CHAPTER–III
THE PARTITION VIOLENCE

India’s independence, a long cherished dream by the Indians, was accompanied by the vivisection of the land on communal basis. The partition caused one of the greatest human convulsions. It was one of the most cataclysmic events in world history. The Punjab bore the worst brunt of the partition and virtually became an arena of communal bloodbath. E.H. Carr has aptly remarked: “Suffering is indigenous in history. Every great period of history has its casualties as well as its victories”.\(^1\) The partition of the Punjab in 1947 resulted in tremendous material, human loss and suffering. The people of the Punjab passed through a traumatic experience in which anarchy and violence created a deep rupture in the social fabric. It has been rightly stated that ‘the butchery of 1947’ was an organized one and with a few parallels in history. These killings can be described as ‘a general massacre’ master-minded by politicians and executed by gangs armed with modern weapons.\(^2\) The great upheaval which shook India from one end to the other during a period of about fifteen months commencing with August 16, 1946, was an event of unprecedented magnitude and horror. History has not known a fratricidal war of such dimensions in which human hatred and bestial passions were degraded to the levels witnessed during this dark epoch when religious frenzy taking the shape of hideous monster, stalked through cities, towns and countryside.\(^3\) For a while in 1947-48, it seemed that large numbers of people were privileging one facet of their identity, namely religious to numerous other referents-cultural, geographical, linguistic, class and many others.\(^4\)

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The partition of the province was the result of deteriorated communal relations between the Hindu-Sikhs on the one side and Muslims on the other side. Though, national movement firmly opposed the communal forces for its commitment to secularism was always deep and total, yet it was not able to fully counter the communal challenge. In the end, communalism succeeded in

of some allegedly predominant identity that drowns other affiliations, and in a conveniently bellicose form can also overpower any human sympathy or natural kindness that we may normally have. In fact, a major source of potential conflict in the contemporary world is the presumption that people can be uniquely categorized based on religion and culture. The implicit belief in the overarching power of a singular classification can make the world thoroughly inflammable: Amartya Sen, Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny, Penguin, London, 2006, pp.xv-xvi.

The social equation between the categories Muslim and Hindu in the subcontinent has clearly been ambiguous. Anyone who looks can find a great deal of evidence both of mutual relatedness and caring across religious lines and of mutual distrust, animosity and worse. Depending on how the evidence is selected and organized, these pre-colonial relations may be presented as overwhelmingly cordial, as thoroughly conflictual or something in between. The fact of that ambiguity has been obscured by the writing, both lay and scholarly, from several sides: Satish Saberwal, Spirals of Contention: Why India was Partitioned in 1947, Routledge, London, 2009, p. xvii. To summarize, the story of Hindu-Muslim relations takes on different hues depending upon the colour of the ideological lenses through which it is viewed. For the liberal historian or one with leftist leanings, the story is bathed in a roseate glow of the pre-colonial golden age of Hindu-Muslim amity. For these storytellers, the tale is of a commingling and flowering of a composite cultural tradition, especially in art, music, architecture. It is the story of gradual drawing closer of Hindus and Muslims in the forms of their daily lives and of an enthusiastic participation in each others festivals. Sporadic outbreaks of violence needing some explanation were almost never religious in their origin but dictated by local economic interests and political compulsions. To the conservatives, on the other hand, for whom the Hindu saffron and the Muslim green do not mix to create a pale pink, the rift between the two communities is a fundamental fact of Indian history: Sudhir Kakkar, The Colours of Violence, Penguin, New Delhi, 1995, p.19. The communal disturbances in the form of riots became visible in 19th Century Punjab. The politics of communalism led to aggressiveness, militancy and regimentation, among the followers of different communities. Initially, it was confined to the middle classes, but slowly and steadily it percolated to the masses. The 1920's witnessed worst communal riots in the Punjab which has been aptly put as ‘prelude to partition’: N.I. Singh Communal Violence in the Punjab (1947), Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, G.N.D. University, Amritsar, 2002, pp. 237, 238. Moreover, the development of electoral politics and introduction of separate electorates further worsened the situation and widened the gulf: See also, Kirpal Singh, Partition of the Punjab, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1972, pp. 5-34; Anita Inder Singh, Origins of the Partition of India, OUP, London, 1987, pp. 1-44; David Page, Prelude to Partition, OUP, London, 1982, pp. 30-73. The growing cleavage received the stamp of authority in 1909 when the colonial government accepted the principle of separate electorates and made it difficult for the Muslims to be absorbed by the growing current of Indian nationalism: Satish Saberwal, Spirals of Contention, p. xxxiii.
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partitioning the country. From the 1920’s, then, there arose a new contest between two different conceptions of nationalism: one that recognized the givenness of ‘pre-existing’ communities which were to form the basis of new India, and another that challenged this view of history, past and present. Alongside these there developed yet another kind of ‘nationalism/communalism’ that sought to establish a hierarchy of cultures among the cultures of India and to assign to one or another, primary place in the future of the society. Communalism was in common with colonialism, the other of nationalism, its opposite, its chief adversary, and hence a necessary part of the story of nation-building in India. Communalism was blight on the body politic. The problem started in the month of March, 1947 with the resignation of Malik Khizr Hayat Khan from the Premiership of the Punjab. The official announcement of the partition by the British Viceroy Lord Louis Mountbatten

7 Gyanendra Pandey, The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India, OUP, New Delhi, 2006 (First Published 1990), pp. 260-261. Communal identity is a constructed category because communities continually recreate themselves. Its extent is, however, limited. The fluidity of communal identities is not completely free floating but relates to conceptions of time and space, and the relationships between histories, cultures and biographies. That communal identity is open to change also confirms that identity is no more than relatively stable construction in an ongoing process of social activity. The act of redefinition is not a matter of accident: Bidyut Chakrabarty, Communal Identity in India: Its Construction and Articulation in Twentieth Century, OUP, New Delhi, 2003, p. 1. Imaginary Identity as an act of distinguishing and separating from others, of boundary making, and line drawing is the most fundamental act of violence committed. Ironically, the outsider is believed to threaten the boundaries that are drawn to exclude him, the boundaries his very existence maintains: C. Vijaysree et al., (eds.), The Nation in Imagination: Essays on Nationalism, Sub-Nationalisms and Narration, Orient Longman, Hyderabad, 2007, p. 60.
8 The opposition to each other of religious communities is commonly designated as communalism. It is the ideology which emphasized as social, political and economic unites the group of adherents of each religion; and emphasizes the distinction, even antagonism between such groups. Gyanendra Pandey, The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India, pp. 2,3, 7. According to Bipan Chandra, “Communalism is the belief that because of a group of people follow a particular religion they have, as a result, common social, political and economic interests: Communalism in Modern India, Vikas, New Delhi, 1984, p. 1.
9 By the end of March, 1947 the major cities of Punjab were already in ashes. Nearly 2,050 persons were officially reported to have been killed and 1100 injured: Mubarak Anand, On the Brink of War, The Colleagues Limited, Lahore, 1947, p. 296. See also, N.N. Mitra and H.N.Mitra (eds.), Indian Annual Register (1947), Vol. I, Gian Publishing House, New Delhi, 1990, p. 233.
plunged the province into an unprecedented holocaust and initiated a saga of communal bloodbath. In terms of its scale, its wide ranging impact and its many ramifications and resonances in the lives of millions, the partition remains singularly important.\(^{10}\) The announcement of the Boundary Award on 16\(^{th}\) August fuelled communal frenzy as each community felt that it was being denied the right to its homeland. Therefore, the mass violence and exodus was rendered inevitable. The newly appointed Governor of West Punjab, Sir Francis Mudie, described the general situation as “festered with tension”.\(^{11}\) The most significant sign of partition of India was the massive violence that surrounded, accompanied and constituted it.\(^{12}\) Sir Malcolm Darling wrote, “Nowhere is communal feeling potentially so dangerous and so complicated as in the Punjab - it is dangerous because of the Punjab’s virile hot-headed people and complicated because there is a third and not less obstinate party, the Sikhs who were more closely knit together than either Hindus or the Muslims”.\(^{13}\) Moreover, the highly militarized character of the Punjabi society made the communal problem more volatile. Because of the presence of ex-soldiers, who were taught to kill and were newly trained in techniques of modern warfare and organization, the partition massacres were so terrible in the Punjab.\(^{14}\) Between March and May 1947, the official figures for deaths in disturbances in Punjab were 3,410-3,600.\(^{15}\)

On 14\(^{th}\) August, 1947 Pakistan was officially born. The advent of Pakistan was signaled by hundreds of fires raging in various parts of the city of Lahore. Numerous places of Hindus and Sikhs had been burnt of which one finds no records

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in daily newspapers.\textsuperscript{16} India’s Independence was indeed a day of sorrow for the people in the Punjab. Arson and murder started in Amritsar. The Sikhs in and around Patiala state prowled the countryside pouncing on Muslims trying to flee across the frontier to Pakistan.\textsuperscript{17} The partition was not only a disaster in terms of the human lives lost and economic destruction or the division it caused among the people, more importantly, it also ended a way of life, a shared history.\textsuperscript{18} The delay in the publication of the Radcliffe Award led to all kinds of speculation and people tensely awaited for it.\textsuperscript{19} It was felt that the Award would be released on 14\textsuperscript{th} August but Lord Louis Mountbatten calculated differently. Large scale violence arising out of the likely disappointment over the Award among all communities was certain and he did not want to have the day of Independence become ‘day of death and destruction’.\textsuperscript{20} Though the Radcliffe Award was ready on August 9, 1947, the government withheld it to avoid repression and responsibility. The Award was handed over to Jawaharlal Nehru on 16\textsuperscript{th} August and the Pakistan Premier Liaquat Ali Khan on 17\textsuperscript{th} August 1947.\textsuperscript{21} This uncertainty of borderline created panic which perpetuated communal violence phenomenally.


\textsuperscript{20} The suppression of Radcliffe Award was a great betrayal: H.M. Seervai, \textit{Partition of India: Legend and Reality}, N.M. Tripathi Pvt. Ltd. Bombay, 1994, pp. 143-162. The Punjab massacres which accompanied the partition were final indictment of Lord Louis Mountbatten. The advancement of date of transfer of power delay in announcing the Boundary Award both of his decisions compounded the tragedy that took place: Sucheta Mahajan, \textit{Independence and Partition: Erosion of Colonial Power in India}, Sage, New Delhi,2000,p.201.

Violence must sit at the core of any history of the partition. It is the phenomenal extent of killing during the partition which distinguishes it as an event.\footnote{Yasmin Khan, 	extit{The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan}, Penguin Viking, New Delhi, 2007, p. 129.} There are different estimates about the killings done during the communal mayhem of 1947. Leonard Mosley estimated six lakh dead.\footnote{Leonard Mosley, 	extit{The Last Days of British Raj}, p.281.} For J.S. Grewal, nearly a million persons perished.\footnote{J.S. Grewal, 	extit{The Sikhs of the Punjab}, Cambridge University Press, New Delhi, 1990, p.181.} Ivan Stephens and Michael Edwardes give the casualty figure to be 5,00,000 and 6,00,000 respectively.\footnote{Supreet Kaur, 	extit{The British Historiography on the Violence and the Partition of Punjab(1947)}, Unpublished M. Phil. Dissertation, G.N.D.U., Amritsar, 2007, p.19.} H.V. Hodson states that a figure of a million was popularly bandied about but the truth was probably around 2,00,000 men, women and children killed.\footnote{H.V. Hodson, 	extit{The Great Divide: Britain, India, Pakistan}, Huthchison, London, 1969, p.418.} In all, nearly 12 million Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims were involved.\footnote{Alan Campbell-Johnson, 	extit{Mission with Mountbatten}, Jaico, New Delhi, 1951, p.5.} Penderal Moon, quoting official figures, states that the Hindus and Sikhs lost property worth a staggering sum of Rs. 4000 crore as against Rs. 400 crore left behind by the Muslims.\footnote{Penderal Moon, 	extit{Divide and Quit}, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1961 p.418.} The suddenness of the event and the fiendishness of partition violence has benumbed all sensitive minds. The truth of partition of Indian subcontinent in 1947 lay, at least for its victims, in the violence done to them.\footnote{Gyanendra Pandey, “Community and Violence: Recalling Partition”, p.2037.} Sure enough, a common refrain in popular and scholarly writings was that country’s division was a colossal tragedy, a man-made catastrophe brought about by hot-headed and cynical politicians who failed to grasp the implications of division along religious lines.\footnote{Mushirul Hasan, “Memories of a Fragmented Nation: Rewriting Histories of India’s Partition”, 	extit{Economic and Political Weekly}, October 10, 1998, Vol. XXIII, No.41, October 1998, p.2662.} The partition is a watershed event in the construction of nation in the aftermath of the British rule in India. Redefining Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs as Indians or Pakistanis, the 1947 division is a story of renegotiation and re-ordering of the identity of the individual or the community. It
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was not merely a history of violence or victimhood or madness, it was also “a history of struggle of people fighting to cope, to survive and build anew”. The gory sundering of the Indian sub-continent into India and Pakistan in 1947 not only inscribed new lines on the face of the South-Asian region, it also etched deep psychological scars on the mindscapes of the people. Moreover, each national catastrophe involves and transforms, memories of other catastrophes, so that history becomes entanglement of complex of crimes inflicted and suffered, with each catastrophe understood— that is, misunderstood in the context of repressed memories of previous ones.

The partition of the subcontinent, and the establishment of the two independent states of India and Pakistan, occurred with remarkable suddenness and in a manner that belied most anticipations of the immediate future. And, astonishingly few had foreseen that this division of territories and power would be accompanied by anything like the bloodbath that actually eventuated. Even the British Viceroy Lord Louis Mountbatten reported that he was unable to anticipate the scale and extent of disturbances in the Punjab. There was a misery on a colossal scale, all around one and millions were bereaved, destitute, homeless, hungry and thirsty and almost insecure about their future. However, the imperial government tried to downplay the statistics of casualties. Lord Mountbatten during the visit for the royal wedding in November 1947 in London sought to minimize the scale of the disaster. For him only one lakh people had died and only a small part of the country had been effected. Moreover, Lord Mountbatten contrasted the

34 Gyanendra Pandey, Remembering Partition, p. 2.
35 H.V. Hodson, The Great Divide, p.103.
killings in the Punjab with the numbers who died in Bengal famine during the War estimated by historians at over a million, ignoring an essential difference between natural and artificial disorder. The character of the violence - the killings, rape and arson - that followed the partition was unprecedented both in scale and method. Anguished by communal riots, Jawaharlal Nehru wrote in 1947: "It is curious that when tragedy affects an individual we feel the full force of it, but when that individual is multiplied a thousand- fold, our senses are dulled and we become insensitive. In a broadcast on the All India Radio, Nehru said, “During the last three weeks, I have wondered about the Punjab and my mind has been filled with the horrors of things which I saw and heard. During the last few days in the Punjab and in Delhi, I have supped my fill of horror. That indeed is the only feast we can now have.” More than the loss of life and property, the horror of partition consisted of the style of violence to which people subjected each other. The partition of the country on communal lines is perceived as the failure of the nationalists and success of the communalists. The joy of Independence was marred by the gloom of the partition. Shirosh Kashmiri, a poet and a journalist poignantly but aptly summarized the situation: “Couches were blown in India. Drums were

39 Gyanendra Pandey, Remembering Partition, p.2.
41 Madhav Godbole, The Holocaust of India’s Partition: An Inquest, Rupa, New Delhi, 2006, p. 178.
43 The Congress leadership is criticized for its failure in maintaining the unity and integrity of the country. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad blamed Mahatma Gandhi for having ‘defected’ to the ranks of Nehru and Patel and not resisting the idea of partition. He warned Jawharlal Nehru, “History would never forgive us if we agreed to partition”: Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, India Wins Freedom, Orient Longman, Bombay,1989, pp. 197, 198, 202. Interestingly ‘the father of the nation’ decided not to take part in the Independence celebrations. Disillusioned by the partition, the massive violence and for being sidelined by Congress leadership, Mahatma Gandhi stayed out of Delhi. Instead, he went to Calcutta to appeal to Hindus and Muslims to live in peace. However, nobody went to the Punjab where millions were on the move as refugees while thousands were already killed: Stanley Wolpart, Gandhi’s Passion: The Life and Legacy of Mahatma Gandhi, OUP, New Delhi, 2001, p. 10.
beaten in Pakistan. All India Radio proclaimed Independence by broadcasting *Vande Matram* and Pakistan Radio did so with the recitation of the Quran. But as the day dawned (15th August) both sides began to butcher their minorities in the name of religion. In India, it was the Muslims who were butchered and in Pakistan, the Sikhs and Hindus. Now the riots ceased to be communal. On the contrary the minorities were simply being butchered by the majorities.44 The conjuncture which brought about this terrible cataclysm was constituted, in the first instance, by the passivity of the British Government, and the complete breakdown of law and order. The promise of freedom, the new dawn that Independence was supposed to usher in was, thus, not to be realized. The partition was irrevocably etched on the minds of the people as watershed, which brutally severed them from their own past.45

The quantum, scale and nature of communal violence of 1947 qualifies itself to be called as genocidal violence. Veena Das and Ashish Nandy have argued that an exchange of violence, as in a feud, is justified from the view point of both the victims, and aggressors, because the feud represents “pact of violence between social groups”.46 Shail Mayaram has used the term consensual violence to describe the violence associated with the feud. It differs from ‘non-consensual’ violence which is grounded in the absence of the consent of the victim. Instead, the aggressor has to create another source of legitimization for the violence.47 Javeed Alam, a political scientist, says that there are innumerable cases of large scale massacres mutually indulged in by people at a moment of loss of judgement of a sense of proportion, at a moment of frenzy. There is no involvement of large organizations or the state as the instrument of mass killings. One can not, therefore, talk of these


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events as a general phenomenon. But on the contrary side, in the tapestry of narrative in order to interpret the event called the partition one must not look at it simply as a happening but as a category of understanding a happening. Moreover, neither original causes, nor states and large organizations exhaust the domain of history. Thus, state involvement need not be a pre-condition for genocide. The partition violence was different from the feud normally associated with traditional violence, because the mutuality of exchange of the feud was rendered absolute. In 1947, the violence had changed into non-consensual violence and appropriated genocidal features because the aim of the violence turned into an act of survival. Jason Francisco argues that the partition, stands as archetype of the nationalist fratricide where people of common cultural heritage were competing for political control of land and government. From sociological point of view, killing among the people of common cultural heritage can also be seen as genocidal. In the case of Punjab, neither state nor government perpetrated partition violence but one could argue that the two embryonic states of India and Pakistan were present as a national discourse in the mindset of the people. However, the partition violence was constituted by genocidal massacres.

There are varying cold and staggering facts about the partition violence. But these facts do not speak about the human pain and agony. Phillip Ziegler has rightly stated that “human suffering is not to be counted in statistics: the partition of the

49 *Ibid*, p.65. The analytical move in Indian historiography was to assimilate the partition as an event in the intersecting histories of British Empire and Indian nation which left little space for recounting the experience of the event for ordinary people: Veena Das, *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary*, OUP, New Delhi, 2007, p. 18.
Punjab caused untold misery to several million people”. Moreover, tragedies like partition can not be relegated to statistics alone; there were deaths other than physical which were equally devastating. The mainstream history of partition has focused on the ‘high politics’ of the partition and applying the cause-effect theory, historian’s stated intention was to recount the truth of the event. But Gyanendra Pandey argues that “to say there was enormous violence during the partition is tautological…One turns to a historian or a novelist not to learn how to add sorrow on sorrow but to hear in ‘unqualified horror or despair’, the more difficult cadence of tragedy. The best of fiction writers about the partition are not concerned with merely telling stories of violence, but with making profoundly troubled enquiries about the survival of our moral being in the midst of horror”. Unprecedented violence that erupted in 1947 has been pushed under the carpet as a bad dream.

David Gilmartin says that historical work on the violence of 1946-47 is still too fragmentary to permit clear generalizations on its meaning.

James Young has rightly remarked that whatever the fiction emerges from the survivor’s account are not deviations from the ‘truth’ but are part of the truth in any particular version. The fictiveness in testimony does not involve disputes about facts but inevitable variance in perceiving and representing these facts, witness by

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55 Saros Cowasjee and K. S. Duggal(eds.) *Orphans of the Storm: Stories About the Partition of India*, UBSPD, New Delhi, 1995, p.xiv.


57 Sukhdev Singh Sohal, “A Nightmare of Two Cities: Amritsar and Lahore in 1947”, Reeta Grewal and Sheena Pall (eds.), *Pre-Colonial and Colonial Punjab: Society, Economy, Politics and Culture*, Manohar, New Delhi, 2005, p. 410. Gyanendra Pandey took the neglect of partition in social sciences and Indian public culture as a symptom of deep malaise. Historical writing he argued was singularly uninterested in the popular construction of the partition, the trauma it produced and sharp division between Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs it left behind. He attributed this blindness to the fact that historian’s craft has never been particularly comfortable with such matters as horrors of partition the anguish and sorrow, pain brutality of riots of 1946-47: Veena Das, *Life and Words*, p. 18.

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The creative writings on the theme of partition offer insights into the new sense of subjectivity, the profound sense of rupture and the deep personal meanings emerging from grotesque human massacre. Violence of the partition days was a sure sign of degradation, which had marked every instance of the nationalist movement and a final refutation of our capacity for decency and freedom. Alok Bhalla, who has extensively worked on partition literature and oral narratives, say that, “fictional writings about this period express the bewilderment of the people and deal with the violence itself in different ways”. The partition violence had belied all the tall claims of national movement and shattered the long cherished dreams of the people who struggled to get it:

“It was first week of August. August 15th, about which it was announced that it would bring freedom after the centuries of subordination. The days were numbered only but as ‘the day’ was coming closer, the land of Punjab was turning red with blood”.

These texts about the partition do not imagine that India before 1947 was made up of exemplary or utopian communities but these writings invariably suggest that people were living in mutual harmony and peace. All the fictional writings

59 James E. Young, Writing and Re-writing Holocaust: Narrative and Consequences of Interpretation, Bloomington, 1990, p.10.
63 These creative writings readily acknowledge that there were times when the conflicts between the people could lead to murder and arson. But they also record that such moments of communal nastiness were rare and transient. The experience of life was sufficiently secure and rooted to enable the society as a whole to evolve mechanism for
interpret the Punjabi society from basic point of view of brotherhood and secularism and assume the existence of a communally shared history and invariably suggest through the fictionalized life worlds of villages and towns that there was an essential feeling of relatedness between Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs not merely as passive acceptance of different customs and beliefs. Khushwant Singh has graphically portrayed the life in a pre-partition village thus:

“Mano Majra is a tiny place-But there is one object that all Mano Majrans venerate. This is a three foot slab of sand-stone that stands upright under a keekar tree beside the pond. It is the local deity, the deo which all the villagers-Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims or pseudo-Christians repair secretly whenever they are in a special need of blessing.”

Arguing the peaceful co-existence and coherence of life, these writings refute the two-nation theory and openly criticize the national leadership for accepting the division of the country. Moreover, for them partition was a colossal tragedy, a man-made catastrophe brought about by hot-headed and cynical politicians who failed to grasp the implications of division of the country along religious lines. Partition containing tensions. So that even if there was vile outrage, the rich heterogeneity of life conducted dialogically was never dangerously threatened: Alok Bhalja, “Memory, History and Fictional Representations of the Partition”, pp. 3120, 3121.

Khushwant Singh, *Train to Pakistan*, Ravi Dayal Publishers, New Delhi, 2001(First Published, 1956).pp. 10, 11. Hindus and Muslims in the subcontinent formed a single people, sharing a culture in which linguistic, regional and fraternal bonds crossing religious communities were socially foundational, and indeed, in which folk religious worship was frequently a fusion of Hindu and Muslim practice: Jason Francisco, “In the Heat of Fratricide”, p. 381. Not only were Hindu and Muslim masses of India closely related ethnically, they were also on a level of culture which was fairly uniform and which in its essentials was a folk civilization almost wholly devoid of self – consciousness. In the contact of diverse cultures the absence of self – consciousness always favoured assimilation and absorption. This was the case with the common heritage of the Hindu and Muslim masses of India. As long as Hindu masses of India remained the adherents of a primitive kind of Hinduism created by the breakup of the ancient Indian civilization, and the Muslim masses remained a horde of semi – Islamised converts, all was likely to go well with the common heritage: Nirad C. Chaudhary, *Autobiography of An Unknown Indian*, Jaico, Bombay, 2006 (First Published1964).p.568.

The national leadership itself was repentant about accepting the division of the country, “Nehru and Patel had lost the nerve and they could not muster the courage to face the possibility of a civil war between the Hindus and Muslims.……… Jinnah’s bluff worked and the country was divided. Both the leaders regretted their decision soon thereafter but unfortunately the die was cast”: Madhav Godbole, *The Holocaust of India’s Partition,*
literature deals with the dilemma and confusion of the people who were too bewildered at the things which were threatening the contours of composite culture:

“Do you think that the centuries old bond of brotherhood, culture, language, literature…….. these things do not matter at all. The creation of Pakistan will solve nothing. The problem will remain there………. Our language, our songs, our legends are common. At the time of Bhangra, all danced together, nobody though that we are Hindus, Sikhs or Muslims. But Bhaijan, today we are shouting the cries of separation”. 66

The mood reflected in popular literature was decisively against the leaders of the subcontinent and their inability to resolve their perennial disputes over power-sharing. 67 People began reflecting to the past. The creative writer tries to prove historically the oneness of the people and cultural unity: “The poetry of Mir Ghalib and Iqbal did never preach hatred. How come such level of hatred has been in the air? Iqbal did compose a poem on Guru Nanak which none of a Sikh or Hindu could pen down”. 68

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p.429. Though the Congress accepted the Partition as a last measure, when all else failed to stop the violence, this tactic was incapable of containing violence as the earlier ones. The irony was cruel. The partition of India was agreed to by the Congress leaders in the hope of averting a civil war between Hindus and Muslims, but a civil war did result, perhaps in acuter form. If they had anticipated that the partition would unleash greater furies of violence, rather than stemming the existing tide, perhaps the Congress leaders might not have accepted the partition: Sucheta Mahajan, *Independence and Partition*, p.346. 66

Niranjan Singh Tasneem, *Jadon Saver Hoi*, Singh Brothers, Amritsar, 1977, pp. 87, 93. Thus, the literature tries to establish that the local identity was more pronounced, it was this identity which decided the course of social interaction: “What if they were Muslims. Hindu and Sikhs would go on their *Niqahs* and they would come on their marriages. Even Diwali, Baisakhi and Id were celebrated together. What has happened now? And he was unable to understand”: Swaran Chandan, *Ujada Aarsi* Publications, Delhi, 1999, p.199. 67

Jawahar Lal Nehru said in 1960, “We were tired men - few of us could stand the prospect of going to prison again and if we had stood out for a united India as we wished it, prison obviously awaited us. We saw the fires burning in the Punjab and heard of the killings. The plan of the partition offered a way out and we took it. We expected that partition would be temporary, that Pakistan was bound to come back to us”: Mushirul Hasan, “Memories of a Fragmented Nation: Rewriting Histories of India’s Partition”, p. 2662. 68

Niranjan Singh Tasneem, *Jadon Saver Hoi*, p. 51. 68
The creative writings speak for the non-participants (common people) who were caught amidst the holocaust to satisfy the political ambition and ego of the others. The creative writers speaking through their fictional characters convey the popular anguish against the leaders who were responsible for the division of the country. For the creative writer, the partition was a mean and immature idea which left behind the millions who were broken, deceived, bewildered and homeless. The fictional characters blame them for their machinations that altered the complexion of common life. They were the real perpetrators of butchery and violence. Lala Kanshi Ram, the protagonist of the english novel *Azadi* says, “I would have hacked Nehru into pieces who accepted the partition”.

The fiction on the partition theme categorically challenges the political belief that the partition was inevitable. For the creative writers, the politicians, so called nationalists and separatists, they were the real perpetrators of the violence in 1947. Infact, these creative writings challenge the very logic, and rational foundation of the partition. Lala Kanshi Ram in *Azadi* is quite disturbed over the behaviour of national leaders:

“What the leaders of India were offering the people of Punjab was enormous bluff. And the Congress leaders—what trust could you put in them?
Did not Gandhiji and Rajaji themselves as much as offer Pakistan to Jinnah in 1944? They were the ones who put the idea in his head”.
He further adds, “Who took Jinnah seriously before 1944? It was doubtful if they took him seriously”.

The joy of independence was overshadowed by the pathetic cries of those who lost their home, honour, identity and even life. For the ordinary people...

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69 Chaman Nahal, *Azadi*, A.H. Publishers, n.p., 1975.p.47. He surprisingly says, ‘After all how could this happen? The Congress had a promise to keep with the people. For the last thirty years, since that wizard Gandhi came on the scene, it had taken the stand that India was a single nation, not two.’ (p.48).

70 *Ibid.*, pp. 34,35. Nanak Singh wrote in introduction to his novel *Khoon De Sohle*; “Mr Jinnah was beating the drum of Pakistan by saying – *Na Khedange na Khedan Diyange* (neither we will play nor allow others to play). On March 3, 1947, Master Tara Singh declared- *Pakistan Murdabad* and *Jo Mangenga Pakistan, devange Usnu Kabristan* (those who demand Pakistan will be given graveyard): *Khoon De Sohle*, , Lok Sahitya Parkashan, Amritsar, 2001 (First Published, 1948).pp.14, 18.
Independence meant nothing. The creative writer records the indifference and illusion of common masses:

“But what we will get out of it? Educated people like you, Babu Sahib will get jobs the English had. Will we get more lands or more buffaloes? Freedom means for the villagers only when it brings more lands and more buffaloes. Otherwise it hardly appeals to them.

We were slaves of the English, now we will be slaves of the educated Indians and Pakistanis.

The lambardar adds - the only ones who enjoy freedom are thieves, robbers and cut-throats and we were better off under the British. At least there was security.”  

Thus, the way country was partitioned and consequently it vitiated the social environment of the province, the common people lost all the glory and charm of Independence. For them it was a bitter harvest. “It was only in the bloodshed of partition that the ordinary people saw the shape of Independence.”

A character in M.S. Sarna’s short story ‘Hira Mirg’ laments over the end of British rule which resulted in much bloodshed:

“What a bad time has come! The British rule was so good. Even a sparrow could not flutter its wings. Why the rule of ‘ours’ has come and why Pakistan has come into being at such a heavy cost”.

The creative writers are equally critical of the British who were primarily responsible for the vivisection of the land. Chaman Nahal’s Azadi accuses the politicians of betraying the people. It is openly critical of the breakneck speed at which the whole partition scheme was affected and it indicts the English for not taking the pre-emptive steps to stop the violence. Lala Kanshi Ram says to an Englishman, Bill Davidson:

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71 Khushwant Singh, *Train to Pakistan*, pp. 48, 49.


“We have been let down by you people. All that I had taken nearly thirty years to build is lost because you refuse to protect us. The English have the biggest hand in this butchery.”

Khushwant Singh has called British as a race of four twenties (deceivers). “Politically they are the world’s biggest four twenties. They would not have spread their domain all over the world if they had been honest.” According to Kamleshwar’s *Partitions*, “Jinnah was deliberately made the trump card of the British. By putting the onus of partition on Jinnah, Mountbatten would never be able to quit himself”.

In the beginning, the people were undisturbed by the communal politics. The virus of communal violence had not entered the social fabric at the grass root level. Sometimes, it appears that the creative writers try to over-romanticize the inter-community relationships of the pre-partition days but it is a matter of fact that communities were not as hostile to each other as during the partition days. Constructing the pattern of everyday life Khushwant Singh portrays the cohesiveness of common life:

“Before the daybreak, the mail train rushes through on its way to Lahore; and as it approaches the bridge, the driver invariably blows two long whistles. In an instant, all Mano Majra comes awake. The Mullah at the Mosque knows it is time for morning prayer. He has a quick wash, stands facing west towards Mecca and with his fingers in ears cries in long sonorous notes, ‘Allah-ho-Akbar’. The priest at the Sikh

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74 Chaman Nahal *Azadi*, pp. 147, 148. Lala Kanshi Ram says, ‘British King was not a king but Ali Baba and England was really a robber’s den filled with loot of the world’ (p.18).

75 Khushwant Singh, *Train to Pakistan*, p. 49.

76 Kamleshwar, *Partitions*, (Translated from Hindi to English by Ameena K. Ansari), Penguin, New Delhi, 2006 (First Published 2000), p.282. Even Phillip Ziegler wrote, “Now that it was decided they would leave, the British were in a hurry to wind up. Preoccupied with misgiving and the arrangements attendant on relocating themselves in their native land, by the agony of separation from regiments, imperial trappings and servants, the rulers of the Empire were entirely too busy to bother overmuch with how India was being divided. It was only one of the thousand and one chores they faced. The earth is not easy to carve up. India required a deft and sensitive surgeon, but the British, steeped in domestic preoccupation, hastily and carelessly butchered it. They were not deliberately mischievous – only cruelly negligent”: quoted in Mushirul Hasan, *Inventing Boundaries: Gender, Politics and Partition of India*, OUP, New Delhi, 2002, p.17.
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temple lies in the bed till the Mullah has called. 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”.

Apart from usual conflicts involving land or property, the relations between Hindus and Muslims were never so hostile as to demand a separation accompanied by genocide. The partition of the land was no solution to the problem if any. Moreover there was a feeling of shared culture and heritage. The professional interdependency and commonality of language were few factors which were able to blow up the religious crystallization. Contours of composite culture were strong enough:

“And when it came to writing he wrote in Urdu, who said it was language of Muslims? Lala Munshi Ram had learned it from his father and from primary teacher and neither of them was a Muslim…. Huge effigies of Ravana and his evil associates were burned on that ground each year. It was a Hindu festival but the effigies were made by Muslim workmen. The crackers and the fireworks were supplied by the Muslims”.

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77 Khushwant Singh, *Train to Pakistan*, pp. 12, 13. Rarely do fictional texts concerned with India’s partition speak about the abstract entities called Hindus and Muslims and Sikhs whose economic and social rights needed to be legally and politically defined, and whose religiously informed identities needed, as if they were some endangered species, special enclaves of protection from other religious predators. Instead, Partition narratives give a human shape and a voice to those in whose name, and for whose benefit (so called), the sordid politics of religious division of the subcontinent was enacted: Alok Bhalla, *Partition Dialogues: Memories of a Lost Home*, OUP, New Delhi, 2006, p. xi.

78 While analyzing the reasons which led to the partition, the material question in this context is whether any expression of religiosity among Muslims encountered opposition from the non-Muslims or were hampered by the fact of the Muslims being a minority. The answer is that all opposition which Muslim religious movements had to face had come from Muslims themselves. Disputes arising from Hindu objections to cow-sacrifice and Muslim objections to music before mosques had generally been engineered by mischief-makers and their effects had been local and temporary. Talking about the partition, it would appear that either there was no problem at all, or that it required an entirely different approach, if there was to be any solution: Muhammad Mujeeb, “Partition of India in Retrospect”, Mushirul Hasan (ed.), *India’s Partition: Process, Strategy and Mobilization*, OUP, New Delhi, 1993, pp. 404, 414.

Harping on social cohesiveness and delving on the contours of composite culture, the fictional writings erode the very foundation of the two nation theory and inevitability theory of the partition. The social identity prevailed upon the religious identity:

“Our villages came from the same racial stock. Muslim or Sikhs, we are basically jats. We are brothers. How can we fight each other? We are dependent on each other bound by our toil; by mandi prices set by the Banyas—they are our common enemy those city Hindus. To us villagers what does it matter if a peasant is Hindu, or a Muslim or a Sikh.”

It is not necessary to be swayed away, as is often the case, by nationalist historians who portrayed an idyllic picture of Hindu-Muslim relations during the pre-colonial days in order to strengthen inter-community ties during the liberation struggle. It is nonetheless important to underline, despite valiant attempts to uncover the ‘pre-history of communalism’, the fusion and integration of the communities at different levels and value they attached to religious tolerance and pluralism in their day to day living. Certainly social identity crystallized over centuries was strong enough:

“Sajjan Singh’s and Ilamdin’s land was divided into four small pieces. Their every piece of land was close to other. Going six or seven generations back, they were descendents of the same person, Baba Yatri. Baba Yatri died at the age of one hundred and thirty years. His smadhi stood next to the bank of uncultivated land was more than half of the Sikhs and Muslims worshipped him as Jathera. The only difference was that Sikhs worshipped him by touching the surface while Muslims did so with opened hands and slightly bowed heads… Having the same roots Sikhs and Muslims had some common customs and

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80 Bapsi Sidhwa, _Ice-Candy Man_, Penguin, New Delhi, 1989, p. 56. Much the same sentiment is expressed in following illustration: “There were some homes of the Muslims in our village. They were Mirasis, potters and weavers. They were all like proverbial salt in wheat floor preposition and lived like Hindus-Sikhs. Some of them had even names like us. They were Muslims occasionally only- on Id or Shabraat. Otherwise, they were not different from the Hindus and Sikhs of the village”: Santokh Singh Dhir, _Oh Din_, Aarsi Publications, Delhi, 1973, p.66.

The whole village shared gifts and presentations on the occasions.\textsuperscript{82}

Malcolm Darling, a civil servant in Punjab for many years, during his travel in 1945-46, found much similarity between the Hindu and the Muslim communities in the tract between the Beas and the Sutlej, and the Chenab and Ravi rivers.\textsuperscript{83} But gradually the virus of communalism entered the rural life and totally disturbed the social fabric. Material issues were coloured in the religious antagonism and mutual conflicts were aired on religious lines.\textsuperscript{84} The fictional writings invariably argue that it was not until the arrival of the outsider that the peaceful environment was vitiated. People began to drift away as the foundations of the composite culture were attacked rigorously.

One of the points adequately documented is that not everyone who raised or rallied around the green flag was uniformly wedded to or inspired by a shared ideal of creating an Islamic society. The reality is that many were pushed into taking religious positions, while many others, especially the landed classes in Punjab and

\textsuperscript{82} Sohan Singh Seetal, \textit{Tutan Wala Khu} (Punjab), Seetal Pustak Bhandar, Ludhiana, 1972, p. 84. Thus, the people had this notion that they belong to same social construct and they had a singular common identity of being Punjabis. Who were the losers in the partition? Without question it was great majority of common people who had lived side by side for generations and had cultivated deep attachments to land, language, friendship and a shared cultural heritage: Jason Francisco, "In the Heat of Fratricide", p. 381.

\textsuperscript{83} He noticed how a Hindu from Karnal proudly announced that Muslim inhabitants of neighbouring 50 villages were from his clan. Hindus and Muslims of the area continued to interchange civilities at marriage inviting the Mullah or Brahman to share in the feasting. Darling wondered how was Pakistan to be fitted into these conditions. He observed what a hash politics threatened to make to this tract where Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs were as mixed up as the ingredients of a well made ‘pulao’ (rice cooked with fowl or meat): Mushirul Hasan, \textit{Legacy of a Divided Nation: Indian Muslims Since Independence}, OUP, London, 1997, p. 168.

\textsuperscript{84} The social environment of Piruwala, the locale of \textit{Tutan Wala Khu}, is poisoned by the moneylender Dhanne Shah, who just wanted to capture the well (Tutan Wala Khu) as playing Sajjan Singh against Ilamdin. The question of nomination of next nambardars is projected as the question of the rights of Muslims and both the friends were played against each other. The Muslim League pamphlet read that Piruwala is a Muslim majority village hence the Nambardar should be a Muslim. It further read “This village was founded by Muslim Pir Hazrat Zahir Shah. But the Sikhs had demolished his tomb and raised the memorial of their ancestor. Now they worship that place and slaughter the goats on the tomb to cause pain to the soul of the Pir. We are not fools not to understand this attack on the Islam”: Sohan Singh Seetal, \textit{Tutan Wala Khu}, pp. 184, 187, 188.
United Provinces used the Muslim League as a vehicle to articulate, defend and promote their material interests.\textsuperscript{85} For the creative writer, the partition and subsequent violence was a sudden eruption, a moment of rupture having no antecedents.

“Our last gurprab of Guru Arjun Dev, the Muslims pooled their sugar rations and arranged for the supply of sharbat to their Sikh brethren in every lane. The Hindus and Sikhs cleaned their streets on the occasion of Id and sent sweets to their Muslim neighbours”.\textsuperscript{86}

The violence which followed the partition of the country was a bad dream. Violent moments that people experienced during this period ‘defamiliarised the everyday’. The locale where sacred and solemn relationships were embedded was metamorphosed into an estranged and unfamiliar terrain. Subjectivity was being formed in the reconstruction of self and other.\textsuperscript{87}

“Muslims sat sad and moped in their houses. Rumours of atrocities committed by Sikhs on Muslims in Patiala, Ambala and Kapurthala, which they had heard and dismissed, came back to their minds. Quite suddenly every Sikh in Mano Majra became a stranger with an evil intent. His long hair and beard appeared barbarous, his kirpan menacingly anti-Muslim. The Sikhs were sullen and angry. ‘Never trust a Musallasman’, The last guru had warned them that Muslims had no loyalties’, they said”.\textsuperscript{88}

\textsuperscript{85} Mushirul Hasan, “Memories of a Fragmented Nation”, p. 2665. Jawaharlal Nehru noted in 1933: “The bulwark of communalism today is political reaction and so we find that communal leaders inevitably tend to become reactionaries in political and economic matters. Groups of upper class people try to cover up their own class interests by making it appear that they stand for communal demands of religious minorities or majorities. A critical examination of various communal demands put on behalf of Hindus, Muslims or others reveals that they have nothing to do with the masses”: Bipan Chandra, \textit{History of Modern India}, p. 319.

\textsuperscript{86} Kartar Singh Duggal, \textit{Nau Te Maas}, p.51.


\textsuperscript{88} Khushwant Singh, \textit{Train to Pakistan}, p. 141. Rumours played a very crucial role in the precipitation of violence. These were floated and circulated in a very planned way. These provided justificatory ground for resorting to violence - undoubtedly the rumours brought spontaneity to violence with which communal polarization became more and more traumatic. Time being limited, no one verified these rumours. In some cases these turned out to be false but the purpose had been served: Narinder Iqbal Singh, \textit{Communal Violence in the Punjab (1947)}, p. 154.
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The creative writer has fully portrayed the kind of competition among the rank and file of various communal organizations which left no stone unturned to vitiate the peaceful environment of the social life. Some identify a moment in the past when old relations between the communities began to show signs of fissure, while others read in the chance utterance of a politician, the cause of tragedy.89

“Sunder Singh said, ‘I surprise, what has happened to his wisdom? This huge poster is not a mischief of a common man. This is a calculated plan of Muslim League to capture our Lambardaris and positions and to show that they are in majority in Punjab and Punjab should go to them. But we have also prepared ‘Azad Punjab Scheme.’”90

For the creative writer the communal violence of 1947 was a nightmare which fell upon their pious land and plagued the festivities of the hard-won Independence and shattered all the dreams of the freedom. The communal violence after the announcement of the partition began to cast its shadow on the social fabric of the Punjabi society which was consequently torn asunder. The communal propaganda had worked and there was alienation of hearts:

“Due to poisonous propaganda of Muslim League, Hindu-Sikhs and Muslims were drifted away. The Pakistan slogan had injected some lethal drug into the mind of every Muslim. Statesmen believe that ‘give such a slogan which should directly attack on their heart, then they will not listen the voice of any logic and would just act like puppets.’ The Pakistan slogan did the same.”91

The friends became enemies overnight. There was all of sudden an uneasiness prevailing over everywhere. Gurbachan Bhullar’s short story Phattu

89 Alok Bhalla, “Memory, History and Fictional Representation of the Partition”, p.3120.
91 Ibid., p. 274. The definition of the self in both sociological and imaginative terms undergoes a qualitative change in the post-partition era. Basically, the self is defined in communitarian terms when contextualised in the pre-partition era. Cohesiveness and harmony not only characterized the individual, they became individual. In other words, the community itself became the character: Bodh Parkash, “Nation and Identity in the Narratives of Partition”, Vinita Damodran and Maya Unnithan Kumar (eds.) Post-Colonial India: History, Politics and Culture, Manohar, New Delhi, 2000, p. 89.
*Marasi* depicts the event of partition through the words of a layman, low caste ignorant who describes the partition as a deluge where the sanity of all vanished into air. For Phattu, the partition was a bad time and he blames the supernatural powers for this mayhem. Phattu, a low caste, migrates to Pakistan after the partition of the country. He loses one of his sons and a daughter during the riots and escapes with his family to Pakistan. But a few years later he comes back to his native village. He does not blame the people who had butchered his family rather the sway of the event.92

The fictional characters project that their suffering was an act of fate or destiny. They can not otherwise explain how, even in places where different religious communities had lived together in reasonable amity, if not peace, for centuries, suddenly inter-communal relations snapped. The scars that the partition left on the commonsense of the Punjabi people, irrespective of religion, caste, class and gender were agonizing. To them it was perdition; it was a conspiracy hatched to disrupt their centuries old composite culture; last but not least they experienced it as a nightmare subverting human thinking.93

“Bachna did not know about the riots-why these were taking place. He was puzzled why Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims were fighting and killing each other. These things were not clear even to many of the people. All like Bachna Chuhra were short sighted. Very few could understand the real reasons of the riots. Most would say that people were not good now.”94

92 Gurbachan Bhullar, “Phattu Marasi” Jaswant Deed (ed.), *Desh Vand Diyan Kahaniyan*, Sahitya Academy, New Delhi, 1995, pp.149-155. A victim from Rawalpindi said, “Do I feel any rage? *Vo Mahaul bura tha. Log bure nahin the. Wo Waqt hi bura tha.* (The atmosphere was bad. People weren’t evil. The time was bad). That is probably why the violence had not divided the three communities permanently into victims and oppressors, both looking to the past with a mixture of guilt and defensiveness: Ashish Nandy, “The Invisible Holocaust and the Journey as an Exodus: The Poisoned Village and the Stranger City”, *Postcolonial Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 3, 1999, p. 313. There is finally, the need to come to terms with the fact that most Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs had no feelings for national borders or the newly created geographical entities that were being labouriously created in 1947. These were just shadow lines: Mushirul Hasan,(ed.), *Inventing Boundaries*, p. 15.


To the victims, partition violence was something like a natural calamity – a
cyclone, plague or a holocaust in its older sense of pralaya- that had befallen the
country at that time. Kulwant Singh Virk, in his short story Ulahma, complains to
the god for the obtrusive segregation of the people of one community from the
other. The alienation of hearts became imperative through the rumours of riots
occurring at other places.\footnote{Kulwant Singh Virk, “Ulahma”, Meriyan Shresht Kahaniyan, Navyug Publishers, New
Delhi,2004,pp.54-58.} There was complete incomprehensibility at what was
happening around them. To some people, the partition violence was a sign of an
‘unnatural’ time, others considered it to be some kind of divine punishment:

“Just as a peeled orange falls apart into many segments, the
Hindus, Muslims and the Sikhs of the Punjab broke away from
each other. As clouds of dust float over the roads, rumours of
‘incidents’ began to float over the country side….. Thus passed
the August 15 of the year 1947”.\footnote{Amrita Pritam, Pinjar, Aarsi Publications, New Delhi, 2000(First Published 1970) p. 56,
57. To quote Amartya Sen, people’s identities as Indians, as Asians or as members of
human race seemed to give way quite suddenly to sectarian identification with Hindu,
Muslim or Sikh communities. The broadly Indian of January was rapidly and
unquestioningly transformed into the narrowly Hindus or finely Muslims of March. The
carnage that followed had much to do with unreasoned herd behaviour by which people,
as it were, discovered their new divisive and belligerent identities and failed to subject
the process to critical examination. The same people were suddenly different: Bidyut
Chakrabarty (ed.) Communal Identity in India: Its Construction and Articulation in
Twentieth Century, OUP, New Delhi,2003,p. 2.}

As the people began to feel to be strangers to each other and their hearts were
divided, there was something unnatural and unnatural in the air. The description of
the weather as hotter and drier than ever, makes a point that something ominous
would take place.

“The summer of 1947 was not like other Indian summers. Even
the weather had a different feel in India that year……. There
was no rain. People began to say that God was punishing them
for their sins.”\footnote{Khushwant Singh, Train to Pakistan, p.9.}

Gradually, the things started changing. The haste with which the entire
business of handing over the power was completed, coupled with releasing of
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communal emotions resulted in riots that racked the Punjab. Most people were caught unaware in the political act and had to move rapidly. In the spate of rumours, feelings ran high. The differences and disparities were highlighted to create the gulf:

“Muslims’ lives would only be secure after the Muslim rule is established over this country. Nobody knows how endangered is Islam today. It is very easy to enjoy the hooka in the village panchayat but to serve the qaum is very difficult. This Hindustan was whose possession just four centuries back? This was a Muslim country, east to west, Islamic flag used to unfurl everywhere. What is your plight today, think over. Poverty and starvation is your lot and under the others’ rule you are living an ignoble and respectless life, better you die”.

People wreaked vengeance for the crimes, real or imagined. It is a painful surprise why religious conflicts destroyed the subcontinent’s communal life. The literature reveals how people fell out of a human world of languages, customs, rituals and prayers into a bestial world of hatred, rage, self-interest and frenzy.

Fiction has provided intense window on the personal experience of 1947, dramatizing graphically the impact of partition on everyday lives. It has, ironically, proved a far more powerful vehicle for describing the influence of the partition on the common man and woman than for describing the influence of the common people on the partition. Indeed, the disconnection between the rarefied decisions

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98 Nanak Singh, Khoon De Sohle, p. 144. The economic differences were brought to surface. “Muslims are mostly involved in humble occupations and worked as vegetable vendors, potters, milkmen, washermen, cobblers, dyers whereas Hindus take up more dignified professions …What do you find in the house of a Muslim? Four earthen pots a hukah and a burqa: Yashpal, Jhootha Sach, Part I, Lokbharti Parkashan, Allahabad, 2007(First Published 1963) p.74.Salma in Jadon Sawer Hoi declares that now this injustice would not continue, the injustice of the exploitation of one community by the other (p.108.). Thus, the creative writer portrays the situation where common people were made to believe that all their miseries and backwardness would end only after the creation of a separate nation.

99 Alok Bhalla (ed.), Stories About the Partition of India, Vol. 1, Harper Collins, Delhi, 1994, pp. xxxii-xxxiii. “Murder stalks the streets and the most amazing cruelties are indulged in by both individual and the mob. It is extraordinary how our peaceful population has become militant and bloodthirsty. Riot is not the word for it – it is just a sadistic desire to kill”: Jawaharlal Nehru to Krishna Menon quoted in Mushirul Hasan, “Partition Narratives”, Social Scientist, Vol. 30, No. 7-8, 2002, p. 36.
leading to the partition, and scaring consequences on individual lives, remains one of the most powerful tropes that has been carried from partition fiction into the work of historians.\textsuperscript{100} The literature records that along with the maps, mass passions were aroused in the partition era followed by endless holocaust coupled with mass murders by hordes of communalists:

“So India witnessed the agony and ecstasy over the massacres and festivities engendered by its partition. Many a marriage processions and funeral cortège was seen making way to its destination, without ever reaching it. There were no wedding mandaps or crematoriums awaiting such processions. All around the country, rituals of celebration and mourning were being observed. No one exactly knew where exactly Cyrille Radcliff’s line had ripped the land in two. But for those who mourned or celebrated, this line was clearly visible. The area littered by the corpses of Hindus and Sikhs was Pakistan; the region strewn with the corpses of Muslims was India. The corpses alone determined where the borders lay”.\textsuperscript{101}

It also focuses on the religious cynicism and human savagery generated as a result of splitting up of the sub-continent. Communal hatred became so blatant on either side of the border that irrational and fanatic Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims immediately asserted their respective religious identities and loyalties. Mutual hatred, fear and distrust had resulted in psychological restlessness as friendship became secondary to faith. Suddenly, the perceptions of looking upon each other changed drastically:

There is so 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 ?…… And I became aware of religious differences. It is sudden. One day everybody is themselves and the next day they are Hindu, Sikh, Muslim or Christian. People shrink, dwindling into

\textsuperscript{100} But the violence itself has resisted effective integration with the political narrative of partition’s causes. Historians can interpret how the stories of partition are told and how they are given meaning, but the place of violence in the larger historical narrative has continued to prove elusive: David Gilmartin, “Partition, Pakistan and South Asian History”, pp. 1069, 70.

\textsuperscript{101} Kamleshwar, \textit{Partitions}, p. 324.
symbols. Ayah is no longer just my all-encompassing Ayah—she is also a token. A Hindu.”

There was lurking fear about the probable violence and much more about the extent of that bloodshed.\(^\text{103}\) Everyone had such words on their lips: “Streams of blood would flow: This time holi (festival of colours) would be played with blood instead of colour”.\(^\text{104}\) Every section of the society had an iota of hatred. The specter of communal unrest and communal violence between the communities of differing religions, was not new in 1947 but had never loomed so ominously. People talked about their victim-hood but they never talked about their involvement in the violence. All of sudden people were made to turn to violence against their neighbours and friends. Fiction goes beneath the skin and engages our emotions. Fiction can dramatize jealousy, hate, greed, revenge and shows how these passions are worked out. And also shows the havoc wrought on the lives of those who got swept up in the maelstrom engendered by politics.

The most dramatic form of violence was massacre, the attack by huge crowds upon villages, trains, refugee camps and long files of migrants moving from one side of the Punjab to the other, in which large number of people were killed, including both men and women, children and the old people. In the Punjab, it was reported that “disturbances are producing an average daily killing of about 100 people with occasional large raids in which 70 to 80 people are killed at one fell

\(^{102}\) Bapsi Sidhwa, *Ice-Candy Man*, pp. 92, 93. In the narratives of the partition, for instance, community is depicted originally free from religious or social conflict. Of course, the individual is a member of a particular class, but what is emphasized is not his conflict with other classes but his essential oneness with the rest of his community. The communitarian ideal and its intermeshing with the individual is contrasted with a post-partition shattered society, completely divided along religious lines. The individual stands distinctly apart, uprooted and alienated in search of a new identity. Critical in these accounts is not so much the actual event of the partition, but the impingement of its consequences on consciousness of the individual: Bodh Parkash, “Nation and Identity in the Narratives of the Partition”, p. 75.


swoop". Indeed, there was hardly a family which survived those days without feeling perpetually threatened by the repulsive and ruthless; there was hardly anyone who did not hide in some dark corner for safety as mobs outside, armed with thirsty spears and the names of gods, killed each other for small and pathetic gain. The violence between the Punjabis was larger than life phenomenon; one comes across several examples of the attitude and behaviour in fiction that seem to have been socially sanctioned during the violent orgy of the partition in this very proud, headstrong, militant and comparatively prosperous region of colonial north India. Partition was to have devastating results for all the communities involved in venting out their anger and hatred which had been fanned or inflated by claims of real and imagined atrocities of the ‘others’:

“What sort of Sikhs are you? Asked the boy, glowing menacingly. He elaborated his question ‘potent or impotent’? Do you know how many trainloads of the dead Sikhs and Hindus have come over? Do you know of the massacres of Rawalpindi and Multan, Gujranwala and Sheikhupura? What are you doing about?

You just eat and sleep and you call yourselves Sikhs-the brave Sikhs. The martial class!
For each Hindu or Sikh they kill, kill two Mussalmans. For each woman they abduct or rape, abduct two. For each home they loot, loot two. That will stop killing on the other side. It will teach them that we can also play the game of killing and looting”

There was construction of the ‘other’ and “the transformation of the ‘other’ from a human being to the enemy, a thing, to be destroyed before it destroyed you

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105 These figures were of a few days prior to the partition. Later on these were reported to be around 4000 killed in a village or small town: Paul Brass, “The Partition of India and Retributive Genocide in Punjab, (1946-47): Means, Methods and Purposes”, Journal of Genocide Research, Vol. 5, No. 1, 2003, p. 87.


107 Khushwant Singh, Train To Pakistan, pp. 170, 171. Revenge is a violence which is not treated as violence - only just as recompense. It is totally different from the feared violence of the enemy’s goondas, even though it is exactly the same. Such a distinction between ‘our’ violence and ‘theirs’ is crucially dependent on the attribution of agency and evilness to the ‘other’: Gyanendra Pandey, “Community and Violence; Recalling Partition”, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. XXXIII, No. 32, p. 2044.
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became the all important imperative”.\textsuperscript{108} Partition literature also deals with the situation where humane and rationale voices were put down or just snubbed:

“To hell with your \textit{Itihad} Sabha and its members whereas our brothers in thousands are being butchered like sheeps and goats, innumerable sisters are paraded naked- they are openly molested in the bazaars. Why do not you die instead of giving slogans of \textit{itihad}. I say, either you are selfish or impotent. Your blood would only boil when the Muslims would enter your houses and your mothers and sisters would be molested in the same way………..”\textsuperscript{109}

These partition narratives are terrifying chronicles of the damned which locate themselves in the middle of madness and crime, and promise nothing more than an endless and repeated cycle of random and capricious violence in which anyone can become a beast and everyone can be destroyed. They offer no historical explanation for the carnage and see no political necessity for the suffering and there is a sense of remorse that no prayers will help to atone for what was done.\textsuperscript{110}

“These discussions were going on daily in the Masjid and poor \textit{Allah} escaped away to the hut of Gehna, the blacksmith. One day the Ghazi went over there even. ‘Listen O Gahna, this is a religious duty, you are on the verge of death, so do something good. Prepare some daggers and spears for our boys’. Gehna closed his eyes and looked upto God. His heart trembled. He politely refused this service. ‘He is a born infidel. Have you ever seen him going to the Mosque? Ok, let the Pakistan come into being, and then we will see him’. These words echoed all the might into the ears of poor Gehna.\textsuperscript{111}

Violence was defined by each subject as an act carried out by the members of the ‘other’ community whereas brutalities they might have witnessed or participated

\textsuperscript{109} Nanak Singh, \textit{Agg Di Khed}, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{110} Alok Bhalla, “Memory, History and Fictional Representations of the Partition”, p. 3123.
\textsuperscript{111} Sohan Singh Sital, \textit{Tutan Wala Khooh}, p. 283.
in were relegated to ‘revenge’ for the barbarity practiced by the other. The feeling of revenge further precipitated violence. Neither self-immolation nor revenge are acts of violence in the victims account; they are acts done as duty, as a response to the call of duty, securing the life of the community or nation.\footnote{Gyanendra Pandey, “Community and Violence”, pp. 2037, 2044.} The ignited minds were not able to make a distinction between the revenge and the killing and they were moved by the external forces, greater than they could control:

“\textit{I lose my senses when I think of the mutilated bodies on that train from Gurdaspur……. 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 some one for each the breast they cut off the Muslim women}”.\footnote{Bapsi Sidhwa, Ice-Candy Man, p. 156.}

Embedded in each individual narrative is a profound sense of loss, of dislocation and ultimately of violence. Whoever experienced one or more of these acts of violence, considers himself or herself only a victim and characterizes the other as villain. Such characterization becomes inadequate because the stereotypes are simplistic and comparatively easy to peddle, achieving very little apart from strengthening the mutual distrust and hatred. The eventual outcome of collective representation results in creating a forced deviation from holding individuals accountable for their actions as opposed to blaming a particular religious community. Thus, partition and questions of violence form an indestructible vice like grip of suspicion and hatred between the warring communities.\footnote{The narratives of the survivors of partition subtly construct in retrospect domains of ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ for defining violence of those traumatic days. A desperate act of self immolation gets transformed into heroic sacrifice sanctifying the inner domain of the community, while violence in form of revenge gets displaced onto the evilness of the other inhabiting the outside: Gyanendra Pandey, “Community and Violence”, p. 2037.} Krishna Sobti’s short story ‘\textit{Where is My Mother}’ narrates how the idea of communalism and fear of annihilation by the ‘other’ was engrained even in an infant’s mind. This is a
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pointer towards the all pervasiveness of the communal identity at this juncture where human beings were just reduced to Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims. The story revolves around a minor Hindu girl who is wounded and taken care by a Baloch but the child is all afraid of her saviour:

The child suddenly became violent. She tried to pounce upon him but he held her back. Thereafter she began screaming. “Take me to the refugee camp. I only want to go to the refugee camp….”

The Baluchi explained to her patiently. “You need have no fear. You don’t have to go to a camp now. You will live with me like my own sister…in my house. You are like a little sister to me”.

“No, no”, the girl screamed and began beating the Baluchi on the chest with her small fists. “You are a Muslim….You will kill me”.

She then started wailing, “I want my mother. Where is my mother?”

Partition violence was constituted by genocidal massacres, characterized by the “annihilation of a section of a group-men, women and children, as for example in the wiping out of whole villages. It was a near genocidal ethnic-religious conflict where the intentions of the combatants clearly qualify as genocidal. The genocidal intent of the violence during 1947 became fully apparent and the aim of violence was no longer defending one’s own community but to ethnically cleanse


116 What gives the genocidal massacres in the Punjab their special character is that they were not ordered by state, but they were also not merely or even at all spontaneous. There was organization and planning that has been largely ignored in the scanty literature on a subject of such enormous violence, but there were also local acts of violence carried out for a multiplicity of reasons and motives that were not genocidal in intent: loot, capture of property, abduction of women. Moreover, much of large scale violence was mutual and it was surely ‘retributive genocide’ and in several respects, the Punjab massacres preceded and anticipated contemporary forms of genocide: Paul Brass, “The Partition of India and Retributive Genocide in the Punjab 1946-47”, p. 72.

117 Anders Bjorn Hansen, *Partition and Genocide*, p. 26. The element of balance did not mitigate the suffering, but allowed many victims to retain their sensitivity to the nature of violence. There was another additional element of ‘equity’. Sizeable sections in each community continued to believe that their community was wronged partly in 1946-48, victimized and denied justice by others who ganged up against it: Ashish Nandy, “The Invisible Holocaust and Journey as an Exodus”, p. 315.
one’s own area of the ‘other’ through mass killings. The term ethnic cleansing generally entails the systematic and forced removal of members of an ethnic group from their communities to alter or ‘purify’ the ethnic composition of a region. In the case of the partition of 1947, the definition stated above can be also applied with minor difference - instead of ethnic, the cleansing was based on religious identity. What followed partition was the uncontrolled ventilation of the pent up rancour between the communities on both sides of the border.118

Killing of the other was considered to be a sacred duty. Sant Singh Sekhon’s story ‘Bhootan Di Khed’ narrates the story of indiscriminate killing by the marauders where odd 50 Muslims were confined in a Dharamshala and they were taken into groups to the fields where they were killed.119 In the heat of communal fire, religions collided with each other but innocent people were killed because in any internecine communal strife it is the non-player who pays the heaviest price. People were just killed being Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. The violence in 1947 was essentially the mob violence where the individual merged his identity with the mob and surrendered his sanity to it making it an impersonal and abstract force. The people from all hues were caught in the endless cycle of violence and hatred. Once they plunged into the violence they were unable to extricate themselves. The perpetrators of violence found some sort of romance in killing the ‘others’ ruthlessly.

“The processionists are milling about two jeeps pushed back to back. They come to a halt- the men in front of the procession pulling ahead and the mob behind banked closed up. There is quickening in the activity about the jeeps. My eyes focus on an emaciated Banya wearing a 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 I see his legs sticking out of his dhoti right up to the groin- each thin brown legs tied to the jeep. Ayah, holding her hands over my


eyes, collapses on the floor pulling me down with her. There is the roar of hundred throats *Allah-ho-Akbar!* and beneath it the growl of reviving motors……… I never again want to see".120

A variety of submerged and conscious political motivations came into play resulting in the victimization of the weakest and most vulnerable. Stereotypes fed into communal violence, wherein body became the most privileged site for subjecting the other to indiscriminate violation and disfigurement.121

“The Hindu-Sikhs as well as the Muslims moved in the city. But both looked upon each other with hatred and perceived each other as monsters……… The shops selling the kirpans witnessed unprecedented crowds like that of those at the time of Diwali and Baisakhi. Wherever there was a shop dealing with swords, in the market it was impossible even to walk in. The price of kirpans swell upto Rs.50-60 as from Rs. 5 or 6. Even the people would not have hesitated to buy those at the cost of gold but by evening stocks were running short.”122

Sujan Singh’s short story *Manukh Te Pashu* depicts fiendishness and madness with which people were slaughtered. Those who opposed and stood for humanity and brotherhood were termed as traitors and eliminated. Their blood was considered to be impure.123 Manto’s short story “Bestiality” brings to the fore the question that who was the beast-animal or human beings who had gone mad and lost

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120 Bapsi Sidhwa, *Ice-Candy Man*, p. 135. The perpetrator and victim of organized violence will undergo achingly disparate significant experiences. For the perpetrator, pain and fear are remote, unreal, and largely unshared. They are, therefore, almost never made part of the interpretive act. On the other hand, for those who impose the violence, the justification is important, real and carefully cultivated. Conversely, for the victim, the justification for the violence recedes in reality and significance in proportion to the overwhelmingly reality of the pain and fear that is suffered: Robert M. Cover, “Violence and the Word”, *The Yale Law Journal*, Vol.95, No.8, 1986, p.1629.


123 Sujan Singh, “*Manukh Te Pashu*”, Jaswant Deed (ed.), *Desh Vand Diyan Kahaniyan*, pp. 41-46. The story establishes a difference between ‘jathedar’ who is inclined to wipe out the Muslim population of the village, and the humanity of a low caste who is termed as ‘tarkhauta’ for saving the Muslims. After killing him, the Jathedar remarks, “His blood is to be washed away as it is not the ordinary blood. This is recognized by its fragrance”, p. 46.
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all the sanity and humanity. But calling frenzied people the beast would be injustice to the world of beasts as even they do not behave in such madness:

“With great difficulty, the husband and wife managed to get away with a few household valuables.

All four of them. The husband, the wife, the baby girl and the cow were now in safe hiding……...

Suddenly, a calf mooed in the near distance. The cow heard him and began to moo back in great agitation. They tried to quieten her but it was impossible.

The noise alerted their pursuers. It was now clear that they would soon be discovered. In the distance, they could hear the sound of approaching steps and could even see the glow of hand held torches.

‘Why did you drag this beast along?’ The woman asked her husband angrily.”

The partition ushered in many uncertainties in a situation where violence seemed to be the only certainty. The killings were carried on an arithmetic precision. These writings portray the elementary ferocity of partition violence. The violence of 1947 gives the flashback of medieval barbarism:

“An old peasant with grey beard lay float on the water. His arms were stretched and as if he had been crucified. His mouth was wide open and showed his toothless gums, his eyes were covered with film, his hair floated about his head like a halo.

He had a deep wound on his neck which slanted down from one side to the chest. A child’s head butted into old man’s armpit. There was a hole in its back. There were many others coming down the river like logs hewn on mountains and cast into streams to be carried down to the plains. A few passed through the middle of the arches and sped onwards faster. Others bumped into the piers and turned over to show their wounds till the current turned them over again. Some were without limbs, some had their bellies torn open, many women’s breasts were slashed. They floated down the sunlit river, bobbing up and down. Overhead hung the kites and vultures.”


Khushwant Singh, Train To Pakistan, p. 165. “The caravans were looted one after another and people were killed on the spot. Breasts were cut off the young and middle aged women and spears were pierced in their private parts… Eagles were flying over the rotten bodies. The dogs were ripping apart and eating the flesh out of the bodies. The
During the partition one could kill for religious reasons or for any other community reason related to certain pre-conscious attitudes but the analysis of the way how one killed during the transfer of power reveals the political reality of the instant. The reality was that violence resulted from manipulation of simple people by the communalists and they were projected as modern warriors defending their faith:

All the four ‘warriors’ were itching for action. Time had come to enter the battlefield and show one’s feats of valour. Standing on the balcony they felt the same way as the Rajputs of yore did, who, taking cover behind rocks and dunes waited for mleccha hordes to enter Haldi Ghati before they pounced upon them. Ranvir was short stature, that is why, he visualized himself in the role of Shivaji. With eyes screwed up he would survey the road below and the adjacent area. He had an intense longing to wear an angarakha and a yellow turban with a steel ring covering it, and carry a sword hanging from his broad waistband. A shapeless pair of pajamas, an ordinary shirt and worn out pair of chappals was no dress for a ‘warrior, and that too on the verge of a mighty conflict! But the impress of authority which his dress lacked was more than made up for by the tenor of his sharp commanding voice. He gave orders like a seasoned army commander, and enforced strict discipline on the members of the group. With his hands joined on his back, and slight stoop of his shoulders he would stroll up and down the ‘armoury’in much the same way as Shivaji must have strolled, before taking on Aurangzeb…. While describing the locale to Ranvir, Shambu had likened the entrance of the lane to the entrance of Chakra Vyuh of Mahabharata and therefore eminently suitable for their operations…. The day had come to launch their operations, when they would attack their first victim. So far the ‘warriors’ had been preoccupied with preparations. The day had come to prove their mettle…. Both the warriors glued their eyes to the chink, one below the other. An elderly man with a beard was coming through the lane towards the road…. Time was passing. The decisive moment

human beings for the first time had provided them flesh more than their appetite. Now the dogs did not quarrel rather the human beings were doing so, not for meat but for the defence and honour of their religions, the religions which did not have any danger at all.”:Swaran Chandan, Ujada, Aarsi Publications, Delhi, 1999, p.198.

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had come. The man was a mlecha, loaded with bags so that he could neither run, nor defend himself, besides, he was tired—all these were favourable factors. Time was passing and the peddler was moving farther and farther away into the lane….Inder stopped short and stared hard at the man’s face. Inder was balancing himself before pouncing upon his victim. His eyes were still riveted on the peddler’s face…. He was all concentration now, and his eyes were set on the scent-seller’s waist, as intently as Arjun’s must have been on the bird on the branch of the tree. Suddenly, Inder took a leap and made a quick movement. The peddler felt as though something had moved with a flash on his left side. But before he could turn round to see what it was, he felt as though something had pricked him badly under the bag. Inder had struck accurately, and as instructed by the Sardar, had given a twist to the handle too, while the blade was still inside, and thus entangled it with intestines.127

The partition violence was not one sided. This was one sided only at one point of time and space; otherwise each community knew that in other parts of the region others were avenging suffering and humiliation. Communalism worked at both levels - intrusively and obtrusively.

“On reaching the Indian side, Lala Kanshi Ram and his entourage helplessly watched brutalities practiced by the Hindu population on the Muslims fleeing to Pakistan. Kanshi Ram says: Whatever the Muslims did to us in Pakistan, we are doing it to them here.”128


128 Chaman Nahal, Azadi, p. 338. Some not merely knew this but also saw what such revenge meant. Shahid Ahmed’s train journey ended in Lahore, where he recounts, sections of the waiting crowd proceeded at once to determine whether the train had been attacked and how many had been killed or wounded. They then promised summary justice. “Wait”, they said, “We shall settle scores right now, in your presence: and stopping a refugee special going the other way at Baghbanpur station just outside Lahore, they paid back the killers of Eastern Punjab in their own coin—‘with interest’: Gyanendra Pandey, “Partition and Independence in Delhi-1947-48”, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. XXXII, No. 36, 1997, p. 2271.
Thus, the very will to fathom out causes of breakdown of sanity and civilizational imperative and to work out the plexus of madness that accompanied the partition is the pivot of these creative writings. The partition violence was an obscene instance of religious fanaticism, an aberration from Indian traditions of non-violence and tolerance: The partition turned turtle the ideal of non-violence:

“What was achieved through non-violence brought with it one of the bloodiest upheavals of history: twelve million people had to flee, leaving their homes, nearly half a million were dead; over a hundred thousand women, young and old, were abducted, raped, mutilated”.¹²⁹

Saadat Hasan Manto, sarcastically, in his story ‘For Necessary Action’, makes a rigorous attack on the futility of religious beliefs of non-violence which at once dwindled away in the heart of communal frenzy:

“When the attack came, some members of the minority community in the neighbourhood were killed, while the survivors ran off. One man and his wife, however, hid themselves in the basement of their house. For two nights they were cooped up there, expecting to be discovered any moment. Two more nights went by and the fear of death began to recede, replaced by pangs of hunger. Four more nights passed, but by now they had reached a point where they did not really care whether they lived or died. They came out of their hideout. In a voice which could be barely heard, the man said to the new occupants of his house, ‘We give ourselves up. Please kill us’. ‘Our religion forbids us to kill’, they answered. They belonged to Jain faith which enjoins reverence for all forms of life. After mutual consultations, the fugitive couple was handed over to the non-Jain residents of a neighbouring locality for necessary action (cold blood murder).”¹³⁰

¹²⁹ Manohar Malgonkar, *A Bend in Ganges*, Orient Paperbacks, New Delhi, 1964.p.6. The novelist laments through the words of Tek Chand, a prominent character in the novel: “At best, they had accepted it as an effective weapon against British power. It seemed that the moment the grip of British power loosened, the population of the sub-continent had discarded non-violence overnight and now were spending themselves on orgies of violence which seemed to fulfil some basic urge (p. 333).

¹³⁰ Saadat Hasan Manto, “For Necessary Action”, Khalid Hasan (ed.), *Mottled Dawn*, p.188
Such moments of violence often come to be designated as aberrational, extraordinary. As acts of collective madness, they are represented as involving temporary suspension of reason and normal behaviour. In other words, the designation ‘extraordinary’ itself stands in for explanation, and any further attempt to understand the moment is rendered superfluous.\(^{131}\) The partition days were those of savage harvest. Mahinder Singh Sarna’s short story *Savage Harvest (Chhavian Di Rutt)* revolves around the discomfiture of an ironsmith Dina, who is forced to make axes and spears for his own sons and their companions for the butchery of the Hindu-Sikhs. Dina is totally moved when he sees an old woman butchered by an axe made by him:

> “What kind of an unholy mess was he in? Carrying, as it were certainly, the entire responsibility of arming the fighters of newly born Pakistan. The fledgling country was already a reality, but to complete that reality it seemed necessary to kill the Hindus and Sikhs. And this *Jihad* would succeed only if his furnace kept raging and kept spitting out fierce instruments of death.
>
> On the horizon someone had murdered the sun. The blood of innocents had spread across the sky and had dissolved in the waters of streams and rivers. Would anybody eat the sugarcane sprayed with blood! Or wear the cotton which had grown in blood. And what kind of a harvest would it be after this bloody season?\(^{132}\)

The partition violence had a more impassioned quality about it. That was the involvement of religious fervour. Those active in the violence did feel that they had to take on the responsibility of defending their faith and teach their enemies a lesson. For this religious slogan were used to provoke the already charged emotions to maximize the damage to the ‘other’. Such slogans as ‘*Nara-i-Taqbir – Allah ho-


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Akbar’, ‘Har Har Madhadev’, And ‘Jo Boley so Nihal’ were heard during those long nights.\(^{133}\)

Literature goes beyond the political processes and touches the human beings at their sensitive and contemplative best and the creative writer is sensitive to the divisive communal trends eating into the very vitals of social organism and which tore asunder the social fabric. In *Dekh Kabira Roya*, Saadat Hasan Manto mythically employs the character of Saint Kabir, the great Saint who taught love and tolerance. Kabir wanders through the streets of the city of Lahore weeping over vandalism and inhumanity brought about by the partition:

One day Kabir sees a man tearing pages from a book of religious poems by Surdas to make paper bags. Kabir starts weeping and prevents the persons by saying that poems by Bhagat Surdas are printed on these page...... Do not insult them. And the man replies, “A man whose name is Surdas can never be a Bhagat.

Then Kabir encounters an idol of Goddess Lakshmi, covered with straw and he is told, that our religion does not permit idol worship. With tears in his eyes, Kabir says that no religion teaches to deface beautiful things”.\(^{134}\)

Another horrible aspect of communal violence was that it was the religious identity or beliefs and practices which decided the fate of the victim. Those were the times when a man’s life depended on whether or not the foreskin of his penis was circumcised. If it was, Hindus and Sikhs killed him and if it was not, the Muslims killed him.

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here!’ 'I did a good job on him. I will vouch for Himmat Ali’. ‘Tell him to recite The Kalma.’ Shouts some one. ‘La Ilaha, Illahlah, Mohammad ur Rasulullah.’ Astonishingly, Himmat Ali injects into the Arabic verse the cadence and intonation of Hindu chants.”  

People had to change their religious symbols and their identity to save life during the mayhem. But some were quite unfortunate not being able to save their life even after that:

“What is evidence that you are who you say you are? ‘Evidence? My name is Dharam Chand, a Hindu name.’ ‘That is no evidence’. ‘All right, I know all the sacred Vedas by heart, test me out.’ ‘We know nothing about the Vedas. We want evidence’; ‘What?’ ‘Lower your trousers.’ When his trousers were lowered, there was a pandemonium. ‘Kill him, kill him.’ ‘Wait please wait… I am your brother… I swear by BhagwanI that I am your brother.’ ‘In that case why the circumcision?’ ‘The area through which I had to pass was controlled by our enemies, therefore, I was forced to take this precaution…. Just to save my life. This is only mistake, the rest of me is in order.’ ‘Remove his mistake’. And the mistake was removed …. And with it Dharam Chand.”.  

Gulzar Singh Sandhu’s short story “Shahid” also depicts the similar situation in which a large number of Muslims converted to Sikhism and wore all the symbols of Khalsa. But ironically all of them were killed and those who did not change their religious affiliation were alive. In this situation, the difference between Smadhi and Takya becomes more pronounced. Krishan Chander’s short story “Peshawar Express” also depicts such scene:

A little later, four persons looking like Hindu brahmins entered a compartment. They sported proper Hindu Chotis, each one of

135 Bapsi Sidhwa, Ice-Candy Man, pp. 180, 181.
them and they wore dhotis in typical caste Hindu fashion. They said that they were going to Hardwar.
At Amritsar, a number of Sikh Jats had fanned themselves out into the compartments in search of shikar. One of them got a bit suspicious and asked one of the four Brahmins where he was going?
‘To Hardwar on pilgrimage’
‘Is it Hardwar or Pakistan you are going to?’
‘Allah forbid’, blurred the man’. The Sikh laughed and then pounced on him with his axe. The Sikh’s companions overpowered the other three Brahmins.
‘You all must be medically examined before you are allowed to go to Hardwar’, said the Sikh.
The four Brahmins were stripped off their clothes, found to be circumcised Muslims, and done to death”.  

The partition violence brought to the surface, both at the level of action and imagination, certain primitive fantasies of bodily violence. Prominent among these fantasies were those related to sexual mutilation – the cutting off male genitals and castration of males in a more or less conscious wish to wipe the hated enemy off the face of the earth by eliminating means of its reproduction. 

The partition fiction also attempts to reflect the efforts of sustaining communal harmony and enduring relationships under the sway of communal orgy. On the one hand, characters participate in communal and carnal holocaust and on the other hand, they make sacrifices for those belonging to other community. The love between Nuran and Jugga in Train to Pakistan and consequently Jugga’s sacrifice to save his girlfriend and consequently turning out to be a saviour of Muslim refugees of ‘Train to Pakistan, is a pointer towards this aspect of the violence ridden atmosphere. There was a general assurance: “As long as we are here nobody will dare to touch you. We will die before you.” Surinder, the protagonist of Gurmukh Singh Musafir’s short story “Allah Wale” says to her parents that when women are sold and their honour is auctioned, then return the

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139 Sudhir Kakkar, Colours of Violence, p. 37.
140 Khushwant Singh, Train to Pakistan, pp. 125, 126.
people of God (Allah Wale) and in this story Allah Baksh saves the honour of a non-Muslim girl.\textsuperscript{141} Bholu, in Hari Singh Dilbar’s short story ‘Bajre Di Dandi Te’ also dies while saving the life and honour of a girl who belonged to other religion.\textsuperscript{142} Mahinder Singh Sarna’s short story Ladhewala Waraich encapsulates the story of Chaudhary Khudabaksh Waraich who tried to save the non-Muslim population of his village. “He had done a wonderful job of guarding his village! His village Ladhewala Waraich was reduced to a cremation ground, and he was living like a stump that did not want to die.”\textsuperscript{143} Thus, many in the bitter days tried to resist the communal violence. Many neighbours succumbed to greed and the temptation to loot but others risked their lives and that of their families – to protect their neighbours.

“As the people of Chakri sensed the trouble, they became alert. All the elder and resourceful Muslims of the village assembled and took oath by placing their hands on Quran that they will not allow anybody to harm Hindus of their village even if they had to die. They made mutual pledges that they would protect the non-Muslims of the village up to the last drop of blood in their body”.\textsuperscript{144}

One can only speculate about the culture and traditions that facilitated their moral integrity. Moreover, people believed that this was just temporal tide that would subside soon. All violence begetting elements – the ambient political and social violence, the terror of an organized few and the self-protective reaction of the many, political and cultural confusion, inflammatory media reportage, the natural retaliatory impulse in the face of violence – do not in anyway contradict the thesis of shared history and essential amity between various communities.\textsuperscript{145} Many rose

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{144} Nanak Singh, \textit{Khoon De Sohle}, p. 161.
\bibitem{145} Jason Francisco “In the Heat of Fratricide”,p.376.
\end{thebibliography}
above the communal considerations and did opposite to what was being done by the majority. Instead, even during the dark years of the partition there were countless small attempts by fallible people to abide by the covenants of a civil society.146

“This was a not an event of some isolated village. Rather there was rarely a village where Muslims did not try to save the non-Muslims of their village. This is a miracle of the god that the water of the spring on one hand was working as the murderer and at the same time it was working as life saver. Can human mind understand this deep mystery of nature…….Chaudhary and some brave hearted Muslims having long sticks in their hands made rounds of the Hindu mohalla and would say, “Do not lose heart. Be brave. Anybody would reach you people only after killing us”.147

Thus, the creative writers compile an endless cumulative dossier of barbarity of the mayhem of 1947. They fictionalize the unqualified horror and terror. The pain and agony speak spontaneously. The rending of social and emotional fabric that took place in 1947 is still far from mended. The creative writer through series of delicate imagination has emotionally recorded the harrowing tales of dehumanization at this historical juncture. Whatever the causes and whatever the questions, the fact remains that partition pained and like all surgical amputations, it could not cure, just cut above the ailment. It is true that, “Realities endure in time only trough language, and language is possible only if it is shared. That simple fact implies a universalism which may make us uncomfortable at times, but which will also help more people share more of the manifold aspects of any event. They are all more challenging, and numerous, when the event itself is without comparison”.148

The fiction writer has the astute ability to produce a greater comprehension of the events because he or she inserts racial, religious, socio-economic and political biases in front of the reader to present an honest narrative account of Partition. The account is honest to the extent that is provides a medium to relate personal

146 Alok Bhalla, “Memory, History and Fictional Representations of the Partition”, p.3119.
147 Nanak Singh, Khoon De Sohle pp. 205, 221.
experiences without the guise of objectivity. The fictional writings look at the problem from a humanistic point of view. By creating a special fictional space and speaking through their characters, the creative writers have given us various perspectives on, and sensitive portrayals of there bloody days. They have narratived the bewilderment and incommunicability of the people who lived through the violence marked epoch and experienced the traumatic event. These writings have recorded the inhumanity and insanity of the partition violence. These probe the inner working of the individual as well as general mind, the plight of humanity under duress and the human experience of this catastrophic event.

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