-rule policy, their inability to protect the refugees, and the appointment of Lord Mountbatten as the Viceroy of India.

Lala thinks the British responsible for the communal tension between the Hindus and Muslims, as he tells his wife: "you know these English, they would rather divide than leave behind a united India" (Nahal 39). Nahal criticizes their inactivity, indifference, and irresponsibility at the time of violence: "the English have let us down. . . . It was their job, their *obligation*, to see that freedom came smoothly" (140-41). Lala once questions Davidson: "You were our sirkar, our masters, and I and millions like me gave you our *complete* loyalty. While striking a deal with these 'leaders,' did you ever think of us? Did you for one moment consider what might befall us?" (147). Unable to bear the violence around him, he declares: "it is the English who have the biggest hand in this butchery" (148). Lala, Arun, Munir, and later Davidson too agree that it was a mistake for the British, in person of Sir Cyril Radcliffe, Chairman of the Boundary Committee, to take on the impossible task of dividing the vast subcontinent into two, in "five weeks' time"

(214). For Nahal, Partition was a hasty decision taken by a very few men that affected the lives of tens of million people, and led to the death of more than one million.[200]

In *Azadi*, Nahal tries to present, what A.H. Tak calls "imaginative truth" rather than "historical epoch" (119).[201] Merging historical facts with imagination, he presents a faithful history of the period when millions were uprooted from their native soil, but he considers imaginative truth more important than historical, factual accuracy. As some fiction writers turn to myths for material, Nahal employs history as a resource, or "literary device" for his novel.[202] As a novelist or a creative artist, Nahal uses his imagination to re-create a history that goes beyond the mere recording of facts.[203] His memories as well as his personal opinions influence the history he produces making him a kind of political historian.[204] In doing so, he transcends personal or communal bounds to produce an artistic representation of the tragedy of Indian nation. Nahal as a creative writer, plays the role of "historical witness."[205] *Azadi* employs more creative freedom than Khushwant Singh in projecting "what partition has meant to an individual and his family."[206] As a historical work, it certainly sustains the spirit of

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[200] Sidhwa also expresses similar opinion in *Cracking India* when she says, "Within three months seven million Muslims and five million Hindus and Sikhs are uprooted in the largest and most terrible exchange of population known to history" (169).

[201] A. H. Tak, in "Historiographic Metafiction," explains that instead of paying attention on historical accuracy, *Azadi* tries to convey the effect of life and times on characters. Tak quotes Paul Levine to claim that Nahal concerns more "with what truly happened than with what really happened" implying that what "really happened" relates to historical facts, and what "truly happened," to the impressions as registered in the consciousness of the characters such as Lala and Arun (119).

[202] In "Writing a Historical Novel," conceiving history as a myth, Nahal observes: "The artists have always leaned on myth for support. Couldn't they lean on history? History, thus, became for me the new myth—or a metaphor, which is my understanding of a myth" (40).

[203] A. J. Thomas, in "Obsessive Precision," quotes Nahal saying: "The study of history is a study of the alternative choices open to a people at a particular time," (http://www.hindu.com).

[204] In this regard, Firoz Shaikh in his Ph.D. dissertation, "The Partition and its Versions in Indian English Novels: A Critical Study," states that in *Azadi*, Nahal plays the role of "a political historian who carries his personal opinions and presents them through the characters, whom he makes his mouthpieces" (182).

[205] C.N Srinath, "The Writer as Historical Witness," 58.

[206] C.N Srinath, "The Writer as Historical Witness," 66.

the time, and yet makes use of imagination to concentrate on the life of individuals to tell the tale of national tragedy.[207] The author compellingly describes the "nightmarish trek" of the refugees as they pass different places and witness scenes of violence. The motif of journey "absorbs any amount of variety, thematic as well as stylistic" and "operates at several levels: social, political, and moral" (Dev 26). The linear narration enables the novelist to recount the experiences of several lives comprehensibly.[208] In form, if Singh's *Train to Pakistan* is the most historical narrative, *Azadi* is the most psychological work among those analyzed here.

Although Nahal tries to represent Partition violence in a neutral manner, his depiction of scenes and portrayal of characters sometimes places Muslims in a harsh light. While he admits that both communities turned wild and inflicted pain upon each other, Nahal depicts Muslim atrocities in a more lurid light than those committed by Hindus or Sikhs. For example, he describes in detail the parade of naked Hindu-Sikh women in Narowal (Nahal 296), whereas he makes only passing reference to a similar parade of the Muslim women in Amritsar. The Muslim women's parade is not described. Arun dares not look at them, and Lala covers his ears with his hands so the writer need not describe the sight in detail.

The reference to the Muslim women's plight remind the readers of the phrase "inauthentic balance"[209] to describe this gesture of the Partition writers. Nahal seems to

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[207] In this regard, Reena Mitra, in *Critical Response to Literatures in English,* convincingly articulates that "Nahal's *Azadi* is a striking synthesis of history and metaphor, the historical narrative being a metaphor for the forced exile" (23).

[208] Tarun K Saint, in *Witnessing Partition: Memory, History, Fiction* says that in *Azadi*, "There is little formal experimentation…; the narrative follows a pattern of linear, realist narration" (166).

[209] Ashish Nandy and Veena Das, in "Violence, Victim and the Language of Silence" use the phrase to describe the gesture of Partition writers to match violent deeds from both sides.

try to match Muslim atrocities with Sikh/Hindu ones to illustrate his neutrality.[210] However, while he depicts the rape of Hindu Sunanda in minute detail, he does not describe any scene in which a Muslim woman is a victim of Hindu or Sikh violence. The scene of Sunanda's torture might lead to the demand for retribution, opening a path for communal violence. We might see every Hindu reader as a potential Arun, seething with a desire to avenge Sunanda's rape. Nahal presents Arun's murder as "retaliatory revenge," justifying his and his community's violence against the Muslims. Observing the violence perpetrated by Muslims in Lahore, Barkat Ali confesses: "All my arguments for peace have failed with my brother Muslims, they have ceased to be Muslims and become shaitans [satans]" (Nahal 138). The Muslims are described as demons in the voice of a Muslim himself. Similarly Nahal describes at length the devastated villages and defiled shrines of the Hindus, but not the similar fate of Muslim villages and shrines.

Partly, Nahal's perspective can be attributed to his personal experience of Partition violence in Lahore; it can also be ascribed to his politics of nationalism. Though critical, he was an admirer of Gandhi and Indian National Congress. Although Nahal confesses that he waited for about two and a half decades to write the book so that he could forget the injustice incurred by him and portray the times with objectivity, he does not quite reach his ideal, perhaps because as a sufferer of trauma himself he cannot completely come to terms with it. As a Hindu forced to leave Pakistan, he finds the British rulers and Muslim leaders mainly responsible for the Partition of the country.

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[210] Veena Das and Ashish Nandy, in *The Word and the World,* write that much Partition literature is "inauthentic, because . . . violence from one side was equally balanced with violence from the other. Thus, the description of violent, inhuman acts perpetuated upon those traveling by a train coming from Lahore[Pakistan] would be matched by another description of similar, gruesome acts to which travelers coming from Amritsar[India] were subjected" (189).

Despite being harsh on Muslims sometimes, Nahal problematizes the role of Gandhi, denying him the status of an unqualified hero, and projects himself as more objective and secular than many others.

Although a personal witness and a victim of Partition, Nahal, in his politico-historical, psychological novel, tries to achieve an objective ground from which to represent events of Partition. He is not carried away by sentiments in narrating events in which he himself participated. Although he was an active witness, as well as a chronicler, the novelist in him restrains his emotions and presents his material artistically. Using a "controlled tension,"[211] Nahal shows the suffering and the psychology of millions represented by Lala and others in the novel, and successfully produces the history of marginal people who suffered the pangs of Partition of 1947.

The vast scale of the novel does not allow the author to leave the story in midst of the violence. Providing detailed analysis of characters and their psychology, Nahal ends the novel on an affirmative note of hope by presenting scenes of rebirth and renewal.[212] In the last part of *Azadi,* most characters accept the horror of Partition as a fact of life, which they forget and forgive. Lala's liberal outlook towards the Muslims, his opening of a small grocery shop with his wife, Arun's joining the Hindu college, and his growing role as the center of consciousness toward the close of the novel indicate that life goes on. Nahal gives some space to Isher Kaur's delivery of a baby girl, whose arrival suggests the renewed beginning of life. In addition, Sunanda's work, her "newly acquired" sewing

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[211] H. K. Verma, "The Narrative Pattern of Chaman Nahal and Khushwant Singh with Special Reference to *Azadi* and *Ttrain to Pakistan*," 155.

[212] O. P. Bhatnagar, in *Indian Political Novel in English,* understands the birth of the baby girl to symbolize "recycling or re-birth of life into a new awakening, a dawn of new awareness, with the attendant freshness of a harmonious vision of existence" (197).

machine's whirring sound and movement, and the shaking of doors with its vibration in the closing sentences of the novel suggest the continuity of life, and hope for the characters' reconstruction of their lives.

Chapter Four:
Silence, History and Cosmopolitanism in Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*

Most Partition stories focus on Punjab, leaving aside the tragic story of the people on the borders of Bengal which also was split into two in 1947. Ghosh writes about the Partition of Bengal and its impact on wide variety of people in at least three different countries--India, Bangladesh and Pakistan--whereas Singh, Sidhwa, and Sahni focus on the Partition of Punjab, and its human dimension, confining their focus to the people of India and Pakistan. Moreover, Ghosh focuses not so much on violent scenes as on their consequences. Although he depicts the traumatic suffering of characters, he describes the continuity of their life in alien settings. If Nahal's characters in *Azadi* have just started to live a new phase of life in another country, Ghosh's characters have already adjusted in foreign lands. Lionel Tresawsen, Shaheb, Mayadebi, Jatin, Tridib, May and the narrator in *The Shadow Lines* cross both physical and mental borders, and live and move in different countries imbued with their cosmopolitan consciousness much like the author himself.[213]

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[213] Amitav Ghosh, a leading contemporary novelist, was born in Calcutta in 1956 but grew up in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), Sri Lanka, Iran, and India. Ghosh graduated with a B.A in History from St. Stephen's College, University of Delhi in 1976, and in 1978, he received a doctorate scholarship in social anthropology from Oxford University. Based on his experiences in Egypt, where he went in 1980 to conduct field research for D. Phil in anthropology, he later produced *In an Antique Land* (1992). As an anthropologist, Ghosh has also visited Cambodia, China, and other countries for field research. He was appointed Research Associate, in the Department of Sociology at Delhi University from 1983 to 1987, when he began writing *The Circle of Reason* (1986). For a brief period of time in 1977, Ghosh also worked with *The Indian Express,* a national newspaper of India. Ghosh has taught at Columbia, Queens College, and Harvard in the US. His writings include novels such as: *The Circle of Reason* (1986), *The Shadow Lines* (1988), *The Calcutta Chromosome* (1995), *The Glass Palace* (2000), *The Hungry Tide* (2005), *Sea of Poppies* (2008), *River of Smoke* (2011), and *Flood of Fire* (2015). His non-fiction works include books such as: *In an Antique Land* (1992) and *Countdown* (1999), and essay collections such *Dancing in*

This Chapter will present a brief introduction to the novel, and analyze the commitments to cosmopolitanism, nationalism, and violence by some characters in the novel.

People tend to resort to silence instead of speaking or writing about cataclysmic violence like that of Partition, mainly because of the fear that it might invite further violence. Historians as well as creative writers find it difficult to represent violence, as they do not want to provoke further violence by reminding people of wounds that still lie dormant in their consciousness. It is difficult for the writers to describe pain and trauma in language in an objective manner, and that too in absence of evidences. Violence cannot be romanticized or aestheticized either, because in that case, violence becomes more attractive. Ghosh uses a skillful strategy to show the dilemma of a writer, as well as to break the silence surrounding the representation of violence, to produce a revisionist history. Mostly, by digging the memories of the victims, he reveals the unsaid in history.

A highly praised masterpiece, Ghosh's third novel, *The Shadow Lines* (1988), is often considered to be his best fictional work. Accommodating the characters of two continents (Asia and Europe), *The Shadow Lines* recounts the story of three generations of the narrator's family in three cities--Dhaka, Calcutta, and London, and shows the interaction of characters belonging to different nationalities and religions--Hindu, Muslim, and Christian. The novel mostly revolves around events involving the family of Mayadebi and her sister Tha'mma and their friends, the English family of the Prices. The narrative begins in 1939 and ends in 1964, connecting Second World War, the Partition in 1947, and the post-Partition riots of 1964 in Calcutta and Dhaka. Tha'mma,

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Cambodia and At Large in Burma (1998), *The Imam and the Indian* (2002) and *Incendiary Circumstances* (2006). Ghosh has been a recipient of many national and international awards for his literary works. He was awarded *Padma Shree*, one of India's highest honors by the President of India in 2007.

elder sister of Mayadebi and grandmother of the narrator, provides the connecting link between pre-modern life before Partition in the family's home in Dhaka and the diasporic life in post-Partition Calcutta.

Cosmopolitanism

In one of its central beliefs, cosmopolitanism holds that identities are fluid and cut across political, geographical, national, or cultural boundary. I use the term "cosmopolitanism" very broadly to refer to the characters' movements across borders; their knowledge and understanding of other people, places, religions, customs, and cultures; their belief in universal humanity; and their sense of respect for and responsibility towards others. *The Shadow Lines* presents Ghosh's cosmopolitan ideals by going beyond the limiting borders of a nation as it embraces wider concept of moral values, multiple identities, and a planetary perspective. The characters in the novel move beyond their own political, communal, territorial, and cultural attachments to give allegiance to the wider human community and universal values of humanity.

We can examine *The Shadow Lines* in light of K. A. Appiah's theory of cosmopolitanism, which suggests the possibility of a cosmopolitan community of individuals who come from various geographical locations and diverse social and economic backgrounds to enter relationships of mutual respect, despite their differing religious beliefs and political ideologies. I will try to focus on Appiah's oxymoronic phrase "rooted cosmopolitanism," which advocates that one can have allegiance to one's family, culture or country and still become a world citizen aspiring to embody universal values. Appiah insists that only a person who is deeply committed to the local can have

genuine sense of obligation to the universal. Respect for the local does not become a hindrance to people having wider aspirations; rather it helps them to strengthen their faith in cosmopolitan ideals.

Characters in *The Shadow Lines* come from diverse religious and political backgrounds, from India, Bangladesh and England and form a loving community of a large family composed of three national families. The relationship between the English family of Lionel Tresawsen and the Indian family of Datta Chaudhuri spans three generations. Their relationship exemplifies Appaiah's idea of "conversation," that literally and metaphorically designates encounters and engagements across national, and religious borders. Characters such as Datta Chaudhuri, Lionel Tresawsen, move across countries and participate in inter-cultural conferences. Actually, the friendship between Lionel Tresawsen, who has been introduced as a globe trotter, and Datta Chaudhuri develops after they meet by chance at a spiritual conference in Calcutta.

For the cosmopolites, the borders make no sense, and do not determine relationships between people. The absurdity of the concept of border comes very clearly from Tridib, who observes that geographical/political borders are mere shadows that will never be able to separate people who share the same history and culture. More than anybody else in the novel, Tridib, emphasizes the mind's ability and necessity to transcend localities, and enables the characters to explore other possible cosmopolitan identities.

Living a life of cosmopolitan ideal far above narrow nationalism, Tridib advocates the idea of the invented and imaginary nature of places and identity: "We could not see without inventing what we saw" (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines*, 31). Just to exist in a

place does not grant meaning to the place or life; it has to be invested with imaginary details. Therefore, Tridib "could experience the world as concretely in [his] imagination as she [Ila] did through her senses" (29-30). For Tridib, imaginative reality is as true as factual reality.

Tridib possesses a wealth of "abstruse information" on far ranging subjects: "He would begin to hold forth on all kinds of subjects--Mesopotamian stelae, East European Jaaz, the habits of arboreal apes, the plays of Garcia Lorca" (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines*, 9). He has a "devastating sharpness" of tongue through which "streams of talk" would come gushing out (9). The narrator thinks that there is apparently "no end to the things he could talk about" (9). A research scholar doing a Ph.D. in medieval Archaeology in relation to the Sena dynasty of Bengal, he also possesses "a streak of intensely worldly shrewdness" because he can give students precise and detailed instructions" for getting better marks in examinations, or in interviews on the ground of his knowledge of the expectations of the concerned teachers or interviewers (9).

Tridib's life is "governed by higher-order needs such as creative thinking, understanding and love,"[214] and though he is rooted in a place, he maintains cosmopolitan consciousness, and with his wide humanitarian outlook, he is able not only to inspire but also to transform characters such as the narrator and May. Except Tha'mma, most characters including Ila and Robi are his admirers. May travels 5000 miles to Calcutta to see "this man whom she'd never met" (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines*, 163). The narrator says of him: "Tridib had given me worlds to travel in and he had given me eyes to see them with" (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 20). Although he was "a boy who

[214] Arvind Chowdhary, *Critical Essays*, 3.

had never been more than a few hundred miles from Calcutta," the narrator says, he came to know several places such as Madrid and Cuzco which had a magical influence on him "because Tridib had pointed them out to me on his tattered old Bartholomew's Atlas" (20).

Feeling at home with the world, Tridib "wanted to travel around the world like Lionel Tresawsen, to live in faraway places half-way around that globe, to walk through the streets of La Paz and Cairo" (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 51). Born in Mabe, Lionel Tresawsen lived in or visited Malaysia, Fiji, Bolivia, the Guinea Coast, and Ceylon, and worked at different capacities in mines, warehouses, and plantations, before owning a factory and a homoeopathic clinic near Calcutta, where he encountered Justice Datta Chaudhuri. Tridib is "happiest in neutral, impersonal places—coffee houses, bars, street-corner *addas*—the sort of place where people come, talk and go away without expecting to know each other any further"(9). For him the essential bond of humanity consists of communicating and interacting with people no matter where they belong or what they do.

Tridib's wide humanity and cosmopolitan spirit come to the fore also when he expresses the desire to meet May as strangers: "as the completest of strangers--strangers-across-the-seas--all the more strangers because they knew each other already . . . in a place without a past, without history, free; really free, two people coming together with the utter freedom of strangers" (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines*, 141). Tridib's idea of "coming together" reminds one of the Vedic maxims: "*Udara charitanam tu vasudhaiva kutumbakam*" which means: "for the liberal minded the entire universe is a single family." Since everyone in this world has his or her own worldview, often quite

different from those of others, the best policy is to respect this difference. For the person of generous outlook, the whole globe is like home; there is no outside or inside, no home and abroad. The coming together of Tridib and May in the form of strangers who know each other already, makes even the strangers as the members of a family but freer so that deep interactions can take place at the level of their hearts. For Tridib, with this outlook, therefore, the story of Tristan, "a man without a country, who fell in love with a woman across-the seas" becomes, the best European story (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 183).

Feeling no dichotomy between the family and the world, Tridib embodies Appiah's ideal of "rooted cosmopolitanism": he maintains an allegiance to his family, culture, and country, yet still becomes a world citizen by embodying universal values. "Something of a recluse," Tridib is physically rooted in Calcutta but imaginatively lives in the entire world as a global citizen (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 18). Tridib disrupts the concept of an essentialist self and revels in the celebration of multiple selves or identity. Perhaps, this lack of a strong unified self makes one's existence a bit shallow in the world of practical affairs, and also creates obstacles when something solid, in terms of political ambition, has to be realized**.**

Through Tridib, who transcends the nation's dividing lines, Ghosh may be responding to Fredric Jameson's assertions that Third World novels are essentially concerned with nation and nation building. Ghosh does not narrate nationalism in *The Shadow Lines*; rather he writes about families. He himself has said: "To me, the family is the central unit, because it's not about the nation, you know?" (Aldama 89). For Ghosh,

family provides the foundation on which to build cosmopolitan relationships.[215] This emphasis on cosmopolitanism, however, does not mean that Tridib is unaware about the distinctness of a location or its culture. In consonance with Appiah's idea that cosmopolitanism balances our obligations to others with the "value not just of human life but of particular human lives"—that is "universality plus difference"--Tridib instructs the narrator "to use [his] imagination with precision (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 24).[216] He asks the narrator whether he "could imagine what it would be like to live under a sloping roof—no place to fly kites, nowhere to hide when one wanted to sulk, and nowhere to shout across to one's friends (29). For Tridib, cosmopolitanism means not only a precise knowledge of one's own cultural location but also of those of others along with deep respect for them. Through Tridib, *The Shadow Lines*, looks beyond the specific reality, though rooted in it.

Tridib's cosmopolitan self emerges most clearly in a passage where the narrator reports Tridib's desire to transcend the self and reach others:

> He said to me once that one could never know anything except through desire, real desire, which was not the same thing as greed or lust; a pure, painful and primitive desire, a longing for everything that was not in oneself, a torment of the flesh, that carried one beyond the limits of one's mind to other times and other places, and even, if one was lucky, to a place where there was no border between oneself and one's image in the mirror. (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 29)

This longing for other times and places takes Tridib across physical and mental borders to forge relations, for example with his beloved May who belongs to a country far from his own. In fact, as Suvir Kaul observes, the novel "describes no sexual or romantic

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[215] In this regard, Shameem Black, in "Cosmopolitan at Home," remarks that: "Ghosh chooses to subvert the idea of national identity or allegory by focusing on families as emblems of cosmopolitan formation" (52).

relationship between two people who share an obvious identity of nationality, race or cultural experiences--desire originates and finds its object, across borders" (128).

The narrator, Tha'mma's grandson, who follows in the footsteps of Tridib, is also a cosmopolitan of parts. Like his uncle Tridib, the anonymous narrator is a highly educated young man, doing research "for a PhD thesis on the textile trade between India and England in the nineteenth century" (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 13). He visits England on a year's research grant to collect material for his dissertation when he meets May, and learns much about her and her relation with Tridib. Like Tridib, he has an inquisitive and receptive mind, and a loving heart.

Although the narrator is located/rooted in Calcutta for most of his life, he gradually realizes that his own existence in post-Partition India is deeply influenced by historical ties to England and Bangladesh. If the stories of Tridib's visit to England, the grandmother's visit to Bangladesh, and his own visit to England have shaped his thoughts and life, it is mainly Tridib's example that has provided him an insight to understand the bond between individuals, nations and cultures.

Domestic spaces of families shape the narrator's concept of cosmopolitanism. Like Tridib, he becomes an ideal rooted cosmopolitan because of "his immersion within discourses of home."[217] He has free access to all the characters from both the Bengali families in Dhaka and Calcutta, and from this privileged position, he unfolds his family history that is intertwined with both national and international events.

The narrator is capable of living in the imaginary landscapes painted by Tridib's exotic stories of places far from his native Calcutta. Listening to Tridib's stories, he

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[216] Shameem Black, in "Cosmopolitan at Home," observes that this precise use of imagination entails "a respect for the specificity and uniqueness of other lives" (54).

would look up "at the smoggy night sky above Gole Park" and wonder "how the stars looked in London" (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 51-52). Like Tridib, the narrator believes in places which come to life by imaginatively living in them. He believes that "a place does not merely exist, that it had to be invented in one's imagination" and that Ila's "practical, bustling London was no less invented than mine, neither more nor less true, only very far apart" (21). In many ways, the narrator is more cosmopolitan than his cousin Ila, who despite living in many places, has "never traveled at all" because "the invention she lived in moved with her" (21). The narrator has the ability to examine and investigate the meaning of nationalism, borders, personal identity, and political freedom; by examining events through the perspectives of diverse characters. He forges a view of the modern world that interweaves memory, history, and contemporary life.

Thus, for instance, although he respects his grandmother, the narrator disagrees with her judgments of Ila and Tridib. If Tridib is a lazy gossip for the old lady, he is a learned and imaginative recluse for the narrator, and where Tha'mma considers Ila to be a licentious/promiscuous girl, the narrator appreciates her spirit of freedom. Nor does he subscribe to the view that the grandmother possesses the temperament of a "war mongering fascist"; he views her sympathetically, like Tridib, who believes that Tha'mma wishes to live a middle-class life denied by history (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 77). Appiah's idea that we must recognize the values, customs, and beliefs of others and try to reach mutual understanding even if we do not agree with them fully finds illustrations in the narrator's relation with Tha'mma and his cousin Ila. Despite his commitment to cosmopolitanism and the imagination, the narrator loves and respects his grandmother, who almost her entire life devotes herself to literal borders, bloody

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[217] Shameem Black, "Cosmopolitan at Home: Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines,*" 57.

patriotism, and militant nationalism; he also appreciates the unimaginative Ila, who lives "intensely in the present," with no ability to comprehend "the past being concurrent with the present" (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 29).

The narrator does not merely sympathize with, but in some cases identifies with others. He says he was so like Ila in childhood that people thought they could have been twins. When once she blurts out in anger that she wants to be free from him, India, and her Indian family and culture, the narrator answers: "You cannot be free of me because *I am within you* . . . just as you are within me" (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 87). He understands and appreciates that Ila has unsuccessfully but persistently dreamed of building a "free world" for herself (185).

The narrator also claims that, in his imagination, he has lived and grown alongside Nick Price suggesting that he not only accepts Nick but also considers him a friend and an alter ego. He says, "Nick Price, whom I had never seen. . . became a spectral presence beside me in my looking glass; growing with me, but always bigger and better, and in some ways more desirable" (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 49). He conceives of Nick as his better mirror image because he looks at him through Ila's eyes. The image in the looking glass signifies the projected image of the man's self onto the other. It not only suggests the likeness of one to the other at the individual level but also of one nation to its other, for instance, the likeness of India and England or India and Pakistan. In fact, by establishing parallels between war-torn Europe and the violence ridden subcontinent, Ghosh dismantles the distinction between the east and the west.[218] The narrator realizes

[218]Robert Dixon, in "Traveling in the West," puts the idea in this way: Ghosh "undermines any distinction between East and west, colony and metropolis, and points to similarities and continuities that cut across these differences" (18).

the futility of boundary line drawn by politicians because he knows that far from being able to separate people, these lines only provoke violence on both sides of the border. About the meaninglessness of the border lines which separate countries on maps, the narrator remarks:

> They had drawn their borders, believing in that pattern, in the enchantment of the lines, hoping perhaps that once they had etched their borders upon the map, the two bits of land would sail away from each other like the shifting tectonic plates. What had they felt, I wondered, when they discovered that they had created not a separation, but a yet-undiscovered irony--the irony that killed Tridib: the simple fact that there had never been a moment in the 4000-year-old history of that map when the places we know as Dhaka and Calcutta were more closely bound to each other than after they had drawn their lines-so closely that I, in Calcutta, had only to look into the mirror to be in Dhaka; a moment when each city was the inverted image of the other, locked into an irreversible symmetry by the line that was to set us free--our looking-glass border. (Ghosh, *The Shadow lines,* 228)

The narrator uses the image of "looking-glass" to suggest that Dhaka and Calcutta function as mirrors to each other and reflect one another. Just as Nick and the narrator, one city functions as the mirror image of the other although they are separated by geography, nationality and culture.

Ghosh seems to agree with Edward Said that borderlines and maps function as the "weapons of imperialism" (Said, *Culture and Imperialism*), which no longer mean much in the contemporary world. This fact is evident when the narrator looks at the old Bartholomew's Atlas that Tridib used in the past, draws some imaginary circles connecting places and discovers that "Khulna is about as far from Srinagar as Tokyo is from Beijing, or Moscow from Venice, or Washington from Havana, or Cairo from Naples" (Ghosh, *The Shadow lines,* 226). He draws some more imaginary lines to discover that "Chiang-Mai in Thailand was much nearer Calcutta than Delhi is; that Chengdu in China is nearer than Srinagar is" (227). This act not only teaches him "the

meaning of distance" but also suggests the imaginary nature of borders and their influence on the minds of people (together with their meaninglessness). It is the governments that draw lines and separate people from people. The compartmentalization of the globe into nation states either creates distance between people or brings them closer. Because of the imaginary lines of nations, people become distant even when they live in close proximity as indicated by the reference to Calcutta, Delhi, and Chiang-Mai, or Chengdu and Srinagar. People in Delhi feel closer to the people of Calcutta, and far distant from the people of Chiang-Mai, even though geographically they live nearer the Thais.

Ernest Gellner in *Thought and Change*, observes: "Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist" (169). In line with the idea of Gellner, Ghosh proposes in the novel not a fixed, solid, essentialist given understanding of identity of a nation but an imaginary one. The narrator says "a place does not merely exist, […] it has to be invented in one's imagination" (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 21). Gellner's emphasis on the invented nature of nations finds an echo time and again in the narrator and his mentor Tridib, who experience the world through their imagination as Ila does through her senses. The narrator argues that the London in his imagination is as true as the actual bustling London in which Ila lives (21); he recounts in flashbacks the people and places Tridib had described to him twenty years earlier, juxtaposes them with the busy life of modern London, and claiming that his imaginary reconstructions are no less real or true than the present.

In contrast, although Ila has spent much of her life travelling (her father Jatin was a UN economist), her insistence on the real present and materiality of things and her

discounting of the value of imagination distance her from the cosmopolitan spirit Tridib and the narrator embody. If Tridib and the narrator can invest a location with magical significance, Ila can give only a most dull and banal account of it. The narrator says:

> I began to tell her how I longed to visit Cairo, to see the world's first pointed arch in the mosque of Ibn Tulun, and touch the stones of the Great Pyramid of Cheops...I watched her, waiting eagerly to hear what she would have to say. Suddenly she clicked her fingers, gave herself a satisfied nod, and said aloud, inadvertently: Oh yes, Cairo, the Ladies is way away on the other side of the departure lounge. (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 20)

Ila is unable to appreciate a place for its beauty, its exotic charm or its historicity; she remembers a place like Cairo for the location of the Ladies toilet in the airport.[219]

Ila grants no significance to local events. At one point, she says: "Well of course there are famines and riots and disasters . . . . But those are local things, after all--not like revolutions or antifascist wars, nothing that sets a political example to the world, nothing that's really remembered" (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 102). Her assessment of the micro-or macro-events in history stands directly opposed to that of the narrator, for whom it is worthwhile to gain even a "spectator's knowledge" of "the Great Terror in Calcutta of the sixties and seventies" (103).

Ila has a low opinion of Indian culture but is also unable fully to embrace the English culture. She feels dislocated, belonging neither here nor there. Her desire for freedom takes her to England because she wants to be away from the gender biases of her family. Once when she is about to dance with a leering businessman, Robi wrenches her away from her partner and says, "You ought to know that; girls don't behave like that here. . . . You can do what you like in England. . . But here there are certain things you

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[219] Chandrani Biswas, in "The Narrative of Displacement," observes: "It is indeed difficult for [Ila] to imagine like her narrator-cousin the wonders that the untraveled lands can hold for her" (177).

cannot do. That's our culture; that's how we live" (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 86-87). To Robi's admonition in the name of Indian culture, Ila responds: "Do you see now why I've chosen to live in London?". . . . It's not only because I want to be free. . . . Free of you! . . . Free of your bloody culture and free of all of you" (87). As she is alienated from home, her "cosmopolitanism is suspect, because it is not rooted in a full observance of 'Indian' norms."[220] Constrained by the gendered disciplinary code in India, Ila soon realizes that she cannot be at home there either; hence, she experiences a perpetual sense of rootlessness. Although she calls herself a "free woman and free spirit," Ila falls short of a cosmopolitan attitude partly because of her inability to appreciate home (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 184). The realization that her husband Nick Price has been unfaithful robs her of peace in England. Ghosh suggests that she is unable to embrace either domestic or foreign space, by contrast with the two central male characters, for whom cosmopolitanism starts at home and embraces the whole world. However, we may argue that partly Ila's problem is inherent in the problem of cosmopolitanism itself which already favors rich elite males.

Nationality

In *The Shadow Lines*, Ghosh presents Tha'mma's life in moving detail as if to propose his views on nations and borders, home and belonging, independence and Partition. Her sense of nationalism leads her to alienation, dislocation, and confusion of identity; instead of providing security and stability it places her in a tragic situation. Her slow and painful realization of the meaninglessness of war and violence, and the

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[220] Suvir Kaul, "Separation Anxiety," 129.

tenuousness of borders allows Ghosh to demonstrate the inadequacy of Tha'mma's ideas, and the need for multiple identities and cosmopolitan ideals. Acknowledging the existence of cartographic borders, though shadowy, Ghosh proposes that humanity cross them to reach each other in a wide understanding.[221]

Born in 1902 in Dhaka, Tha'mma grew up as a member of "a big joint family with everyone living and eating together" (Ghosh, *Shadow Lines,* 119). After the death of her husband, she is confined almost to the city of Calcutta where she has worked as a schoolmistress for twenty seven years. Burdened with new responsibility,

> 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 Jethamoshai [her uncle] and her aunt again. (Ghosh, *Shadow Lines,* 123)

The Partition in 1947 brings to an end even her communication with her uncle and aunt. She is only able to visit Dhaka in 1964, seventeen years after Partition.

A believer in the work ethic and a strict disciplinarian and traditionalist, Tha'mma considers Tridib "a loafer and a wastrel" who wastes his time gossiping with idlers at the *addas* (meeting places) in Gole Park (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 4). She considers him a self-indulgent, "lightweight and frivolous character" (6) who could have "lived like a lord and ruled the country" (7) if only he knew how to use his connections. She warns the narrator to avoid Tridib's company because "she believed [him] to be capable of exerting his influence at a distance, like a baleful planet" (5).

Anchoring herself in pre-modern ideas of nationality, Tha'mma cannot appreciate Ila's aspirations for freedom and her desire to live in England either: Ila has

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[221] Arvind Chowdhary, in his introduction to *Critical Essays,* argues that the novel "does not quite wish away the borders. Nor does it suggest that people are the same everywhere. Differences must persist, but they should not breed hatred or violence" (3).

"no right" to be in England because she "doesn't belong there" (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 75). Tha'mma thinks that Ila has moved to England for money and for "the things money can buy" (77). Condemning Ila's western-style dress and haircut, she even compares her to a "Free School Street whore" (79). As Tha'mma sees it, Ila, the grandchild of an affluent family, could have a much more comfortable life with "houses and servants and cars" in India, her home, than frugally adjusting to one small room of a house in England which she shares with five other students (77).

Irritated by her accusing/fighting manner, Ila thinks the grandmother has the temperament of "war-mongering fascists" in her, but neither Tridib nor the narrator subscribe to this view of Ila (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 77). Instead, Tridib remarks:

> All she wanted was middle-class life in which, like the middle classes the world over, she would thrive believing in the unity of nationhood and territory, of self-respect and national power; that was all she wanted--a modern middle-class life, a small thing, that history had denied her in its fullness and for which she could never forgive it. (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 77)

Tha'mma lives a frustrated, unfulfilled life because she never realizes the pre-modern Eurocentric geographic nationhood and middle-class life to which she aspired.

As a youth, Tha'mma dreamt of fighting for the independence of East Bengal. At college doing B.A. in History, Tha'mma learnt about and attempted to help Bengali nationalist groups, "secret terrorist societies like Anushilan and Jugantar and all their off shoots, their clandestine networks, and the homemade bombs with which they tried to assassinate British officials and policemen" (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 37). When the narrator asks her if she would have really killed the British magistrate at Khulna, the first assignment given to her terrorist classmate, Tha'mma answers, "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" (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 39). Tha'mma believed that murderer was defensible to ensure political freedom and territorial demarcation. She thought that, to be strong, the people of any nation had to shed their own blood and the blood of others, as had the British:

> They know they're a nation because they've drawn their borders with blood. War is their religion. That's what it takes to make a country. Once that happens people forget they were born this or that, Muslim or Hindu, Bengali or Punjabi: they become a family born of the same pool of blood. That is what you have to achieve for India, don't you see? (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 76)

Taking England as a model, she has dreamt about a strong India where all communities--Hindu, Muslim, Bengali, Punjabi--live as members of one family "born of the same pool of blood." She imagines India populated by all communities almost in the spirit of Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* who says that the nation "is imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each [member], the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (7). Unlike Anderson's nationalism that stresses the willingness to sacrifice for one's country, Tha'mma's nationalism is based on war and the desire to kill in order to strengthen it.

However, after the passing of time, nationalism becomes increasingly complex for Tha'mma. She finds things so much to have changed in 1964 that the very people of Bangladesh, for whom she desired to kill or sacrifice her life in pre-Partition days, have now become her fatal enemies. Nationalist feelings that motivated her to fight against the British in the past, now prompts the rioters in Dhaka to target Indians like her. On the one hand, she comes to realize the emptiness of nationalism; on the other, she clings to its old meaning and validity. The changing meaning of nationality perplexes the old lady.

On the one hand, Tha'mma becomes disillusioned when she discovers that her nationality conflicts with her nativity. During her visit to Dhaka, Tha'mma is shocked as an Indian national when she has to write Dhaka as her birthplace in the passport-form. Ghosh writes: "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" (Ghosh, *Shadow Lines,* 149). Like Manto's Toba Tek Singh, Tha'mma suffers from locational uncertainty. Born and brought up in undivided Bengal or India, Tha'mma ironically cannot understand the new nationality created after Partition, although she fought for it.

Nevertheless, she cannot wish away force and appeal of the nation. After Tridib's death, at the end of the visit, the border acquires an even stronger meaning for Tha'mma. A merely confusing line before, it now becomes concrete and potent enough to define her national identity. Unlike Robi, who considers freedom a mirage, Tha'mma views the Pakistanis (her former countrymen) as enemies to be fought and defeated to preserve her grandson's freedom and the future of India. She therefore contributes to the war fund explaining to her grandson, the narrator: "I gave it away . . . I gave it [her chain and jewelry] to the fund for the war. I had to, don't you see? For your sake; for your freedom. We have to kill them before they kill us; we have to wipe them out" (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 232). To preserve the integrity of India she is now ready to exterminate the Pakistanis for whom she had been willing to kill the British in her youth.

Tha'mma literally subscribes to this "limited nation" having "finite, if elastic" view of border and wonders:

> 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? (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 148-149).

Her question about the border gives room for her son to tease her asking, "Did she really think the border was a long black line with green on one side and scarlet on the other, like it was in a school atlas?" (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines, 148*). The absence of border walls between India and Bangladesh makes her wonder if the blood sacrifice made by Bengali revolutionaries has not gone waste. Her question "What was it all for then--partition and all the killing and everything--if there isn't something in between?" embodies her growing realization that not even bloody war can erect real, solid and permanent walls between nations (149**).** The question not only represents the voices of millions of people who were similarly confounded by the hastily drawn Radcliffe line but also indicates the futility of the concept of nationality and nation states. Partition neither fulfilled the wishes of the Indians nor satisfied the dreams of the Pakistanis—it rather brought hardship and suffering for multitudes of people residing in both countries, who lost their roots, their homes and their identity.

Ghosh also brings into question the concepts of home and nationality through Tha'mma's visit to Dhaka for her desire to see her old house and to bring her uncle Jethamoshai back to India. The very titles of the two sections of the novel--"Going Away" and "Coming Home," the latter devoted to Tha'mma's visit to Dhaka--convey the inadequacy of "essentialist notions" of belonging to describe the post-Partition identity of

South Asian immigrants (Roy 7). At a broader level, Tha'mma's confusion about nationality is embedded in our use of language, which confuses the connotations of coming and going because of context. But, at a specific level the confusion comes because of a pragmatic and cultural use of a Bengali word—*aashi* which connotes both coming and going in English[222]. "While on journey to Dhaka from Calcutta in 1964, Tha'mma tells her family that travelling to Dhaka was different in pre-Partition days because she could "come home to Dhaka whenever [she] wanted" (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 149*)*. Tha'mma's reference here is to her parents' home in Dhaka; she speaks the words anchored in Dhaka of her youth. As an unmarried college girl of Dhaka, she could "come" home to Dhaka in those days but now in 1964, her home is in India and to this home she wants to take her uncle too. In a sense, she can only "go" to Dhaka now, and yet she refers to Dhaka as her home where she could "come" to confusing herself and the others.[223] Wearing a white *sari* with a red border and being as excited as a bride going to her home for the first time, Tha'mma says: "I'm going home as a widow for the first time" (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 201). When she meets Jethamoshai, with misty eyes she says, "We've come home at last" (208). The words *coming* or *going* here signify the

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[222] Traditionally, some Bengalis associate inauspiciousness with the expression such as "I take your leave, or I am going now," or "I must go now," when actually they are taking leave, or going out on a journey. Instead, they use expressions like "I will come," or "I'm just coming." Therefore, when a person is going or taking a leave, he or she says: [*aami*] *aashi* (I'm coming).

[223] In *The Shadow Lines*, the narrator, explains this in the following manner:

> You see, in our family we don't know whether we're coming or going--it's all my grandmother's fault. But, of course, the fault wasn't hers at all: it lay in language. Every language assumes a centrality, a fixed and settled point to go away from and come back to, and what my grandmother was looking for was a word for a journey which was not a coming or a going at all; a journey that was a search for precisely that fixed point which permits the proper use of verbs of movement. (150)

same thing: Ghosh makes Tha'mma use the words in a confusing way so as to dismantle the difference between the two nations across borders.

Tha'mma realizes that after 1947, for someone in her position to come home to Dhaka from India means going to a foreign country. Tridib makes this point clear to her when he says, "But you *are* a foreigner now, you're as foreign here as May" (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 191). Even the narrator teases her, "Tha'mma Tha'mma! I cried. How could you have 'come' home to Dhaka? You don't know the difference between coming and going!" (150). The old lady too admits once, "Yes, I really am a foreigner here—as foreign as May in India or Tagore in Argentina" (191).

Despite the fact that Tha'mma no longer belongs to Dhaka, and has her home in India, Ghosh depicts her visit to Dhaka as a necessarily frustrating and disorienting home-returning journey because she is searching unsuccessfully for the pre-Partition Dhaka of her younger days. She keeps asking, "This is all wonderful….But where's Dhaka?" (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines*, 201).Unable to believe the changes, she comments: "But whatever you may say, this isn't Dhaka" (191). When the driver points down a lane and shows her house, Tha'mma cries, "It can't be our lane, for where's Kanababu's sweet shop?" (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 202). The narrator explains that, Dhaka means for Tha'mma, "the city that had surrounded their old house" (190). Finally, when she comes to the large, old, crumbling, welcoming and ungainly house, she cries, "Look! Our house!" (202). This concept of home is complicated by Ghosh because after all Tha'mma considers Calcutta to be her new home and she has visited Dhaka with an express purpose of bringing her uncle back to her Indian home. If she wants to "bring back" her uncle to her home in Calcutta, she cannot "come home" to Dhaka but has to "go" to

Dhaka. The trip to Dhaka reveals the confused sense of identity of the grandmother. Although now happily rooted in Calcutta, India, Tha'mma's strong attachment to her native city manifests itself repeatedly.[224] Ultimately, like the narrator, we see that Tha'mma has "no home but in memory" (190). Instead of providing the freedom and security of an independent nation, Partition has deprived her of her home and sense of belonging.[225] An individual who cherished the dream of a strong nation and a secure home ironically becomes homeless; her identity is questioned in the very land where she fought for it. Her tragic experience in Dhaka teaches her the lesson that nations and borders, instead of guaranteeing sense of belonging, might put citizens in danger. Sadly, Tha'mma realizes the hollowness of the concepts for which she was ready to sacrifice her life and the lives of others in the past.[226]

Probably for this reason, instead of advocating an exclusive nationalism, Ghosh envisages a world where people are not confined within narrow geographical borders and boundaries, but have a diasporic existence embodying "different histories" and changing identities.[227] He has a vision of the world as a global village, where citizens of different countries and nationalities interact with respect for each other and with understanding of

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[224] Anjali Roy, in "Microstoria," rightly observes that Tha'mma's confused identity allows the novelist "to investigate the conflicting claims of roots and belongings in 'chauvinist nationalism'" (4).

[225] Feroz Shaikh, in "The Partition and its Versions," comments that Tha'mma's development and growth as a character "encapsulates the futility and meaninglessness of political freedom that was otherwise supposed to usher in an era of peace and prosperity for all" (198).

[226] Arvind Chowdhary, in his introduction to *Critical Essays,* maintains that "the idea that violence gets driven to the borders, once new nations are carved out of a single state is a myth, which gets questioned in the novel" (6).

[227] R. Radhakrishnan, "Ethnicity in an Age of Diaspora," 126.

each other's differences, exemplified by the family relation of Datta Chaudhuri and Lionel Tresawsen on the one hand, and Jethamoshai and Khalil on the other.

In *The Shadow Lines*, Ghosh suggests through Tha'mma's old uncle Jethamoshai in Dhaka that borders and geographical demarcations are arbitrary shadow lines invented to divide people. When Tha'mma tries to persuade him to return to Calcutta to join his family relations there, like Manto's Toba Tek Singh, Jethamoshai refuses to leave his place of belonging:

> 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. (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 211)

Jethamoshai questions the ability of the cartographic lines between nations to divide people; he sees identity as rooted in a place because: "once you start moving you never stop" (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 211). He sees no logic in the creation of two nations out of one perhaps foreseeing the plight of millions of refugees who belonged nowhere after the Partition.

Jethamoshai seems to be living peacefully in his huge old ancestral home which has been "occupied by Muslim refugees from India--mainly people who had gone across from Bihar and U.P. [Uttar Pradesh]," whom he considers his family (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 132). Khalil's family cooks for the old man and takes care of him; in return, Jethamoshai performs the role of a guardian for Khalil's family. Therefore, it seems absurd for Tha'mma to express concern for the "poor old man" and to wonder "what it must be like to die in another country, abandoned and alone in your old age" (132). It is highly ironic that Jethamoshai has sought the protection of Muslim refugees

rather than his own family members in Dhaka. He is not leading an abandoned life; he is living a secured and peaceful life at his home in Dhaka. In fact, in one of the sharpest ironies in the novel it is when Jethamoshai tries to move away that he meets his end; ultimately it is the artificial line that kills him along with Khalil and Tridib.

The novel points out that people like Tha'mma suffer from the sense of alienation and dislocation because of their contradictory notions of loyalty and identity. However, Ghosh does not seem to support Jethamosha's belief in the rootedness of identities and nations, either.

Equating his nationality with his birthplace, Jethamoshai refuses to acknowledge the existence of new nation states: "I don't believe in this India-Shindia" (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 211). Although he is living a relatively secure and peaceful life, his concept of nationality seems anachronistic in the changing circumstances because of the massive migrations during and after Partition. Finding both Jethamoshai's and Tha'mma's attitude toward the nation and identity to be inadequate for the contemporary situation, Ghosh's text opens space for considering other forms of identity that transcend nationality. These identities need to be imagined or invented in plurality.[228]

> Early in life, the narrator believes in the reality of borders and boundaries:I grew up believing in the truth of the precepts that were available to me: I believed in the reality of space; I believed that distance separates, that it is a corporeal substance; I believed in the reality of nations and borders. (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 214)

However, he comes to realize that nations cannot enforce cultural difference because some "other thing" will always connect people across borders. Borders do not divide

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[228] Perhaps Anjali Roy is right when, in "Microstoria," she writes that "Ghosh's novel explores the possibility of constituting identity as multiply interpellated and non-stable in the post-national Indian context" (6).

because of the undivided nature of people's memory. Borders can even ironically bring people together rather than separating them, as the narrator observes: "there had never been a moment in the 4000-year-old history of that map when the places we know as Dhaka and Calcutta were more closely bound to each other than after they had drawn their lines" (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines* 228). The newspaper report about demonstrations or riots in Kashmir attests to the strengthening of a bond by borders: "the theft of the relic had brought together the communities of Kashmir as never before" (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines*, 221). Even demonstrations can be instrumental in bringing people closer.

Violence and Tridib's Death

Ghosh's representation of Partition violence in *The Shadow Lines* seems to be consonant with the belief of Javed Alam that Partition violence "should be left behind, should be forgotten so that people may live in peace, socially normal everyday life, politically as well as individually" (101). To recount traumatic events "is morally not sustainable" (Alam101). Alam argues that revisiting trauma reopens the almost healed wounds and harms the communities living together in amity who are trying to forget their past. Ghosh seems to adopt this view in the novel by not revealing the facts concerning the central character's death for a long time, and by not having the characters directly discuss Partition. On the surface, it looks as if Ghosh agrees with Alam in his hesitation to represent violence, but this is not the case. The wounds of Partition cannot be healed unless they are faced.

Ghosh's strategy, which is more in accord with the argument that trauma needs to be represented so as to heal the wounds of memory, aligns him with theorists such as

Gyanendra Pandey, Cathy Caruth, and Dominic La Capra. According to La Capra, who adopts Freud's term here, one needs to "work through" trauma so as to come to terms with and move beyond it. La Capra explains what working-through trauma implies:

> Working-through means work on posttraumatic symptoms in order to mitigate the effects of trauma by generating counterforces to compulsive repetition (or acting-out), thereby enabling a more viable articulation of affect and cognition or representation, as well as ethical and sociopolitical agency, in the present and future. (La Capra 119)

Acting-out means creating a therapeutic situation that re-traumatizes the victim with the witnessing and experiencing of the earlier scene of violence, whereas working-through involves an imperative to recognize the symptom and the trauma as one's own, to acknowledge that the trauma is still active and that one is implicated in its destructive effects (Berger 570-6). Working-through, in La Capra's opinion, helps the victim move beyond the trauma because hiding or suppressing traumatic feelings does not end them but only keep them at latent state, from which they will re-emerge later in more dangerous forms. Pandey also insists on the need to come to terms with individual as well as national trauma by representing it.[229] Violence in history should not be elided "as *aberration* and as *absence,*" or avoided as being non-narratable as the official historians elide it (Pandey, "In Defense" 27).

In accordance with the views of La Capra and Pandey, Ghosh's narrator attempts to retrieve the facts of history, and reveals the details of Tridib's death in the final pages of the novel. His hesitation is due to the sensitivity of the subject and the discursive and ideological complexity associated with representation itself. As Gyanendra Pandey writes:

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[229] Gyanendra Pandey, in "The Prose of Otherness," argues that national trauma has to be owned because "whether we like it or not, this is *our* history and in many respects *our* condition today" (206).

> The historian seeking to represent violence in history faces problems of language (how, for example, does one describe pain and suffering), of analytical stance (how can one be objective and express suffering at the same time?), and of evidence (for does not large-scale violence destroy much of its more direct evidence?). (Pandey, "Prose" 190)

Historians and novelists have to be very careful in their use of language, analytical stance, and citation of evidence when representing violence. In "The Ghosts of Mrs. Gandhi," Ghosh maintains that violence should neither be romanticized, nor aestheticized; however, he emphasizes the need to represent it.

The Shadow Lines shows the far reaching consequences of Partition through the death of Tridib--arguably the most important incident in the novel--which occurs in 1964, seventeen years after Partition violence. The communal and religious violence affect the lives of people in future, as the riots in the streets of Calcutta or Dhaka in 1964 can be understood as consequences and images of the large scale violence of 1947. The South Asian subcontinent has been afflicted by many riots since Partition; Ghosh brings attention to one of these riots in *The Shadow Lines*.[230]

Ghosh observes that when the relic Mu-i-Mubarak, a hair of the Prophet Mohammad in a mosque in Kashmir disappears, demonstrations occur in Kashmir in which both Hindus and Muslims participate, because both the religious communities put their faith in the prophet. Thousands of people from various communities of Kashmir come together in "a collective display of mourning" (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 221). Different religious communities coalesce in Kashmir rather than splitting apart and killing each other in response to the provocative theft. When Mu-i-Mubarak is recovered, the entire city of Srinagar erupts with joy, giving Kashmir the distinction of its unique

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[230] Tuomas Huttunen, in "Representation of Riots in *The Shadow Lines,*"observes that Ghosh "depicts riots at three levels. There are riots between different religious communities within one nation-state; there are

culture of unity of faiths (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 220-221). Although the agitation ends without violence in Kashmir, riots erupt in Khulna, East Pakistan, leading to the tragedy in the novel.

When Tha'mma and Mayadebi are returning by car from their ancestral home, Jethamoshai follows closely in Khalil's rickshaw. Near the bazaar area, a mob of rioters encircles their car and breaks the wind shield, cutting the driver's face. (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 238-239). After the town's security man fires a shot from his revolver, the attention of the mob shifts to Khalil's rickshaw, which is soon surrounded. May and Tridib jump out of the car to try to save Khalil and Jethamoshai, but in vain. Tridib, Khalil and Jethamoshai are killed in the process (245).

Ghosh does not describe this scene until the final pages of the novel. The narrator and others provide the context and approach the scene repeatedly but never recount the killings. Robi's nightmarish dream includes all that leads up to the deaths, but ends before Tridib is killed. In Robi's recurring dream,

> It always begins with our car going around a corner…. We turn… and there they are, ahead of us, strung out across the road. Sometimes it's a crowd, sometimes just a couple of men….The odd thing is, that no matter how many men there are--a couple, or dozens--the street always seems empty. It was full of people when we went through it…but all the shops are shut now, barricaded, and so are the windows in the houses…. Then the men begin to move towards us--they're not running, they're gliding, like skaters in a race. They fan out and begin to close in on us. It's all silent, I can't hear a single thing, no sound at all…. And then the silence is broken…. We all turn: we in the car, they outside. And do you know what it is? It's the rickshaw—with the old man, our grand uncle, whom we'd gone to rescue, sitting at the back, all dressed up in his lawyer's coat. (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 238-240)

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simultaneous mirrored riots between religious communities in two states and there are riots between different communities (one or more) and the government" (97).

Robi's narration allows Ghosh to distance himself from the realistic and aestheticizing representation of violence. The oneiric form of the narrative becomes stronger as it proceeds:

> When I look around I see May: she's tiny, shrunken, and behind her is that rickshaw, reaching heavenwards, like a gigantic anthill, and its sides are seething with hundreds of little men…. May is screaming at us; I can't hear a word, but I know what she's saying….I stretch out a hand to pull him back into the car, but my hand won't reach him [Tridib]; I try to shout, but I have no voice left, I cannot make a single sound. (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines*, 240-241)

The actual scene of death is represented through the flat, prosaic, journalistic reporting of May, which is again far removed from the aestheticizing, or romanticized, or sentimental violence presented by some other writers. Recalling the scene, years later, May tells the narrator:

> I began to run towards the rickshaw. I heard Tridib shouting my name. But I kept running. I heard him running after me. He caught up with me and pushed me, from behind. I stumbled and fell…. Tridib ran into the mob, and fell upon their backs. He was trying to push his way through to the old man, I think. Then the mob dragged him in. He vanished…it took less than a moment….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 Tridib's throat, from ear to ear.
>
> That was that; that's all there is to tell. (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 245).

The swift-moving short sentences of May present violence in a flat manner without any dramatization of the gruesome act. The technique not only restrains the narrator, but also effectively checks the reader's emotions.

The scene remains imprinted in the minds of Robi and May. Elaborating and interpreting the Freudian theory of trauma Cathy Cauth says: "trauma is described as the response to an unexpected or overwhelming violent event or events that are not fully grasped as they occur, but return later in repeated flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena" ("Traumatic Awakenings" 208). The recurrent nature of Robi's

nightmare shows that he has been traumatized by the killing of Tridib, Khalil, and Jethamoshai. He says that although he has the dream only twice a year now, he used to have it once a week in his youth (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 238). A small incident or a chance remark is enough to trigger his memory. When a waiter in a restaurant in London, asks Robi why he remembers Jindabahar Lane in Dhaka so well, Robi says simply that he remembers because his brother was killed in a riot in that lane, but his hands shake "like a leaf" even after fifteen years as the memory re-surfaces, brought up by "a chance remark" of a man "thousands of miles away, at the other end of another continent" (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 241).

Ghosh faces the same challenge while writing about Partition violence in *The Shadow Lines* that his narrator faces while trying to write about the riots that killed Tridib. The narrator can find no words in which to represent violence because he does not know its meanings:

> The enemy of silence is speech, but there can be no speech without words, and there can be no words without meanings--so it follows...that when we try to speak of events of which we do not know the meaning, we must lose ourselves in the gap between words and the world . . . . Where there is no meaning, there is banality, and this is what this silence consists in. (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 214).

The narrator finds that the violence of the riots was so irrational and meaningless that when he tries to discuss or represent them, he falls back into silence.

The narrator has to struggle with silence to write about violence, whereas his grandmother does not struggle to speak about the tragedy of 1964; she never opens her mouth about it (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 213). His mother tells him about Tha'mma: "She's never been the same, you know, since they killed Tridib over there" (233). Tha'mma remembers and shares so many other elements of her past. After retirement,

she often “sits in an armchair beside an open window” and gazes out “across the lake” remembering her old house in Dhaka (118). She tells stories about her life in Dhaka, the house, the family strife, the wall to divide the house, the invented stories about the upside-down-house on the other side of the wall, the Partition, and her meetings with the refugees in Calcutta. However, like so many victims of Partition tragedy, Tha’mma hides her wound so as to forget it.

Consequently the riot of Khulna in 1964 that claims the life of Tridib, remains outside family discussion for a long time. The lack of discussion of Tridib's death until the conclusion of The *Shadow Lines*, creates a narrative gap in the novel. Similarly, the word “Partition” is either avoided or only appears trivially: “And then, in 1947, came Partition, and Dhaka became the capital of East Pakistan” (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 123). Perhaps the narrator elides this subject because, as he says, it is better to remain silent about certain times in history that cannot be known: “Nobody knows, nobody can ever know, not even in memory, because there are moments in time that are not knowable: nobody can ever know what it was like to be young and intelligent in the summer of 1939 in London or Berlin” (67). People suppress the memory of the violent times; and even of the prelude to violent times.

Related to the elision of the physical fact of Tridib’s death, another gap concerns the circumstances and the reason for his death. For a long time, May lives a guilt-ridden life, considering herself responsible for Tridib’s death, but at the end of the novel she comes to the realization that Tridib gave up his life as a sacrifice (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 246). But lacking the exact nature of or reason for the sacrifice, she explains it away as a mystery leaving the readers too in a quandary, unable to decide whether it was

a real sacrifice or just an accident. She gives his death a meaning but we may question whether she imposes that meaning rather than discovering it in the event.

Robi and May are the two most important witnesses of the riots and killings of 1964. May becomes a relief worker, mixes with the natives, empathizes with their problems, accepts their ways of life and overcomes the sense of guilt. Like Tha'mma, who buries her sorrows and anxiety concerning the unspeakable, Robi remains silent about the riot for a long time because of a promise to his father who has said: "[You] have to understand that there are things grown-ups don't talk about" (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 234). It is only after fifteen years that Robi breaks his silence in an "Indian" restaurant run by Bangladeshis in London.

Though not a very effective officer, Robi has attained a high position in the civil service in India. Still, despite his work for the nation, he thinks in a cosmopolitan way about the futility of making shadow lines into borders. Almost at the end of the novel, he discusses national independence and personal freedom as illusions:

> 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 a mirage; the whole thing is a mirage. How can anyone divide a memory? If freedom were possible, surely Tridib's death would have set me free. (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 241)

Robi suggests the impossibility of dividing memory and also the irrationality of dividing nations for freedom—individual or collective, personal or political. Unlike May, who gives Tridib's death a meaning, for Robi, Tridib's death signifies the meaningless futility of drawing borders between countries or the struggling for personal freedom.

Ghosh is acutely aware that nationalist discourse and official histories marginalize riots and other incidents of violence, considering them to be insignificant. In

conversation with the narrator, about the riot in Khulna in which twenty nine people were killed, including Tridib, Malik, a Marxist says: "Terrible or not, it's hardly comparable to a war" (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines*, 216). However, to the narrator, these riots are very important histories that he cannot allow to remain buried forever. Therefore, the narrator researches the riot of Khulna in 1964, which was hardly mentioned by national newspapers or documented by official histories.

Pandey remarks that in the historical master-narrative of Partition, its essence, i.e. violence, is either avoided as non-narratable or given a very short shrift as an aberration, an accident, or a mistake, and is often regarded as no history at all. "'Real' violence, however, of which the riot might be said to be the quintessential form, lies outside the domain of the State, outside Progress, and History" (Pandey, "Violence" 10). Similarly, the national newspapers do not represent the riots, instead attributing them to disorderly communal elements. Only the war between nations and states find space in the pages of journalism: "The theatre of war, where generals meet, is the stage on which states disport themselves: they [newspapers] have no use for memories of riots" (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 226). Since the nationalist newspapers, in line with nationalist discourse, elide the violence, attributing it to outsiders, criminals, political reactionaries, fanatics, or communalists, the news of violence soon fades into oblivion (Pandey, "Voices" 234). Ghosh writes:

> By the end of January 1964, the riots had faded away from the pages of the newspaper, disappeared from the collective imagination…without leaving a trace in the histories and bookshelves. They had dropped out of memory into the crater of a volcano of silence. (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 226)

The collective memory of the people does not keep record of such passing local incidents because they find no historical or national significance in these events. However, like

Sahni in *Tamas,* Ghosh discusses riots in *The Shadow Lines*: "'Stray incidents' of arson and looting continued, in Dhaka as well as Calcutta, despite the presence of the two armies, for a few days" (224). Like Sahni again, Ghosh acknowledges the crucial role played by rumor and gossip:

> In Calcutta, rumours were in the air--especially that familiar old rumour, the harbinger of every serious riot that the trains from Pakistan were arriving packed with corpses. A few Calcutta dailies printed pictures of weeping, stranded Hindu refugees, along with a few lurid accounts of the events in the east. (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 224)

Ghosh notes the terrible consequences rumor can produce: the emotion of anger, retaliation and revenge it can arouse in people, and the animosity it engenders. In fact, Partition writers have referred to terrible events caused by rumor.

In "The Ghosts of Mrs. Gandhi," Ghosh maintains that as citizen and a human being, he experienced in the riots of 1984 "not the horror and violence but the affirmation of humanity: in each case, I witnessed the risks that perfectly ordinary people are willing to take for one another" (61). In accordance with this point of view, he incorporates in *The Shadow Lines*, the small or unremarkable acts of humanity and charity performed by ordinary people:

> As always, there were innumerable cases of Muslims in East Pakistan giving shelter to Hindus, often at the cost of their own lives, and equally, in India, of Hindus sheltering Muslims. But they were ordinary people, soon forgotten- not for them any Martyr's Memorials or Eternal Flames. (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 225)

Humanitarian acts of many Hindus and Muslims become visible at the time of this violence as they help each other even at the risk of their lives. The concern of Khalil's family for old Jethamoshai provides one of the best examples of inter-community care. These people in the narrator's opinion, are "subject to logic larger than themselves"; they

consider riot as "a pathological inversion" of "individual sanity," which "binds people to each other independently of their governments" (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 225). Ghosh propositions that although Bangladesh (East Bengal), is separated from India by the government as a political entity, its people bear strong affinities with those of West Bengal, India; the people from these two areas have so much in common that the artificial line between them cannot erase their cultural unity. As we have seen in the case of Kashmir in 1964, even the riots (demonstrations turned riots), can bring people together.

The novel suggests the power that brings otherwise unremarkable people together and forges a permanent bond envisaging transnational, cosmopolitan identity rather than narrow communal or national ones. Tresawsen and Mayadebi, Tridib, the narrator and May, and Jethamoshai and Khalil rise above the narrow limits of communal, religious, or national differences. They overcome the barriers erected by governments, politicians and extremists. It is ironic that the riots ignited by petty politicians and fanatics in 1964 claim the lives of liberal people such as Jethamoshai, Khalil, and Tridib, who stand above the shadow lines of communalism and sectarianism. In order for the world to have peace, more such people are needed; otherwise the ideal of cosmopolitanism will suffer at the hands of chauvinism. It is true cosmopolitan values remain fragile unless they are backed by a strong political agenda; still, the ideals of people such as Tridib remain and inspire others for a long time.

Ghosh exhibits admirable balance towards all communities while writing about the violence of 1947 and its very real physical, social, and psychological impact after seventeen years. In fact, he writes about Partition very indirectly by concentrating on its

effects. In a most impartial manner, he describes the plight of innumerable Hindu families who were displaced from their ancestral homes in East Pakistan to settle in the suburbs of Calcutta. He also recounts the miserable life of Muslim refugees who were uprooted from Bihar, Bengal, and Assam and forced to find shelter in the newly created Pakistan. Saifuddin, the mechanic and Khalil, the rickshaw puller have come to Dhaka from Bihar, India. Ghosh has equal concern for these victims and points out that the people in the subcontinent suffer from the fear of loneliness than any other thing in the world:

> [The fear] is without analogy, for it is not comparable to the fear of nature, which is the most universal of human fears, nor to fear of the violence for the state, which is the commonest of modern fears. It is this that sets apart the thousand million who inhabit the subcontinent from the rest of the world--not language, not food, not music--it is the special quality of loneliness that grows out of the fear of the war between oneself and one's image in the mirror. (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 200)

This loneliness grows out of fear of the other, who is but one's own mirror image, and this/such fear, ultimately is absurd.

History and Silence

Perhaps, Ghosh, being another generation removed from the violence of 1947, is not as traumatized by it as earlier writers. He does not seem to focus as much as other writers on the physical scenes of violence and trauma; he directs his attention toward wider historical realities. He focuses on the far-reaching consequences of the Partition of Bengal into West Bengal (India) and East Bengal (Pakistan, which later became

Bangladesh) on the dislocated people.[231] These consequences have wider repercussions, and provide much insights to understand the problem of the victims of the Partition of Punjab as well.

In *The Shadow Lines*, Ghosh not only emphasizes the invented nature of nations and identities but also the invented nature of narrations: stories, histories, novels, and nationalist and historical discourses. However, he tries to fill up huge omissions he finds in nationalist discourse and official histories by creating his own version of Partition history, including with its accompanying riots and the physical, social, political and psychological consequences people suffer even a long time after 1947.

In line with Pandey's argument that historians consider the violence of riots as "disorganized," "chaotic," "irrational," and therefore, unnecessary or unworthy to be a subject of history, Ghosh researches the riots that were not even reported in the national newspapers or recorded by the government (Pandey, "Violence" 10). Ghosh not only emphasizes their importance, but also writes about them in detail, producing a novel that serves the purpose of a revisionist history, which supplies the facts ignored by official history.

Emphasizing the importance of memory in his subaltern history project, Pandey asserts: "History would seem to have more to learn from Memory than the other way around" ("Community" 50). Ghosh subscribes to this view in *The Shadow Lines* when he relies on personal memories to produce his alternate history though these memories have

[231] Bengal was partitioned in 1905 by the then Viceroy Lord Curzon; in 1911, the decision was reversed due to mass outrage and Bengal was reunited. It was once again partitioned in 1947 into West Bengal and East Bengal.

links with public events, too.[232] Historical narratives written through memory do not much depend on actual facts, and yet they convey a deeper sense of truth and reality. These narratives can encompass a wide variety of issues that the official historians cannot document and record.

Perhaps Ghosh focuses on personal memories because he is aware that collective memory has a tendency to overlook the local, as in the case of the riot that kills Tridib--except for the narrator, no other character acknowledges the importance or even the existence of the riot. For instance, like Malik, the Marxist, Ila dismisses the importance of "famines and riots and disasters," saying, "but those are local things, after all-not like revolutions or antifascist wars, nothing that sets a political example to the world, nothing that's really remembered" (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines*, 102). The narratives based on personal memory can be appealing to many at the individual as well as collective level, and produce positive results.

Ghosh also critiques the national newspapers that give extensive coverage to cricket matches and political speeches, but no space to those on the margin whose lives are changed by riots. As the journalists write about the "Congress conference, of the impending split in in the Communist Party, of wars and revolutions," the narrator asks, "what is it that makes all those things called 'politics' so eloquent and these other unnamable things so silent?" (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 223). He himself supplies an answer when he meditates on irrational violence, writing that "for these other things we can only use words of description when they happen and then fall silent, for to look for

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[232] Anjali Roy, in "Microstoria," also looks at The *Shadow Lines* as a novel of memory because it "prefers memory's truth to recorded history to explore alternative means of documenting events" (11).

words of any other kind would be to give them meaning, and that is a risk we cannot take any more than we can afford to listen to madness" (223). Ghosh does not want to assign meaning to acts that are meaningless. In order to avoid such ascription of significance to meaningless events, yet also to bring to light the stories of people who survived or perished in the terrible times. Ghosh builds up "layer upon layer upon layer" of personal memories, producing in the end "the dense layering of history," in his novel.[233]

Most characters tell their stories in the novel as fragments of memory.[234] As Mayadebi, Tridib, Tha'mma, the narrator, Robi, and May share their private memory in parts, they help the author to create an alternate history of Partition that revises the official textbook histories. By contrast, Ila "lived in a present which was like an air lock in a canal, shut away from the tidewaters of the past and the future by steel floodgates" (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 30). Lacking both memory and imagination, Ila is unable to connect the past with the present, or to realize the shaping force of history. For Ghosh, because the past has a strong connection with the present, a character such as Ila, incapable memory, cannot provide material for the narrator as he performs his task as historian. While sharing their remembered histories, however, most adults reveal only certain information and hide the rest, especially about violence, riots, and deaths. Although Tha'mma speaks at length about her past commitments to the nation, and about her old home in Dhaka, she remains completely mute on the riot that killed Tridib. Nationalist discourse as well as public opinion maintained silence about Partition violence. The secrecy and silence maintained by Tha'mma and others about Tridib's

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[233] T. Vijay Kumar, "'Postcolonial' Describes You as a Negative," 105.

[234] Shail Mayaram, in "Speech, Silence and the Making of Partition Violence in Mewat," observes that "the history of partition… is one that can only be written in fragments" (162).

death mirrors the silence of mainstream history concerning the unnamable other of their history of freedom and progress usually kept suppressed by the victims and citizens alike.

As an author, Ghosh has to face the challenge of seeing through the politics of silence, but also maintaining a kind of silence himself, while at the same time bringing to light the unrecorded facts of history. By struggling against silence to write a local history, Ghosh is able to present the dilemma of one who writes of violence, and to produce a record of marginalized people who have been victims of violence. He unearths the history of millions who suffered, writing "a history from below" by giving "voice to the voiceless," in Salman Rushdie's formulation.[235] His approach might be described as a conscious post-modern making of history.

Unlike historians' history, which is based on official documents about large public events, Ghosh produces a history written from the perspective of the marginal people based on their oral tales (Pandey, "Prose" 205). Although most characters in *The Shadow Lines* are well-to-do, privileged people both in England and in India, and do not represent subalterns, still they are subject to the large forces of history**,** and the most pivotal characters are connected to the interest of the masses of people. Their history does not constitute a grand narrative of the march of science, progress, or empire. It is significant also that the British characters such as the Prices have only a marginal presence and space in the novel. Ghosh does not either emulate the form of the Western grand narratives but rather focuses on eastern genre of oral tales.[236]

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[235] Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-91*, 115.

[236] Anjali Roy, in " Microstoria," rightly argues that "Ghosh's novel can profitably read as a revisionist history of India that incorporates elements from oral discourse of storytelling rather than the western historiographical documentation" (9).

In producing the history of the ordinary people, Ghosh brings to the fore not only the perspectives of male victims such as Robi, but definitely focuses on the female victims, and in general, the novel provides space for the voices of women including May, Ila, and Tha'mma. Through the emphasis on these characters, the novel valorizes family instead of nation. The novelist does not provide much space to Datta Chaudhuri and Lionel Tresawsen; the Shaheb is only mentioned once or twice by his name. This valorizing of women not only serves the purpose of subaltern history project but also provides Ghosh an opportunity to reply to Fredric Jameson, Homi Bhabha and others who look at Third World novels as allegories of nations.[237] Ghosh asserts that such writers have not been alert readers of Indian novels.

Actually, Ghosh recounts the little histories of families to make bold statements about nations and their histories. Through the detailed portrayal of the life of Tha'mma, *The Shadow Lines* implies a sharp critique of the nationalist discourse of Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru, as well as the militant nationalism of Bengali freedom fighters such as Khudiram Bose and Jatin Bagha. However, the novel never mentions a word about Mahatma Gandhi; neither has Ghosh written about the Hindu-Muslim politics of the time, or the role of British in the Partition of the subcontinent. He attributes some of the violence to radical nationalist leaders, but remains silent about the Hindu militants highlighted by Sahni in *Tamas*. He focuses more on the consequence of the violence, the discourses or silence surrounding it, and the need to move on.

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[237] In an interview with Frederick Luis Aldama, Ghosh says, "many of [his] books … have really been centered on families" and adds that "Families can actually span nations. I think the reason why you see so many Indian books essentially centered on the family is precisely because the nation is not, as it were, the central imaginative unit" (89).

Ghosh's historiography suggests the possibility of identities other than the ones projected by the nationalist, colonial, or postcolonial discourses. In fact, Ghosh objects to the use of "postcolonial" to describe India's contemporary situation because for him the word has negative connotations. In an interview with T. Vijay Kumar, Ghosh says,

> 'Postcolonial' is essentially a term that describes you as a negative. I mean, when I think of the world that I grew up to inhabit, my dominant memory of it is not that it was trying to be a successor state to a colony; it was trying to create its own reality, which today is the reality that we do inhabit. (105)

The reality inhabited seems to be an effort to reconcile the reality of multiple allegiances, multiple identities, a reality having "many roots and many pasts," and cosmopolitan existence.[238]

The Shadow Lines, to use Mushirul Hasan's words*,* forces "the communities to affirm broad humanity," which is conspicuously absent in the nationalist history ("Memories" 2667). The narrator affirms this need when he says that the madness of a riot is a reminder of "that individual sanity that binds people to each other independently of their governments" (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 225). Such fundamental sanity figures in the re-forging of communities in the Dhaka house where Jethamoshai lives contentedly surrounded by the Muslims; in Hindu-Muslim relations at the mosque in Kashmir; and in the relationship of May and the narrator at the end of the novel.

Ghosh's novel shows what Pandey calls "a whole new beginning . . . a radical reconstitution of community and history" through the new meanings of nation, and community, and family forged after the Partition (*Remembering* 7). Created out of the "little histories" neglected by academic historians *The Shadow Lines* fills the gaps left by nationalist or other official histories (Pandey, *Remembering*, 64). We may say that by

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[238] R. Radhakrishnan, "Ethnicity in an Age of Diaspora," 129.

incorporating what Pandey calls the "voices at the edge" or the "fragments" of the victims, Ghosh has produced a more authentic history than the textbook histories.

Conclusion

In his essay "The Ghosts of Mrs. Gandhi," Ghosh asserts that the representation of violence must never stoke the fire even as the writer tries to capture the intensity of a cataclysmic event. To avoid sanctioning violent reactions, the novel uses a deliberate strategy to narrate Tridib's death in a second hand manner, "without reducing it to mere spectacle" (Ghosh, "The Ghosts" 60).

Denying the claim that non-European texts mostly employ the technique of magical realism, Ghosh in an interview clarifies that he has written *The Shadow Lines* "in a realist mode to deal with real events and real characters."[239] Except for the dream narration of Robi, the text uses "gritty realism" though it mixes time, space and narrative perspectives.[240] Mixing modes and styles, the novel blurs the distinction between nations and nationalities, history and memory, secrets and revelations, fact and fiction, realities and imagination. Ghosh uses this complex pattern to reveal the absurdity of Partition, and the futility of artificial boundaries that provoke violence, but cannot divide people and their memories. He paints the geographical borders as mere shadow lines in order to communicate the pointlessness of the idea of nationalism based on cartographic lines.

Ghosh's characters may be seen constituting or constituted of many different circumstances and realities and living their diasporic life in a satisfactory manner. They come from different social, political, geographical, and historical backgrounds, and many

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[239] Frederick Luis Aldama, "An Interview with Amitav Ghosh," 87.

[240] Frederick Luis Aldama, "An Interview with Amitav Ghosh," 85.
About the use of space and time, in the same interview, Ghosh says, "My idea was to collapse space in the way that Ford Madox Ford collapses time" (90).

of them embody cosmopolitan consciousness. While it can be argued that the female characters in *The Shadow Lines* linger in a phase of cultural dislocation, the central male characters lead fully cosmopolitan lives, rooted or not within any geographical boundary. Tridib, "a man without a country," has attained the state of an ethical, political and social cosmopolitan (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 183).

Ghosh's form of writing best suits his traveling characters, who have the ability to move freely in different countries and cultures, and live cosmopolitan lives with comfortable ease and satisfaction. The nameless narrator and Tridib in *The Shadow Lines* can furnish very good examples of characters leading happy lives either travelling or rooted in a place. Characters such as Lionel Tresawsen, May and Robi also cross both physical and mental borders, and live and move in different countries imbued with their cosmopolitan consciousness.

Like Manto, Ghosh writes from the victim's point of view. He not only valorizes the marginalized, but also parodies the official historians, by seeming to avoid, yet recording, what they tend to avoid in their texts, such as riots, or the tragic tales of refugees. He tries to look at the world as the characters did, presenting their stories of dislocation, fragmentation, and achieved cosmopolitanism in a respectful manner, employing a postmodern mode of text that at once embraces and defies the limits and borders of genres.

Ghosh shows the meaninglessness of the modern concepts of nation states and borders; he highlights the contemporary transnational and cosmopolitan awareness with which many people live around the globe. Ghosh envisions a world in which people from

diverse cultural groups across borders can reach each other with openness of heart as occurs at the end of the novel when the narrator and May lie in an embrace:

> I stayed, and when we lay in each other's arms quietly, in the night, I could tell that she was glad, and I was glad too, and grateful, for the glimpse she had given me of a final redemptive mystery. (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 246)

We cannot be sure, as May and the narrator are, about the sacrifice or martyrdom of Tridib, and may not share the belief of the narrator that he has been redeemed by unraveling the mystery of his uncle's death. However, we may appreciate their love and understanding of "the kindred spirit" (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines,* 52), whose death and memory unites these people belonging to different cultures and climes, and at least, applaud the author for wishing a world where, despite the shadow lines, people reach each other's arms in understanding and love.

Conclusion:
Bridging the Boundary

The writers whom this Dissertation examines—all focus on the Partition of Punjab, except for Ghosh, who writes about the Partition of Bengal. All the writers--Manto, Singh, Sidhwa, Sahni, Nahal, and Ghosh--describe scenes of violence as they portray the complex milieu of the times. They are able to maintain a very high standard of impartiality. Working in different forms--Manto in short story and the others in novel--they show remarkable greatness in raising themselves above political, religious and national barriers.

The examination of these fictional works (ranging roughly from 1950-1990) reveals that in the beginning, writers such as Manto and Singh represented Partition by depicting cataclysmic violence; in the next phase, Sahni, Nahal and Sidhwa wrote about loss and restitution; and lastly, writers like Ghosh have been meditating on diasporic existence in which some of their characters live life with a planetary awareness that tries to bridge the boundaries of national, cultural, and religious differences. All these writers document in their fictional works factual content, which is conveniently elided by mainstream historians. Bringing to the center the victims' point of view, these writers' texts provide rich material for scholars who aim to write revisionist histories.

The study shows that, with certain exceptions, the trend of Partition writers has significantly changed in recent years, exhibiting less the pain of diaspora, and opening up more to a cosmopolitan mode of life in the contemporary world. In his short stories,

Manto focuses on the representation of macabre violence confined mainly to the characters of India and Pakistan. Although a man of cosmopolitan vision, he does not create characters who travel nations comfortably; they live the burden of tragic times. Similarly Singh concentrates on providing a map of violent India based on the events of a tiny village. Although Sidhwa depicts much suffering in her cosmopolitan Lahore, she shows some hope at the end. Despite devastation, Nahal's characters show mental strength to re-build their life. Ghosh deals with the violent history of 1947 in a cosmopolitan manner, and tries to convey the idea of humanity that transcends borders and boundaries. Although they are haunted by their past, Ghosh's characters overcome trauma, cross religious, cultural, and national boundaries, and discover a cosmopolitan spirit that enables them to live in relative satisfaction**.** In the half-century of Partition writing, global and planetary cosmopolitan consciousness has partially replaced the representation of communal violence and trauma. All the texts emphasize the indefatigable will and undaunted spirit of mankind to struggle, survive and move on in life. By underlining the charity of some characters amidst scenes of violence, all the writers illustrate the human capacity for tolerance and love, and the need to forgive. However, despite the authors' ultimate hope in humanity, the texts reveal an undercurrent of fear that history might often be repeated.

Representation of mass violence has remained a very sensitive and difficult task. Artists, theorists, writers, and scholars of different calibers, and expertise have been engaged in exploring possibilities of authentic means and methods of representation for a long time, without reaching any consensus on how to deal with violence. For certain subjects, films have been a very effective medium of representation, for instance, Sahni's

novel seems to pale before Govind Nihalani's televised serial on *Tamas*. However, well-written fictional works can convey much more than film, which involves a very complex procedure in its making and the selection and omission of materials and scenes. Besides, cinematography seems to have taken its cues for representation from fiction writing itself, which serves as the best vehicle of representation. I have concentrated my study on fiction, especially the novel, for the simple reason that in an artistic manner, it offers a vast canvas on which to provide a comprehensive picture of the times, to explore many aspects of individual and collective life.

I have also selected the novels for the affective history they provide about the most tragic times in the subcontinents' history. Academic histories cannot and do not give us a moving account of the life of individuals lived at a certain historical time. They concentrate on the broad facts and truths of history and try to present the essence of the times in an unemotional manner. They miss out on the affective aspect: everyday life, lived experiences and human interactions escape their pen. They do not also grant space for alternative viewpoints.

The novelistic form, on the other hand, not only creates a world peopled by various characters having different points of views, but also engages them in interactions and presents their joys and sorrows, loves and loss, loyalty and treachery, hopes and despair. Unlike history, which works on a set form, fiction evolves its own form in accord with its content, and renders a dramatic quality to the entire work bestowing on it at the same time a sense of immediacy. The creation of plausible characters who live amidst turbulent times in history largely influenced by them and struggling in their daily lives provides sometimes a much detailed and authentic history than academic history.

Fictional works provide the viewpoints not recorded in history. They compel readers at least for some time to identify with the characters and look at their lives with empathy. Unlike in the official versions of history, the readers re-live the moments of history in personal and sympathetic narratives constructed by the writers. The fictional forms affect the readers the way history can never do. Writers of fiction try to explain the inexplicable, imagine the unimaginable, and speak about the unspeakable in the subcontinent's history, and enable the readers to understand and deal with history better. Fictional works, such as I have selected for examination, best communicate the human dimension of Partition history, which besides being beset with pain and trauma, tell enduring tales of human love and sacrifice.

Constraints of time and space of the present study have confined my study to a limited number of novels and stories written on Partition, as a result of which I have not been able to study oral tales of the victims of Partition, which might shed much light on the subject. It would be worthwhile to examine in detail some personal memoirs and testimonies of the witnesses of Partition violence together with the tales of their grandchildren and see how the wounds of history have been healed or not. Further, examination of the role played by the refugees in the making of modern day India and Pakistan can be of added interest in the field of Partition studies.

Coda

There are some brilliant works on Partition that did not find place in my studies. Amrita Pritam's poem "Ajj Akhaan Waris Shah Nun,"/"I Say to Waris Shah Today" (1948), her novel *Pinjar* (1950), and *Garam Hawa* (1973), a movie directed by M.S Sathyu, readily come to mind. Originally written in Punjabi, "I Say to Waris Shah Today" is addressed to the eighteenth century Sufi poet Waris Shah (1722-1798), who wrote *Heer Ranjha*, one of the most popular versions of the Punjabi national epic, which recounts the tragic love story of Heer and Ranjha. "I Say to Waris Shah Today" documents the agony that Pritam and many others lived during the communal violence of Partition.[241] Here is the English translation of the poem:

I Say to Waris Shah Today[242]

I say to Waris Shah today, speak from your grave

And add a new page to your book of love [.]

Once one daughter of Punjab wept, and you wrote your long saga;

Today thousands weep, calling to you Waris Shah:

Arise, o friend of the afflicted; arise and see the state of Punjab,

Corpses strewn on fields, and the Chenaab flowing with much blood.

Someone filled the five rivers with poison,

And this same water now irrigates our soil.

Where was lost the flute, where the songs of love sounded?

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[241] Amrita Pritam (1919-2005), an outstanding Punjabi novelist, is the winner of highest literary awards such as Bharatiya Jnanpeeth and Sahitya Akademi Fellowship. A contemporary of Manto, Pritam has immensely contributed to the body of Partition literature.

[242] (http://www.sagennext.com/2009/12/30/the-sufiyana-kalam-of-amrita-pritam).

And all Ranjha's brothers forgotten to play the flute.

Blood has rained on the soil, graves are oozing with blood,

The princesses of love cry their hearts out in the graveyards.

Today all the Quaido'ns have become the thieves of love and beauty,

Where can we find another one like Waris Shah?

Waris Shah! I say to you, speak from your grave

And add a new page to your book of love.

The poem appeals the 18th century epic poet to arise from his grave, see the tragedy of Punjab, and write a new page of love in its history.

***Pinjar* (1950)**

Like Manto's stories, Pritam's novel *Pinjar* (1950), presents a realistic account of Partition violence by focusing on the plight of women. Set in the period just before and after Partition, *Pinjar*, a Punjabi novel, published in 1950 and translated into English as *The Skeleton* by Khushwant Singh in 1987, tells the moving story of Pooro, a young Hindu girl from a north Indian village of Chatto. Betrothed to Hindu Ram Chand from Rattowal, Pooro is abducted just before her wedding by Rashida, a Muslim youth from the same village. Both the villages fall into Pakistan after the Partition. After much struggle, although Pooro manages to return to her parents, she is not accepted by them for the honor of the family as she is now considered defiled by Muslim touch. Compelled by circumstances, Pooro marries Rashida and moves to what later becomes a part of Pakistan.

Ram Chand has moved to India. In the riots of Partition, his father is lost, and his sister Lajo, wife of Pooro's brother Trilok is also kidnapped by the Muslims. When Pooro meets Ram Chand at a refugee camp, he informs her about his missing sister and seeks her help. Poroo, a victim turned witness-actor, requests Rashida, who wants to redeem himself from the sins he has committed, to help Ram Chand recover Lajo, her sister in law. Rashida has now been transformed into a loving and responsible husband.

At length, destiny puts Pooro at such a situation that she is free to choose between moving to India with Ram Chand to start a new life, or to continue to live with her kidnapper Rashida in Pakistan. Ironically, Pooro chooses Rashida, accepts him as her husband and bids goodbye to her former lover and family relations for good.

Told from the perspective of Pooro, *Pinjar* skillfully presents the physical and psychological problem faced by women at the time of Partition. The novel shows how female body becomes the site for playing out the conflicts between families, communities and nations. Poroo and Lajo serve as examples of "dislocation and violence"[243] against women at the time. The novel was filmed in 2003 and was directed by Chandra Prakash Dwivedi.

***Garam Hawa* (1973)**

Garam Hawa (1973), based on an unpublished short story of Ishmat Chugtai, deals with the tragic human consequences wrought by the Partition of Indian subcontinent in 1947. It depicts the difficult decision a north Indian Muslim family has to make at the time of communal violence in India. Owing to large-scale violence and discrimination, the Mirzas who have been living in Agra for generations are compelled to

decide whether they will continue to stay in India or leave for Pakistan. Trapped between the two worlds, some of the family members leave whereas others stay back. The movie focuses on the tragedy faced by Salim Mirza, a Muslim shoemaker who does not want to leave India for relocation in Pakistan. His brother Halim, a local politician, and his son Baqar leave for Pakistan, seeing no future for Muslims in India. Salim, now a member of minority Muslim community in India becomes the victim of displacement and discrimination. His property is snatched by Indian government, rendering his ageing mother homeless, grieving, and ultimately dead. His son Sikandar does not get any job and his daughter Amina commits suicide, betrayed in love twice by her lovers Kazim and Shamshad who have moved to Pakistan.

Devastated Salim does not obtain any financial support for his business and has begun to work as a humble shoemaker to make a living. He is not only investigated by the police on charges of espionage but is also shunned in public. Unable to cope with the overwhelming problems, Salim finally decides to leave India in anger and frustration. Despite Sikander's opposition, he starts with his family for Pakistan. However, on their way to the railway station, they encounter a large crowd of protestors marching against unemployment and discrimination, which Sikander had earlier planned to join. The rally seeks to unite the discriminated and dispossessed of the nation. Salim encourages Sikander to join the protest march before he joins it himself. Salim takes up the new challenges of life in India and once again decides to remain in India.

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[243] Jagdev Singh, "Comments on Amrita Pritam's Magnum Opus: *The Skeleton*," 29.

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