CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

This thesis examines the way in which select writers deal with a range of incidents of violence, in narratives written post 2001. Until the 1990s, the study of diaspora narratives was based mainly on questions of identities and relocation. However, the bombing of the Twin Towers in New York on 11 September 2001 had a significant impact on the writers and their writing. This act of terrorism compelled authors of the South Asian Diaspora to reflect and debate upon the effect of increased violence on the world as a whole and on their own abode also. The shifting situations induced them to modify their outlook towards the issues that they choose to write about. In the decade since then, acts of violence in the land of their origin and land of residence have been central themes to their writing. This thesis undertakes a study of the discourse of violence, which necessitates the interrogation of the ideology and position of violence in society. This is attempted through an analysis of the literary narratives by seven authors, namely, M.G. Vassanji, Rohinton Mistry, Nadeem Aslam, Anita Rau Badami, Roma Tearne, Monica Ali and Khaled Hosseini. In order to do this, certain essential concepts of violence are examined in detail. These key concepts are applied to the texts under study to comprehend the complexities of underlying violent acts.

The thesis also scrutinizes the concepts of nonviolence and ‘peacefulness’ from the point of view of formulating a theoretical framework. The objective of this thesis is to explore how writers consciously depict acts of violence in their writing to express their disapproval of the use of violence and to sensitize readers to the futility of violent actions. To this end, the first chapter is interdisciplinary in approach and discusses the effect of the several recent acts of violence that have taken place in the world. The introduction takes up the matter of the changing representations. It deals with the way in which the altered living conditions made the world a more dangerous place and changed the focus of fictional narratives.
The authors also use the narratives as a coping mechanism by sending a message to the readers that violence can and should be eschewed through reconciliation and resolution.

The first section, **The South Asian Diaspora: Shifting Perspectives (1.1)**, examines the alterations subsequent to 2001. It looks at the way in which the world has changed and transformed as a consequence of the event of 9/11, the bombing of the Twin Towers in New York. It also scrutinizes the ways in which writers write about violence subsequent to 2001. It probes as well the motivation of writers of the South Asian Diaspora in writing about violence and the changing representations of the concept of diaspora.

The second section, **Understanding the Ideology of Violence (1.2)** examines the concept and ideology of violence and illustrates how it is related to other associated notions like power, strength and force. It also observes strategies of conciliation and peacefulness. It further attempts to analyse some theories associated with violence. It examines theories put forth by Samuel Huntington (in *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*, 1996), Rajmohan Gandhi (in *Revenge and Reconciliation, Understanding South Asian History*, 1999), Amartya Sen (in *Identity and Violence*, 2006) and others, which elucidate the causes for the persistence and escalation of violence throughout history.

The concluding section, **Methodology and Chapter Schema (1.3)** proposes the chapter scheme and also sets forth the methodology used. It suggests the way in which theoretical concepts are used to analyse the texts studied. This section also explains how the various manifestations of violence are portrayed in the chosen texts and provides appropriate grounds for choosing the selected works.

### 1.1 The South Asian Diaspora: Shifting Perspectives

The notion of diaspora has been generating greater attention for the last quarter century due to the contemporary phenomenon of people going overseas
for work and study. The changes in technology, ubiquity and awareness of mass transport systems, and improvement in methods of mass communication have changed the nature and amount of migration. On June 13, 2011, the Times of India newspaper reported: “There has been a rise of 42% increase in migrant population across the world in the last decade” (5). This shows the extent to which the trend of migration is growing. This growth is only escalating faster with time. The same report continues: “According to the Geneva-based World Organization for Migration, the total population of migrants in the world rose from 15 crore in 2000 to 21.40 crore in 2011” (5). Such an increase gives rise to various issues. Migrants face innumerable challenges because they are not natives in the country of their residence. Factors like family identity and individual identity assume importance in such a situation. It requires strength and vigour to maintain one’s distinctiveness in a new or unfamiliar setup, to mingle into the dominant culture and yet avoid getting submerged in it, to fit in but retain a unique individualism. With the proliferation of migration trends, approaches of examining diasporic groups have also changed. Earlier, members of the diaspora were viewed as unfamiliar or somehow disadvantaged. These views have now become more practical, and constituents of diasporas are no longer viewed in the same manner.

The issues of everyday living that affect the diaspora have changed also. Due to the forces of globalization, localization and regionalization, the earlier concerns with identity exploration and formation are no longer dominant and new perspectives on diaspora are emerging. Presently, attitudes of natives of the host country towards diaspora are more favourable and diasporic citizens are accepted as part of the society. This in turn makes the diaspora more confident and assertive. The process of acculturation and assimilation of the members of a diaspora which was long and agonizing earlier has developed extensively as migrants try to recreate a home away from home. Previous administrative and legal restrictions on travel or emigration for work and settlement have eased. This is an important development and has had widespread effect on the lives of migrants. Bahar Baser and Ashok Swain in Diasporas as Peace makers: Third Party Mediation in Homeland Conflicts (2008) express their point, “the benefits of globalization have made communication much easier and the diaspora
communities may stay engaged with their homeland's politics and evolve a long-distance nationalist stance towards the developments in their homeland” (13). No longer do immigrants leave with a one way ticket to the target destination: now, there is greater interaction and involvement with the affairs of the home country and this is true of the writers also. Baser and Swain add: “Members of diaspora groups have greater potential to interact between homeland and host land, as well owing to improved information and communication. Consequently, it is particularly important to understand the dynamics of diaspora groups in world conflicts in the present day” (13). In the era of globalization and improved communication, all this leads to multifaceted and complex matters that entail exploration.

In the fast-changing world that we inhabit, multiculturalism is an accepted way of life in most parts of the world. This development affects the concept of diasporas in that the representation of the immigrant as the “other” in a particular nation-state is not as absolute as earlier. Earlier the immigrant embodied an implicit comparison between one world and another, between two languages and two sets of cultural norms. This cultural politics of difference has been discarded. The monolithic, homogenous state has given way to diversity, multiplicity and heterogeneity. Also the tendency of the immigrant to perceive the new land as the referential other, of constantly comparing the new land to the old no longer holds. There is greater acceptance that factors governing an individual’s life now depend on the national laws where the diasporic subject resides and the influence of the traditional values of the home country stand diluted in a globalized world. As Robin Cohen explains in Global Diasporas, An Introduction (1997): “In the age of globalization, unexpected people turn up in the most unexpected places. Their more diverse geographical spread creates a more truly global basis for the evolution of diasporic networks” (162). Apart from the changed perceptions, other developments like technological and trans-border international advancements too have an effect on this experience. Robin Cohen points out that these shifting destination patterns have been paralleled by important political changes that affect migration. The character of international migration has been radically altered as a consequence of the breakup of the hitherto prevailing international balance of
power. Thus, it can be said that present-day diasporic rubric has undergone significant alteration as well.

Most diaspora analysis till date stressed on conventional approaches such as examining the themes of alienation and adaptation of the individual in a diasporic location. However, the way in which the scrutiny is structured has changed in contemporary times, thus opening up fresh and exciting ways of understanding cultural variation and identity construction. Diaspora as a term historically denotes the scattering of people from their homelands into new communities across the globe. William Safran in *Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return* (1991) contrasts the word diaspora with other related categories. He notes that the expression is now used to describe different categories of people—expatriates, expellees, political refugees, alien residents, immigrants, ethnic and racial minorities, refugees and other comparable groups. In order to situate the meaning of diaspora within suitable parameters, he provides some distinguishing characteristics of the term.

Homi Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* (1994) positions diasporic epistemology in the realm of the cross-cultural. He calls it a third space, a hybrid location. Robin Cohen in *Global Diasporas* (1997) agrees with Safran’s definition and advances it further adding supplementary features to it. He also points out that scholars of diaspora studies know that the Jewish tradition is at the heart of any definition of the concept, yet in order to take a full account of this tradition, it is also necessary to transcend it as the tradition is much more complex and diverse than assumed and the word diaspora is now being used in a variety of new but interesting and suggestive contexts. Makarand Paranjpe in *In Diaspora: Theories, Histories, Texts* (2001) focuses specifically on the changes in the nature of South Asian Diaspora. He points out that there is nothing alienating or dispossessing about a South Asian’s sudden burst of stupendous success in Silicon Valley. He too notices the confusions and contradictions in the manner in which diaspora is theorized. K. Sachidanandan in That Third Space: Interrogating the Diasporic Paradigm (2001) talks about the tremendous qualitative and quantitative change in the phenomenon of diasporas owing to the great demographic upheavals of the
last century and to the unprecedented growth of the technologies of communication. According to him the new speed, reach and dimension of communication networks including the dimensions of vision, sound and movement, and the increased possibilities of forming a little real community of one's own people have definitely changed the nature and experience of exile.

Gabriel Sheffer in *Diaspora Politics, At Home Abroad* (2003) indicates that until the late twentieth century, wherever possible, and particularly when physical appearance and basic mores, innate habits, and linguistic proficiency permitted, many members of such groups tried hard to conceal their ethno-national origins. Furthermore, they were inclined to minimize the importance of their contacts with their countries of origin. According to him, such patterns of behaviour were related to a desire prevalent among members of such groups to assimilate, acculturate, or at least integrate into their countries of settlement. He also notes that despite recent recurring incidents of racist and xenophobic outbursts in some societies directed at foreigners and “others” in general, and at members of ethno-national diasporas in particular, there are greater numbers of host countries or societies in which previously held negative, skeptical views are being modified or are waning. In such host countries new mutually reinforcing forces and processes have emerged.

According to Braziel and Mannur in *Theorizing Diaspora: A Reader* (2002), diasporas confound the accepted, visibly demarcated parameters of geography, national identity and belonging. Diasporas work simultaneously in two directions which challenge the parameters of nationalism and globalization. They call for further elaboration of their conceptualization especially in relation to the post-2001 geopolitical shifts. The international migratory flows have been profoundly impacted by the terrorist attacks against the Pentagon and the Twin Towers of the World Trade Centre. Diaspora shifts post 2001 have witnessed the proliferation of extraterritorial sites of confinement and interrogation, increased detention for asylees and illegal border crossers, expanded ground for legal deportation of immigrants and the tightening of international boundaries and the restriction of trans border migrations in the name of homeland security. These
post-2001 shifts have had global ramifications. Jana Evans Braziel in *Diaspora, an Introduction* (2008) examines diasporas in relation to aspects of global capitalism. Diasporas transmit information, finance, and even desire across the international borders of nation-states; diasporas hence typically remain connected to those left behind at home through cyber, digital and telecommunication technologies, expressions of long distance nationalism and transnational activism to raise political consciousness and impact foreign policy in their adopted countries. Diasporas are thus transnational branches of nation states, both those of the homeland and country of adoption.

William Safran, Ajaya Kumar Sahoo and Braj Lal in *Transnational Migrations, The Indian Diaspora* (2009) agree with the earlier position that diasporas are held together by a collective ethnic identity and a common relationship with the homeland, although they may be scattered geographically. They also observe that apart from the forces of globalization, advancement in the technologies of travel, transport and communication, most notably the Internet play a vital role in the emergence of transnational networks. With the shrinking of space and time, there has been a revival of the local in the global phenomenon. Due to this, the ties with the motherland are reinforced and intensified. Diaspora discourse will endure owing to these advances.

It can be seen from the above that different diaspora scholars have developed an array of terms to describe the topography of diaspora and diasporism. Most agree, however, that the term is used to describe migrants who live outside their native country for varied reasons. They also stress the changing nature of this phenomenon in the present time due to the changes that modern technology has achieved and to develop a transnational framework for the study of migration. A methodology that moves beyond the present system of binaries such as home land–host land, acculturation–cultural persistence, and citizen–non-citizen that have been the usual up to the present time is needed. The framework has expanded and attitudes and methods of learning are undergoing a change, opening up new and interesting possibilities.
Other changes have taken place too. The world we live in has witnessed revolutions in the information technology, communication, transport, medical fields and a number of other areas as well. Alongside these, many acts of violence have occurred and violence in all its forms destabilizes the quality of life. The willingness of certain individuals to commit violence often poses tremendous problems for ordinary persons and these acts have changed life in the world. Jamal Nasser in Globalization and Terrorism, The Migration of Dreams and Nightmares (2005) writes: “The world today is very different from the world our grandparents lived in. It is much more connected and perhaps much more dangerous” (1). There can be no opposition to the fact that the world today faces multiple threats. Violence has become endemic, more and more individuals and organized groups resort to violence for different reasons, some may desire power, others to redress perceived grievances. The chief act of violence of the late twentieth century that changed the world irrevocably is the attack on the Twin Towers in New York in 2001. Brian Forst in Terrorism, Crime, and Public Policy (2009) asserts:

One of the clichés of our time is that the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001 changed our world. That it is a cliché does not diminish the truth. In a single day, individuals operating in four small teams, outside the authority of any state, revealed themselves able to organize and inflict damage on civilians on a scale and in a manner that shocked the vast majority of both the general public and responsible authorities. (1)

On the morning of September 11, 2001 armed terrorists hijacked four airplanes and successfully initiated the largest attack ever led against the United States of America on its own soil. The airplanes were deliberately crashed into New York’s World Trade Centre resulting in considerable loss of life and property. Thomas Freidman in Longitudes and Attitudes: Exploring the World Before and After September 11 (2003) compares 9/11 to World War III and states, “World War III is a war being fought between open societies everywhere against religious totalitarians. America was simply the first target, but every open society is a potential target and every open society is being affected by the course of this war” (ix). Heightened security measures everywhere and a spillover from America’s direct assault on places perceived as breeding grounds for this religious
totalitarianism were the immediate results of this event. These attacks on the Twin Towers left a profound impact not only within the United States of America but on the global scenario. As Suketu Mehta in *Maximum City* (2002) describes: “I woke up in Brooklyn one September morning to find a thick grey cloud outside my window; the debris blowing over the East River from the burning World Trade Centre. That morning, in the city I had moved back to (New York), set off a chain of events that changed the nature of the gang war in the city I had recently left (Mumbai)” (583). The consequence of this attack was greater global activism by the USA against the danger of what they perceived or termed as ‘international terrorism’.

The search for Osama Bin Laden, the suspected mastermind behind the hits, and ‘the war against international terrorism’ was initiated and conducted in Afghanistan. Therefore, the impacts of the tremors created by the bombing in Afghanistan were immediately felt in the South Asian region. During this action Pakistan surfaced as the frontline state in the war against terrorism. Pakistan severed connections with the Taliban and joined the international coalition against terrorism; India found itself on a similar contour and had to change its strategies and tactics. More significantly, members of diasporic communities from South Asia within the United States, the United Kingdom and other locations in Europe found their own lives to be extensively disturbed. These groups of people were suddenly compelled to either rethink or renegotiate their loyalties. The equation between Eurocentric and non-Eurocentric cultures underwent a drastic shift. New borders were drawn. For the diasporic subject, cultural baggage became heavier, and the possibilities of integration weakened. Members of Asian ethnicity were ‘not invisible’ anymore. As race and personality became a marker of identity in the public space, there was an urgency to rethink or renegotiate categories of identity that one had come to take for granted. Baser and Swain make a relevant point: “as it has become increasingly hard to settle and assimilate in the host land, diasporas are more likely to continue to focus on their erstwhile homeland” (13, 2008). This may be one of the factors that motivate the writers to try to sensitize their brothers and sisters to the perils of violence and bring them to a more harmonious state of living.
The aftermath of this act of terrible violence is reflected significantly in a number of narratives produced post 2001. Depictions of the actual act of the twin towers crashing vary. Monica Ali depicts the tangible bombing as shown on television in Brick Lane (2003). This changes the lives of her characters, prompting many like Karim and Chanu to adopt a more ethnic identity. Karim starts wearing the traditional dress of his community in favour of a western one. He also grows a beard and starts speaking in Bangla, a language that he does not know well. Chanu too starts attending the meetings held by his co-religionists, something that he avoided previously. In addition to this, his prior stance, his feeling of superiority over his countrymen, people whom he earlier called ‘ignorant’ and ‘village types’ too subsides and he now adopts a more conventional lifestyle. He sits on the floor, is stricter with his daughters’ upbringing and no longer uses derogatory epithets to describe his countrypersons. Besides he decides to go back to his native Bangladesh although his wife Nazneen does not, nor do the daughters but for them conditions change in a different way. Khaled Hosseini disposes the actual demolition of the twin towers in a single paragraph in his novel, A Thousand Splendid Suns (2007) but the effect of this on the lives of the characters is tremendous. Laila and Tariq have to leave Afghanistan and take refuge in Pakistan as a consequence of the dangerous situation in their native land but they too return to their original homeland after a brief stay. As a consequence of 9/11, there are significant changes in the lives of the characters that affect their ways of thinking, especially their notions of ‘home’.

On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of 9/11, questions about the philosophy of violence and nonviolence have become fundamental issues. These questions affect all in an interrelated world, and this applies to writers also. People from all walks of life were attacked during this act of violence, the victims were noncombatants—young and old, male and female, and people of all religious denominations. The offenders were suicide bombers and it was not possible to bring them to justice through conventional avenues. The level and magnitude of the event was unprecedented and people the world over were left stunned. Thomas Friedman agrees: “This event has so fundamentally transformed America and its
relations with the rest of the world that it will either directly or indirectly impact every corner of the globe” (ix, 2003). The event did produce monumental changes in an interconnected world. The changes were many: security everywhere became much more widespread, there was more discussion and coverage by the media of stories related to terrorist activities, the financial markets were disturbed, and large military actions were launched in Afghanistan and Iraq. Brian Forst calls attention to the circumstances: “Prior to the 9/11 attack, scholars and public commentators had been writing that the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1991 and the ending of the Cold War, along with the use of advanced information and communication technology, were bringing the world closer together” (2, 2009). The world had in effect witnessed an enhanced global and cultural exchange, the essential elements of a move towards a more peaceful existence. It did seem that the forces of harmony were the dominating force.

The events of 9/11 and its aftermath destroyed this optimism and raised serious questions about the prevalence of peace and allied prosperity. According to Francis Fukuyama in The End of History and The Last Man (2006), the September 11 attacks represented a desperate backlash against a modern world and posed a serious challenge. He stresses that a movement that has the power to wreak immense damage on the modern world, even if it represents only a small number of people, raises real questions about the viability of our civilization. There grew a need for more thoughtful action, more understanding of violence and awareness of actions to eradicate it. Since diverse problems have come to the foreground, the writing of migrant writers has evolved too. This work will attempt to examine how the commodification and exoticization of writers and their worlds, the colonial othering, has been supplemented and sometimes replaced by issues like the matter of living in a host country that has become hostile to non-native citizens due to violent events.

It also undertakes to explore the effect of violence on diasporic citizens in relation to their country of origin. It endeavours to investigate how many diasporic writers responded to the violent acts by writing about violence in their home as well as host countries. With the monumental attacks on 9/11, the trickle of
literature on violence turned into a torrent. The number of novels on violence saw an exponential growth. Suketu Mehta’s *Maximum City* (2004), Salman Rushdie’s *Shalimar the Clown* (2005), Kiran Desai’s *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006), Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Half a Yellow Sun* (2006), Yasmina Khadra’s *The Attack* (2007) and Mohsin Hamid’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) are some works that come to mind. This burgeoning literature on violence is the product of many authors from varied countries and dissimilar orientations. This thesis endeavours to examine the manner in which the writers use literature as a conduit to channelize the readers’ psyche into positive action, so that they can deal with their trauma and thus cope with the violence and atrocities they witness in everyday life.

People from the South Asian region have travelled far and wide and settled down in different countries of the world making up the South Asian Diaspora. Prior to World War II, England was the country of choice for most immigrants. Many people of South Asian origin went there for various reasons and Britain became a site for post-colonial struggles in economics, politics, arts and religion too. But in the last four decades, especially after the revolution in information technology, the United States of America has become the preferred country for immigrants from this region. However, South Asians have migrated to many countries all over the world and made second homes for themselves in these places. Immigration to a new country which had at best been intermittent earlier has turned into a steady incursion now and is on the increase. One finds South Asians settled in countries like the United States of America, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Africa, the United Arab Emirates and many other countries; in fact, it can be said that they have settled in every country of the world. Needless to say, this is true of the writers too. So, while earlier, such writers were few and far between, now there are many more writers of this kind recording their experiences. Of the authors who were writing before the changed circumstances earlier, a few names that come up are Amitav Ghosh, Bharati Mukherjee, M.G. Vassanji, Michael Ondatjee, Rohinton Mistry, Salman Rushdie, etc. A host of names have been added to the list like Khaled Hosseini, Kiran Desai, Mohsin Hamid, Nadeem Aslam, Roma Tearne and V.V. Ganeshanathan among others.
Due to geographical proximity, ethnic similarity and other related factors, members of the countries of South Asia share common characteristics that create in them a sense of bonding and a transnational relationship. Bonds of language, culture and a sense of common history and perhaps a common future impregnate such an affiliation. A relationship that transcends national borders is thus created and bestows members with an affective intimacy that is normally the hallmark of formal citizenship of a single country. This inimitable fraternity results in a unique collective experience when faced with a dissimilar way of life in the non-native countries.

In the study of diaspora, a study of their literature is important too, as it is through literature that they verbalize their innermost thoughts and concerns. Also it is their literature that shows real-life displacement and replacement and their effort to retain or alter their personality. The continuous movement of people of all races, religions and countries across borders has brought about a transfiguration of cultural boundaries with travellers recreating new representations of their selves, their pasts and the new environment they find themselves in. Nations and cultures, long defined by geography and territory, are undergoing rapid transformation in the present century. These are reflected in the accounts of diasporic writers along with the domestic, humane, personal and psychological factors that contribute to the ongoing transformations.

Diasporic authors have focussed their attention on the difficulties of the situation in normal times; they have articulated the approach adopted to cope with the world; the proverbial themes of ‘dislocation, relocation and questions of identity’ were causes of apprehension and the reason for the trauma that they articulated. The earlier thematic concerns have now been supplemented with the question of widespread violence. Pervasive violence adds an additional complexity to this pattern of life in society and nations. It affects not only the harmony around human communities but also creates new dangers and threats to progressive and constructive life. A writer does not write in isolation, rather everyday events happening in society at large get reflected in literature and this is true of violence too. Needless to say, that with the shifting experiences the
literature produced has changed also. The accounts show some common themes, yet no two experiences are alike. True, earlier also, writers mentioned the differences, the difficulties of the segregation into ‘them’ and ‘us’. The application of such discriminatory labels is itself a form of inequity leading to and causing violence; consequently the works also spoke about racism and allied acts earlier. However this sort of division that sanctioned additional degrees of difference to be layered onto such representations is not central to the works being written at present. Post 2001, themes of exile, sense of nostalgia, disruptiveness, belongingness and search for identity are no longer the only central issues of the writing of diasporic authors. Rather they focus their attention on prevailing issues—the situation as perceived by them in their home as well as host lands.

Consequently writers like Anita Rau Badami, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Khaled Hosseini, Kiran Desai, Mohsin Hamid, Monica Ali, Nadeem Aslam, Roma Tearne and others are now writing about the question of violence and the way in which it affects the lives of ordinary persons. Although living in a foreign country, they feel the trauma of their brethren in their homelands and express their concern for their native soil. They do this by presenting a picture of the motherland, thus, reinforcing the diasporic bond with the home country. Baser and Swain affirm: “The diaspora groups are also committed to preserve or restore their ‘nation’. Their consciousness and solidarity are primarily defined by this continuing relationship with the homeland” (14, 2008). Originating from the land, they understand the nature of the conflict in this locale better than outsiders. Being from outside the conflict zone but having a connection to it provides them with special understanding and ability to influence and support their fellow country persons. Baser and Swain add, “The idea of a potential return to the homeland is always there and that affords them a legitimate stake in the way they interfere with homeland policies. The notion of a “secure homeland”, a place to return in time, plays a very important role in diaspora behaviour” (14, 2008). The yearning to go back to the original home, a defining feature of membership of a diaspora is evident here. The home country has to necessarily be a safe place where the immigrants long to return one day. The example of Theo and Rohan in Tearne’s Mosquito presents itself here. Both return to their native Sri Lanka but
are forced out again as the conditions in their home are too dangerous and they cannot risk their lives by continuing to live there. This makes them rethink their concept of home and they return disillusioned to their diasporic ‘home.’

In addition to this, writing about the appalling condition in the homeland and diasporic subjects in the host land seems to be a means for the writers to deal with the sorrow and pain they feel about the prevailing situation. Thus, the literature of these writers inevitably becomes a mirror force of the changing social and political conditions. The articulation of the altered circumstances by the writers helps them to deal with the responsibility they feel towards the country of their origin and its inhabitants, to this extent it serves the purpose of dealing with the distress they feel. It is an effort on their part to sensitize the readers to the violence around them. The characters portrayed by these writers observably share the conflicts of the native land and use varied means to try to contend with their pain. The writing becomes a means to deal with the emotions that the writers undergo—a kind of catharsis. It affords an emotional cleansing to the authors and develops into a part of the audience’s experience as well; it describes a change occurring in emotions experienced as a result of enduring strong feelings of anger, sorrow, fear and pity.

The sentiments produce purification or a purging of the powerful emotions. Tilottoma Misra in “Women Writing in Times of Violence” (2010) explains the function of literary discourse in the representation of violent actions. According to her, fictional narratives can play a more useful role than historical accounts, for victims who undergo the trauma of violence wish to forget the trauma. History only serves to remind them of the suffering, but fictional accounts present the information in an indirect way as the story of a set of characters, this helps victims to deal with their experiences. She discusses, “recent theorists of trauma say that it is precisely because of the uncertain nature of literary discourses that it is capable of transporting us through those regions of the wounded psyche which no historical narrative can reach effectively” (249, 2010). This leads to other thoughts such as restoration, renewal, and revitalization. The authors confront the complexity, ambiguity, and violence with the imperative to write and
resist. There is a sense of vindication, perhaps even relief in revealing the personal stories of the characters who represent the denizens of the conflict ridden homeland. Misra maintains: “It is exactly because of this that literary discourses rather than historical narratives are better modes of representing violent events” (249, 2010). For the readers, it is a way of remembering their story and of listening to that story through the writer's pen, for the sake of not only bearing in mind but of connecting it to rejuvenation and reconstruction, to transcend the response of retaliation and develop the understanding that there are other than violent means for addressing human needs and for serving the common good.

The terror of violent actions creates uncertainty; this necessitates strategies for survival as well as resistance. The exploits of the characters also get reflected in the works of the writers and the effect of this on literature presents an interesting aspect to discover and study. Authors like Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Monica Ali, Mohsin Hamid, Khaled Hosseini, Nadeem Aslam and others depict the violence and its consequences in their works. The writers also speak of the ramifications on the characters in their novels, their lives, their perceptions about the world they live in (country of adoption) and the world left behind (home country). In such situations the existing insecurities are only heightened and the characters have to devise different kinds of coping strategies to come to grips with the situation. This study therefore aims at finding out and placing relevant issues, conditions, solutions and value-systems about the effects of violence subsequent to the attack on the twin towers in New York City in the year 2001. Violent events that take place anywhere in the world do require analysis and preventive measures since they are a threat to peace and humanity. Readers observe the acts of violence as borne out in the writers’ works in the form of stories, situations, characters and conflicts. Tillotama Mishra adds, “Since violence is increasingly becoming central to our lives in a world where the civilian population has become the target of terrorists attacks, more and more writers would be faced with the problem of retrieving memories…The process of sifting the memories in order to select the images which convey a violent event most powerfully, is one of the important parts of a writer's work” (250, 2010). Since writers have a vision of their own while carrying out the responsibility of portraying socio-cultural and political
violence around them in society, they can visualize and offer the alternative paradigms of bettering human social systems through their writings. The authors, by depicting nonviolence and violence in various forms, exemplify their vision unto defending and advocating the ways of peaceful human action.

Also the writers themselves take up a position by writing about such events. The words of Amitav Kumar in *Husband of a Fanatic* (2004) are pertinent here: “What is it that divides the writer from the rioter? The answer is not very clear or simple. There could be more in common between the two than either might imagine—a vast hinterland of cultural memory or a shared prejudice, for example. Was it an excess of sympathy on my part—or, on the contrary, too little of it—that made it difficult, if not impossible, for me to draw a plainly legible line between man in a mob and myself?” (xvi). Amitav Kumar, like any creative writer connects the ordinary existence of man in a mob and a creative artist as sharing the common sources of life. Besides this, in a situation where violent behaviour is an everyday occurrence, literature is frequently used by writers to turn the imagination of the readers to what is desirable according to their minds (the minds of the writers). This is also true of the writers that this study engages. Their writing has a rehabilitative and cathartic effect for them and their readers. All this leads one to accept the role of the author in providing useful insights in this field, explaining and even shaping the world around him through the agency of his/her writings. Given the failure of prevention strategies in eradicating violence to date, there is a pressing need to consider how violence is used by the writers to understand the world around them. Importantly, there is also the urge to suggest alternative ‘violence prevention strategies’ and provide new directions for negotiating relationships

1.2. Understanding the Ideology of Violence

In the last few decades, several instances of violence and terrorism have regularly occurred: the violence and the crisis affecting the Sri Lankan nation and people since 1983, the escalation of armed violence all over that country like the ethnic clashes, the indiscriminate attacks on members of the security forces and
civilians; the Afghan civil war (1989–1996) and the terror attacks and clashes between militants and security forces that have deepened the political turmoil in that country; the bomb blasts in Mumbai city (1993); blasts in the city of London (2005); recent events in Pakistan like the assassination of twice Prime Minister of Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto (2007) in Rawalpindi, Rawalpindi (2011); the terrorist attack on Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, The Taj Mahal Hotel, The Trident Hotel, Leopold Café in Mumbai city (2008), the assassination of former president of Afghanistan, Burhanuddin Rabbini in Kabul (2011); the list is endless. The matters of violence are significant; they vary in their causes and content and in their intensity too. But they invariably affect everyone; no being is immune from the ache and anguish caused by violence. The trauma of violence is equally noteworthy. It can be explained as the suffering and distress that is caused as a consequence of violence. The consequences of violent behavior are multifarious, while the outcome may be physical, psychological or political. It needs no stressing that the treatment of trauma and violence and their aftermath is an important concern that needs to be addressed.

Violence throws up many issues; violent behavior spans the spectrum from minor aggression to brutality and bloodshed. The causes of violence too are different. Violence has long-term, cumulative causes in contrast with short-term causes, and causes associated with other such factors. Violence exists in many forms and at multiple levels. Whether physical, verbal, sexual or psychological; whether inflicted by individuals, groups, institutions or nations, violence threatens in numerous and complex ways. Personal violence refers to acts of aggression or force performed by individuals. Collective violence results when individuals engage in violent activities as a group, incidents of group violence are typically viewed as attached to a specific cause. All forms of violence possess their own unique dynamics.

Violence may be horrifying and disturbing, but it also captivating and intriguing. Although people are shocked and distressed by the violence they are subjected to everyday by simply turning on the news, they still desire to witness other forms of violence, for instance violence for entertainment. The popularity of
films or television serials that contain graphic scenes of cruelty is a case in point. There are video games which make use of violence to engage the players; scenes of violence may be distressing and disturbing but people go to view such scenes with an incomprehensible yet abiding interest. Ronald Bailey in *Violence and Aggression* (1977) talks about the reaction of human beings to violence: “People recoil from it yet are drawn perversely to it” (7). Violence as a current issue concerns and fascinates. It draws people to study its repercussions on the society around. Bailey continues: “Crowds flock to scenes of violent tragedy, avid for every gory detail” (7, 1977). Thus even though it is unpleasant, violence holds an inexplicable attraction for people.

However, the ramifications of violent events are fear and uncertainty as Amartya Sen elucidates in the introduction to *Identity and Violence* (2006): “The violent events and atrocities of the last few years have ushered in a period of terrible confusion as well as dreadful conflicts” (xii). Sen’s concern for the tensions prevailing in the world today is not isolated, he is voicing the anxiety of all concurring individuals who are committed to peace and shun violent behavior. As Sen himself adds, “the current public engagement in issues of global violence are the results of terribly tragic and disturbing events, it is good to see that these matters are receiving widespread attention” (xx). This is an encouraging development as the general thought and reflection that the issue gets bears significance for the quality of human life and the survival of man are linked to this awareness. Amartya Sen goes on to say, “much will depend on how we rise to the challenge that we face” (xx, 2006). The subject of violence raises many questions that are crucial to all societies grappling with this menace: What are the causes that crystallize conflictual violence? Why do situations fraught with the potential for conflict between groups arise? How can societies evolve various devices for avoiding or minimizing such situations? These questions demand to be confronted.

In order to address the questions pertaining to violence, the nature of violence needs to be comprehended first. Violence is understood in many diverse ways by different people. Prabhash Singh asserts in *Political Violence in India*
Violence is a term that suffers from a surfeit of meanings. Even a cursory glance through the rapidly growing literature on the subject is enough to show the bewildering melody in which the concept is entrapped (2). Violence is usually understood as behaviour designed to inflict physical injury on people or damage to property or any observable interaction in the course of which persons or objects are seized or physically damaged in spite of resistance. In his many writings Mahatma Gandhi, the champion of nonviolence has expressed his views about the nature of violence. Giuliani Pontura writes on Gandhi, in the *Journal of Peace Research* (1965) “he saw violence as the wilful use of power to force a change in another’s behaviour in such a way that the opponent is physically or psychologically harmed” (199). Gandhi also extended the definition of violence to cover moral evil. In *Nonviolent Resistance* (1951), he states: “under violence I include corruption, falsehood, hypocrisy, deceit and the like” (294). In Gandhi’s definition, even lying is a form of violence. He is quoted as declaring in *The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (1968), “The principle of ahimsa is hurt by every evil thought, by undue haste, by lying, by hatred, by wishing ill to anybody” (4:218). Hence for Gandhi, anything morally wrong, even the smallest transgression, is also a form of violence.

Not everyone may agree with Gandhi’s severe definitions of violence. Others have defined violence in different ways. For Joan Bondurant in *Conquest of Violence, The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict* (1959), it is “the definite purpose to use strength that constitutes violence” (9). The purpose of the user assumes significance in this perspective. According to S.P. Aiyar’s views in *The Politics of Mass Violence in India* (1967), “The essence of violence is the infliction of injury on other people; this injury may be physical or mental. It also involves excessive, unrestrained or unjustifiable force, outrage, profanation, injury or rape” (29). For reviewers like Suma Chitnis, writing in the context of patriarchal theoretical notions, violence acquires overtones of control and will. Therefore, according to her in “The Concept of Violence” (1998), “Violence, in general is a coercive mechanism to assert one’s will over another, in order to prove or feel a sense of power” (12). This is in a sense a definition of violence as a form of cruelty inflicted to feel powerful. Leslie Macfarlane holds an analogous
outlook in *Violence and the State* (1974). She summarizes: “Violence is the capacity to impose, or the act of imposing, one's will upon another, where the imposition is held to be illegitimate” (40). There are other views, Daniels in *Violence and the Struggle for Existence* (1970), examines aggression and violence together. For him aggression is the complete range of assertive, intrusive and attacking behaviour. Violence is a specialised subform of aggression and is accompanied by the emotions of anger or hostility. These various definitions of violence demonstrate that violence is a complex concept that can be interpreted in a variety of ways. It can be said that the purpose of the perpetrator to cause harm is the crucial factor that explicates violence. It is also true that most observers envision violence as undesirable and detrimental to the progress of mankind and welcome the efforts to control it that are in progress. In the texts taken up for study, this is the position that the writers take through their fictional narratives. As observers, they depict the grossness of violence in its entirety. Even though the accounts are fictional, they are rooted in the cultural actuality of the social order they depict. This furnishes the descriptions a major impact that helps to demonstrate the repulsiveness of violence. By showing the consequences of violent behavior and the additional violence that these actions lead to, the futility of violence comes across compellingly to the readers, persuading them to rethink their customary response to violence. This thesis considers this aspect of the writing on violence.

There can be no disagreement with the position that violent behavior is on the rise. Rajmohan Gandhi writes in *Revenge and Reconciliation, Understanding South Asian History* (1999), “As far as violence is concerned, today – in 1999 – there seems to be no argument: whether out on the street or on the small screen inside the home, it dominates – not merely violence in self defence but violence in revenge, or for power, or for a thrill or in the name of justice” (1). As Rajmohan Gandhi points out, violence is on the increase everywhere—inside the home, outside it or in films and television. Rajmohan Gandhi’s assertions were made in 1999; subsequently violent events have become even more extensive and post 2001, the effect of violent incidents has occupied the psyche of nations and individuals in an unprecedented way. This is due to many reasons, some of which
Rajmohan Gandhi himself enumerates – for revenge, thrill or as a form of justice. Violence has taken over the popular imagination. Vikram Seth in his book *Two Lives* (2005) describes the present times as: “an evil century past and a still more dangerous one to come” (499). The ‘evil’ referred to is the various acts of violence that have taken place in the past. As Seth points out, violence in the current age is increasingly becoming commonplace. The efforts to combat violence continue but the escalation of violence exposes their lack of effectiveness. This is a cause for concern for the entire world as no country can remain aloof from the effect of violence when it is extending in all directions. Despite efforts to bring an end to violence, violence continues unabated and in fact can even be seen to be on the rise probably because of the way in which society at large views both violence and nonviolence. This makes it all the more important to conduct a critical reading of how society perceives the arrangement of violence and nonviolence.

Nonviolent methods may be eulogized and commended by society but such efforts are at best superficial and disingenuous. In practice, most members of society believe in the superior efficacy of violence since this has been instilled in their minds through the media, films, television programmes, video games, etc. Michael Nojeim, in *Gandhi and King, The Power of Nonviolent Resistance* (2005) elucidates: “Even schoolchildren are taught from an early age about the military exploits of Hannibal, Caesar and Napoleon. Few children learn about the nonviolent exploits of A.J. Muste, John Woolman, or even Gandhi and King for that matter. Inculcated in their minds at a very early age is a glorified idea of violence” (14, 15). Inspite of this, even if nonviolent means are advocated by a few, these are restricted to an individual and family sphere. In the public and collective field it is still violence that is used to bring about change. This is especially true of political conflicts. Nojeim elaborates: “There is little acceptance of nonviolence as a legitimate form of political action” (15). Supporters of nonviolent ideology are usually not taken seriously and believed to be weak or persons incapable of robust action. Nojeim goes on about nonviolence:

Its advocates are considered naïve idealists more interested in flaky intellectual pursuits than in the serious contemplation typically
associated with the military sciences, studies in the military sciences are quite advanced compared to studies in the “science of nonviolent resistance”. (15, 2005)

If a violent method to achieve a desired result is unsuccessful, more violence is advocated and used and considered to be the reasonable course of action. However, if a nonviolent method fails, the ideology of nonviolence itself is perceived as flawed and rather than advocating an improved method of nonviolent action, nonviolence is itself rejected and discarded. Supporters of nonviolent ideology and thinkers like Nojeim evolve their perception of violence on opposite grounds. This thesis will examine, however, the way in which the authors demonstrate through their stories that the characters who refuse to view violence as a solution to the hostility around them are not frail or cowardly but their actions transpire as a result of their beliefs in the greater strength of the forces of peacefulness. While the authors under study in this thesis do write about violence, violence creates more difficulty for those who respond with aggression. This helps to create the reflections of the futility of violence on the grounds of society, family and nations in their fiction. The role of the text then appears as a means of sensitization for the denizens of society to ponder and to contemplate their own role as passive onlookers. It expresses the need to change the way in which readers view their function and create a concern for pro-peace action using a practical approach based on observation and self-healing.

Nonviolence as a form of action is not accorded the same status as violence in popular perception. This is borne out by the use of the two terms in language. In the English language, violence has an independent terminology. However nonviolence is dependent upon violence to be understood. The use of the word nonviolence itself is imperfect as nonviolence can only mean “non”, not being of something, the conspicuous absence of the occurrence. Nojeim explains, “An explanation for the disparity in phraseology has to do with the notion of violence being sanctioned as normal and acceptable form of social behaviour, whereas nonviolence is considered “out there”. Nonviolence then becomes only a reactive word with a negative connotation. This serves to afford violence an element of normalcy and legitimacy at the expense of nonviolence” (15, 16,
2005). Due to the lack of an appropriate word of expression, nonviolence loses its ability to imply something more such as a proactive programme for positive social change, because the term only implies that which the method is not.

More evidence of the place of violence viz a viz nonviolence comes from the fact that Gandhi’s system of nonviolent resistance, although successful had its fair share of critics who believed in the superiority of violence and also that it was not always bad. To cite just one instance, A.K.S. Parihar in *Mahatma Gandhi, His Thoughts, Life and Ideas* (2007), comments about Gandhi’s method of nonviolence or Satyagraha:

Gandhi’s Satyagraha has much to be said for it, but it cannot be a catholicon. Although Gandhi insisted otherwise, violence need not be accompanied by hatred and ill-will or be uncontrolled. Like nonviolence it too can be restrained, measured, born out of love for both the victims and the perpetrators of injustice, and used to arrest human degradation. Gandhi would have been wiser to insist not on one ‘sovereign’ method of action but on a plurality of methods to be used singly or in combination with others as the situation required. Since different circumstances require different responses, violence might sometimes achieve results that nonviolence either cannot or do so only at an unacceptably high price in human suffering. (114)

This criticism clearly demonstrates nonviolence as a means to achieve political ends evidently did not find approval from all. Some advocated the use of violence in conjunction with or without nonviolence in certain situations. Parihar adds: “While the moral and political significance of Gandhi’s Satyagraha is beyond doubt, it is not the panacea he thought it was” (112, 2007). The faith in nonviolence or Satyagraha of all Gandhi’s followers is not implicit. Parihar says further: “Gandhi was wrong to argue that Satyagraha never failed and that it was effective under all conditions” (113, 2007). Although he does not rule out nonviolence as useless, Parihar does not believe that nonviolence can provide solutions always and this naturally means that the final action in some situations at least is violence, thus adding strength to the use of violence. Nojeim adds, “Most
cultures express confidence in the ability of violence to solve problems despite the flourish of rhetoric that says "violence doesn't solve anything" " (14, 2005). For example strikes, bandhs protest-marches are symbolically violent but accepted forms of social activism in a democratic cause.

This position gets depicted in some of the narratives as well. For example, in Anita Rau Badami’s *Can You Nightbird Call?*, Pa-ji is a satunch believer in nonviolence and adopts an attitude of respect and love for all. But most other characters fall prey to the machinations of Dr. Raghbir Randhawa, who is an activist and supporter of a militant course of action. They start advocating violence to the extent that they even turn hostile to Pa-ji, their former benefactor. Their belief in violence is so pervasive that in the concluding part even Pa-ji’s wife, Bibi-ji starts approving of violent methods. However, Badami shows that this stance is not beneficial to anybody and depicts, through the anti-Sikh riots, that the members of the community themselves suffer and a cycle of unending violence is unleashed.

Observers and commentators have elaborated on violence with the help of certain interconnected terms, a distinct vocabulary has hence evolved around the concept of violence. This section examines violence and other associated terminology. As seen in Section 1, the term violence usually connotes physical force exerted for the purpose of hurting, damaging or abusing others. It is often used in interrelation with other similar expressions. Hannah Arendt in *On Violence* (1970) makes a distinction between violence and related terminology like power, strength, force and authority. According to her all these refer to different and distinct phenomena (43). Power connotes the ability of people to act collectively in collaboration with others. Arendt explains: “Power is never the property of an individual, it belongs to a group and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together” (44, 1970). According to this, it follows that without a group that keeps a person in power, there is no power.
Strength, on the other hand is independent of others; however it can demonstrate itself only when it comes in contact with other people or things. Arendt continues: “Strength unequivocally designates something in the singular, an individual entity; it is the property inherent in an object or person and belongs to its character” (44, 1970). In this sense, strength, by itself, is not a negative attribute, when it is joined to harmful intentions viz. using strength to harm or destroy a creature with lesser strength that it becomes negative. Nonetheless, the strength of even the strongest single being may be overcome by that of many, who may combine for the specific purpose of surmounting this strength. This kind of strength is also displayed by some of the characters in the works under study. In Hosseini’s A Thousand Splendid Suns (2007), Rasheed’s brute physical strength is an example of individual strength. His ability and readiness to use it extensively against his wives confirms the use of strength to gain and maintain command in his household. The coming together of the two women and their superior mental strength provides them with greater capacity. Their combined strength grows to become bigger than the individual strength of their husband and they are able to free themselves of his long standing atrocities.

Arendt goes on to explicate the word ‘Force’. She declares: “Force, which we often use in daily speech as a synonym for violence especially if violence serves as a means of coercion, should be reserved in terminological language, for the "forces of nature" or "the force of circumstances" ” (45, 1970). According to this description, force has limited application and should, therefore refer only to physical or social movements. However, for many others, violence is similar to force. Joseph Thomas states in Social Movements and Violence (2001): “In its everyday use, "violence" refers to "acting with or characterized by great physical force, so as to injure, damage, or destroy" ” (39). Violence is therefore the use of great physical force to inflict damage. For commentators like Leslie Macfarlane, “Force is the capacity to impose, or the art of imposing one’s will upon another, where the imposition is held to be legitimate” (40, 1974). In this view, force is conjoined with notions of legitimacy and may be endorsed in the right conditions. Georges Sorel in Reflections on Violence (1961) makes a meaningful distinction between the force that aims at authority and violence that would destroy that
authority. According to his view, force is used by the state to maintain social order and violence to undermine that order. Force is state coercion and violence as coercion by others, the former is legitimate and the latter illegitimate. Francis Fukuyama’s views are similar. In Trust, The Social Virtues and The Creation of Prosperity (1995), he writes about, “The intimate connection that exists between power and concepts of legitimacy” (258). This perspective of power suggests that an officially authorized entity like the police force or armed forces of a country have the lawful privileges to use intimidation against others who do not enjoy such sanctions, the coercive or retaliatory actions of the opposite group however are viewed as erroneous and illegitimate.

Moving on to the matter of ‘Authority’, Arendt asserts that authority “can be vested in persons—there is such a thing as personal authority in the relation between parent and child, between teacher and pupil—or it can be vested in offices” (45, 1970). Automatic obedience by those who are asked to acknowledge the authority is the defining feature of authority. She further articulates: “To remain in authority requires respect for the person or the office” (45, 1970). Authority cannot be sustained through coercion or persuasion, if respect is lost, so is authority. Finally, violence according to her can be distinguished from the other terms explained as being instrumental. The tools of violence are designed and used for the purpose of multiplying natural strength and finally substituting it. In practice, therefore violence is similar to strength. The example of the army and the politicians in Sri Lanka in Mosquito (2007) embody this well. Their acts of violence as a result of an assertion of their power to make ordinary citizens obey them results in their losing the respect of both the Sinhalese and the Tamils. Consequently, they are provoked to employ more tools of strength like machine guns and use these more frequently as well to remain in authority.

Terms like power and force are not the exclusive to the domain of violence. Power as a concept can be used in the discussion of nonviolence too. Nojeim states: “A common definition of power is the ability to get someone to do something he or she would otherwise not do. Although advocates of both violence and nonviolence recognize the importance of possessing power and properly
wielding it in order to achieve their objectives, they differ significantly as to the sources of power and how power is acquired” (14, 2005). He continues “Advocates of violence view power relations in a conventional manner: power exists in a hierarchical structure, flowing from top to down” (14, 2005). He explains this, using the analogy of a general in the army who gives orders to the colonel, who then gives orders to a major who in turn gives orders to the captain and so on. This is the conventional set-up of power where the general is supposed to possess inherent power and authority over his subordinates. He elaborates: “To advocates of nonviolence, however, the general's power does not exist inherently, but only because the bottom of the chain of command agreed to obey. Power is vested in the masses, the people who convey authority to leaders by virtue of their willingness to obey” (14, 2005). Again, force, can be used as a means to effect nonviolence also. According to Bondurant, violence is “the wilful application of force in such a way that it is intentionally injurious to the person or group against whom it is applied” (9, 1959). She also defines force as the exercise of physical or intangible power to effectuate change. In Bondurant’s view, when force is conjoined with violence, it can be used intentionally to harm the opponent. But with nonviolence, force is used to cause a change, not to purposefully harm another. The key difference could be said to be the objective of the user.

Finally, it can be said that these categories are not impermeable. They may overlap in various situations as they often do in actuality. Since violence uses devices to increase its potency, it is usually considered to be in concert with power. Arendt postulates, “nothing...is more common than the combination of violence and power, nothing less frequent than to find them in their pure and therefore extreme form” (46, 47, 1970). Power uses violence, in effect, needs violence to maintain itself. For instance, every government uses violence as a means when threatened by internal or external confrontations. She says “Violence appears where power is in jeopardy” (56, 1970). In such situations violence is not merely used but also justified by the user as a necessary measure to cope with the threat at hand. It becomes a permissible and valid course for self preservation for the person behind the act. Arendt says further: “No one questions the use of violence in self-defense, because the danger is not only clear but also present, and the end
justifying the means is immediate” (52). However questions may be raised about
the reasonableness of the violent path, that which can be defended may still be
incorrect. Arendt concludes, “violence can be justifiable but it will never be
legitimate” (52). It can be said that the legitimacy of the use of violence even as a
means of protection is uncertain because the very concept of legitimacy is
context-bound and relative. Moreover, the fragile justification too is shattered
when the struggle is a long or never-ending one or when violence is used against a
weak challenger. Mosquito and Can You Hear the Nightbird Call? are good
examples of this position. In Mosquito, the hostilities by the security forces
prolong for a very long time, exposing that the violence cannot be valid. In Can
You Hear the Nightbird Call? again, the well-prepared state forces employ their
capability on members of a religion. This use of state violence in both novels
against citizens shows that violence cannot be justified in this situation.

1.2.1. Strategies of Reconciliation and Concepts of Nonviolence

Philosophers and thinkers have recognized that violence and fear have
become part of people’s everyday lives and violence in all its forms undermines
the quality of life. They have acknowledged the need to change this and to take
action against violence: to speak out against it and to amend and influence the
values and attitudes that affect violence. They have practiced alternate methods
and offered courses of action to make this a reality. The writers taken up too
endorse and advocate a similar position. They stress this through their writing.
Characters like Pir Baba in The Assassin’s Song, Shamas in Maps for Lost
Lovers, and Pa-ji in Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?, in the texts that this work
analyses, do practice alternate methods of dealing with issues and the readers see
this in actual practice rather than as theoretical principles. This section looks at
some philosophers and their views. Gandhi stressed on the need to eschew
violence and to make his vision a practical course of action, he advocated
alternate principles. He conceived the practice of nonviolence or ahimsa and
satyagraha to obtain results. For Gandhi nonviolence or ahimsa means something
additional to mere abstinence from violence. Bondurant elucidates “Yet ahimsa is
eminently more than a negative notion” (23, 1959). For Gandhi, ahimsa actually
translates into an action further than simply refraining from committing harm or violence. He asserts: “Ahimsa is not the crude thing it has been made to appear. Not to hurt any living thing is no doubt a part of ahimsa. But it is its least expression” (4:218, 1968). Rather, ahimsa carries with it a positive, life-affirming connotation that calls for action based not just on the refusal to do harm, but also on the notion of doing good, even to the evildoer. Gandhi himself explicates ahimsa; he is quoted in *The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (1968): “it does not…express a negative force but a force superior to all the forces put together. One person who can express Ahimsa in life exercises a force superior to all the forces of brutality” (6:153). The forces of brutality may have strong and powerful implications but Gandhi means to convey that the force of ahimsa is superior to other forces for the simple reason that it does no harm.

True ahimsa starts with renouncing the intention to hurt or damage, going a step further and intending to uplift and benefit through peaceful and loving actions. Gandhi himself remarks: “Ahimsa is not merely a negative state of harmlessness, but it is a positive state of love, of doing good even to the evil-doer” (6:153, 1968). Ahimsa therefore is more than the absence of violence. It is the affirmative presence of peace, love, and justice. Ahimsa is not only opposed to violence, it also includes for Gandhi a positive state of love and selflessness.

Sunanda Shastri and Yajneshwar Shastri in *Ahimsa and the Unity of All Things: A Hindu View of Non Violence* (1998) opine: “Ahimsa is an antidote to...violence. But there is far more to ahimsa than merely non-hurting or non-killing. It includes giving up concepts of "otherness", "separateness", "selfishness" and "self-centeredness", and identifying oneself with all other beings” (67). In the words of Gandhi: “A true believer of ahimsa does not display resentment even towards an unfair opponent. Ahimsa means the largest love, the greatest charity. If I am a follower of Ahimsa, I must love my enemy” (6:154, 1968). The genuine consideration of Gandhi’s thinking relates to the highest ethical and humane level of existence by the most positive feelings like love as he refers to love as the greatest charity.
Another believer of nonviolence, Martin Luther King who was inspired by the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi and made use of nonviolent methods in the Civil Rights Movement adopted the idea of ‘agape’, a Greek word meaning love to describe his conception. Love, for King is not romantic love or love for one's family and friends but a kind of disinterested love for all. It is a love that seeks nothing in return. Bondurant points out the similarity between Gandhi’s and King’s thoughts. She observes: “Gandhi here identifies ahimsa and love, the proximity of this concept to the Christian charity and to the Greek agape is, throughout apparent” (24, 1959). Nojeim explicates: “Agape is a realization and recognition that all people's lives are fully intertwined with one another as part of God's way and as part of a single process binding all of humanity” (198, 2005). For King agape was akin to restoration and forgiveness. King said “If (peace) is to be achieved, man must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love” (Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech, 1964). King’s philosophical views on nonviolence were centered on several key principles. Apart from agape, these are beloved community, justice and just laws, civil disobedience and self-suffering, and lastly means and ends. Although King's ideas of nonviolence are borrowed from Mahatma Gandhi, he did not follow Gandhi’s ideology as it is, rather he imbibed the fundamental concepts, modified them and made them his own, according to the different situations and circumstances that he worked in.

The Dalai Lama, a staunch advocate of nonviolence provides one more example to the world that nonviolence can and should be practised. His stand on the matter of a native land for his countrymen and his attitude towards the apparent other, the Chinese and his insistence on keeping his demand for Tibet nonviolent is remarkable. The thoughts expressed by Rajmohan Gandhi reverberate in the Dalai Lama’s message on the first anniversary of the 9/11 attack. The Dalai Lama wrote in his commemoration: “violence undoubtedly breeds more violence. If we instinctively retaliate when violence is done to us, what can we expect other than that our opponent to also feel justified (in) retaliating. This is how violence escalates.” The Dalai Lama’s standpoint again serves to emphasize that violence cannot be used to answer violence. Violent
responses to violent attacks do not resolve anything; they only take the conflict deeper, making conflict resolution even more inaccessible. In such situations, the decision to decline violence methods is required as the Dalai Lama counsels.

Nelson Mandela is another champion of nonviolence who has made efforts towards reconciliation. His approach to and his treatment of his white opponents is also an affirmation of nonviolence. Nelson Mandela made use of dialogue rather than violence and that is the reason for the success of the struggle in South Africa. After the abolition of apartheid and his release from captivity in South Africa, instead of seeking vengeance from his former tormentors, he set up the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). “This was a court-like restorative justice body assembled in South Africa. Witnesses who were identified as victims of gross human rights violations were invited to give statements about their experiences, and some were selected for public hearings. Perpetrators of violence could also give testimony and request amnesty from both civil and criminal prosecution”<http://www.absoluteastronomy.com/topics/Truth_and_Reconciliation_Commission>. The commission was empowered to grant amnesty to those who committed abuses during the apartheid era, as long as the crimes were politically motivated, proportionate, and there was full disclosure by the person seeking amnesty. To avoid victor's justice, no side was exempt from appearing before the commission. The commission heard reports of human rights violations and considered amnesty applications from all sides, from the apartheid state to the liberation forces, including the African National Congress.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission enabled many South Africans to face and admit cruelties they had perpetrated and this acknowledgement was perceived as a step of justice. The Commission provided some moving demonstrations of apology by the perpetrators and forgiveness by the victims. This message from Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who also helped in the setting up of the TRC, conveyed to the world the power of reconciliation and forgiveness in breaking the cycle of violence. Archbishop Tutu has said “If we look only to retributive justice, then we could just as well close up shop.
Forgiveness…is practical politics, without forgiveness, there is no future” (Cited in Rajmohan Gandhi, 1999, 401). Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu’s actions demonstrate that reconciliation can heal the trauma of violence. They were successful in ending cycles of provocation and retaliation as their goal was the reform of the person responsible for the oppression and the re-education of the injured party. “The TRC's emphasis on reconciliation is in sharp contrast to the approach taken by the Nuremberg Trials after World War II and other de-Nazification measures” <http://www.absoluteastronomy.com/topics/Truth_and_Reconciliation_Commission>. Justice for the founders of the TRC was not retributive; rather, they believed in and practiced restorative and transformative justice. Traditionally justice has been equivalent to punishment, a sort of retribution or paying back the executor of violence by inflicting similar pain through the use of the same instrument: violence. However, retributivism has been contrasted with utilitarianism. For retributionists, punishment is backward-looking, and strictly for punishing crimes according to their severity. For utilitarians, punishment is forward-looking, justified by a purported ability to achieve future social benefits, such as crime reduction as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and its founders have proved. Their actions are a triumph of humanity. Other countries have instituted similar commissions. TRCs based on the South Africa model have been set up in Argentina, Colombia, Chile, El Salvador, Philippines, South Korea, etc.

Others too have propagated nonviolence and peace, seers like Jesus Christ, Gautama Buddha, Mahavira and Zoroaster as well as intellectuals and activists like Aung San Suu Kyi, Mohamed El Baradei, Liu Xiaobo and Martti Ahtisaari have supported and practised peaceful procedures to show to the world that violence can be prevented by adopting appropriate measures. However, as O.P. Jaggi points out in Religion, Practice and Science of Nonviolence (1974): “Sages and prophets taught us to observe nonviolence, but we paid only lip service to this principle” (viii). The strategies conceived and advocated by the seers have remained in the realm of academics and theoretical study, they have not become a practice to be followed in everyday life. In fact, the message of nonviolence has been critiqued. Nelson Mandela’s efforts have been critcized, the TRC has its
detractors and most people believe that justice is a prerequisite for reconciliation rather than an alternative to it. Gandhi’s policies have been criticized by his own supporters. O.P. Jaggi continues: “In our present-day world of conflict and violence, Satyagraha is a unique and faultless tool to bring about social justice; but today there is no individual or nation, willing to make use of it” (viii, 1974). The veracity of Jaggi’s assertion is self-evident as Gandhi’s message is not followed even in his native India.

The opinions and principles on nonviolence, peace reconciliation and resolution postulated by philosophers are studied and admired but not followed earnestly. The fact that common people do not pursue the path of nonviolence but rather relegate it to theoretical study is the source of the narratives on violence. The authors have presented their writing to the readers, this is their contribution to the cause of nonviolence and peace. By showing the senselessness of violence, the writers seek to create in the readers an understanding of the fact that the underused values of ahimsa, agape, reconciliation and acceptance ought to be practiced extensively. The aim of the writers is to make the strategies an everyday reality, to bring them out of the domain of texts into the real world. To this end they depict the violence and offer reconciliation as an advanced plan of action. Through the events and characters in their stories, the writers show the way in which violence produces a spiral of justifications for brutality, enabling its perpetrators to take on the guise of victims. Their tales are told without embellishments so as not to divert attention from the main theme. This calls attention to the fact that it is necessary that feelings of victimization must be dealt with and got rid of before one can hope to arrive at any solution. Therefore an important part of the process of transition must be that the victims heal themselves. To cope and deal with anger and fear, to forgive and not want revenge, to give up the victim self-image and build up one's hidden potential, and to channelize energy towards positive action. In their hope of a better society, the writers continue to assert their faith in the capacity of human effort to change the course of humanity. Here, the role of the writer as peacemaker is revealed and the intrinsic faith in the capacity of human nature to heal and rejuvenate comes through the anguish-laden writings in this time of violence.
There is the need in human beings to avenge past injustices with acts of violence. This is a possible reason for the increasing spread and status of violence, violence comes in as a useful tool to settle scores with the adversary. Rajmohan Gandhi in *Revenge and Reconciliation, Understanding South Asian History* (1999) discusses this aspect. According to him violence is imbued with an added tendency. i.e., the propensity of violent activities to spread further into additional cycles of violence, which in turn escalate into more such cycles until they turn into a succession of violent actions, of violence for violence sake. Writing in the context of the history of India and South Asia, Rajmohan Gandhi talks about the ‘strands of revenge and reconciliation’ (xxiii) to be found in the past. He elaborates further,

While there have been several portrayals of South Asia as a region steeped in violence, sufficient attention has not been given to the history and continuing culture of settling scores, or to the fact that over time triumphs and defeats in the region have led not to stable treaties or settlements but to oaths of revenge and preparations for new rounds of battle. (xxiii)

A violent act does not stop as one transaction but rather degenerates into recurring acts with the perpetrator and victim exchanging roles.

Using the analogy of the Mahabharata, Rajmohan Gandhi explains: “The jealousy and hate of the Kauravas led by Duryodhana for their Pandava cousins, the revenge the Pandavas exact after their pleas for bare justice are dismissed, and the rivalry between Arjuna and Karna are key strands of the epic story. But other rivalries and hates seem almost crucial to it” (7, 1999). The theme of revenge in the epic is an important pattern that validates violence and gives it moral sanctity. Rajmohan Gandhi discusses this further. Talking about the television serial based on the Mahabharata in the 1980s, he writes: “Episode after episode seemed to end with a hero or heroine vowing revenge, not merely as an immediate reaction to a horrible event but a well-considered, sacred and clearly spelt-out duty. A suitably gruesome manner of destroying the guilty person, and perhaps some others, was often part of a pledge” (xxviii, 1999). Here violence becomes a sacrosanct
obligation to be performed for the sake of the departed loved ones. The theory of retributive justice seems to operate here. According to this philosophy, punishment in the form of a vicious action, if proportionate, is a morally acceptable response to the original offence as only this will satisfy the aggrieved party. Forgiveness, at this point becomes a mark of weakness. The story of the Mahabharata and the revenge motif in it, according to Rajmohan Gandhi is mirrored by real-life events in South Asia and also in India. Next, Rajmohan Gandhi draws parallels between India and the external world. He writes: “Outside India as well, the war of the Mahabharata was at least faintly reproduced in the crusades…They have left a legacy of revenge, rather like the note left by the Mahabharata war” (34, 1999). This extends the revenge urge as a remedy to alleviate the trauma of violence making it a universal feeling.

Rajmohan Gandhi also suggests strategies of reconciliation. He discusses South Asians who adapt, endure and share and draw inspiration from a long line of reconcilers not only in the Mahabharata itself but also figures like Buddha, Mahavira, Ashoka and others like Qutb-ud-din, Nizamuddin Auliya, Guru Tegh Bahadur, Dara Shukoh, Jawaharlal Nehru and Lal Bahadur Shastri. The need for forgiveness and reconciliation to break the cycles of violence is stressed. He points out, this again is part of the epics, he asserts: “As striking as the epic’s revenge demands is its recognition, in numerous passages, of the need for forgiveness” (11, 1999). True, forgiveness is an essential asset and is accorded high merit. The dilemma though is that the urge for vengeance takes precedence over that of reconciliation. He elaborates: “However, again and again in the story, the hand of fate or human nature tips the scale in favour of revenge” (11, 1999). The process of concluding resentment, indignation or anger, and ceasing to demand punishment or restitution as a result of a perceived offence gets submerged under the more powerful impulse of seeking retaliation. Rajmohan Gandhi adds, “In the Mahabharata, revenge is a fact, reconciliation a fancy; forgiveness is preached, vengeance practised; healing is conceived, injury executed” (16, 19). Although the merits of reconciliation are acknowledged, they are not lived out in actual practice. Forgiveness is merely a lofty principle that is to be admired but revenge is the code to be followed.
In spite of the responsibility of forgiveness and mercy that the Mahabharata expresses in no uncertain terms, Rajmohan Gandhi’s view is that the Mahabharata envisages a series of acts of eternal violence. His analysis is corroborated by O.P. Jaggi who remarks: “The Mahabharata lays stress on the observance of ahimsa. But it clearly states that one’s duty in life is even more important. If there is a conflict between the two, it prefers duty to ahimsa” (5, 1974). Stressing the message of the Mahabharata, Rajmohan Gandhi sounds a cautionary note, reminding us about Mahatma Gandhi’s view he says “The truth of Gandhi’s warning is that it is the character of violence to beget more and more of itself, and less and less of freedom” (319, 1999). This is an important warning for the world today; violence by its very nature reproduces and violent deeds have the quality of generating more and more brutal acts.

This is borne out in among others by the events in Mosquito as Roma Tearne depicts and realistically reports. Anita Rau Badami’s Can You Hear the Nightbird Call? is another example of this. The retaliatory violence depicted in their works by both authors only leads to more brutal act of retribution by the opposite faction and the cycle is perpetuated. For instance in Mosquito, the atrocities of the Sinhala-speaking forces are answered by the Tamil Tigers with more violence and terrorism, this instigates the Sinhalese into more atrocious action and the political mayhem in the country only becomes worse affecting the lives of ordinary people. In Can You Hear the Nightbird Call? as well, the character of Bibi-ji faces this predicament. Bibi-ji knows the consequences of her actions of omission—her silence. She is aware that her friend, Leela will be killed but feels justified in harming and destroying people of another religion to uphold the honour of her religion, she chooses not to warn an innocent woman of the danger she is in because, in her view, her religion has been slighted, additionally, her husband has lost his life. The demands of revenge have to be met if she is to find restful sleep. However, in both texts, the characters’ actions, their desire for revenge results in unending cycles of violence. The depiction of these serves to show up the effect of the revenge impulse to the readers. No religion teaches that it is good to hurt others or to kill; they all in different ways extol peace and compassion, yet the
characters reject the virtues of sympathy in favour of a mindless course of seeking revenge as a duty. This appears to be intended to create in the readers a sense of the need to rein in the forces of simple-minded solutions grounded in inflamed fears and intolerance and to liberate the alternative approaches peace and harmony.

Many advocates of globalization view the post Cold War period as a new era of political and economic liberalization. Francis Fukuyama, one of the champions of globalization in his widely acclaimed book *The End of History and the Last Man* (2006) views globalization as growth in free trade, civil society, and privatization of state-owned enterprises. He argues that modern liberal democratic societies had grown sufficiently aware and interconnected through modern technology to protect against catastrophic warfare among superpowers, marking an end to the Cold War. He asserts:

But if war is fundamentally driven by the desire for recognition, it stands to reason that the liberal revolution which abolishes the relationship of lordship and bondage by making former slaves their own masters should have a similar effect on the relationship between states. Liberal democracy replaces the irrational desire to be recognized as greater than others with the national desire to be recognized as equal. A world made up of liberal democracies, then, should have much less incentive for war. (xx)

According to him the prospects of authoritarian regimes are also limited and the pre-existing patterns of history too are substantially altered in the era of globalization. Post September 11, 2001, many posit the argument that Fukuyama’s *End of History* thesis had itself ended but this did not deter Fukuyama, who continues to maintain his fundamental globalist position. However, globalization has its critics too. Brian Forst writes, “Today many are strongly opposed to what they see as dangerous disruptions that have spread throughout the world in the name of globalization” (83, 2009). As indicated by Forst, the rewards of globalization have a contradictory aspect as well. He continues, “In short, many of the same resources and advantages of globalization that have spurred economies and cultural exchange throughout the world have become accessible as well to
terrorist organizations with global aspirations, and these organizations have not hesitated to exploit them” (87, 2009). Others too have written about the link between globalization and violence, especially terrorism. Nassar discusses the link between globalization and violence in the form of terror. He proposes the concept of migration of dreams and migration of nightmares. Nassar’s argument is that due to globalization, there is greater homogenization in the world and inhabitants of the Third World have access to information about levels of affluence current in the First. This creates aspirations in them about enjoying the same standards. However, in a poor country with limited resources complete parity with the First World may not be possible, this leads to a gap in expectations and achievement and consequent violence or the migration of nightmares. In this way, globalization can indirectly be a cause for violence. According to him the elevated hopes are the merging points of both globalization and terrorism. He advances his case: “Globalization contributes to dreams among those who are poor or oppressed. This gap contributes to violence that often migrates to the lands of the rich and powerful. It is this cycle of dreams and nightmares that characterizes our globalized world today” (viii, ix, 2005). He discusses nightmares of violence and terrorism as a product of a globalized dream for a more equitable world.

In a globalized world where there is increased migration, there is also more contact with other cultures. This leads to expectations of a better share of resources in the less advantaged, this according to Nassar is the cause of violence and terrorism. He continues “Without hope for those poor and oppressed, violence is likely to continue” (ix, 2005). He therefore proposes a dialogue between the two, rich and poor, if violence is to be annihilated. Francis Fukuyama and Thomas Friedman, both proponents of the affirmative aspects of globalization too have pointed out its role in being a cause of violence. Francis Fukuyama observes: “People compare their situation not with that of traditional societies, but with that of wealthy countries, and grow angry as a result” (175, 2006). This explains how globalization can lead to violence due to the resentment felt by those who feel left out of the benefits it makes available. Thomas Friedman agrees with this position. In a discussion about globalization, he observes: “Everyone is directly or indirectly affected by this new system but not everyone benefits from it” (4,
2003). He goes on to add “which is why the more it becomes diffused, the more it also produces a backlash by people who feel overwhelmed by it, homogenized by it, or unable to keep pace with its demands” (4, 2003). So, while globalization can be positive in that it helps in better interaction and therefore understanding, the same resources can also be used negatively reversing the good effects and leading to violent acts. Thus, supporters of the positive effects of globalization like Thomas Friedman and Francis Fukuyama too acknowledge its negative features as observed above.

Discussions and debates around the question of violence abound. Various theories to explain the causes and possible resolutions of violence between people have been postulated by scholars. This section discusses two such theories: Samuel Huntington’s Clash of Civilizations and Amartya Sen’s Identity and Violence. The phrase ‘Clash of Civilizations’ was first used by Professor Bernard Lewis in an essay entitled “The Roots of Muslim Rage” in the Atlantic Monthly in 1990. Lewis discusses the clash especially focussing on the conflict between Islam and the West. He attributes the clash to a variety of factors, for instance the corrupting influence of an alien, seductive, and decadent Western culture into pious Muslim communities and the mounting struggle of fundamentalism against pagan secularist and disruptive modernist forces. He proposes that the historic but irrational reaction of an ancient rival against the Judeo-Christian, secular heritage and the worldwide expansion of both is no less than a clash of civilizations. He also suggests that it is crucially important that the West should not be provoked into an equally historic but also equally irrational reaction against that rival.

In 1993, Samuel Huntington wrote an essay that expanded on Lewis’s ‘Clash of Civilizations’ theory. Huntington extended the focus from Islam to all major civilizations. His proposition is that global politics is entering a new phase with deep and increasingly important differences in religion and culture. Later in 1997, Huntington wrote a thesis The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order in which he developed and reorganized the ideas expressed in his essay. The book posits a multipolar world consisting of seven or eight major civilizations. It draws attention to a clash of cultures rather than a clash of
ideologies. According to him: “In the new world the most pervasive, important and dangerous conflicts will not be between social class, rich and poor, or other economically defined groups, but between peoples belonging to different cultural entities” (28). He argues that the primary source of conflict in the world will not be ideological or economic; rather the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. He remarks that the clash of civilizations will be the battle lines of the future. The reason for this in his estimation is that the world is becoming a smaller place. The interactions between peoples of different civilizations are increasing; these escalating interactions intensify cultural consciousness and awareness of differences between civilizations and commonalities within civilizations. Huntington recognized before 9/11 that terrorism was a crucial mechanism in the clash of civilizations. He also talks about immigrants from other civilizations who reject assimilation and continue to adhere to and to propagate the values, customs, and cultures of their home societies. Huntington’s views were widely discussed and there were many differing observations and opinions related to his thesis. Among other things, Professor Huntington has been accused of bais, arbitrariness and self-prophesy.

One of the most notable responses to Huntington was launched by Nobel Laureate, Amartya Sen in Identity and Violence, The Illusion of Destiny (2006). His foremost argument is that the classifications that Huntington proposes are unreasonable. He criticizes the arbitrariness of Huntington’s categorization system by noting that other potentially more important distinctions can be made among people throughout the world. In his collection of essays, Amartya Sen proposes that a singular identity is the cause of violence in our world. He embarks upon a passionate debunking of such classifications of identity. Viewing a person’s identity through the perspective of religion alone is fundamentally flawed, he explains, for it ignores the many other equally strong identities that a person might bear. According to Sen, most people have plural identities; they define themselves not just by religion, but also by gender, nationality, class, profession, and much more. Sen contends that a single manner of identification based on a narrow grouping becomes the basis for violence in the world. He continues, “a major source of potential conflict in the contemporary world is the presumption that
people can be uniquely categorized based on religion or culture” (xv, 2006). Sen postulates that Samuel Huntington’s thesis makes use of the imagined singular identity. He says: “the difficulty with the thesis of the clash of civilizations begins well before we come to the issue of an inevitable clash; it begins with the presumption of the unique relevance of a singular classification” (11, 2006). For Sen, identity is based on multiple factors that describe an individual. He elucidates:

In partitioning the population of the world into those belonging to "the Islamic world", "the Western world", "the Hindu world", "the Buddhist world", the divisive power of classificatory priority is implicitly used to place people firmly inside a unique set of rigid boxes. Other divisions say, between the rich and the poor, between members of different classes and occupations, between people of different politics, between distinct nationalities and residential locations between language groups, etc are all submerged by this allegedly primal way of seeing the differences between people. (11, 2006)

According to Sen, the very idea of a clash of civilizations partitions the world into discrete, static, monolithic “cultures”, while ignoring the constant flow of intellectual, political, scientific, cultural and artistic exchange, not to mention the complexity of the myriad human individuals who make up the very civilization.

For Sen this is a reductionist approach that does not take into consideration other identities a person may have. He continues: “Despite our diverse diversities, the world is suddenly seen not as a collection of people but as a federation of religions and civilizations” (13, 2006). Sen rejects this notion of seeing people only according to one kind of taxonomy, he asserts: “Underlying the thesis of a civilizational clash lies a much more general idea of the possibility of seeing people primarily as belonging to one civilization or another. The relations between different persons in the world can be seen in this reductionist approach, as relations between the respective civilizations to which they allegedly belong” (41, 2006). This singular way of division is unacceptable to Sen. Stressing that there are other possibilities, he states:
In fact, of course, the people of the world can be classified according to many other systems of partitioning, each of which has some-often far-reaching-relevance in our lives: such as nationalities, locations, classes, occupations, social status, languages, politics, and many others. While religious categories have received much airing in recent years, they cannot be presumed to obliterate other destinations, and even less can they be seen as the only relevant system of classifying people across the globe. (10, 11, 2006)

This observation by Sen is important. The idea of a singular identity is related to the novels in this study whenever the characterization is focussed in terms of personality. It is demonstrated in the novels taken up, as in many instances it is the particular, sole identity that underlies the violent conduct. ‘The divisive power of classificatory priority’ is evident, for example in Vassanji’s The Assassins’ Song. The family of Pir Bawa which traditionally does not adopt a singular religious identity is pressurized by the forces of the major sides in conflict to do so, their refusal results in their being targeted as adversaries by both factions. A single identity, a singular affiliation is the requirement, comradeship with all is disallowed and the family which does not assume ‘a singular classification’ has to endure the resultant violence.

According to Sen, a sense of belonging to one group can carry with it the awareness of distance and divergence from other groups and this sense of solidarity within a group can create discord with those outside the group and this is what causes violence. So for him the remedy lies in an understanding of identity as plural and also of choosing the right affiliation. He suggests: “Along with the recognition of the plurality of our identities and their diverse applications, there is a critically important need to see the role of choice in determining the cogency and relevance of particular identities which are inescapably diverse” (4, 2006). He continues “So a person has to decide the precise importance that they would like to attach of an identity over other categories to which one belongs” (6, 2006). However Sen also sounds a note of caution, he says that a person’s freedom to assert his identity can be limited. Even when a person is unequivocal about his
own identity, others may not allow him or be ready to perceive him in this way. Sen adds: “Our freedom to assert our personal identities can sometimes be extraordinarily limited in the eyes of others, no matter how we see ourselves” (6, 2006). Hence, he proposes that it is important for all humans to exercise their choice and reasoning with due responsibility.

As thought by Sen, humans have to make the choice in adopting a plural identity and decide on the relative importance of different associations and affiliations of each in a given context. He continues “violence is promoted by the sense of inevitability about some allegedly unique-often belligerent-identity that we are supposed to have and which apparently makes extensive demands on us” (xiii, 2006). Sen gives an optimistic solution: “The main hope of harmony in our troubled world lies in the plurality of our identities which cut across each other and work against sharp divisions around one single hardened line of vehement division that allegedly cannot be resisted” (16, 2006). He rejects the clash and cultural conflict theory saying that this one-dimensional approach to human identity can only lead to global disorder. However, this hypothesis has become more popular post 9/11, the bombing of the Twin Towers in New York City, gaining better acceptance and respectability. For instance, Michael Bowden of Roger Williams University writes “The notion of a "clash of civilizations," first made famous in Samuel Huntington’s 1996 work "The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order" has gained increasing currency today. In essence, the theory presumes religious/cultural identity to be the keystone upon which cultures are differentiated; the world is accordingly categorized into "Islamic civilization," "Hindu civilization," "Buddhist civilization," and so on, which clash with each other”. Michael Bowden’s comment goes back to correlate the debate between Sen and Huntington with the concrete instance of 9/11 to prove identity as a deeply rooted constituent of human actions and character.

1.3. Methodology and Chapter Schema

This thesis will investigate the ways in which the various manifestations of violence-violence due to the rise in fundamentalist tendencies, political violence,
gendered violence, etc. are depicted in the works taken up for study. For instance, in Vassanji’s *The Assassin’s Song*, there is a violent riot on the streets of Gujarat, this is collective violence. In Badami’s *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?*, the Prime Minister of India is assassinated; this represents violence due to political reasons. Again, in Hosseini’s *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, there is public violence on the streets but there is private psychological warfare too, especially between the principal male and female characters. Monica Ali’s *Brick Lane* and Nadeem Aslam’s *Maps for Lost Lovers* depict other kinds of mental and emotional violent acts which are visible in the relationship between the various characters. An attempt will be made to observe how physical violence in its most intense form, i.e. killings and in other milder forms like beatings, bombings, attacks as well as other expressions of violence are portrayed. The authors draw upon their awareness, experience and comprehension of the situation they are articulating. The manner in which they do this in order to sensitize the readers to the circumstances around and create in them an impact that will not only illustrate but also underline the futility of violence to them will be examined. Supporters of nonviolence and peacefulness have recommended the approach of calmness and serenity to the world. The work will also observe the mode used by the authors to add weight to this communication.

An endeavour will be made to examine the means by which confronted with the futility of violence, the value of nonviolence is appreciated better. It may be inferred that this is the aim of the authors in writing about violence. An effort will be made to study how the texts are replete with instances demonstrating the danger of using violent methods to attain a just end in the narratives, the use of violence creates more problems than it solves, the experience, hopefully will help to forge the readers’ belief in the futility of violence and launch them to develop into advocates for nonviolent reconciliation. Any act that takes the lives of innocent people for whatever cause, secular or religious, noble or ignoble, demands certain ruthlessness. It requires turning a blind eye to the loss of lives and the consequences that ensue. Blindness cannot lead to insight. The depiction of this in the narratives provides good reason to ponder the consequences of using violence to solve problems. This aids the readers to find sufficient incentive to
move on and find alternatives to violence-methods like nonviolent resistance propounded and used by Gandhi and King, who discarded the prevalent method of violence and succeeded in freeing the downtrodden people of their country from political domination and exploitation. To see the effectiveness of such methods is to ultimately make nonviolent action a reality. The delineation of characters caught up in the dizzying cycle of violence, of retaliation and counter-retaliation show up the viscous cycles that violent action perpetrates. This charges the readers to be seriously dedicated to the task of pro-peace effort and the need to commit seriously to the undertaking of peace and reconciliation. In this way, the authors seek to stress the message of nonviolence given by Gandhi, King, the Dalai Lama, Mandela and others. This project is designed to attempt to examine the narrative strategies that the authors have evolved in order to describe and address the various manifestations of violence. Hence, the chapters are organized thematically according to the different types of violence examined.

In order to contextualize the events that led up to 9/11 and its aftermath on the diasporic consciousness thereafter, this study will adopt a combination of approaches. The nature of the subjects, i.e., violence and migration is closely connected to sociology; therefore one of the strategies of reading adopted will be sociological. In order to understand the response of the writers under study: the maintenance of cultural and national connections even in and as result of the hostility unleashed by acts of violence, diaspora theory will also be applied. The gender-specific violence and its acceptance as a result of patriarchal conditioning will be examined with the help of theories of feminism. Diaspora studies are heavily influenced by postcolonial discourse; Homi Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* (1994) speaks about the “splitting of the post-colonial or migrant subject” (47). In effect, many themes like identity, otherness, differentiation, etc are common to post-colonial and diaspora theories; therefore aspects of post-colonial theory too will be touched upon as part of the methodology employed. The occurrence of violence, whether in the home country or host nation, plays a pivotal role in the process of adaptation and transformation of the protagonists and their search for a suitable self. They act and are in turn acted upon by the dominant background of violence. In all this, the literature of the writers who
verbalize their own experiences of the transition process is representative and this is borne out time and again in their writing.

In an effort to make an extensive study, the novel form was preferred as this structure of writing requires a sustained and comprehensive treatment of a theme. An attempt was made to read and analyze an eclectic mix of authors and their writing; therefore novels by authors coming from different countries of origin in South Asia and settled in different parts of the world were consciously picked. The many sources and outcomes of violence too were sought to be considered. Accordingly, the selection of novels in this project covers the South Asian religions of Hinduism, Islam, Zoroastrianism and Sikhism. In addition to religion, political causes also get examined and a chapter on gender as the foundation of violence has been included as well. In all seven novels have been selected for this study. These are as follows: Rohinton Mistry’s *Family Matters* (2002), Monica Ali’s *Brick Lane* (2003), Nadeem Aslam’s *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004), Anita Rau Badami’s *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?* (2006), Khaled Hosseini’s *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007), M.G. Vassanji’s *The Assassin’s Song* (2007) and Roma Tearne’s *Mosquito* (2007).

1.3.1.

Prof Ram Puniyani asks in *Fundamentalism, Threat to Secular Democracy*, (2007): “The last three decades have seen the violence world over under the flag of religions…How are religions related to the massive violence, which goes on in their name?” (21). This discloses that the fundamentalism perpetrated by religion is a cause of violence. Puniyani adds: “The language of religion is deceptive. It gives it a type of moral sanctity, it creates a sort of mass hysteria, and it offers a sort of platform for the retrograde ideology” (13). This points out the role of religion in the power politics in our time. Political views and religious beliefs are perceived to be the cause of confrontation and cultural divisions in the world. The world is increasingly being divided by issues of religiosity. Religion also has an effect on politics. This extremism-based politics has evolved into a global issue. The representation of this in the works is the novelist’s way of interpreting the
world. Many authors depict characters practicing religious bigotry, fundamentalism and double standards, for example, M.G. Vassanji’s depiction of Pradhan Shastri in The Assassin’s Song and the portrayal of Yezad in Family Matters. These characters propagate an extreme form of faith based upon abhorrence of those outside the creed. This corresponds to the rise of fundamentalism that gives vent to violence. The effect of this on the characters presents an important area of study. In their narratives, writers also depict the way in which extremist tendencies increase and spread. The intensification of violent activities results in many hitherto moderate characters taking up a more militant stance and this is true of all religions. The second chapter, Fundamentalism and Religion in M. G. Vassanji’s The Assassin's Song, Rohinton Mistry’s Family Matters and Nadeem Aslam’s Maps For Lost Lovers takes up this issue. The novels taken up for examination are as follows: The Assassin’s Song by M.G. Vassanji, (2007), Family Matters by Rohinton Mistry (2002) and Maps for Lost Lovers by Nadeem Aslam, (2004).

M.G. Vassanji is one of Canada's most acclaimed writers. He was born in Kenya. He attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the University of Pennsylvania. He has a keen interest in medieval Indian literature and history. He co-founded and edited a literary magazine, The Toronto Review of Contemporary Writing Abroad. The focus of Vassanji's work has primarily been the situation of Asian Diaspora settled in East Africa. In his novels, members of this community (like himself) undergo a second migration to Europe, Canada, or the United States. Vassanji examines how the lives of his characters are affected by these migrations. He looks at the relations between the Indian community, the native Africans and the colonial administration. Though few of his characters ever return to India, the country's presence looms throughout his work. Vassanji’s work has received considerable critical acclaim.

The Assassin’s Song is set in locations very different from several of Vassanji’s earlier novels. It is set mostly in India and America and it speaks about Hinduism and Islam and violence in the name of religion in India. The reason for this is the pain and sorrow that the author feels at the situation in the country of
his ancestors. In his travelogue describing his visits to India, A Place Within (2009) he verbalizes his pain, he writes, “my visit to the homeland also coincided with a barbaric blight which afflicts it periodically. Its disturbing reverberations followed me in my journeys” (4). Vassanji visited India for the first time during the period of the riots consequent to the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya in 1992. As he mentions this is not an isolated case, clashes of this kind are a regular feature, he describes his feelings of revulsion himself, “the reality of the horrors of the 'riots' became impossible to ignore” (4, 2009). He also mentions the attitude of the common people, for whom this is part of normal life: “To be as resigned to the violence as many of my new Indian friends and acquaintances were, I realized, I would have to be born here. I was not” (4, 2009). The attitude of resignation causes anger in him: “I feel enraged because I cannot detach and disinfect myself from the horror” (34, 2009). The powerful reactions aroused in him impelled Vassanji to place his fictional account in a different location this time and articulate his thoughts on the subject of religious and communal animosity prevailing in India.

The story is about Karsan Dargawalla and his family. The main cultural background of the novel involves the history of Muslims in the Indian state of Gujarat. The story takes the reader from a thirteenth century village there to the United States in the 1960s and Canada in the 1980s. It moves back to Gujarat in 2002, when Hindu-Muslim riots took place. Among other things, The Assassin’s Song is about the danger of taking a neutral position in a world that demands certainties. The faith followed by Karsan’s family, the keepers of the Pir’s flame, is neither Hindu nor Muslim, but this doesn’t count for much in the heat of communal riots, when convenient labels have to be put on everything. It also looks at the way in which extremist elements spread hatred and violence in a peaceful community. Besides, it deals with the relationship between father and son and the two brothers as well. The friction between Karsan and his younger brother Mansoor, who has become an orthodox Muslim and is wanted by police for questioning, is representative of a clash of two ideologies. In its final denouement, the novel explores as well the outcome of violence and the traditional legacy of the protagonist. Karsan refuses to visit home under any
circumstances until the communal killings of 2002 force him back to the renamed Haripur to start life afresh.

Rohinton Mistry was born in 1952 in Bombay. He grew up as a member of Bombay’s middle class Parsi community. He obtained his education at the University of Bombay, studying mathematics and economics and receiving a Bachelor of Science degree in 1975. He then married and immigrated to Canada, settling in Toronto. He worked in a bank for a while, before returning to studies, studying English and philosophy part-time at the University of Toronto and completing his second degree in 1982. His books, thus far, portray diverse facets of Indian socioeconomic life; as well as Parsi Zoroastrian life, customs, and religion. Mistry’s fiction is rooted in the streets of Bombay. Many of his writings have been called “Indo-nostalgic”. Family Matters won the Kiriyama Pacific Rim Book Prize (2002) and was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize and the James Tait Black Memorial Prize (for fiction), (2002).

First published in 2002, Family Matters portrays the life of Nariman and his family. The story is told from Nariman’s point of view. It is set in Mumbai (Bombay) in the 1990s. It is full of the typical flavour of a representative Parsi household. It captures well the minute details of such a family. While the often mundane minutia of a family's life and struggles are delineated, Mistry masterfully weaves a reality that is both compelling and easy to relate to. In the novel, Mistry captures a realistic image of the city of Mumbai, the train system, arranged marriages, unending corruption of government, religious discrimination, exploding pressure-cookers full of curry, etc. The beauty and the agony of Mumbai act almost as another character in the story. In addition to this, the novel throws up some very serious questions about present day society and time, the issues of care of the sick and the aged, the financial difficulties of a middle class family, the small temptations that this dearth of money exposes the characters to, filial relationships, migration to another country in search of a better lifestyle and many other distinctively Indian facets of life. The novel also acts as a commentary about the role of religious affairs in the life of ordinary people. Mistry, a Parsi
himself observes some exacting practices of Zoroastrianism and the way in which these affect a normal happy household.


Aslam has said that *Maps for Lost Lovers* is his response to 9/11. In a discussion about the novel, Akash Kapur informs: “In an interview with a British newspaper, Aslam said that "Maps for Lost Lovers" is, in part, a response to the events of Sept 11, and that he was inspired to "condemn the small-scale Sept 11's that go on every day." ” It is set in an unnamed town in England. It depicts the lives of poor Pakistani immigrants; living on the margins of society, especially the women in the community. It is the story of Shamas, a former poet and current social worker and his family. The central act of violence around which the action of the novel revolves is an honour killing. Shamas’s brother, Jugnu and his lover, Chanda are murdered by Chanda's brothers because they cannot accept the couple living in sin. *Maps for Lost Lovers* traces the year following Jugnu and Chanda’s disappearance. The manner in which the year after they have gone missing unfolds, how those months come to have a bearing on all those close to the couple, how it splinters relationships and changes lives provides the narrative spine of the novel. Again, Aslam a Muslim himself speaks about the role of Islam in women’s oppression and the atrocities perpetrated in the name of religion. The novel explores the subjects of honour killings, questions the sexual practices of
some clerics, it exposes the beatings handed out to women who offend Islamic law. It also renders the hypocrisy of Muslim men who spend nights with their lovers but who torture their female relatives for their imagined sins by day. Besides, it highlights the claustrophobic society and clash of liberation versus old traditions and hatreds. Stylistically, the novel is exceptional. It has been called a prose poem; it is imbued with metaphor, sensuous allusions to Muslim fable and Eastern myth, and beautiful imagery from nature.

1.3.2

When one considers violence in society, one usually thinks of individual acts of violence. These acts of violence are the kind of hostility which most people identify as something to be feared and which causes citizens to lock their doors at night. But one encounters other categorizations of violence that can be detrimental to a comfortable existence. Especially, in the twenty first century, society is faced with a more grave type of violence. “This type of violence is done by groups of people to advance or impede the goal of a social change” <http://www.exampleessays.com/viewpaper/84562.html>. This kind of violence goes by many labels, such as collective violence or political violence. The structure and practice of this kind of violence is different in that the perpetrators have the object of social change in mind and that is the component which differentiates it from other kinds of violence. In any society the most familiar type of violence under this classification is war. But besides war, there are many other varieties of violence that contribute to political violence, such as riots, terrorist activities, police brutality, the actions of revolutionaries, etc. “In general, politically motivated violence can be defined as committing violent actions against others with the intended purpose of effecting a change in their actions. It is commonly referred to by the terms terrorism, rebellion, war, conquest, revolution, oppression, tyranny, and many others” <www.reference.com/browse/motivated>. Political violence is used by citizens, groups, or governments in different contexts. Violence is a common means used by people and governments around the world to realize present goals. Many groups and individuals believe that their political systems will never respond to their personal demands. As a result they believe that
violence is not only justified but also necessary in order to achieve their political objectives. By the same logic, many governments around the world believe they need to use violence in order to intimidate their populace into acquiescence. At other times, governments use force in order to defend their country from outside invasion or other threats of force.

There has been a strong correlation between nationalism and political violence. The enormous extent to which nation-based conflicts regarding religion, language and ethnicity differences are causing statewide conflicts is important. Other factors which can and do play significant roles in forming state violence are issues such as inequality, class conflicts, etc. Conflicts derived from nationalistic ideologies arise from complex combinations of ethnic strength, class, inequality, political opportunity, mobilization processes or international intervention. Again, all this is borne out in the texts. Tearne’s Mosquito (2007) illustrates this best. The position of the Tamils in her novel represents the factors contributing towards political violence. In Hosseini’s A Thousand Splendid Suns (2007), people are stoned to death by the ruling Taliban, who also perpetrate other crimes on the population at large openly and publicly. In Badami’s Can You Hear the Nightbird Call? (2006), there is public and political violence on the streets and inside a place of worship. In addition to this the army, the custodian of the law indulges in violent activities. Chapter Three, Political Violence in Can You Hear the Nightbird Call? and Mosquito explores the progression of this violence and the effect of uncertainties, anger and fear that this violence encompasses. The works taken up for study are: Anita Rau Badami’s Can You Hear the Nightbird Call? (2006) and Roma Tearne’s Mosquito (2007).

Can You Hear the Nightbird Call? is written by Anita Rau Badami, an Indian-Canadian novelist. She was born in 1961 in India. She has always been an avid reader and grew up nurtured by stories told by her extended family. Badami earned a Bachelor's Degree in English and studied journalism in Sophia College in Bombay. Badami has also written many stories for a children's magazine. She worked as a copywriter and wrote for newspapers and magazines for seventeen years before she became a full-fledged writer. She married in 1984 and moved to
Calgary in 1991 where she earned an M.A. at the University of Calgary. Currently, Badami and her family live in Vancouver. Her critically acclaimed novels deal with the complexities of Indian family life and with the cultural gap that emerges when Indians move to the West.

*Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?* alternates between India and Canada, exploring the lives of three women and their families for fifty years from the pre-partition times up to the 1990s. This novel encompasses many of the notable political events that affected both the people from the subcontinent and the Indo-Canadian population, like the partition of India in 1947, Indira Gandhi’s assassination by her own Sikh bodyguards in 1984, the book culminates with the Air India flight that left Vancouver on 23 June 1985 and exploded off the coast of Ireland, killing 329 people, mostly Indo-Canadians. It also deals with the practices of Sikhism. In the novel, events in the personal sphere of the three principal women characters are closely linked to events in the political area. Thus it was chosen as it provided a good opportunity to study the interrelation of the private and the public and the consequent violence. It shows how ordinary lives can be altered, sometimes to the point of being completely distorted by sentiments inspired by politics, history and religion. It traces the life of a friendly immigrant community in Vancouver in the early 1950s, where Sikhs and Hindus get together over tea but turns slowly but inexorably into ethnic remnants of humanity fuelled by fundamentalism and bigotry that explode into active hatred. *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?* also shows the tumultuous effect of the past on new immigrants, and the ways in which memory and myth, the personal and the political, become connected as for all three women protagonists, the conflicts of the past re-emerge with shattering results. It also questions what it means to be an immigrant. The characters are unable to embrace their adopted country and discard the history of their birth country, they carry it with them for the rest of their life even handing it down to their children.

Roma Tearne is a Sri Lankan born artist and writer. Her parents emigrated from Sri Lanka with her to South London in 1964 after witnessing a series of violently suppressed uprisings that left many civilians dead. She attended a
teachers’ training college. She later trained as a painter at Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art. Her work has been exhibited at the Royal Academy. In 2002, she became a Leverhulme resident artist at Oxford’s Ashmolean Museum, and is now a fellow at Oxford Brookes University. She lives with her family in Oxford. In her novels, topical themes such as the war on terror and the treatment of asylum seekers are cleverly presented against a background of love, grief and guilt; all this is drawn together by the theme of belonging. Her writing is deeply moving and thought-provoking, descriptions of the beautifully atmospheric landscape of Sri Lanka is pervasive in her writing. She views her three novels as a sort of trilogy, the first Mosquito,(2007) deals with the war in Sri Lanka, the second Bone China (2008) has the main theme of emigration to escape the war, and Brixton Beach (2009) is primarily about integration. Mosquito was shortlisted for the Costa First Novel Award and the Kiriyama Prize. This thesis takes up Mosquito as this novel affords an in depth insight into the politics of the violence in Sri Lanka. In this novel, the lives of the characters are chronicled in the setting of the political events in the author’s country of origin, Sri Lanka.

Mosquito is a novel of love, loss and hope. It is set in Sri Lanka, London and Venice. The Sri Lankan civil war serves as the backdrop for Roma Tearne’s debut novel. It is the story of Theo Samarajeeva, a Sri Lankan author who returns home from England after his wife’s death despite the warnings of his friends not to return to the war torn island nation. He develops a friendship with an artistic young girl, Nulani, whose family is caught up in the growing turmoil. The friendship gradually blossoms into love. But the violence explodes, tearing them apart. Betrayed, imprisoned and tortured, Theo is gradually stripped of everything he once held dear-his writing, his humanity and, eventually, his love. Broken by the belief that her lover is dead, Nulani flees Sri Lanka for a cold and lonely life of exile. As the years pass and the country descends into a morass of violence and hatred, the lovers struggle to recover some of what they have lost. They try to resurrect from the wreckage of their lives a fragile belief in the possibility of redemption. Tearne writes beautifully about Sri Lanka, capturing its beauty and the brutality of the civil war. She writes poignantly about the pointlessness of war, about the brutality of persecution, the physical and psychological damage it
wrecks on the tortured and of the triumph of hope. Tearne also gives a brief sketch of the psyche of a Tamil Tiger recruit, through the character of Vikram, the young orphan boy who gets recruited into the LTTE.

1.3.3.

On another level are the experiences of Laila and Miriam vis-a-vis their common husband in Hosseini’s *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, (2007). These constitute one more kind of violent behaviour which is private, individual, dreadfully physical and traumatic. The way Razia’s husband treats his family in Ali’s *Brick Lane* (2003) is violence of another kind, individual and psychological. Both these fall under the broad category of domestic violence. It is usually women who are at the receiving end of such violence, although there may be instances of the old and elderly, children or other weak and unprotected factions being subjected to this form of aggression. Kalini Muzumdar in “Women and Violence: A Human Rights Perspective” (1998), speaking about domestic violence against women says: “The focus on women as an exploited, victimized and marginalised group is a recent development in the world. It has now been recognised that despite all their rights being violated women have been suffering in silence” (47). From this it can be seen that a vigorous multi-pronged effort is needed to stop this violence and establish women as human beings; to dispel the misconceptions surrounding them and their duties. However, to fight domestic violence one must first understand it. Violence against women is considered to be a manifestation of the patriarchal system, a system resting on and vesting in the age-old subordination and exploitation of women. It is socially sanctioned to some extent. Shirin Kudchedkar and Sabiha Al Issa in their Introduction to *Violence against Women, Women against Violence*, (1998) say “Even today the wife and mother roles are seen as women’s primary roles. Thus Patriarchy legitimizes women’s oppression” (2). The gender specific roles in a patriarchal society provide the basis for women’s subordination and consequent victimization. As a mother and a wife the woman becomes dependent on the males in her life and this could lead to her ill-treatment.
Suma Chitnis asserts, “There are many ways in which women suffer, and are made to suffer” (11, 1998). As victims of this violence, the pain suffered by the women is harsh and more severe than any other kind of pain, fear and terror. Chitnis continues: “Any individual or group facing the threat of coercion or being disciplined to act in a manner required by another individual or group, is subject to violence. This is not necessarily confined to physical violence but the creation of an atmosphere of terror, a situation of threat and reprisal...A hierarchal social structure has violence built into it” (12, 1998). Violence against women ranges from simple suppression to abuse, aggression, exploitation, severe oppression and even murder. Also it is widespread and regular in most societies as the social composition is such that violent behavior is inherent in the household, where one component is strong and powerful and the other is weak and dependent. Meera Kosambi in “Tradition" "Modernity" and "Violence against Women” (1998) affirms “Just as the universality and pervasiveness of violence against women cuts across geographical, cultural or ethnic boundaries, so does it persist despite significant social changes. The difference is usually one only of culturally or temporally specific manifestations, but rarely that of the presence or absence of this violence itself” (19). In a situation where the two constituents that make up a complete family unit are acutely unequal, vicious actions against the weaker one are not only tolerated but also expected and an added dimension is that the victim has no other alternative but to suffer. Meera Kosambi argues further: “As the underlying socio-cultural values are intricately woven into all forms of violence perpetrated against women, in the absence of a fundamental change in the existing patriarchal values, such violence will continue both in its familiar form and in newer guises” (25, 26, 1998). This speaks about the customs of patriarchy which find novel ways to suppress and repress women. Such practices are detrimental to women and girls in many ways and need to be brought to an end. Efforts in this direction have started and women have begun to channelize their resentment against the discrimination they suffer into constructive channels aimed at mitigating their circumstances and that of their sisters. Earlier diasporic writers who wrote about women centric issues, focussed on their identity and their
experiences being subsumed under those of men, post 2001, the writers are articulating the issue of domestic or gendered violence and the way it can be combated. Chapter Four on Domestic Violence is an attempt to understand and study in this direction. The chapter is called Examining Gendered Violence in Monica Ali’s *Brick Lane* and Khaled Hosseini’s *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and analyses Monica Ali’s *Brick Lane*, (2003) and Khaled Hosseini’s *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, (2007).

*Brick Lane* (2003) is Monica Ali’s first novel. She was born in 1967 in Dhaka, Bangladesh to a Bangladeshi father and English mother, moving to Bolton, England at the age of three, where she was raised. She went to Bolton School and then studied philosophy, politics and economics at Wadham College, Oxford. She lives in South London with her husband and their two children. Ali opposed the British government’s attempt to introduce the ‘Racial and Religious Hatred Act’ (2006), something she writes about in her contribution to *Free Expression Is No Offence*, a collection of essays published by Penguin in November 2005. *Brick Lane* was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize for Fiction in 2003. Ali was voted Granta’s Best of Young British Novelists on the basis of the unpublished manuscript of the novel. In her novels, Ali chooses contemporary storylines and keeps a focus on the connections between geography, identity and human relationships.

*Brick Lane* is set in the eponymous Brick Lane, a neighbourhood in London. It deals with the condition of women in the author’s native Bangladesh and in the diasporic location of London. Therefore, this novel was a good choice to explore violence, especially gendered violence. After her mother kills herself, seventeen-year old Bangladesh-based Nazneen gets married to forty-two-year old Chanu Ahmed, and re-locates to live in London in the 1980s, leaving her father and sister, Hasina, behind. Trapped within the four walls of her flat in East London, and in a loveless marriage with the middle aged Chanu, she fears her soul is quietly dying. She soon gives birth to two daughters, Rukshana and Bibi. Her sister Hasina, meanwhile, through letters to Nazneen, tells of her life back in Bangladesh, stumbling from one experience to the next. Nazneen struggles to
accept her lifestyle, and keeps her head down in spite of life's blows, but she soon
discovers that life cannot be avoided-and is forced to confront it. When her
husband loses his job, she takes up sewing and meets with Karim, who supplies
her dress material, and both get attracted to each other. While racism prevails in
the community, especially from white supremacist groups, it escalates after the
events of September 11, 2001, prompting a debt-ridden Chanu to consider re-
locating back to Dhaka, much to the chagrin of Nazneen and her daughters.
Although the thought of being reunited with a seemingly care-free Hasina attracts
her, Nazneen must now choose between living in their apartment on Brick Lane,
continuing her affair or even getting married to Karim, or accompanying her
husband. She chooses neither option, preferring a life of independence with other
women like herself.

Khaled Hosseini was born in Kabul, Afghanistan, in 1965. In 1980, the
Hosseini family sought and was granted political asylum in the United States as
by then Afghanistan had already witnessed a bloody communist coup and the
invasion of the Soviet army. Hosseini graduated from high school in 1984 and
enrolled at Santa Clara University where he earned a Bachelor's degree in biology
in 1988. The following year, he entered the University of California, San Diego's
School of Medicine, where he earned a Medical Degree in 1993. He completed
his residency at Cedars-Sinai Hospital in Los Angeles. Hosseini was a practicing
internist between 1996 and 2004. While in medical practice; Hosseini began
writing his first novel, *The Kite Runner*. In 2006, he was named a goodwill envoy
to UNHCR, the United Nations Refugee Agency. Hosseini is deeply concerned
about his native country. He has been working to provide humanitarian assistance
in Afghanistan through ‘The Khaled Hosseini Foundation’. He lives in northern
California. Both his novels till date deal with relationships, family ties, homeland
and nationality. The Taliban and their control over Afghanistan is another theme
common to both novels. His work also reveals the suffering Afghanistan has
experienced in a quarter century of conflict. Violence pervades the novels, even
in the seemingly innocuous activity of kite fighting. Also, many characters in his
novels express their feeling of connection to the geographical place that is
Afghanistan. He has won numerous awards.
A Thousand Splendid Suns is Khaled Hosseini’s second novel. This novel was selected for its depiction of the status of women in Afghanistan both inside and outside their homes. The violence they face is sensitively portrayed by the author. Another interesting feature of the novel is that although it is written by a man, it holds a woman’s point of view. All this gives it a distinctiveness that makes it remarkable and appropriate for a study on violence. A Thousand Splendid Suns is a story set against the volatile events of Afghanistan’s political landscape—from the Soviet invasion to the reign of the Taliban to the post-Taliban rebuilding—that puts the violence, fear, hope, and faith of this country in intimate, human terms. It is a tale of two generations of characters brought jarringly together by the tragic sweep of war, where personal lives—the struggle to survive, raise a family, find happiness—are inextricable from the history playing out around them. A Thousand Splendid Suns chronicles three decades of Afghan history and a deeply moving account of family and friendship. It is a novel of an unforgiving time, an unlikely friendship, and an indestructible love.