CHAPTER–IV
CROSSING THE BORDER : MIGRATION AND RESETTLEMENT

Partition, Vibhajan, Batwara or Takseem - these words carry grave implications. People were uprooted overnight, homes became strange places, or to borrow the appropriate phrase from Amitav Ghosh, millions were left “with no home but in memory”. As a moment of rupture it occurred with remarkable suddenness and in a manner that it belied most prognoses of immediate future. Identities had to be suddenly renegotiated and redefined.\(^1\) The partition, the word itself is so inadequate. Partition is a simple division, a separation but surely what happened in 1947 was much more than that … not only were people separated overnight and friends became enemies, homes became strange places, strange places had to be claimed now as homes, a line was drawn to mark a border and boundaries began to find reflection in people’s lives and minds.\(^2\) It had been unthinkable that twelve million people would move, absolutely impossible to conceive, even if anyone had believed it to be desirable. The mass migrations were the sting in the scorpion’s tail, the unknown face of the Partition Plan.\(^3\) Like the flash of a supernova, the star of colonialism in India died in an explosion of internecine violence and bloodletting. Around 12 million lost their homes in the aftermath of Britain’s clumsy partition of India in 1947. It was the largest mass migration in history, the messiest national divorce and also one of the quickest, taking place in just a few months.\(^4\) The process of the partition had claimed large numbers of lives and destroyed the peace and well being of innumerable individuals and families even before the official


announcement of the partition and Independence. Within weeks, it destroyed many more and uprooted practically a whole countryside in Punjab and neighbouring areas, as people fled in both directions in search of minimal safety and security.\(^5\)

The partition of the Punjab led to the biggest mass exodus in the recorded human history. The partition brought the problem of minorities into greater prominence than ever before. No matter where the lines of demarcation were drawn, there were Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs on either side of it, in a majority or a substantial minority; and whatever the geographical boundaries of Pakistan, large number of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs became alien and foreigners in their homes.\(^6\) The millions were forced to leave their homelands and adjust themselves in new locale and new environment despite their continued protestations. Leonard Mosley estimated that fourteen million people were driven from their homes.\(^7\) According to J.S. Grewal over thirteen million people crossed over the border on either side.\(^8\) Ivan Stephen and Michael Edwardes estimated that some 14 million people were forced to leave their homes.\(^9\) Allan Campbell-Johnson states that the partition led to migration of some nine million people.\(^10\) Initially, millions of non-Muslims in West Punjab and millions of Muslims in East Punjab were staying against the hope that the Boundary Commission Award would incorporate their villages, homes and lands in new dominions of their choice.\(^11\) But ultimately the people had to leave their

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\(^11\) Narinder Iqbal Singh, *Communal Violence in the Punjab (1947)*, p. 164. Independence Day in the Punjab saw strange scenes. Flags of both countries were flown in villages between Lahore and Amritsar, as people of both communities believed that they were on the right side of the border. The morrow after freedom was to find them foreigners in their own homes, exiled by executive fiat: Sucheta Mahajan, *Independence and Partition: Erosion of Colonial Power in India*, Sage, New Delhi, 2000, p.202.
places. Thus, the partition of the Punjab enforced movements of the people on a scale absolutely unparalleled in the history of world civilizations. Arguably, before the Indian partition, the Twentieth Century had not experienced such a massive and excruciating migration of people.

The people were forced to leave their home and hearth because of their fear of becoming a minority in a given place. The religious affiliations were the sole criterion that decided where people could live. There must be many examples in the bloody history of mankind where “the extent of violence has been as great or even greater but it is probably true that there has never been such a huge exchange of population”. A greater part of this huge migration took place within the short span of three months, that is between mid of August and mid of November. On the whole, the Muslims suffered most lives. The Hindus and Sikhs lost most property.

The Director of Public Relations, West Punjab stated that the mass evacuation of Muslims from East Punjab was completed in less than three and a half months. A total number of about 5.5 million Muslims had crossed over the border to Pakistan and about 3.5 million Hindus and Sikhs had left West Punjab for India. The job

Cyrille Radcliffe pointed out that, given the vastness of India and its multitudinous populations, it would take the most careful arbitrators years to decide on a boundary that would certainly cut across homes and populations. He was evidently shocked when told that he had only five weeks to complete his work: Leonard Mosley, The Last Days of British Raj, p. 195. The narrow time-frame in which Radcliffe was expected to delineate the boundaries was largely imposed by the impatience of Nehru, who did not wish the transfer to power to be delayed by the work of Boundary Commission. Nehru wanted the Commission to finish the work as quickly as possible and was prepared to accept a makeshift border in the belief that once the states were formed they would mutually consider modifications and variations of their frontiers: Gyanesh Kudaisya and Tai Yong Tan, The Aftermath of Partition in South Asia, Routledge, London, 2000, p. 85.


unprecedented in history was accomplished within record period.\textsuperscript{18} The exchange of population between Turkey and Greece, hitherto known as the biggest of its kind was accomplished in a year or so, whereas in the Punjab transfer of population was completed in three months.\textsuperscript{19} By October 8, 1947 some 16, 28,000 refugees had already been exchanged between East Punjab and West Punjab: 4,50,000 were on their way and 2 million in the West Punjab were awaiting evacuation to India.\textsuperscript{20} Cyrille Radcliffe knew only too well that his had been a butcher’s job, and not a surgeon’s operation, and that his rushed job of an Award would please no one. One the eve of his departure from India, Radcliffe revealed his feelings about the Award he had made: “Nobody in India will love me for the Award about the Punjab and Bengal and there will be roughly 80 million people with a grievance who will begin looking for me. I do not want them to find me”.\textsuperscript{21} The massive exchange of population that attended the partition of the country and the conditions under which it took place were almost unprecedented in history”.\textsuperscript{22}

Moreover, the mass migration in Punjab did not result from any settled government policy but later on the magnitude of migration forced the Governments of India and Pakistan to evolve out ‘Joint Evacuation Movement Plan’ on 20\textsuperscript{th} October, 1947. The Plan envisaged to evacuate the remaining refugees. The Plan proposed that 1,00,000 people would leave on foot every three days on different routes and it was estimated that it would take 12 days to move the non-Muslim and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{18} K.B. Sayeed, \textit{Pakistan: The Formative Years}, OUP,London,1968, pp. 263-64.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Moreover, elsewhere the minorities had the right of leaving the country of their origin under certain conditions which would guarantee them full value of properties left behind whereas in the Punjab the minorities were made to quit their hearths and homes in the most adverse conditions and they had to reach the country of their destination very often as paupers’. Kirpal Singh, \textit{Partition of the Punjab}, p. 140.
\item \textsuperscript{20} Narinder Iqbal Singh, \textit{Communal Violence in the Punjab (1947)}, p. 207.
\item \textsuperscript{21} Radcliffe, expecting that his Award would constitute no more than hastily improvised boundaries that would subsequently be subjected to bilateral modifications readily concurred for the expediency of the Award: Gyanesh Kudaisya and Tai Yong Tan, \textit{The Aftermath of Partition in South Asia}, pp. 85, 94.
\item \textsuperscript{22} Narinder Iqbal Singh, \textit{Communal Violence in the Punjab (1947)}, p. 207.
\end{itemize}
35 days for the Muslims. By rail, 15,000 were to be moved in each direction daily for a period of 70 days.\textsuperscript{23}

There were columns of refugees stretching for more than sixty miles, creeping along narrow roads, the families carrying all their worldly goods in bullock carts.\textsuperscript{24} The total number of Hindu and Sikh refugees evacuated upto December 14, 1947 from West Punjab stood at 43,62,000. In the Census of 1951, refugees formed one fifth of the total population of East Punjab.\textsuperscript{25} In 1951, in Pakistan about 53 lakh refugees were recorded. On the whole, one sixth of the entire population of West Punjab consisted of refugees.\textsuperscript{26} In the large parts of new domains of India and Pakistan being a Sikh or Hindu (one side) or a Muslim (on the other) had become virtually synonymous with being a refugee and a foreign national. Local designations, discriminations between different sections of the different religious communities was at a discount, and whole religious communities came to be suspect'.\textsuperscript{27}

The newly drawn boundary in the Punjab had caught everyone, including the provincial administration by surprise. Several thousand people especially those in the central districts of the Punjab, suddenly found themselves on the wrong side of the border after August 17, 1947. There were neither provisions nor preparations for the affected populations to be evacuated, until it was too late.\textsuperscript{28} Lord Louis Mountbatten and his colleagues were aware that there would inevitably be displacement of population, but they felt that it would be on a relatively minor scale,

\textsuperscript{23} Anders Bjorn Hansen, \textit{Partition and Genocide}, p. 178.
\textsuperscript{24} Allan Campbell-Johnson, \textit{Mission with Mountbatten}, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{26} Narinder Iqbal Singh, \textit{Communal Violence in the Punjab (1947)}, p. 208.
\textsuperscript{27} Gyanendra Pandey, “Partition and Independence in Delhi”, p. 2264.
\textsuperscript{28} Gyanesh Kudaisya and Tai Yong Tan, \textit{The Aftermath of Partition in the South Asia}, p. 98.
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and spread over a long period. But it proved otherwise. As per the Boundary Award, West Punjab received an area of nearly 63,000 sq. miles, containing a population of 16 million of which 4 million or 25 per cent were non-Muslims. East Punjab acquired an area of some 37,000 square miles and a population of about 12.5 million of which 4.4 million (almost 35 per cent) were Muslims.

Across national boundaries in South Asia, the view is now widely shared that the partition was an ‘epic tragedy’ that changed the destinies of people in the region. Increasingly, as the long term consequences of the partition are becoming manifest, the perception is gaining ground that the partition was not just an event but a trigger for a series of reverberations, the tremors of which can still be felt in the region. “Public memory identifies India’s day of freedom with tens of thousands of people thronging the center of New Delhi, Nehru’s stirring call to the world in a midnight session of the Indian Parliament to acknowledge India’s ‘tryst with destiny’ and the ritual lowering of the Union Jack after 190 years of British imperial rule. On 15th August 1947, India walked towards a new dawn of freedom: its journey towards nationhood and statehood had begun”. However, there is also the other journey people do not like to talk about. That journey, closely associated with the birth of India and Pakistan, also frames significant aspects of political cultures and international relations of these countries, though it does so silently, without anyone seriously admitting or denying it.

The ultimate symbol of this journey was the mass exodus of minorities from the new states. It was kind of journey the people had not previously seen. It

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31 Gyanesh Kudaisya and Tai Yong Tan, The Aftermath of the Partition in South Asia, p. 8.
uprooted people from the habitat they had inhabited for centuries. Bipan Chandra has aptly remarked, “On 15 August 1947, India celebrated with joy its first day of freedom. The sacrifices of generations of patriots and the blood of countless martyrs had borne fruit…….. But the sense of joy was mixed with pain and sadness. Even at the very moment of freedom, a communal orgy, accompanied by indescribable brutalities, was consuming thousands of lives in India and Pakistan”.34 The partition transformed the landscape of northern parts of the subcontinent, as it uprooted millions of the people from their habitat and the places experienced transformations due to such displacement and rehabilitation. It is worth stating that places were not merely physical spaces, but arenas where the lives, movements, activities and everyday routines of people were staged. They were not mere fragments of physical space but rather socially constructed entities invested with a range of meanings by the people who inhabited them. Such meanings transform physical space into place by imparting a distinct identity with which a place comes to be associated. The partition transformed these individual identities of places.”35

The partition and consequent migration brought about uprootedness and the emotional trauma.36 The millions were forced to leave their homes, their bastis, their

35 Gyanesh Kudaisya and Tai Yong Tan, The Aftermath of the Partition in South Asia, p. 24.
36 Trauma is simply not the other word for disaster. The idea of catastrophe as trauma provides a method of interpretation, for it posits that the effects of an event may be dispersed and manifested in many forms not obviously associated with the event. Moreover, this dispersal occurs across time, so that event experienced as shattering may actually produce its full impact only years later. In its emphasis on the retrospective reconstruction of the traumatic event, a traumatic analysis is both constructivist and empirical: James Berger, “Trauma and Literary Theory”, Contemporary Literature, Vol. 38, No.3,1997, p. 572. Under the traumatic experience the people were not able to think and act. Trauma described variously as shock and neurosis, is actual effect, a severance; a severance from the present, from one’s normal self, from the environment and empirical reality of the external world. A certain kind of passivity, if not of action, of thinking takes over one’s mind. From this point of view trauma is also a severance between the ability to think and react. Several partition narratives try to capture this state of trauma – a mental state which reflects on the self-in-the-world because it represents a phase when the self is not in the world or of the world. Some work through amnesia, others through frenzy, still others through a slow realization of the loss and a deep sense of sorrow and some through presenting the hallucinatory state of mind through non-realistic modes: Jasbir Jain, Reading Partition / Living Partition, Rawat, Jaipur, 2007, pp.320,321.
watan, and undertake a difficult and sorrowful journey, often against their desires and better instincts, to cities and villages whose names and images had rarely ever before drifted across the boundaries of their affected realms.\(^{37}\) The individual’s fate hung in uncertainty and he became a refugee “who had to strive to relocate his/her identity in a radically different present, which, paradoxically enough, was shaped, influenced and conditioned by the very past which was irrecoverable”.\(^{38}\) Mushirul Hasan has rightly observed: “The history books do not record the pain, trauma and sufferings of those who had to part from their kin, neighbours and friends, their deepening nostalgia for places they had lived in for generations, the anguish of devotees removed from their places of worship, and the harrowing experiences of the countless people who boarded trains thinking they would be transported to the realization of their dreams, but of whom not a man, woman or child survived the journey”.\(^{39}\) The partition fiction has recorded in sensitive detail that how the partition rendered it impossible for people, despite their own protestations, to continue to live where they had been for generations. To quote Suketu Mehta, “there are millions of the partition stories throughout the sub-continent, a body of lore that is infrequently recorded in print or on tape, and rarely passed on to the next generation. All over the map of the sub-continent, there is an entire generation of people who have been made poets, philosophers, and storytellers by their experience during the partition.”\(^{40}\) The partition came to exercise an extraordinary hold over the imagination of its practitioners in the literature. The partition fiction has fully addressed the issues largely glossed over by the historian in the mainstream history. The creative writer has graphically portrayed that how the people were divided, how they were separated from their homeland and how the people tried to cope up with


this trauma. Literary writings are also remarkable in that they articulate almost in unison the sense of anguish and bewilderment which common people experienced.\textsuperscript{41} Often official records do not reflect their pain and agony, their fear and afflictions, their dismay and disillusionment but the creative writings do. These writings serve, above all, as a reminder of how the partition cruelly displaced millions, divided India’s past, wrecked its civilizational rhythm and unity, and left behind a seemingly constant legacy of hostility, bitterness and rancor between the people and governments of India and Pakistan.\textsuperscript{42}

It was the beginning of year 1947. There were few months remaining in India’s independence. Hindustan was one. On 15\textsuperscript{th} August this one nation would be divided into two - Hindustan and Pakistan. Punjab was to be partitioned. Lahore and Amritsar, which stood as brothers on the land of five rivers would be separated forever. Now they are brothers but they would turn into foes. The reverberating heart of Punjab was to be cut into two halves. The fierce sword of partition and communalism would cut this heart and a line of blood would flow at Wagah; Wagah which is least known. It would become world famous as a border post.\textsuperscript{43}

The commonality in the concerns of these works, produced across national boundaries in different languages, is striking. A single, common note informs nearly all the stories written about the partition and the horror it unleashed - a note of utter bewilderment.\textsuperscript{44}

\begin{quote}
\textquote{``We should move now'.

‘Where will we go leaving our home and hearth? Our cattle, our crops and this home……….. We made this after so much hardships’.

Uncle became sad and she replied nothing’}.\textsuperscript{45}
\end{quote}

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\textsuperscript{43} Santokh Singh Dhir, Oh Din, Aarsi Publicaitons, Delhi, 2004 (First Published 1973), p. 9.
\textsuperscript{45} Swaran Chandan Ujada, Aarsi Publications, New Delhi, 1999, p. 192.
\end{flushright}
Independence brought with it anguish and dilemma, the emotional pain of severance from home. The partition was irrevocably etched on the minds of the people, which had severed them from their own past. The partition fiction laments the loss of a world not only in the form of romanticized nostalgia but also in form of dejection and bewilderment. This disillusionment is poignantly captured by the scores of writers on the both sides of the border. It was only those people, who experienced the uprootment, understood that why people wept when they had to leave their homeland. The plight of every one caught in the middle of the casual brutality of the partition days was, perhaps, summed up by a refugee who told an interviewer with the austerity of those who had suffered far too much: “Kaun Ujadna Chahta Tha?” (who wanted to be uprooted?). Many abandoned their homes because the social spaces which they had inhibited for generations had suddenly become fragile. 46 These stories offer a valuable insight into the hopes, fears, joys and sorrows of a whole generation of migrants, whose lives were changed almost overnight when history catapulted them from the land of their own origin to a new one that was destined to be their home and nation.47 Fictional writings lament the loss of a world though not only in the form of nostalgia which emerges as an ambivalent motif. It can veer towards romanticization of the pre-partition experience which appears, as if clad in translucent hues. In such writings then, nostalgia serves to illustrate the irrevocable break with traditional values that the partition brought about.48 The migrants did not choose to leave their homes or see themselves as makers of new nations. Nor did they deliberately gather their household gods and their holy books and move to safer sanctuaries where all they considered sacred would be preserved from the pollution of the other.49

49 Indeed, there is very little historical evidence, to indicate that apart from few, the migrants had left their homes because they were tempted by visions of new selfhood and a new country, a promise and a hope. Many who crossed the newly marked borders, even those who had supported the various demands for separate countries did not want to leave the places that they had come to regard as their *zameen*, their piece of land, their home: Alok Bhalla, *Partition Dialogues*, p. 4.
“Pakistan has come into being. A new line was drawn on the map. Punjab was divided. So was Kasur tehsil of district Lahore. The line was drawn on the papers. There was no sign of it on the earth. No mountain, no river, no canal, no road which demarcated the boundary of two countries. On one side was India and on the other side Pakistan came into being. Hindustan disappeared from the map of the world. On the one side country of the Pak and on the other side the country of the faithful. There was no place for impure (napak) and faithless (Adharmi). Millions were uprooted from their homes. Passages, roads were full of the dead bodies or corpse carriers”.

The partition did not mean the birth of two new geographical dominions, as the examination of creative literature proves, it gave birth to a new psychic dominion as well. These narratives offer insight into the new sense of rupture and deep personal meanings emerging from the grotesque human massacre and the mass exodus of panic stricken people. Otherwise, the migration has been approached largely in the mode of documentary historical scholarship which has tended to focus on the politics of the partition or and the formation of two nation states. Most people, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs alike, were largely unconcerned with the newly created geographical entities or indifferent to them. “They were needlessly caught up in the crossfire of religious hatred. Some were driven out of their homes; others drifted from one place to another out of fear, panic and a sense of hopelessness, most were hapless victims of a triangular game plan worked out by the British, the Congress and the League without care or consideration for a vast number of people who were neither committed to a Hindu homeland or to an imaginary Dar-ul-Islam. They had no destination, no mirage to pursue”.

The fiction portrays the initial hesitation and dilemma about leaving the home. When faced with the reality of partition, many characters in partition fiction assert with quiet confidence their

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refusal to leave their places. They suffered acute pangs of nostalgia for leaving their *watan*: “I was born around here, this is my home, how can I be a refugee in my own home?” Almost every account suggests that for most of the population, the traumatic period of uncertainty of deciding whether to stay or go was very short and tumultuous and the ultimate decision was often made abruptly.

The Hindus of neighbouring villages started fleeing at once. They could not attend their cattle and they could take nothing from their lavish houses. Their farms left gazing at the face of their masters. They fled during the night, some died in the fields, some were tired after journey of miles together.

Before the partition, people had a hope, enthusiasm and determination to achieve what they thought, nation of their own while after the partition they were shattered when faced with the stark reality of division and consequent uprootment. There was a hope among the people that all the tribulations and adversities would subside and they would be able to retain their places:

“I suppose, we’ll continue here, why can’t Hindus and Sikhs live in Pakistan? Why should they wish us harm? He said without much conviction. ……. 
“Well why can’t we live in Pakistan? They certainly would like to have us, have our business. Their whole economy will be ruined if they drive us out.”

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55 The fatal decision was not delayed as the ring of death and destruction closed in from all sides. The hand that was sowing the seed in fields in the morning was hurriedly packing in the afternoon…. When at the time of evacuation, the farmers yoked their bullock to the carts which formed their miles long caravans they looked wistfully at their houses, granaries full of wheat, and orchards of oranges which they had planted with so much care: M.S. Randhawa, *Out of Ashes: An Account of the Rehabilitation of Refugees from West Pakistan in Rural Areas of East Punjab*, Bombay, 1954, p. 25.
58 Chaman Nahal, *Azadi*, p. 66.Even after Sir Radcliffe officially announced the new borders, hundreds and thousands of people on both sides did not think it was necessary to leave their homes. In fact, they were ‘blissfully unaware’ that new borders were being drawn to alienate them from their homes and they were indifferent to the religious nationalism: Alok Bhalla, *Partition Dialogues*, p.13.
People did not readily accept the idea to migrate. As per human sense of belonging, people had an emotional relationship with their native places. They were attached to their ancestral places having some psychological bonding and it was there that the core of their identity resided.\(^{59}\) Thus, the partition literature speaks about the concept of place of identification, caught in the tension of demand and desire.

“Alla Rakhi moaned when she saw the soldiers with long guns, ‘I will never go. So what if name has changed, this is my own country, these are our trees, these leaves are ours, this \textit{dhrek} that I have nourished with water is yet to grow up’, and her tears would not stop.”\(^{60}\)

Human beings are like plants. When pulled out, some portion of a person’s roots remains in the native soil and the memory of the lost roots tortures him or her for the remaining life. However, the people moved to safer places to escape violence with the only hope that soon peace would return back.\(^{61}\) One of the reactions to the partition was to see it as temporary measure. Most people were unable to accept that Pakistan was forever. They continued to believe that a united India would be forged and that two countries would be reunited. Hope in an eventual united India reconciled them to the present reality of division.\(^{62}\)

In the displacement, “the borders between home and world become confused; and uncannily, the private and the public become parts of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting.”\(^{63}\) A sense of bewilderment and an adamant refusal to leave home for religious reasons and find a refuge in another country is informed in nearly all fictional writings on the partition. The partition


\(^{62}\) Sucheta Mahajan, \textit{Independence and Partition}, p. 340. Even Jawaharlal Nehru said, “We expected that Pakistan would be temporary, that Pakistan was bound to come back to us”, Leonard Mosley, \textit{Last Days of the British Raj}, p. 177.

\(^{63}\) Homi Bhabha, \textit{The Location of Culture}, Routledge, New York, 1994, p. 9.
made a realignment of borders and of national and community identities, but not necessarily of loyalties. Thousands here and there forsook their allegiance to their families and never left at all. Some were unaware of Pakistan as a separate country till some years after its creation, even though they themselves had migrated to it. And any number failed to quite absorb the fact there were borders that could not be crossed.  

“What is this strange bird called, ‘our land’? Tell me where is that land? This is the place where one was born, one grew up in body and mind. If this cannot be one’s own land then how can the place where one simply goes and settles downs for a couple of days be one’s own? And who knows whether one won’t be driven out from there as well and be told – ‘Go and inhabit a new land’? I am like a lamp in its last gasp. A mild gust of wind and all this fuss about choosing a land is over. After all, this game of one’s land vanishing and inhabiting a new land is not very interesting. There was a time when Mughals left their country to inhabit a new country. And today you want to establish a new one. As though the land is no better than a pair of shoes - If it becomes a little tight, throw it away and get a new one’….

And she seemed to have lost her self in that quest.”

The events of 1947 not only violently uproot characters in the partition fiction but also suddenly estrange them from those simple words like friendship, neighbourhood, peepul tree, well… which they had nurtured for generations to craft their world. These words that had once helped them craft their communities were now lost in the maze of refugee towns. Besides the initial denial to leave, people had to leave their Desh or Watan. The displacement forced many to search a new home away from home. The partition had made their homeland hostile and they started imagining that peace and security were on the other side of the border. Each peace of literature speaks about a tale of individual loss, of escape; a narrative rendered poignant by the sudden whiff of nostalgia for a lost homeland:

66 Alok Bhalla, Partition Dialogues, pp. 7-8.
“Get up and pack we have to go away tomorrow morning. He announced dramatically.
‘Go away? Where?’
‘I do not know……. Pakistan!’
‘I will not go to Pakistan’, the girl repeated fiercely.
‘You may not want to go, but they will throw you out. All Muslims are leaving for camp tomorrow’.
‘Who will throw us out? This is our village’.”

Through these narratives, the self finds a home, or would perhaps describe the process better if we say that around a particular home they try to paint a picture of some kind of an ordered, intelligible, humane and habitable world. It is in the partition fiction that we see an attempt to assimilate the full import of what the partition actually meant. It deals with profound sense of rupture, tribulations and trauma experienced by the people. In Devendar Satyarthi’s short story *Janam Bhoomi*, love for birth-place is held responsible for the excruciating pain suffered by the people while being uprooted from their native lands. The story speaks about the utter sense of rupture, detachment and displacement. The protagonist of the story, a schoolmaster belongs to a village very close to Taxila, the ancient seat of learning. He along with his family, has to leave his native land. The loss of motherland causes unbearable pain and schoolmaster’s ailing wife succumbs to this utter sense of loss.

Thus, *Desh* remains trapped in people’s past, in their nostalgia.

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67 Khushwant Singh, *Train To Pakistan*, Ravi Dayal Publishers, New Delhi, 2001 (First Published 1956), p. 150. The native village is pictured as both sacred and beautiful, and it is this that makes communal violence an act of both violation and defilement, an act of sacrilege against everything that stood for sanctity and beauty in the popular understanding of what home was. What gives the ‘native village’ its sacredness is patriliny, its ancestral connection. Worshipping of the village land was equivalent to worshipping one’s ancestors: Dipesh Chakrabarty, “Remembered Village: Representation of Hindu, Muslim Memories in the Aftermath of Partition”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, August 10, 1996, p. 2145.


69 Moreover, the people cursed the freedom which compelled them to leave their motherland. What sort of freedom this was? The motherland has its own features, the people feel oneness, and religion and caste appear meaningless when the question of love for land arises, but the people were imposed with the trauma of separation from motherland. The story deals with spiritual and metaphysical questions of belongingness which ultimately causes physical and mental pain: Devender Satyarathi, “Janam Bhoomi” Jaswant Deed (ed.) *Desh Wand Diyan Kahaniyan*, Sahitya Academy, New Delhi, 1995, pp.164-178.
and in their memory. Desh and nation are two different categories. While the nation is largely an imagined category, desh in frequently revisited in memories. The nation, therefore may be a product of imagination, but desh is concrete but distant reality for the uprooted people as it remains encapsulated in their past.\textsuperscript{70}

People who lost their homes and Desh due to the partition were perhaps in an appropriate position to suffer from such nostalgia. Dulla in Punjabi short story ‘Mera Ujadya Gwandi’, while leaving his ancestral place met his friend and neighbour on the way. He yearned to see his home once again and said, “If I were a crow I would have once more seen my village and its dwellings. There would have been no threat to my life as the birds and animals do not have any religion” \textsuperscript{71} The act of separating the erstwhile neighbours is described as pulling out the nail from the flesh with excruciating pain. Their pain speaks spontaneously:

“Slowly the Muslims began to come out of their homes, driving their cattle and their bullock carts loaded with charpoys, rolls of bedding, tin trunks, kerosene oil tins, earthen pitches and brass utensils. The rest of Mano Majra came out to see them off…. There was no time to make arrangements. There was no time even to say good bye. Truck engines were started…. All they could do was to shout their last farewells from the trucks. The Sikhs watched them till they were out of sight. They wiped the tears off their faces and turned back to their homes with heavy hearts”.\textsuperscript{72}

To those uprooted, with demarcation of boundaries, the geographical space became a part of memory overnight. The partition is, therefore, a nodal point underlining a massive shift in conceptualizing ‘the self’ and ‘collectivity’ in relation to politically demarcated boundaries. How does one capture the ‘shift’ which was partly obviously given the changed complexion of nation that began transforming ever since the articulation of Hindu-Muslim differences to advance a political goal?


\textsuperscript{72} Khushwant Singh, \textit{Train To Pakistan}, pp. 155,159.
Here the creative writings are most crucial to capture and meaningfully explain the multi-faceted voice of the people. The people wept inconsolably as they were being snatched away from their neighbours and the people with whom they had lived together for generation:

The cart stopped at the border of two countries, where power hungry people had pierced the body of the earth by drawing a line in the paper. Ilamdin had controlled himself so far. Now he lost his patience and started crying. ‘Oye Sajjana! Won’t we ever meet again? We are detached even before death. It is true that it is most painful to get separated but we… Then there were only cries and sobs of the both’.

It is not surprising that characters in the partition fiction are unable to forget their abandoned home and they are unwilling to acknowledge that the villages they had left behind were marked by a long history of communal violence. Their nostalgia is often accompanied by tears and curses, inconsolable sadness and pain. In their despondency they confess to themselves that in pre-partition India their religious selfhood was never threatened. India or Pakistan were mere territorial abstractions to most people who were ignorant of how the Mountbatten’s Plan or Radcliffe Award would change their destinies and tear them apart from their social and cultural moorings. In their world-view, there was no nationalism, religious or composite. They were blissfully unaware that their fate, which had rested in the hands of exploiting classes for countries would be decided by Radcliffe and a ‘continent for better or worse divided’.

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74 Sohan Singh Sital, Tutan Wala Khuh, pp. 298-299. See also, Santokh Singh Dhir “Mera Ujadya Gwandhi”, Jaswant Deed (ed.), Desh Wand Diya Kahaniyan, pp. 57-63. The two characters Gurbachan and Dulla remembered their days as neighbours and shared their memories of neighbourhood which were causing pain to them at the time of separation.
75 They knew, of course, in times of folly there had been strife between religious communities and sects but they also understand that it was very heterogeneity of religious in India which had made it historically possible for all of them to survive and to enrich than own particular religions heritage. Alok Bhatta, Partition Dialogues, pp.10,11.
76 Mushirul Hasan, “Memories of a Fragmented Nation”, p.2666.
“The decision about the creation of Pakistan had just been announced and people were indulging in all kinds of surmises about the pattern of life that would emerge. But no one’s imagination could go very far…The Sardarji sitting in front of me repeatedly asked me whether I thought Mr. Jinnah would continue to live in Bombay after the creation of Pakistan. Each time my answer would be the same, ‘why would he leave Bombay. I think he will continue to live in Bombay and continue visiting Pakistan’. Similar guesses were being made about the towns of Lahore and Gurdaspur too, and no one knew which town would fall to the share of India and which to Pakistan”.

The cartographic and political divisions constituted by the partition were ‘shadow lines’ that the literature seeks to repudiate. It does so by impelling into public memory accounts of violence that paradoxically tied the people of the region forging identities insisting upon differences with what lies across the border. Gyanendra Pandey points out, “There were people with no fixed abode, no fixed national status both Pakistani-Indian and at the same time not Pakistani not Indian. Yet available categories allowed for classification as only distinctly Pakistani or Indian’. After the announcement of Independence and the Partition, the fate of thousands hung in between as the Boundary Award was made public two days later. The fiction explores the state of uncertainty and fears and aspirations of the people who did not know to which country they belonged:

“Finally the day of India’s independence and Pakistan’s birth came. On August 15, both countries were declared to be free. But there was no decision about the boundary of Punjab and people of Piruwala could not know about their fate, whether they are citizens of India or Pakistan. They spent whole day in

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fear and sadness. They looked on the face of everybody coming from Kasur, but fearfully asked nothing. They found their own meanings of the cheerfulness or disgust on the passenger’s face”. 86

The only journeys that have acquired heroic proportions in our times are the ones that have sought to alter the cartography of the self. The point of departure is self exile and the crucial mileposts - the ones tell whether it is a journey into madness or out of it, whether it is time to travel towards the future and self-actualization, or towards the past and defensive stupor - are not placed predictably along a road. 81 The fictional descriptions picture an existentialist reality - the separation of people living on both sides who had a long history of cultural and social contact and paradoxical character of borders being a metaphor of ambiguities of nation building. 82

“Obviously, it had become impossible for them to stay in their houses. And they would have started new paths for the search of new destinations.
‘Where Bebe? Where will you go leaving your own home?’
‘Wherever our fate will take us. Now there is no home of our own. Salma weeps all the time and she says that she would not go anywhere rather she will die over here”. 83

Threatened by unrelenting and remorseless violence, migrants’ journey across new borders had no moral glamour attached to it and no religious sanctity. Confronted by mercilessness of those who had ruined them by instigating politics of religious identities that they had not known till then, migrants in the partition narratives fail to understand how they will ever find their way back to an ordinary place called ‘home’. 84

The partition fiction repudiates the territorial boundaries and divisions constituted by the partition. Significantly, it is the affective recounting of peoples’

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experience of migration and highlights the disjunction between home and nation.\textsuperscript{85} The nations are fictions in a sense; but the process by which this fiction is created is real. Sometimes, a nation has been described as a soul, a spiritual principle.\textsuperscript{86} But with the partition, suddenly, home and nationality came at odds with each other. Against this backdrop, the reminiscences of the uprooted are like a perpetually yearning for a ‘paradise lost’.

“They could not remember when they had left their homes or how long they had been tossed about in the midst of those thundering waters.
‘Will we ever go back?’
‘Where?’
‘Home’.
‘Home?’
They were bewildered and anxious once again. The very thought of home threatened to shatter their sanity just as a storm threatens to uproot trees.”\textsuperscript{87}

Here it may be pointed out that however traumatic the separation may have been, the old world is claimed as one’s own even in the midst of most formidable barriers to its reclamation.\textsuperscript{88} The partition migrants in their accounts appear united in their misfortune irrespective of their social class, caste and gender experience. The tension between the ‘differing’ experiences and the master narrative of the last journey seeks to condense, simplify and standardize the account of partition migration.\textsuperscript{89} Indeed, what we receive in the creative literature on the partition is the

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\textsuperscript{85} As Benedict Anderson would argue, the nation had been imagined into existence. To him, “the nation is an imagined political community, imagined both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because “the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the mind of each lives the images of their communion”: Benedict Anderson, \textit{Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism}, Verso, London, 1983, p.

\textsuperscript{86} Anasua Basu Raychaudhary, “Nostalgia of Desh, Memories of Partition”, p. 5659.


\textsuperscript{89} The master narrative is built upon the common minimum narrative of partition since it is repeated by intellectual, social and governmental authorities as the true version of historical events: Ravinder Kaur. “The Last Journey: Exploring Social Class in the 1947 Partition Migration”, \textit{Economic and Political Weekly}, June 3, 2006, p. 2221.
Crossing the Border

essence of this nightmare, the displacement. It crystallizes the agony of innumerable
into the reverberating lament of the fictional characters. It humanizes the figures,
structures and movements of a traumatic history.

Most of the characters are not reconciled to borders being drawn and people
being uprooted from their familiar socio-cultural milieu. They remind us time and
again that regardless of religious passions being heightened by the politics of hate
and of fragile nature of community relations in the 1940’s, most people had no clue
whatsoever of the nature of forthcoming division’. The shift from the known to
unknown was apprehensive of migrant’s journey from sanity to madness. The
partition literature depicts the collective as well as individual anguish and mental
disequilibrium of those who were being drifted away from their homes:

“Do you want us to walk away with our hands and feet? What
use will they serve us without our lands?....
‘And what about our harvest?’ they asked. ‘And the crop we
have just sown? And our cattle’ .......
‘Do you expect us to leave everything we’ve valued and loved
since childhood? The seasons, the angle and colour of the Sun
rising and setting over our fields are beautiful to us, the shape
of our rooms and barns is familiar and dear. You can’t expect
us to leave just like that!”

Migration has often been viewed within a calculus of rational choices with
the individual as the locus of decision making. In the context of political turmoi1,
the decision to migrate to another place is often a strategy of survival in the face of
annihilating violence. Consequent to the violence of 1947 in which the most interior
aspects of life were the most intruded upon - fleeing to another alien space led to a
division of the self and the world according to a logic that made the self radically
fugitive and the world radically fragmented. There was alien-ness in the
environment and the partition fiction highlights the nuances of this change involved:

“Then the Hindu Sikhs realized that it is impossible for them to
live there. Within a day or so, ploughing came to a standstill.

90 Bidyut Chakrabarty, “History of Partition or Partition of History”, p.236.
91 Bapsi Sidhwa, Ice-Candy man, pp. 110-111.
Those who used to sow seeds in the fields, felt estranged. What was the use of sowing of crops which they could not later on harvest. There was a talk of burning down the houses which till then had been kept spick and span by them. They now thought of nothing else leaving the place. Gradually, all the Hindus of the area left for refugee camps. Within a week or so, the Hindus and Sikhs had segregated themselves from Muslim population just as village women separate grains of one sort from those of another by winnowing them.\(^\text{93}\)

The literature tries to crystallize that how a place called ‘home’ or _watan_ was just reduced to a rubble and converted into some alien land. The farms where “farmers ploughed the field, grazed the animals, sang the songs and felt amused, did not know why they were being deserted in those days\(^\text{94}\). Thus, the long awaited freedom brought to a whole of people not merely the exhilaration of political freedom but also a tragic snapping of their roots grown over centuries within specific geographical, cultural and social boundaries.\(^\text{95}\) In the cataclysmic event of partition, epitomized by scenes of carnage, devastation and utter chaos, reality itself became a melodrama. What was home or motherland before the partition, was no longer so in terms of geographical space and it was not home in its comprehensive sense because the people did not feel the same affinity with it. The partition had made their homeland hostile and strange.

“On the first day of the March, most people in the convoy, repeatedly stopped and looked at the distant landmarks of the city of Sialkot. It’s houses, it’s temples and its mosques, it’s church spires, its factories stood out sharply in the blazing Sun, and men vied with each other in identifying them pointing them to others. It was a warm day and the fields stretched clean and wide, ready for winter sowing. There was no activity in the fields through, they were deserted. The sowing would have to be postponed this year, thought Lala Kanshi Ram.”\(^\text{96}\)


\(^{94}\) Kartar Singh Duggal, _Nau Te Maas_, Attar Chand Kapur & Sons, Delhi, 1951, p. 64. Urvashi Butalia, _The Other Side of the Silence_, pp. 271-272.


\(^{96}\) Chaman Nahal, _Azadi_, p. 266.
Thus, the literature is able to testify to the collective loss of people who had no land to call their own, who had no place to call home within geographical confines of the nation they inhabited. It compels us to think whether it is possible to think about identity and place in more ontological ways, where belonging to a place, to a land, can also be significant to the ways in which we think and feel our subjectivities, to our ways of being in the world. In a momentary flashback, literature takes one back to the mayhem of 1947 through images of flames, people running in confusion and the tormented sounds of screaming. It attempts to recall those apocalyptic days when millions of people found themselves divested of their homes and attempted to cross the newly drawn borders. Literature speaks about the unending and woeful journey that the millions had to undertake. The moments of exodus represent both chaos and order, depending upon the individual circumstances and time period, when the last journey was undertaken. Abrupt, instantaneous, individually organized journeys to safety were common at the time of the partition. The pictures of long kafilas of people, their belongings, and their bullock carts moving from one place to another, have, in the world of images, become a metaphor for the longest human migration in history. Fiction uses vehicular metaphors to communicate their sense of dislocation, the train being the prominent one.

The underlying sentiment in the partition fiction is that the arbitrary delineation of borders created a lost generation, a generation with no moorings. It traces the lost subject in the form of migrants who were never able to heal the wounds of separation of home. Thus, it talks about a generation of people who were left unanchored by a moment in history that had created irreparable cleavages between home and belonging. In the fiction dealing with partition, the author can

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97 Priya Kumar, “Testimonies of Loss and Memory”, p. 209.
98 Regarding the mode of transportation, 10,36,000 moved on foot, 10,00,000 by trains; 31,34,000 by motor transport and 2000 by air. Trucks were provided by the military: Ravinder Kaur, Since 1947: Partition Narratives among Punjabi Migrants of Delhi OUP, New Delhi, 2007, pp. 29, 74.
100 Priya Kumar, “Testimonies of Loss and Memory”, p. 211,
find a voice even through impersonal narrators, or tellers-actors. Spaces in which the climax occurs are impersonal spaces. This is consistent with the use of impersonal narrators as the repositors of truth. The transformation of the impersonal voice into an impersonal style of presentation in personal narratives points to certain continuities through which the personal experience of disruption is conveyed.101 Krishan Chander’s short story “Peshawar Express” through the character of train itself narrates of the plight of refugees from West Punjab who were forced to leave their home and hearth. The pain speaks spontaneously as the train moves on and witnesses the harrowing tales:

“The passengers in the train were shedding tears of blood in their hearts of hearts. They were leaving the land of their birth, the land that had made them hardy. They had drunk deep at its salubrious springs. And today they had become strangers to it. It had shut doors on them. They were proceeding to an unknown country. When they thought of its parched plains and its scorching Sun their hearts sank. But they must go to save themselves, to protect the honour of their wives and daughters. Still, their eyes were riveted on ancient plateau - their own. Why the land of their birth no longer belonged to them. As I gathered speed, the passengers occupying the various compartments were trying to cling to the familiar sights of hills and meadows, valleys and orchards. Seeing them feel so forlorn, my spirits sank and I felt weak in the knees. I feared I may collapse any time.”102

The train, during the partition, came to symbolize the death of certainty in one’s dwelling and the start of a life of flux where one was no longer sure of anything. After the loss of home, one’s birth place and emotional moorings, train becomes an unwilling, uncertain, unsafe dwelling for millions of passengers during the passage from one way of life to another. The image of hapless passengers huddled in a corner of the train compartment with a few belongings and a look of


102 Krishan Chandar, “Peshawar Express”, Saros Cowasjee and K. S. Duggal (eds.), Orphans of Storm, pp.79-80. The story is narrated in the person of the railway engine, the non-human machine which alone, while men kill one another, is capable of human feelings (p. xiii.).
total disbelief heralds the beginning of all narratives of loss and misery during the partition.103

“There were over five hundred men and women in a compartment meant to carry ‘no sitting, no sleeping’. There was just one little lavatory in the corner without any water in the cistern… At all stations there were people with spears along the railings. Then the train was held up at a station for four days. No one was allowed to get off. Sunder Singh’s children cried for water and food. So did everyone else. Sunder Singh gave them his urine to drink. Then that dried up too. So he pulled out his revolver and shot them all. Shangara Singh aged six with his long brown blonde hair tied up in a topknot. Deepo aged four with curling eyelashes, and Amro, four months old, who tugged at her mother’s dry breasts with her gums and puckered up her face till it was full of wrinkles, crying frantically. Sunder Singh also shot his wife. Then he lost his nerve. He put the revolver to his temple but did not fire. There was no point in killing himself the train had begun to move. He heaved out of the corpses of his wife and children and came along to India.104

The journey by train across the border forms part of the most traumatic narratives of the partition. Almost all these journeys resulted in surreal encounters between the two warring communities leading either to death or a miraculous escape. These journeys exposed people to more than one side of man, who had turned into a beast, a mad fanatic, a mindless revenge seeker.105 Millions left their places for better and boarded the trains that took them to the realization of their dreams but the destiny had something else in its store for them:

103 Otherwise, trains rumbling the past villages, sleepy towns hinted at the fast paced world with its threats and dangers lurking beyond the idyllic settings of the villages. Trains to that extent were becoming not only part of India’s growing technological culture but were gradually also getting embedded in popular culture, literature and the fabric of daily life. Vijaya Singh, “The Dance of Death on the Highways of Steel”, Jasbir Jain, Reading Partition / Living Partition, Rawat, Jaipur, 2007, pp. 90, 91.

104 Khushwant Singh, Train to Pakistan, pp. 203-204.

105 Vijaya Singh, “The Dance of Death on the Highways of Steel”, pp. 87-88. It was the time when trains arriving in Lahore station with passengers all of them dead, with message scribed on the carriage reading ‘A Present from India’. So of course the Muslims sent back trains loaded of butchered Sikhs and Hindus with the message: ‘A Present from Pakistan’ : Leonard Mosley, The Last Days of British Raj, p. 279.
“On the train, all was utter confusion. The marauders came with spears, swords, bamboo lathis, rifles, and muskets. When the first wave rushed onto stricken train, someone fired into the big engine loco light and after that there was no light anywhere. There were more than two hundred goondas on foot and horseback, camels and cycles, letting off blood curdling cries of ‘Allah-Ho-Akbar’, abusing their mothers and their fathers and sisters, laughing sinister laughs that rang far into the night. The sweat of fear tickled down the necks of the people in the train. The stoker heard the mob coming, shouting, laughing, sneering. Abusing none in particular and yet everyone.106

Literature explores the uncertainty of a human situation where violence was the only certainty. The trains carrying refugees on the both sides, virtually turned out to be ‘corpse carriers’. The motif of train is in fact, closely interwoven with the image of the partition in public mind. The trains in the partition fiction become the ‘site to articulate the fragility of life, and the uncertainty of being able to reach one’s destination.’107

“There was no doubt what the train contained. They were sure that soldiers would come for oil and wood. They had no more oil to spare and wood they left was too damp to burn. But the soldiers did not come. Instead, a bulldozer arrived from somewhere. It began its lower jaw into the ground outside the station on the Mano Majra side. It did this for several hours, until there was a rectangular trench almost fifty yards long with mounds of earth on either side……. They came back in two’s carrying canvas stretchers. They tipped the stretchers into the pit and went back to the train for more. This went on all day till sunset.”108

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106 H.S. Gill, *Ashes and Petals*, Vikas, New Delhi, 1978, pp. 6-7. These refugee trains were known as ‘India Specials’ or ‘Pakistan Specials’. Due to their central role as preferred means of urban evacuation, they had become symbolic of the last journeys of the masses. Though the refugee special trains plan was started to evacuate the refugees *en masse*, it served an altogether different purpose for the attackers. Instead of launching random attacks, now one could indulge in ‘whole scale slaughter’ because these trains carried members of a single community: Ravinder Kaur, *Since 1947: Partition Narratives among Punjabi Migrants of Delhi*, p. 76.


The trains presented another world which portrayed the picture of totally ravaged humanity. The platform and the compartment of the train became the ‘indicators of the misery of refugee existence - a life in flux’. There were regular attacks on the refugee trains. The cramped confines of compartments would not allow people to run, escape or hide. The narratives of the partition are full of gory accounts of train-loads of dead passengers which symbolize the deranged humanity.

“The train stopped between Delhi and Mathura. Actually, it was forced to... what had happened? ... It looked as if thousands of insects had come out of the bushes and had been transformed into human beings. Shouts of ‘Jai Hind and Sat Sri Akal and Jai Bali Dev’, noises of the game hunt; calls of the beaters, the hunters, the butchers, the goats: the cries of those who refused to get off the train, of those who were being lanced, or stabbed - all were mixed up”.

The trains during the partition mayhem became the ‘heralds of death’ and multiplied the violence. In fact, the trains plying during the process of migration had something usual:

“One morning a train from Pakistan halted at Mano Majra railway station. At first glance, it had the look of a train in the days of peace. No one sat on the roof. No one clung between the bogies. No one was balanced on the footboards. But somehow it was different. There was something uneasy about it. It had a ghostly quality”.

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109 Ravi Kant and Tarun, K. Sain (eds.), Translating Partition, p. xv. Often the trains would arrive at their destinations piled with dead bodies. Such ghost trains would unleash another round of killings: “One day a train crammed with two thousand refugees from the more predominantly Muslim areas of Jhelum and beyond. At Gujrat station the train was stopped and Muslims from the neighbourhood, excited by the news of violence in East Punjab began to attack and loot. There was indescribable carnage. Several hours later the train moved on filled with bloody mess of corpses, without a soul alive. At Amritsar, when the train with its load of dead arrived, they took revenge on a train-load of Muslim refugees: Parkash Tandon, Punjabi Century, p. 131.

110 Vijay Kumar, “The Dance of Death on the Highways of Steel”, p. 93.


112 Khushwant Singh, Train to Pakistan, p. 171. In every fictional account the train is portrayed as carrying the dead bodies only as it was the order of the day: “ Its windows
Bhisham Sahni’s short story, “We have arrived Amritsar” gives the mental mappings of the refugees traveling by train from West Punjab. A Hindu Babu remains very submissive and bears the taunts of the Pathans as long as the train is passing through Muslim majority area. Once the train enters the Indian territory, the same Hindu Babu feels elated and stretches his muscles and even he takes the life of a Muslim who is trying to enter the train.113

There was official complicity in giving the details about refugee trains. It further worsened the situation and led towards the wholesale and industrialized butchery of the migrants. The trains were especially vulnerable to systematic, pre-mediated attacks because trains had fixed routes and may not change them and that indeed their times of departure and arrival were known to the assailants.114 In Saadat Hasan Manto’s short story ‘Modesty’, the rioters after killing the ‘other’, offer their co-religionists eatables and declare, “We were not sure about the time of your train’s arrival, regretfully, we were not able to offer you anything better than this most modest hospitality.”115

The attacks on the refugee convoys was the hallmark of the partition violence. Almost every fictional account has an instance of attack on the people on


114 Vijaya Kumar, “The Dance of Death on the Highways of Steel”, p. 94.

115 Saadat Hasan Manto, “Modesty”, Khalid Hasan(ed.), Mottled Dawn,p.201. The earth sealed its clumsy new boundaries in blood as town by town, farm by farm, the border was defined. Trains carrying refugees sped through the darkness of night - Hindus going one way and the Muslims the other. They left at odd hours to try to dodge mobs bent on their destruction. Yet trains were ambushed and looted and fleeing occupants slaughtered: Mushirul Hasan, Inventing Boundaries: Gender, Politics and Partition of India, OUP, New Delhi, 2002, p.17.
the move’. Torn from their roots and bearing the trauma of being uprooted from their ‘homes’, the migrants had a very little ability to combat the attacks. Thus, on the whole, the moving migrants were unfortunate victims of the marauding attacks or silent witnesses. At the mental and spatial level, the people traveling on foot shared the same hatred, suspicion, mass hysteria and insecurity with those traveling by trains:

“The first attack on the convoy came soon afterwards. Lala Kanshi Ram was shaken out of his well being by the noise of machine gun firing and the man of Indian army shouting: ‘Stop where you are. Sit down, sit down on the road. Don’t panic! Instinctively each one sat down where he was. The firing lay somewhere ahead but they could saw nothing. They heard tumultuous shouting and cries of *Allah Ho Akbar*… people looked with fear and tension. Many were shivering and murmuring prayers. As soon as the second unit had passed the mango gardens that cut off the valley from other, they heard the cries of *‘Allah Ho Akbar’* and *‘Ya Ali’* and saw a group of armed man or horsebacks to their right. The attack from right was a ruse, to frighten them and make them run to the left. A large number of Muslims armed with rifles and swords were concealed in the garden. The soldiers could not fire on a crowd so mixed up, where they were afraid of hitting their own people. They fixed bayonets and attacked into the garden, but many of them were killed, along with hundreds of refugees”.

Often the sick and feeble-bodied were abandoned by roadside. So were the dead with no one to mourn them or perform obsequies. The living had no time for the dying and the dead. Each looked to their own selves, as few showed pity for age and sex, and many aged or infirm persons who could not walk were deserted by their relations and left to die on the roadside.

“When people died due to illness or exhaustion, as many did, they were cremated by the roadside and the family moved on. It was decided to leave these bodies where they were, they were far too numerous to be attended to. Most of the dead lay fully dressed, only a few women lay with their breasts

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exposed, with a dead child next to the breast. The men lay on their backs or on their sides, their mouths open. Some women lay doubled up like bundles. While there were splashes of the blood on the ground, and in a few cases on the tree trunks, the bodies themselves were relatively clean. Only their unnatural postures gave out that they were dead.\textsuperscript{118}

Refugee camps formed the transit stage between uprootement and resettlement. These refugee camps have been fictionalized in the partition literature as portrayal of humanity under duress. The partition fiction records that when refugees arrived at camps set up for them or found shelter in schools, evacuee properties, temples, mosque, old facts, gardens, railway stations or footpaths, they understood that far from being participants in ‘pilgrim time’ who had at last realized their telos of burgeoning historical explanation, that they are merely poor players trapped in civil, political and religious nightmares enacted to satisfy the egotism of some and powerful ambitions of others.\textsuperscript{119} Refugee camps were ubiquitous and the crisis rippled out across the rest of the sub-continent. Sanitation was poor, old customs went unobserved and taboos were broken.\textsuperscript{120} The life in refugee camps in itself was deplorable:

\textquote{The rain had been heavy through the day. Small streams of water flowed through the muddy lanes of the refugee camp and in many cases flooded the tents which stood shoulder to shoulder on both sides of the lanes. Most of women had removed their \textit{saris} and were working only in petticoats with brooms in hands, they vigorously pushed the water out of the tents and made little mud dams outside to prevent if from coming in again}.\textsuperscript{121}

People crazed with fear, shattered in body and mind, most of them pitifully destitute, had come over, many lakhs more than had left the country. They had to be fed, clothed, protected from the ravages of disease, found shelter and homes, where they could be slowly nursed back to some semblance of lost dignity and the specter

\textsuperscript{118} Chaman Nahal, \textit{Azadi}, p. 287.
\textsuperscript{119} Alok Bhalla, \textit{Partition Dialogues}, pp. 6-7.
\textsuperscript{120} Yasmin Khan, \textit{The Great Partition}, pp. 163-164.
\textsuperscript{121} Chaman Khan, \textit{Azadi}, p. 165.
of fear driven from their hearts.\textsuperscript{122} By the time migrations were finally over, millions had crossed the newly created boundaries, carrying with them memories of a kind of violence that the three communities had visited upon each other, that was unmatched in scale, brutality and intensity. Saadat Hasan Manto’s short story ‘\textit{Dog of Titwal}’ deals with a situation where a dog is made an object of fun between Pakistani and Indian soldiers. Thus, it encapsulates how the communal passions rang high and even the animals were assured to show their identities as Indians or Pakistanis:

“It soon became a game between the two soldiers with the dog running round in circles in state of great terror. Both Harnam Singh and Himmat Khan were laughing boisterously. The dog began to run towards Harnam Singh, who abused him loudly and fired. The bullet caught him in the leg. He yelped, turned around and began to run towards Himmat Khan only to meet more fire, which was only meant to scare him. ‘Be a brave boy, if you are injured, do not let that stand between you and your duty. Go, go, go’, the Pakistani shouted. The dog turned. One of his legs was now quite useless. He began to drag himself towards Harnam Singh, who picked up his rifle, aimed carefully and shot him dead. Subedar Himmat Khan sighed, ‘The poor buggar martyred’. Jamadar Harnam Singh ran his hand over the still hot barrel of his rifle and muttered, ‘he died a dog’s death’.\textsuperscript{123}

\textsuperscript{122} Ravinder Kaur, \textit{Since 1947: Partition Narratives among Punjabi Migrants of Delhi}, p. 89. With the loss of their homes and places of work, with the snapping of long-standing friendships and other social ties, there was little for the refugees to do except seek comfort from the sharing of each other’s riot experiences: Sudhir Kakkar, \textit{The Colours of Violence}, Penguin, New Delhi, 1995, p.31. In contrast to their nostalgia about the past, when the migrants in the partition fiction speak about their present conditions, they mention only those immediate, contingent, and uncovered events which are shadowed by despair and are devoid of any moral power or civilizational purpose. Their civil spaces had lost coherence, their time had become fragmented, and they do not know how to retrieve their lives and remake their homes: Alok Bhatta, \textit{Partition Dialogues}, p.12.

\textsuperscript{123} Saadat Hasan Manto, ‘The Dog of Titwal’, Khalid Hasan (edited and translated), \textit{Mottled Dawn; Fifty Sketches and Stories on Partition}, Penguin, New Delhi, 1997, pp. 36-37. The sardonic remark, “Now even the dogs will have to be either Hindustani or Pakistani”, testifies to the absolutization of difference; the logic of national boundaries seems to extend even to the creatures of the animal kingdom. The dog is explicitly described as a refugee, its vagabound status reminiscent of the many refugees wandering about, looking for shelter and food. The poignancy of this exchange is sharpened by our sense of context in which such black humour becomes possible. The reader can make inferences on the
The metamorphosis of cities and villages underwent a drastic change in the aftermath of partition. It totally transformed the cultural composition of the spaces. As old communities departed and new settlers arrived, the inner milieu of the city was altered and its cultural, social and religious rhythms disturbed, and these had profound implications. Finally, the city was transformed in a metaphysical sense, as people were uprooted from the places where they had been born and nurtured and where they had families, properties and associations. The social and cultural complexions were totally altered:

“Lahore is suddenly emptied of yet another hoary dimension. There are no Brahmins with caste marks or Hindus in dhotis with bodhis, only hoardes of Muslim refugees.”

The partition brought about the identity crisis. The metaphors of lunacy just caricature the fact that separation from home threatened the core of many migrants’ identity. For them, loss of home is loss of self for which they yearn forever. The loss of identity which the consciousness of common heritage conferred was one of the most serious losses of the partition. Saadat Hasan Manto approaches the subject reality of widespread suffering on account of displacement, as personified in the figure of the dog. The dog’s situation, thus, embodies the dilemma of all the people who faced a closure of choices because of the partition. Through the refraction of his own experience as well as the general experience of liminality, Manto achieves a searing critique of the oppressive structures that came into being with the division of the sub-continent: Ravikant and Tarun K. Saint, Translating Partition, pp. 97, 98.

The most obvious aspect was physical: the expansion or contraction which the city experienced due to refugee movements and the changes imposed by the new boundaries and the manner in which these were reflected in spatial structure, land use and built forms of the city: Gyanesh Kudaisya and Tai Yong Tan, The Aftermath of Partition in South Asia, p.200.

Bapsi Sidhwa, Ice-Candy Man, p. 175. “My beloved city of Lahore still standing not far from Delhi, within quicker reach by air or train, suddenly became a forbidden land guarded by a sovereign state of new ideologies, loves and hates. Homes were lost and hearts were bruised in both unhappy parts of Punjab”: Pran Nevile, Lahore: The Sentimental Journey, Penguin, New Delhi, 1993, p. 18.

Crossing the Border

in his classic story ‘Toba Tek Singh’ through an allegory which concerns the
echange of lunatics after the Independence.127

“Just before sunrise, Bishan Singh, the man who had stood on
his legs for fifteen years, screamed and as officials from both
sides rushed towards him, he collapsed on the ground.
There behind the barbed wire, on the one side lay India, and
behind more barbed wire, on the other side lay Pakistan. In
between on the bit of earth which had no name, lay Toba Tek
Singh”.128

Toba Tek Singh is a triumph of ambivalence and a great story because it
proclaims the in-betweeness of its protagonist and his triumph over those who want
to fix his identity. The madman’s death takes place in no-man’s land, where the
writ of neither nation prevails. Indeed, the term ‘madness’ itself has a privileged
status in the discourse on the partition. Analogies of madness appear in abundance
and with frightening frequency.129 Dividing the country, identifying the people as
Pakistani and Hindustani lunatics, becomes a bizarre act and simple, direct
questions of lunatics bring in doubt the sanity of communal leaders. What we are
finally left with is a powerful and suggestive image of a physically and psychically
uprooted individual, standing at the threshold of a new world, a new context and a
new reality. It is an ambivalent movement, suggesting both loss and total liberation
of the self.130

The people underwent the traumatic experience of being uprooted from their
land and then being planted in an alien land. They were robbed of their identity
which was closely knitted with the notion of an area and land. In Kulwant Singh

127 Ian Talbot, “Literature and the Human Drama of the 1947 Partition”, D.A. Low and
Howard Brasted (eds.), Freedom, Trauma and Continuities: Northern India and
128 Saadat Hasan Manto, “Toba Tek Singh”, Khalid Hasan (edited and translated), Mottled
Dawn, pp.9-10. Manto makes the character Bishan Singh reflect the sense of confusion
and uprootedness which was faced by many refugees. They were attached to their
ancestral villages not out of mere sentimentality, but as the allegory reveals because it
was there that the core or their identity resided”: Ian Talbot, “Literature and the Human
129 RaviKant and Tarun K. Saint, Translating Partition, p. xvi.
Virk’s story *Mainu Janney*, the rickshaw puller says, “Ever since the day, I have crossed the border, I found nobody known to me”. But when he comes to know that the interlocutor is familiar with his area, he at once amazingly asks. “*Tu Mainu Janney*? (Do you know me?). And he was brimming with joy.\(^\text{131}\)

Intizaar Hussain's short story "An Unwritten Epic" graphically portrays the theme of a lost world and utter bewilderment in the new landscape and consequent emotional trauma. The story revolves around Pischwa, who is quite popular in his Indian village Qadirpur but after the Partition he is just reduced to a *muhajir*. He faces the hostile words like, “every *muhajir* here should damn well pack up and go back to India”.\(^\text{132}\) Thus, Pischwa is reduced from being a man of uncomplicated courage to being a self-pitying and blustering fool. Pishwa becomes an emblem of lost memories and abandoned hopes, and the narrator acknowledges, in the secret of notations, the impossibility of imagination in a society which has been ruptured from its older forms of life.\(^\text{133}\)

The people had to relocate themselves in the changed and hostile landscapes. The literature tries to characterize the fractured sense of family and community, the dominant way of the living of the migrants with all its despair and suffering. They had to live amidst the atmosphere of animosity and alienation of their ‘own’. The wounds of displacement were scratched by hostile and unwelcoming attitude of the local population:

> “The relations smiled. They said they were happy, they had safely got out. Some offered them tea. Some offered them food. Yet none offered them shelter. They offered apologies, they were already overcrowded, they said”.\(^\text{134}\)

As if to darken the irony of their migration, the refugees discover that those who had waged them to leave their homes had no vision of a future to offer them -


\(^{133}\) Alok Bhala and Vishwa Mittar Adil (Trans. and eds.), *A Chronicle of the Peacocks*, pp. xiv-xv.

\(^{134}\) Chaman Nahal, *Azadi*, p. 325.
no politics which will give voice to their anxieties.\textsuperscript{135} The partition horror stalked their dreams. They had lost their homeland, where they had been born and lived, which constituted such an important, albeit unconscious, facet of the identity. With the loss of their homes, their sense of personal identity was tottering – had become diffused – while they had yet to begin the process of adapting this fragmenting identity to a new homeland.\textsuperscript{136} Mulk Raj Anand’s short story “The Parrot in Cage” deals with woes of the migrants through the character of an old woman Rukmani. The story deplores the inhumanity and callousness of the administration while dealing with the refugees. Consequently, all the hopes of the refugees were shattered.\textsuperscript{137} Mohan Rakesh’s short story, “God’s Dog” depicts the mental pain and agony of a Sikh refugee who is just reduced to a number (122616) and is not treated as a human being. The story highlights the plight of millions who had to leave their homes and the callous attitude of the state further scratched their wounds.\textsuperscript{138} People are depicted as lost, bewildered, and broken ones who could not comprehend the breakdown of everything that was known to them. They slept and woke up with demonic fears and were completely overwhelmed by the situation.\textsuperscript{139} Abandoned by the state, the refugees were nobody’s responsibility:

\begin{quote}
“In each of these areas they also enquired for a flat in a private home. The native people in Delhi seemed so afraid of the Punjabis. The moment they gave out their identity, the door was shut on them. ‘Punjabis? Never! You are so quarrelsome. Did, they know what they, the Punjabis, had gone through? But the door was shut tight and even when he pounded hard on it, it was not opened again. Only in one instance the man reappeared at the window on the first floor and said: Didn’t I tell you, you people are too quarrelsome.’”\textsuperscript{140}
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{135} Alok Bhalla, \textit{Partition Dialogues}, p.7.
\textsuperscript{136} Sudhir Kakkar, \textit{The Colours of Violence}, p.39.
\textsuperscript{139} Ravinder Kaur, \textit{Since 1947: Partition Narratives among Punjabi Migrants of Delhi}, p. 88
\textsuperscript{140} Chaman Nahal, \textit{Azadi}, p.351.Once they reached new homeland, the fight for survival and rehabilitation stripped the community, if not of its vitality, certainly of its dignity. The
Wantomly sacrificed to the demands of making two new nations in 1947, the refugees often felt disgust and abandoned by a callous state, which had promised them the moon and given them, in words of the Urdu poet Faiz Ahmad Faiz, a ‘leprous day break’ instead. There is ambivalence regarding the role of the state which had been so trumpeted in the official discourse on the ‘refugee problem’. The lackadaisical approach of the bureaucracy and administrative lacunae added to the miseries of the refugees:

“It took Lala Kanshi Ram and Teja Singh several hours in the line to reach the officials who sat at one and behind large tables receiving the incoming refugees. Everyone referred to them with awe as the rehabilitation officers. And the first words of swarthy rehabilitation officer before whom Lala Kanshi Ram ended up were severe and abrupt. ‘Why have you come to Delhi?’

‘I am from Pakistan’, he said feeling certain that this was identity enough.

‘Why to Delhi? The officer was harsh and over-bearing.

‘I hope to settle here’, he said.

‘Why not in East Punjab: Why do you Punjabi’s lift your faces and march on to Delhi? The man was at least ten years younger than Lala Kanshi Ram, but he was scolding him though as Lala Kanshi Ram were only an infant.”

Thus, the creative writers have portrayed the process of migration and rehabilitation in their writings providing window to human strength and frailties. Despite all the adversities, refugees started the long journey to recovery and

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141 Yasmin Khan, _The Great Partition_, p. 175
143 Chaman Nahal, _Azadi_, pp. 340-341. Sohne Shah in Punjabi novel _Ab Na Bason Eh Gaon_, faces similar fate. “Then religion, how much property was left behind, how many members of the family died, what kind of work he wanted and there were so many other questions which Sohne Shah had to reply; Kartar Singh Duggal, _Ab Na Bason Eh Gaon_, Sahitya Academy, New Delhi, 1974, p.166.
adjusted to their new lives that would never be the same again.\footnote{Yasmin Khan, \textit{The Great Partition}, p. 164.} They showed all “the cheerful vitality of birds, which when robbed of their nest, will start immediately to build a fresh one. The conditions were harsh but not too harsh to suppress or even check the surge of life in these sturdy, virile people”.\footnote{Penderal Moon, \textit{Divide and Quit}, OUP, New Delhi, 1961, p. 247.} They reconciled to the new realities and again joined the march of destiny. They were put in new physical and psychological environment as they were to find home away from home.\footnote{Jasbir Singh, “Revisiting 1947: Punjabi Short Story on the Partition of the Punjab”, p. 57.}

“This city with its bustling restaurants, leafy trees, and well developed girls was becoming part of me, and moreover its shape was changing before my eyes. Those lanes with collapsed, burned out houses testifying to the terrible events that had happened there, were now fragrant with new houses and new residents, and the streets were full of new hustle and bustle. The shopkeepers sitting in abandoned shops no longer looked uprooted, the way they had before. Now they looked as though they had been sitting there forever.”\footnote{Intizar Hussain, \textit{Basti} (Translated from Urdu by Frances W. Pritchell), OUP, New Delhi, 2007, p. 78.}

Most accounts of the partition focus on violence, trauma and fragmented identities. But the partition is also about survival. The partition fiction not only contains narratives of despair but also of grit and determination to fight against odds, not to succumb to the massive sense of loss.\footnote{Sherina Joshi and Preeti Gupta Dewan (eds.), “Editorial”, \textit{Creative Forum: Journal of literary and Critical Writings}, Vol. 18, No. 1, 2005, p. 12.}

“Aladinpur was the village of Allah and everyone was welcome to come and stay here………. Santa Singh and Ajit moved into small Kutcha house next to Bhagwan Singh’s which earlier belonged to Hamid, the potter, who had opted to move to Pakistan. The farming was hard going for Santa Singh at first. He was getting on in years, the fields were raw and unproductive, besides everything, he was all alone.”\footnote{H. S. Gill, \textit{Ashes and Petals}, pp. 16-17.}
Kartar Singh Duggal’s short story “A New Home” portrays the plight of the migrants who had to leave their homes in a hurry to escape the attacks and they were not able to take anything except their clothes on. At the same time, it depicts the resettlement of the refugees in a new locate to make a new start.151 The migrants had to put themselves in the survival mode in somewhat alien land. After the anarchy and chaos of the partition, the life began itself in its rhythm with all vigour and force.152

“These refugees have guts, they said. Their families struggled for centuries to carve out a place for themselves, people commented. In the twinkling of an eye their properties were reduced to ashes. But without shedding a tear, they set about creating a new world for themselves. These people have guts.”153

The partition fiction informs that human life cannot be paused even under the imperious sway of destitute. Kulwant Singh Virk’s short story is the best example to dramatize this human situation. Its theme bears universality in nature and character. The author, working as a recovery officer goes to recover a woman in a sleepy village of western Punjab. But the woman disagrees to go back and wants to make a fresh start of life under the new conditions. The author compares the human being with the Khabbal, a perennial grass which begins to grow even after being uprooted.154 Sukhwant Singh Mann’s short story “Chattu” also reflects the same

human spirit which tries to re-reflect the same human spirit which tries to re-establish itself after dislocation and devastation. It conveys the idea that even the greatest human tragedies cannot check the surge of the life. ‘Chattu’ turns out to be a symbol of belonging and the same time the symbol of human quality of establishing itself.\textsuperscript{155} The partition characters began to peep into the future, their new hopes, new dreams and aspirations. The determination of the characters to start afresh, despite unconscionable loss is one of the pronounced feature of the creative writings. The fiction aesthetically portrays this human quality of re-establishing and quest for life. It brings out the continuity of human consciousness. The partition literature fully deals with the people’s yearning for a lost home they felt nostalgic about their lost places and always had an ambition or aspiration to see once again the place where they were born and brought up:

Lala Kanshi Ram would forgive the English and the Muslims for all their sins, if only he could return. Return and die here and be cremated by the side of river Aik. To be carried shoulder high on a bier through the streets of Sialkot, through all the streets in each of which somewhere sat a friend. Then at last moment, for his spirit to look at the Aik and the land of Sialkot from above, from the sky, or to come down and roll in the dust of fields -that would be very pinnacle of his delight.\textsuperscript{156}

Even sometimes they risked their life to have a glimpse of their motherland Gurdyal Singh’s short story ‘Murh Gwachi Shai’ (Twice Lost Thing) narrates that how Ilma tried to enter the Indian territory during the war to see his native village but he was captured as spy. On discovering his identity, the people of his native village give him modest treatment but he is arrested by police for necessary action. While he is being taken to the police station, the people feel that they have again lost something of their own which they had recovered.\textsuperscript{157} Vishnu Parbhakar’s short story “My Native Land” portrays the plight of a Hindu lawyer who had to migrate


\textsuperscript{156} Chaman Nahal, \textit{Azadi}, pp. 148-149.

from Lahore. But time and again he would visit Lahore. Ultimately, he is killed for visiting his motherland and on being questioned that why he came to Lahore, he answers, ‘I never went from here. I just can’t, this is my country, my native land’. And then, it was over. The memory of motherland was like a sore in the hearts of the displaced who always longed for reunion with their ‘own’ people and land. Phattu Marasi, when asked about why he came back from Pakistan, picked some dust and place it on his forehead and answered, “Prabha, it was the love for this which dragged me back, it was not there.”

Thus, the creative writings reveal the other face of the freedom. The partition left a permanent scar on the psyche of the uprooted. For them, the loss of the home was the loss of self. The creative writers have explored the mental agony, pain and bewilderment of the people experienced this catastrophic event. The popular sentiment and perception in fictional writings has recorded the event of partition with profound sense of despair and unhappiness. The fiction writers are not concerned with merely telling the stories of violence and migration rather they have dealt with the sense of rupture, tribulations and trauma experienced by ordinary people. “What distinguishes the creative writers from their contemporary political commentators and analysts is their ability to repudiate ‘communal’ categories and transcend religious, regional and territorial barriers in their creative moments. Their creative energies were released not because their co-religionists alone were mercilessly slaughtered in the communal holocaust, but because their humanity was wounded and the civilizational rhythm of Indian sub-continent was being irreparably destroyed.”

Literature provides a fascinating site for analysis because it manifests a far more concrete and tactile mapping of concepts of home and belonging. It reveals very poignantly, how place or home can become an inseparable part of our genealogy and the ways in which we understand our relation to the

world. In particular, the relationship to homeland is very corporeal, almost physical in its intensity. Moreover, these works question the moral and intellectual underpinnings of the decision to partition the country and uproot and shatter the lives of the millions. On the whole, the creative writings have portrayed the predicament and agony of the people, graphically. Fiction probes the inner recesses of the mind and through the fictionalized characters, the creative writer epitomizes the psychological trauma of the people while being robbed of their homeland. In the exchanges of fictional characters, ‘home’ is always identified as the place left behind and a place of hopeless yearning.

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161 The critical and theoretical endeavour of addressing these testimonies of loss and mourning are crucial to our understanding and acceptance of the partition as an event that cannot be frozen in the past. In their different ways, these fictions attest to individual traumatic histories that have to do with a legacy of the partition. The horror that they attempt to render, however, is not only the bodily violence of the times but the violation that results from the loss of home, family, community, physical space or a shared past, traumas not really grasped by the terms in which we think about violence and reality today: Priya Kumar, “Testimonies of Loss and Memory”, pp. 211,215.