CHAPTER THREE

An Analysis of Political Violence in Anita Rau Badami’s *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?* and Roma Tearne's *Mosquito*

Chapter two examined the rise of fundamentalism and the way in which this gives rise to violence in society. Fundamentalism is associated with a strict interpretation of traditional texts and is therefore resistant to modernism. The chapter also observed how fundamentalism, especially of the religious variety leads to intolerance and is the cause of violent behaviour. Another related area that combines with the forces of fundamentalism to produce more violent activities is politics. In a society, situations or sentiments of dissatisfaction are influenced by political relationships and this leads to violence. Chapter three therefore considers the effects of politics in producing violence and the way in which the utilization of political forces brings into play religion, communalism and other influences like cultural differences that affect the lives of ordinary citizens.

This chapter studies the concept of violence to gain political advantage. It argues that the role of political affairs in spreading and prolonging violence is considerable. It contends that the use of violence to accomplish political objectives is increasing. It also illustrates how both the authorities in power and ordinary citizens use the means of violence for their purpose of achieving public or collective gains. The chapter is divided into three sections. The texts that it investigates are as follows: *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?* (2006) and *Mosquito* (2007).

The first section, *Understanding the Complexities of Political Violence* (3.1) establishes the nature of political violence and how it is different from other kinds of violence. It analyses the approaches to violence and various theories of political violence. The section discusses that political violence manifests itself more in societies where political institutions are not sufficiently capable of dealing with socio-economic disparities and other grievances. Political stability, on the
other hand, helps in accommodating the demands of various groups, and this restrains violent behavior.

The next section, **The Consequences of Public Violence on Private Lives in Anita Rau Badami’s Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?** (3.2) interrogates the effect of political events in the home country and their effect on the actions of people living a diasporic existence in Canada. It illustrates the change that activities in the political and public sphere bring about in the personal and private domain. Finally, it also observes the way in which acts of violence and terrorism follow one another.

The third and last section is entitled **Cycles of Political Violence in Roma Tearne's Mosquito** (3.3). It deals with the Sri Lankan Civil War. This section examines the role of international and internal politics in the lives of citizens. It observes how the long history of political separation based on language and ethnicity has lead to the present situation. This section analyses how violence brutalizes the victim, the perpetrator, as well as those who witness it. It also demonstrates the futility of violent methods.

Many theorists have propounded their views on political violence. Some believe it is inherent in the process of change while others speak of it as dependent on factors of political affairs. In an effort to explain the causes of politically motivated violence, Rajmohan Gandhi has postulated cycles of violence. In *Revenge and Reconciliation, Understanding South Asian History* (1999), speaking in the context of the history of the Indian subcontinent, he states, “The recognition, overdue as a century ends, is of the violence in India’s past and present, and the inquiry is about the comparative strengths, in India’s and South Asia’s history, of the threads of revenge and reconciliation” (xi). Cycles of violence are initiated by the intention of seeking vengeance for past wrongs. Rajmohan Gandhi continues, “many see revenge as the only possible response. A merely appropriate armed reply does not satisfy. A lesson must be taught” (391, 1999). The pursuit of revenge that leads to a series of violent events can be evidenced in the works under scrutiny. The objective of this chapter is to discern
these sequences of violence and the way in which they affect ordinary lives as portrayed by the writers.

The threat of politically induced violence is of paramount significance in the present day. Violence persists as an essential element in the social and political spheres. No social phenomenon has escalated on such a large scale, in recent times as political violence. Prabhash Singh in *Political Violence in India* (1989) says, “Actually in our fragmented social structure violence has emerged as a dominant mode of social interaction and this mode is mostly influenced by politics” (ix). The surfacing of violence as a means to redress societal issues is indicated by this. Singh continues, “Though force and violence are not isolated phenomena to be examined as something extraordinary in the life of a political community but today’s world has an increasing propensity to use violence as a means of political action” (ix). All interest groups including political parties and individuals are increasingly resorting to physical coercion and violence in the clash for resources. Violence in the political sphere is seen as a remedy for the problems faced by individuals and institutions.

Sachidananda in *Political Violence in India* (1989) states, “There is no phenomenon which has escalated on such a large scale in recent times as violence. The escalation is not only an Indian experience but holds true for the entire globe … Some time back India was held as an example of peace and nonviolence, probably in no other country we have had important exponents of nonviolence down the ages from Buddha and Mahabir to Mahatma Gandhi” (foreword). The predisposition of Indians to nonviolence has now been invalidated in the light of violent events like the anti-Sikh riots (1985), the succession of riots in the state of Gujarat from pre- partition times upto the present, violence in the state of Kashmir since 1990, Maoist insurgency in central and east India. This is equally true of South Asia and other parts of the globe as well. S. P. Aiyar asserts in The *Politics of Mass Violence in India*, (1967): “Unfortunately for society, most of the social movements have resorted to violence at some stage or another” (71). Thus, it can be said that violence is widespread in most actions that involve a group or public cause.
3.1 Understanding the Complexities of Political Violence

Political violence is pervasive and invades the political structure of every major country. S. P. Aiyar elucidates: “To understand the role of violence in any political system it is necessary to remember that violence is present in some degree and in some form in every kind of social arrangement. The history of all countries shows that violence is a universal phenomenon. It is writ large on the pages of human history; in fact, it is no exaggeration to say that if violence is erased from human records, little of history would be left” (29, 30, 1967). Political violence refers to all combined and single attacks within a political community or the political regime, its members including competing political groups as well as the incumbents or its policies. The notion embodies a set of occurrences that take place in the common backdrop of the actual use of physical force resulting in death or injury or both.

Political violence is undertaken for some political gains. Prabhash Singh postulates, “political violence is either the deliberate infliction or threat of infliction of physical injury or damage for political ends or it is violence which occurs unintentionally in course of several political conflicts” (9, 1989). All violence has at its core physical damage or psychological harm to a perceived opponent. S. P. Aiyar explains: “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” (27, 1967). Political violence is distinguished from other forms of violence in that it aims to accomplish political purposes rather than individual goals. Dipak Gupta in Understanding Terrorism and Political Violence (2008) states: “A politically motivated act is undertaken in the name of an entire community. Therefore, the instrumental goal of a violent act of dissidence is a public good that must be shared with the entire community regardless of the levels of participation by an individual member” (9). Hence, political violence has at its core some common goal, a collective enterprise undertaken for the benefit of the community or group, which is to be shared with all members of society even those who did not
contribute to the confrontation. This notion includes the distinction between authorized and unauthorized force; the former as violence of the authority, the latter as an expression of defiance against the authority. Political violence is “the calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological”. <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/Political+violence>. The purpose of such acts of violence is to create alarm. Political violence is the use of aggressive methods to gain political advantage “whenever social tensions and group interests find violent expression directed against the state power, they acquire a political colour, such violence is called political violence” <http://nos.org/317courseE/L-36%20POLITICAL%20VIOLENCE.pdf>. According to this view political violence is the aggression of a group in society against the forces of the state.

It is usual to use the mode of political violence to accomplish supporting goals. This is considered accepted practice because of the belief that without violence political structures will not respond to the demands of citizens. In his foreword to The Politics of Mass Violence in India (1967), P. B. Gajendragadkar, asserts “incidents of mass violence result from the belief that unless public dissatisfaction speaks the language of violence, it does not receive the attention of the party in power” (11). Violence against the political order is therefore considered to be justified and also necessary in order to achieve political purposes. According to this view, whenever the people or a particular group of people under a political regime are dissatisfied with the prevailing regulations and want a change, the political authorities may not necessarily accede to their demands and the use of violence would achieve the desired change. P. B. Gajendragadkar continues: “Explosion of violence is in a sense dramatic and it immediately attracts the attention of the party in power and the public at large” (11, 1967). The stratagem of using political violence ensures that the issue at hand gets noticed and people become aware of it, thus becoming a pressure point for the powers that be.
In a situation where citizens make their demands known visibly, a
government cannot afford to be unresponsive to public grievances as they are
aware that continued unresponsiveness may lead to a ventilation of the protests
through violence. The risk of aggression provides an active and receptive reply.
Speaking about collective violence and mass movements like bandhs and hartals,
S. P. Aiyar says: “These political movements are forms of persuading authorities
to yield to organized demands; violence is its instrument which it may actually use
or keep in reserve as the "last" resort. For agitated masses it is the language of
communication” (27, 1967). Thus political violence is used to send across an
effective message in a way that other methods would not be successful in doing.
S. P. Aiyar extends the function of violence or the threat of violence to the entire
range of social movements. He goes on: “Violence, it seems to me, is potentially
present in all mass movements” (27, 1967). For S. P. Aiyar, in every collective
movement there is a latent measure of violence that can become active under
certain circumstances.

In the same way, the other side viz. many political administrations around
the world believe they need to use violence in order to coerce the population into
submission to the prevailing rules. Charles Tilly in The Politics of Collective
Violence (2003) articulates: “Collective violence, then, is a form of contentious
politics. It counts as contentious because participants are making claims that affect
each other’s interests. It counts as politics, because relations of participants to
governments are always at stake” (26). However, the nature and causes of
violence may differ from place to place and culture to culture. It depends among
other things, on the nature of political institutions and the level of economic
development. In brief one may say that that all such violence which is related to
the activities for seeking power positions, for decision-making in a political
system or which directly or indirectly influence political power relationships or
get influenced by them can be classified as political violence.

Deliberations about the basis of political violence are made by analysts
who have proposed theories to explain the occurrence. Harry Eckstein in his
essay, “Theoretical Approaches to Explaining Political Violence” (1980) uses the
terms ‘Contingency’ and ‘Inherency’. He states: “In studying political collective violence, the first and most fateful choice lies between regarding it as "contingent" or "inherent” in political life” (138). He goes on to explain the nature of contingency and inherency. He declares “something is contingent if its occurrence depends on the presence of unusual (we might say aberrant) conditions that occur accidentally-conditions that involve a large component of chance” (138). According to this perspective, unforeseen events and incidents act as a trigger to activate political violence. Having established the nature of contingency, he takes up inherency; “Per contra, something is inherent either if it will always will happen … or if the potentiality for it always exists and actuality can only be obstructed. Just when the inevitable occurs or hindrances are removed is decided by contingencies: chance occurrences that hinder or facilitate” (139). Contingency theories hinge on the concept of an extensive collapse in a system where regulating devices become dysfunctional. A word of caution needs to be inserted here about the overlapping of the two categories, Eckstein takes care to assert: “In the concrete world, contingency and inherency are almost always, intertwined and hard to disentangle. What seems manifestly contingent to one observer may seem just as obviously inherent to another” (139). Contingency can be summarized as a possibility dependent upon other conditions and inherency as intrinsic to the structure.

Social scientists have acknowledged that the gap between expectation and achievement is a key contributor to violence. This has given rise to the ‘Relative deprivation Theory’. This hypothesis can be identified as the difference between what someone acquires and what he or she believes they should acquire. Dipak Gupta in an effort to explain ‘relative deprivation’ states: “Relative deprivation results when one section of a society appropriates for itself a greater share of resources and opportunities, the rest of the society in such a situation feels relatively deprived” (22, 2008). However this condition of feeling deprived and frustrated remains dormant until aroused by some special extrinsic forces strong enough to overcome the tendency toward pacific acquiescence. Gupta continues “When the gap or imbalance in allocation of limited resources increases, this leads to violence” (22, 2008). In other words, when the feeling of disparity, of being
deprived becomes sufficiently large, it leads the affected persons to turn to aggression. Prabhash Singh clarifies: “the larger the gap between the two, the more likely an individual is to turn to violence” (14, 1989). This model also proposes that the greater the scope and density of relative deprivation the more likely is it to lead to violent behaviour, the other feature is that the arousal of aggression is the first step that causes a progression for latency to become actuality.

In many societies, there is a transitional phase between tradition and modernity. This results in an imbalance between political, social and economic institutions which causes violence. Dipak Gupta elucidates: “A number of scholars see sociopolitical conflicts as the outcomes of an inevitable clash between the traditional values and the forces of modernization” (23, 2008). Political modernization necessitates the accommodation of new social groups. When this need is not understood and accepted and institutions and systems to ensure their participation are not established, the result is political violence. Dipak Gupta explicates: “Social-structural imbalances take place when a society fails to assimilate a group of people within it, and conflicts are generated from social-structural strains due to widespread poverty, inequality, etc.” (24, 2008). In a state of flux, other factors come into play and these could be the cause of violence. He elaborates: “Violent conflicts are born when the state authorities lose political legitimacy among a segment of the population” (25, 2008). The aim of political violence is to influence either directly or indirectly the decision making or power relationships in a political system. It is motivated by a desire to maintain or change the existing social political order and, manifests itself when political institutions fail to perform their designated duties or lose their authority or legitimacy. It is also manifested when violence in a political community involves competing political groups against the political regime. Gupta also proposes other related causes, “some have argued that conflicts are essentially the outcome of lack of political legitimacy of those in power, while others contend that when the demands on the policy outstrip its ability to deliver, social order tends to break down” (24, 2008). Besides this, it is argued by some thinkers like Frantz Fanon that violence is the only tool available to the oppressed people in their struggle
against exploitation. This is one more theory that is used to explain political violence, it expounds that there can be a resolution of tensions through conflict.

In the social and political context, violence can be of two kinds: In the first case, it involves the use of physical or psychological force by the people against the state power or government power to achieve shared ends. This is violence by the people at large. Secondly, violence may involve the force of state power, the agencies like the police, army, etc as a means to ensure law and order. This kind of violence is sanctioned by the Law and thus considered to be legitimate. However excessive use of such force or a protracted use of it could become official or state sponsored violence. Dipak Gupta says “The hallmark of an organized society is that the state carries the monopoly of the right to use power” (69, 2008). The police and army which are expected to maintain law and order sometimes use violence against the very citizens they are supposed to protect. Torture of people taken into custody, encounter killings, sometimes even rape of women, etc., are some forms of political violence by the state machinery. This brings to the fore the question of violence and force.

The concept of political violence is also explained with reference to ideas like force. S. P. Aiyar expounds this thus: “A clear distinction must be made between force and violence. Generally, critics of the government often talk of the police excesses and its resorting to violence to break nonviolent non-operators. Here the police are using force, for they are legally entitled to use it under certain circumstances” (71, 1967). For S. P. Aiyar, a legally constituted state cannot commit violence at all, it can exercise force. He says: Violence has been defined as the “illegal employment of methods of physical coercion for personal or group ends” (71, 1967). Thus, seen from this angle, the concept of violence by the state or polity is considered as unreal and invented. The application of violent means by the official machinery of the State does not amount to violence since such an authority has the legal sanction to use aggression or force in the appropriate circumstances. This force is not tantamount to violence. Charles Tilly asserts: “Rulers, police, philosophers, and historians often distinguish between force and violence. Force, in this view, consists of legitimate short-run damage and seizure-
which typically means that the persons who administer damage enjoy legal protection, for their actions. Force might therefore include legitimate self-defence but not unprovoked aggression. In such a perspective, violence refers to damage that does not enjoy legal protection” (27, 2003). On the other hand, Charles Tilly also problematizes this standpoint. He points out that while the distinction between force and violence serves some purposes and for that reason all citizens want to make some such distinction. Yet, they also want to draw lines between right and wrong uses of governmental authority to seize and damage persons or their property. This point is corroborated by S. P. Aiyar. He says: “whenever mass violence has to be put down firmly, it is the Police Forces that are called out to do so. Later, it becomes a moot point as to whether the Police Forces had used too much or too little force in dealing with the situation” (136, 1967). Hence, citizens want governments to deploy their concentrated coercive means against improper use of violence. Nonetheless, they also inquire into the use of such force in variable amounts and with diverse definitions of propriety.

There are doubts about the appropriateness or otherwise about the violence used by the forces of official agencies. Tilly affirms: “For purposes of explaining violent interactions, however, the distinction between (legitimate) force and (illegitimate) violence faces three inseparable objections” (27, 2003). He continues: “First, the precise boundary of legitimate force remains a matter of fierce dispute in all political systems. Just think of debates about what does or doesn't constitute proper police behaviour in pursuing a suspect, about the rights and wrongs of capital punishment, or about permissible military actions against civilians in wartime. In the very course of initially peaceful demonstrations that turn violent, demonstrators and police are almost always contesting the boundary between legitimate and illegitimate uses of coercive means” (27). Tilly also talks about harm due to governmental negligence and by secret support from some governmental body as well as action by official machinewry during riots, rebellions, revolutions, etc. These are sensitive matters in every polity where there is exercise of power by the official bodies of a government against civilians. Nonetheless, such use is ubiquitously present the world over. Tilly says additionally: “In all governments, furthermore, some rulers also use violent means
to further their own power and material advantage, when large-scale collective violence occurs, government forces of one sort or another almost always play significant parts as attackers, objects of attack, competitors, or intervening agents. International war is simply the extreme case but, on the whole, the most lethal of government involvement in violence. For these reasons, collective violence and nonviolent politics intersect incessantly” (27). The correlation between violence and government continues all over the world. Charles Tilly postulates:

Nevertheless, violence and government maintain a queasy relationship. Where and when governments are very weak, interpersonal violence commonly proliferates in the populations under the nominal jurisdictions of those governments. Where and when governments grow very strong, violence among civilians usually declines. Politicians and political philosophers often advocate good strong governments as a bulwark against violent victimization. But all governments maintain control over concentrated means of violence in the form of arms, troops, guards, and jails. Most governments use these means extensively to maintain what their rulers define as public order. (26, 27, 2003)

Political violence may take various forms like demonstrations, riots, political assassination, insurgency, riots, terrorism, etc. All these forms are usually concerned with mass violence of the people. Political violence by the state machinery includes detention, custodial torture, extrajudicial killings, etc. Some forms like strikes or demonstrations are low intensity or symbolic forms of protest which do not cause much harm, while riots, insurgency, etc are more intense forms of protest. Terrorism and internal or civil war constitute the most severe form of political violence. It needs to be said, however, that the various categories of political violence are not mutually exclusive, they may overlap as they very often do. Low intensity violence may escalate into high intensity violence. Also more than one form of political violence may be current in society at the same time. Finally, political violence has a subversive effect on society. It makes the life of ordinary citizens difficult and unsafe, and also affects the social life of people. It can retard economic progress and impede healthy growth. Politically instigated violence is a significant manifestation of violence. Many diasporic
writers have located their fictional narratives against the backdrop of the political events of their native lands. The following sections analyse two such works.

3.2. The Consequences of Public Violence on Private Lives in Anita Rau Badami’s Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?

Anita Rau Badami’s Can You Hear the Nightbird Call? (2006) is the story of three women linked in love and tragedy over a long span of time. Beginning at the time before the partition of India and Pakistan, it ends with the explosion of Air India flight 182 off the coast of Ireland in 1985. The novel is rich with the daily sights, sounds and scents of both India and Canada. Rau’s warmth and her understanding of human relationships is amply demonstrated in this novel, where the fictional world gets intermingled with real events that took place in history. This mixture also becomes the connection and fusion of the personal and the political with the religious identity of the characters, mostly with chaotic results.

3.2.1 Background: Historical Events in the Novel

The action of the novel takes place in the backdrop of actual happenings in the history of India. Anita Rau Badami positions the episodes of the novel as if the tangible events in the political reality of India and Canada are taking place as the characters lives get played out. Speaking about the various political incidents depicted in the novel, Ami Sands Brodoff in “Humanizing History” (2001) explicates, “we experience these events through the lives, thoughts and experiences of her characters; we live through the devastation with them”. The diverse political incidents represented in the novel serve to remind the readers about the politics of the region and exercises their reminiscences of the recent past. “My memory keeps getting in the way of your history,” reads the first epigraph to the novel. There are three epigraphs in all; the second refers to the Anti-Sikh riots in Delhi and the third to the Kanishka bombing. These reveal the role that political events play in the scheme of the narrative. Her biggest challenge in writing Nightbird, Badami says in the same interview with Brodoff was “keeping the history in backdrop, not letting it eat up the story”. This again
explains the importance attached to the actual historical and political incidents in the work of fiction. Badami also dedicates the book to the memory of the man on the bridge in Modinagar and the victims of Air India Flight 182. This is explained by Badami in an interview with Brodoff: “My husband and I were travelling back to Delhi after our honeymoon. From our bus window I saw a Sikh man set on fire, then thrown over a bridge.” Brodoff goes on: “The traumatic incident is the seed for what became Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?” Even as she was shocked by the distressing incident, Badami did not start writing right away. Brodoff elaborates: “However, Badami didn't begin work on the novel until 1995, when "the revenge killings of innocent Sikhs became linked in my mind with the Air India disaster of 1985." The novel took her six years to write”. This is a clear indication of the cycles of violence that have been referred to by numerous commentators like Rajmohan Gandhi. Brodoff continues further: “She achieves her intention, linking the lives of three women whose fates are entwined by love, chance, and ultimately, the cycle of violence.” So, in this novel the author herself gives evidence of the fact that violence, even political violence appears in a series. Badami says in the same interview: “I wanted to humanize the facts, to give life and shape to the dry bones of history”. The fictional characters live and breathe in the background of the partition of India, the emergency, etc and their lives are affected by this history. Some major historical events embodied in the novel are:

- The Komagata Maru incident (1914),
- The Partition of India (1947),
- The two Indo-Pak Wars (1965, 1971),
- The Khalistan Movement (1970s and 1980s),
- Imposition of a State of Emergency in India (1975),
- Operation Bluestar (1984),
- The Assassination of Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi (1984),
- The Anti-Sikh Riots (1984),
3.2.2 Pre-Partition Period: Kinship, Fraternity, Affinity and a Shared Community Life

At the outset, Badami brings in the role of politics-based religion in the society that the characters are a part of. She mentions that the house of the central character Bibi-ji was: “One of a small cluster of Sikh and Hindu houses, it was separated from the Muslim homes by fields of swaying cane sugar” (3). This clearly indicates that even in pre-partition India, Muslims and Hindus live close to each other yet separated by fields or some other barrier. Here it can also be seen that the Sikhs and Hindus live together as one, there is no marked differentiation between the two religions. This is articulated by Rajkumari Shanker in “Women in Sikhism” (1997), “until recently Sikhs had displayed little collective concern in distinguishing themselves from the predominant Hindu culture and religion” (184). Speaking about the similarity of customs between the two, she continues: “Day-to-day life was influenced by a network of kinship and caste relations. Consequently, the religious groupings of "Hindu" and "Sikh" remained fluid and frail…These commonalities tied them together into a common symbolic universe” (201, 1997). At this stage there is an essential feeling of relatedness between the Hindus and Sikhs, not merely a passive acceptance of different customs and beliefs. Rajkumari Shanker relates more similarities: “The result of all this was that the two were integrated into a common cultural universe. They shared the same grammar of social relations based on vertical ties of kinship and caste rather than the horizontal solidarity of religion and community” (201, 1997). However, Badami makes it clear soon enough that the feeling of kinship is not an absence of awareness of the religious duties of one’s faith. These are alluded to when the author says about Bibi-ji or Sharan: “As a Sikh she already knew she was not supposed to worship idols and stones and pictures, but her mother had said that gods from all religions were holy and it would not hurt to pray to them now and again” (8). This serves to show that although the characters are conscious of their religion they live in harmony with other religions.
Badami also gives out other pieces of information indicating that at this juncture religious dissimilarities are not powerful and dominant obligations, a form that they later assume. She tells readers that Sharan's husband wants her to learn both English and Gurbaani (33). Also, Sharan secretly breaks the rules of her religion by cutting her hair to even them out (35). And more importantly, Pa-ji celebrates all festivals: “He insisted on being multi-denominational as far as festivals went, and celebrated them all—Baisakhi, Diwali, Eid, Hanukkah, Christmas” (38). In addition to this, Laloo too rejects Sikh tradition despite Pa-ji’s objections; he cut his long hair and traded his turban for a hat. (59). These examples from the pre-partition period stress that although religious consciousness is present in the psyche of the characters, it remains latent in their lifestyle. Characters are not so acutely aware of either the religious or cultural divide. There is a sense of sharing and community life in the initial phase. When Sharan and Laloo disregard the customs of their community, they experience a feeling of emancipation rather than the pressure on the mind of any guilt and consequent remorse. This displays the initial tolerant and open-minded approach to religious convictions. Pa-ji’s actions appear in his connection with all festivals and languages and thus become an access to accommodate people of their own and other faiths.

Up to here, realization of religion is not extreme, yet the affinity and sense of pride is very much present. Pa-ji (Khushwant Singh) treats younger immigrants to Canada as younger brothers. (40). Also, Pa-ji and Bibi-ji run an open house for newcomers “Anyone was welcome: relatives, friends, refugees, children of friends on their way to somewhere else, they were all ushered in” (42). Pa-ji explains the reason for this: “People helped me when I came here, and this is my way of paying back. We are strangers in this land and have nobody but our own community to turn to” (47). The sense of fraternity that Pa-ji feels for his fellow Sikhs is demonstrated in his generosity for recent immigrants. His love also acquires a feeling of pride. Badami reports: “It pleased him to be reminded that Sikhs were scattered all over the world, like seeds that had exploded from a seed pod” (60). It is a matter of happiness for Pa-ji that Sikhs have settled in many parts of the planet and their common religion is flourishing there. Speaking about
the Indian diasporic community, Aparna Rayaprol states in *Negotiating Identities: Women in the Indian Diaspora* (1997) “Religion is another identity marker that helps Indians to preserve their individual self-awareness and group cohesion” (16). In the diasporic location of Canada, Pa-ji maintains ties with his Sikh associates in an effort to uphold the religious identity he shares with them. Rayaprol’s assertions are corroborated by Ajay Kumar Sahoo in *Sociology of Diaspora, A Reader* (2007): “Religion serves as a major symbolic resource in building community around Gurdwaras, temples and Mosques” (115, 116). Pa-ji’s love and pride for his creed is not just a passive emotion of satisfaction. “Pa-ji is active on the religious front. He sends out petitions to fellow Sikhs for funds for this or that charitable cause and worked on his book, *The Popular and True History of the Sikh Diaspora*” (200). In spite of all this he is a citizen of the world and wants his wife to know English and he also wishes to share the happiness of others.

3.2.3 The Partition of India: A Defining Moment in the Political History of the Indian Subcontinent

The Partition of India is mentioned time and again in the novel. Kanwar writes to Bibi-ji in Canada: “Ever since it was announced that there will be a division of land between the Hindus and the Mussalmans, there has been unrest” (44). The first mention of the rise of religious consciousness and the distrust between the Muslims on one side and Hindus and Sikhs on the other starts with the mention of the partition. Again the distinction is between the Hindus and Muslims, Kanwar does not mention Sikhs separately. So, it can be assumed that the Sikhs are counted together with the Hindus. In this initial mention of separation, the unease is due to the allotment of land and the consequent insecurity of where one would find oneself after the division. There is no actual distrust or dislike of the other side. Veena Das in “Time, Self and Community: Features of the Sikh Militant Discourse” (1996) comments about the building up of a Sikh narrative of identity. She states, “the self is given shape and form by opposing it to its 'others'. There are two communities that are posited as the counterpoints of the Sikh community, the relevant others, in the building up of this narrative. The first
are Muslims” (178). Her postulation is that up to the partition times the distinction between the Sikh and Muslims was important but after partition this got neutralised. Das goes on, “the second opposing community is that of the Hindus” (178). The veracity of Das’s assertions is visible in the action of the novel at this stage. It can be seen clearly here that the Muslims are the ‘other’ at this point, the Hindus and Sikhs are on the same side. But events later in the novel do reveal that the oppositional other changes and the Hindus take on this position in the perception of the Sikhs.

This holds true for those living in Canada too. In accordance with this, the author continues with the details of the everyday life of the characters in Canada that goes on as usual. However, soon the account goes on to another letter by Kanwar. The unrest mentioned earlier is now a heightened animosity: “Last week there was a big fight between the Mussalmans and the Sikhs in Hazara district in the north-west...Across our land, hearts are filling with anger and hate” (49), Kanwar writes. Yet, at this stage Kanwar’s husband is still hopeful and believes that the Muslims in the village, his long-time neighbours are like kith and kin and will protect his family (50). This stage is the changeover period when acrimony between the two factions has taken root but is not a wholly wrought enmity. However religion does become an important aspect of life as the partition draws near and a month before the actual event, in Canada there are “rumours of fighting between Hindus and Sikhs on one side and Muslims on the other, of the beatings and rapes and killings accruing daily in the villages near the lines that had been so arbitrarily drawn across the country” (50). Violence erupts due to the political redrawing of borders. These geographical boundaries also represent the divisions in the hearts of the people and serve to strengthen the religious divide; the earlier neighbourhood affinity is lost. Individuals find it impossible to escape that phase of religious affinity and repulsion for those belonging to another faith, they fall prey to collective violence. The scene of carnage during the partition period has been documented in literature and history giving rise to a whole sub division of fictional accounts dealing with this massacre called Partition Literature. M. G. Vassanji in A Place Within: Rediscovering India (2008) states: “In 1947 arrived the last viceroy of India, Lord Mountbatten to oversee the division and
independence of India…The boundary was drawn, and the transfer of populations, which took place in the north-west and north-east, was accompanied by scenes of gruesome violence in which half a million lives were lost” (170). In the fictional world of the novel too, political events continue to have an effect on socio-religious affairs: “Bibi-ji found it hard to believe that people who had lived as neighbours and friends for so many years could suddenly become enemies just because of a line drawn on a paper map in a government office” (51). Bibi-ji’s objective insight into the situation in the neutral territory of a distant country uninvolved in the politics of the sub continent is shared by the readers who are studying the novel in a comparatively distant point in time. In this way readers too discern the insanity of the violence that the political events have unleashed.

In addition to this, during partition violence, Nimmo’s mother is raped. It needs to be noted here that the agent of this extreme violence remains undisclosed. The person who reads is not told about the identity or religious inclination of the rapist, this is because it is an act of violence due to the communal perception that the politics of the time gave a free rein to. Therefore, it seems that there is no purpose in identifying the instrument of collective consciousness except that it is a faceless, non-Sikh man. Preeti Gill in *The peripheral Centre, Voices from India’s Northeast* (2010) makes a point about the position of women when violent activities are unleashed. She says, “often women’s bodies become the site of battle with innumerable instances of atrocities and brutality” (10). At this point, in the tale, Nimmo’s mother, a woman, loses her reputation and her life as well for being an agent belonging to the other side. She commits suicide by hanging herself because of her shame and humiliation at her rape. Gill continues: “Women who lose their ‘honour’ find it extremely difficult to lead normal lives and live down the stigma” (10, 2010). Nimmo’s mother knows this reality only too well and therefore takes the extreme step of killing herself rather than face the shame. Gill elaborates: “The effects of violent acts like rape, sexual abuse and physical assault and abuse has led to deep psychological and emotional trauma and a very high incidence of what is known as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder” (8, 2010). In the novel, the veracity of Gill’s words is revealed in the actions of the victim who tries to wash away the disgrace. This demonstrates the cruel outcome of the
assault, of offending her feminity that finally pushes her to suicidal death after the
tragic pathos of trying to wash away her shameful experience which her daughter
remembers over and over again in parts. Badami only indirectly reveals this to her
readers, “Nimmo could not rid herself of the memory of a pair of feet dangling
above a dusty floor, their clean pink soles smelling delicately of lavender soap”
(159). The violent past haunting Nimmo’s mind through memories seems to be a
continuation of the traumatic tension that her daughter too feels at the memory of
the mother’s rape. This technique of revealing Nimmo's memories slowly but
repeatedly reinforces the trauma of the violence during partition and serves to
demonstrate the issue of the rise of religious feeling that has its source in the
political events of the time.

Like Nimmo, there are others who lose everything including their relations
and identity during the partition. But this is not damage enough; other scenes are
related by the writer. The author continues to the time when Nimmo is trying to
cross over to India: “She joined a kafeela…and walked for days in that enormous
ragged line of people, begging people for food and water” (157). In the riots that
followed the partition, entire families were wiped out and there were those
considered lucky because they managed to escape, leaving behind all they had.
Kafeelas were made up of such people walking in a long column, trying to protect
all they had—their lives. “They passed burning villages… She saw men weeping
for their losses. Bloated corpses floated in the canals that ran along the edges of
the fields, and lost-eyed children like herself begged pitifully for food and water”
(157). This also confirms the passion and fanaticism that religion can generate in
the lives of ordinary people. Alok Bhalla points out in Memory, History and
India's partition in 1947 was of such fiendishness that it has defied understanding.
Fictional writings about this period express this bewilderment. They also portray
pre-partition times of tolerance. The writers deal with the violence itself in
different ways – redemptively, pessimistically or cynically” (3119). A limb cut or
horrendous death without food or water and rape were common occurrences
during the time and were inflicted for the sole purpose of separating those on the
same side from those on the other side. As Bhalla testifies, Badami’s readers too
are left confused about the extent of the rapid deterioration in the ties between former neighbours and friends.

The violence that is perpetrated in the name of religion happens in India. It reaches Bibi-ji in Canada as a distant reality. She learns of it only through letters, rumours and news on television: “In the months that followed, stories of the savagery sweeping Punjab in the north-west and Bengal in the northeast trickled steadily into Vancouver” (51). But, in Canada, Muslims like Hafeez Ali and his friend, Alibhai are regulars at the Indian restaurant called ‘The Delhi Junction Café’ run by Pa-ji and Bibi-ji (65). In spite of the partition and consequent violence back home, in the early years of the restaurant’s life, the Indians and the Pakistanis had sat hunched around the same table (65). Ajay Kumar Sahoo states “Food and cuisine form a significant feature of Indian identity in the diaspora. One can easily locate an Indian restaurant in any major metropolitan city of Canada” (117, 2007). This seems to be the situation in the fictional world of Badami’s creation, common food habits play a major part in joining members of the sub continent in a fraternal bond. They meet regularly in the Indian restaurant and exchange pleasantries. This shows that at this point in the novel, the politics of the homeland is not so strong a force at least in Canada and this consciousness is not so vigorously felt there. The characters depicted are away from their homeland, the prime condition of their mind is dislocation, the pain of not being on native soil is powerful enough to supersede any feeling of ill-will and they consider themselves associates if they belong to the same ethnic location. In fact, at this point Bibi.-ji is not even sure which country is 'home' for her, “A taut rope tied them all to "home", whether India or Pakistan” (65). Political events in the home country do not exert so powerful an influence. But she acquires the necessary conviction later when she decides that her loyalties lay with India, not Pakistan (66). Nevertheless, later the violence becomes real as the political events in the characters’ native lands force them to take up a definite identity as the next section demonstrates.
3.2.4 The First Indo-Pak War (1965): Events in Canada Reflect the Sentiment in India

Presently, incidents that take place due to the politics of the time do have an effect. The first war between the two newly formed nations is referred to: “In 1965, when war broke out between India and Pakistan, the battle came to The Delhi Junction as well. The seating maps altered, and Hafeez and Alibhai moved defensively over to a separate table across the room from the Indian group” (66, 67). When the two countries are at war with each other, the split consciousness that was fired with the partition travels all the way to far-off Canada to reach and divide of the space they occupy physically. Mental consciousness of partition in the form of religion and creed too splits the beings into opposite numbers. The damage is identical: “Anger, hurt and loss simmered on both sides” (67). The escalation of the resentment is analogous to the intensification of the political hostilities back home. So much so that at one point the two sides are not even on speaking terms and soon the two regulars cease to be patrons. But, Badami is quick to reveal the outcome at the end of the war. “But when the war ended a few months later, they reappeared as if nothing had occurred” (67). The war between the two countries, India and Pakistan has ended and there is no cause for continued animosity. Therefore, after the war, the antagonism is forgotten and both sides share the same camaraderie that existed earlier. An unchanged consciousness prevails once again as if a wave that had split from and the sea merges with the deep waters again. However, these agreeable circumstances are a transitory phase and the author, feeling the need to stress this, gives her readers a clue to the future. As predicted by Veena Das earlier, the amity between the Sikhs and the Hindus turns to antagonism.

When Bibi-ji decides to rent out her flat to her Hindu friends and is feeling happy about it. Badami addresses her audience: “But that was before events in distant India poisoned her life, before bitter anger wiped out the gratitude and her friends became her enemies” (70). This advance information about her character in an act of foreshadowing has a dual purpose: First, it stresses Bibi-ji’s gratitude for her long friendship with Leela and how this friendship
becomes sour as a consequence of political events. It lets the addressees observe the way in which Bibi-ji changes her stance from a regular member of the community to a strong reactionary. Veena Das explicates further: “The emergence of a militant movement among Sikhs, both in India and among emigrant Sikhs, is an important phenomenon” (176, 1996). This important trend is depicted by Badami in her characters especially Bibi-ji. The same Bibi-ji who once thanked her stars for her Hindu friend, revises her opinion due to the effect of politics. Second, this also tells readers that politics does not cause a rift between different nations but internally within citizens of the same nation also. This time the Sikhs and Hindus are in opposition. Badami, continuing to utilize the unique narrative style employing prolepsis or an interjected scene that takes the narrative forward and after appraising readers about the future goes back to past political affairs.

3.2.5 The Khalistan Movement: The Beginning of Sikh Revivalism and the Appearance of Dr. Raghubir Randhawa

The introduction of the character of Dr. Raghubir Randhawa (250) is important from the point of view of the permutation of a divisive ideology into politics. This also portends the commencement of the rift between Sikhs and Hindus. Dr. Randhawa is a supporter of Khalistan, a separate country for the Sikhs. George Bryjak in “Collective Violence in India” (1986) elaborates: “Sikhism, a religion founded by Guru Nanak in the fifteenth century, has a long and proud military tradition. Sikhs view themselves as a unique people, and some of them have attempted to establish an independent political state since 1947” (38). The demand for a separate country for the Sikhs is linked to feelings of pride in one's religion, ethnicity, language, and way of life for Dr Randhawa. His politics of identity is conducted through a paranoiac hatred of others. George Bryjak clarifies further: “The desire for an autonomous homeland to be called Khalistan (derived from the concept of Khalsa- a chosen race of soldier-saints), along with a number of other economic, social, and cultural grievances, has pitted Sikhs against their Hindu neighbors, the local police, and the federal government” (38, 1986). Bryjak’s statements are proved true in Badami’s story in the character of Dr. Raghubir Randhawa. He is a Sikh scholar who has come to Canada from
Southall, England. He is Pa-ji’s guest and has been invited to lecture at the Sikh temple. “On the drive home, Pa-ji also discovered that his guest had arrived on wings of anger and discontent, for it was promises-broken ones — that had brought him to Vancouver” (251). Badami takes care to point out that Dr Randhawa is not only different in sartorial taste and appearance, but that the difference is ideological also. His communication is part of the political idiom being developed by the militant movement to create a politically active group and to forge an effective unity among his community against the Hindus.

Badami goes to a great extent to stress the fact that at this point Dr. Randhawa’s intense views are not common amongst others especially his hosts. For, although Pa-ji contributes to the Sikh cause, he does not believe in Dr. Randhawa’s extreme opinions. He attends the lecture out of a sense of duty towards the visitor and because he considered Dr. Randhawa, a fellow historian and a history lesson was not to be missed. Bibi-ji went out of politeness, although she thought the man a pompous fellow who talked too much. Lalloo is present as well, because Pa-ji had forced him to do so. He had brought his six-year old son, who spent the hour buzzing about the hall pretending to be a fighter plane. Jasbeer was there for the same reason as Lallo, Pa-ji had insisted. Further, Badami writes:

But his lecture the following evening was poorly attended; there were only five people in an echoing hall that could accommodate three hundred… An old Sikh man, spread out over the last five chairs in the hall, was taking a nap, his snores occasionally rising above Dr Randhawa’s impassioned speech.

(251, 252)

Badami uses humour to good effect here. Dr Randhawa’s role as a speaker and revolutionary for his community is ridiculed with descriptions of a scanty audience and dozing listeners.

The main force of Dr. Randhawa's speech is about a separate state for Sikhs - Khalistan. Archana Goyal in *Terrorism: Causes and Consequences* (1990) says “The voice of 'Khalistan', purely, political issue, has been dyed with religious touch and a number of groups are formed to disturb the peace of the people and
the government, with their undesired actions” (74, 75). Here, religion and politics get intertwined; the desire for political power is cloaked in a religious garb. In the novel, Dr. Randhawa talks in terms of religious convictions. He starts:

"The Sikhs have been betrayed!"...We have been betrayed for two hundred years-first by the British, who stole Punjab that our great Maharaja Ranjit Singh won for us from the Mughals… and then by the Congress Brahmins, who gave the Musalmans their Pakistan and the Hindus their India but left the Sikhs to die in between; then by Nehru…and his winning words…And we have been cheated again by the rose-wearing Brahman's daughter, Indira Gandhi who takes the wheat that we grow on our lands and distributes it to all of Hindustan, who diverts the water from our rivers to neighbouring states and leaves us with empty buckets. (252)

The remarks made by Veena Das are pertinent here: “It is important to appreciate the juxtaposition of the stories of how Sikhs had been insulted and oppressed, the allusions to mythology and folklore about the past heroic deeds of the Sikhs, and the exhortations to violence” (189). Dr. Randhawa comments about the Hindu Brahmins and his stance clearly shows his antagonism towards them. Again his appeal is to past wrongs that have to be set right. His open criticism of the political regime of the time and his identification of the government with Hindustan-the land of Hindus in his speech can be considered the first stirrings of a Sikh revival in Badami’s story. The words he uses are significant as they are meant to incite passion and mark the reality of being Sikh as distinct from not just Muslims but Hindus as well. Here, Dr. Randhawa’s exhortations to incite the audience follow the expected contours of the buildup of a common Sikh account of having been victimised for their service to their country. V. S. Naipaul considering the concerns of Sikhs in his travelogue India A Million Mutinies Now (1990) alludes to “Sikh alienation” (427). He discusses the case of one Sikh, Gurtej Singh who resigned from the Indian Administrative Service because of his commitment to the Sikh cause, Naipaul writes about Gurtej Singh: “He wanted, the very first time he came, to talk about the importance of water. Punjab depended on the water of its rivers; it didn’t like sharing its water with other
states. Since 1947, he said more people had died quarrelling over water than had died over the upheavals of partition. "The water problem is the crux of the matter’” (427, 428). Naipaul’s observations about the response of ordinary Sikhs to the policies of the Indian authorities are reflected in the concerns of the fictional character of Dr. Randhawa, who also talks about the ‘water problem’. Veena Das, speaking about the rise of militancy in the Sikh religious tradition says: “In this narrative, the Sikh community is defined in the contemporary period with reference to certain key events of the past, which emphasise the building up of the community on the basis of its heroic deeds” (178). Dr. Randhawa’s subsequent words in the novel relate exactly to Das’s observations. Dr. Randhawa continues:

We fight their wars for them; give up our young men for the safety of their Hindu lives. Think how many soldiers in the Indian army are Sikhs! Think how many of us are dying fighting the Pakistanis while the Hindus shiver behind their doors! And then think what we Sikhs have got in return for all this endless generosity! A kick—that’s all. We have been betrayed, I say and we are fools to sit quietly and take it. (252, 253)

These words seek to inform Sikhs about their foolishness and innocence in the acceptance of their position as brave warriors who fight the enemy selflessly to preserve the lives of their weak co–citizens. Naipaul continues: “The establishing of a Sikh identity was a recurring Sikh need. Religion was the basis of this identity; religion provided the emotional charge” (448, 1990). Dr. Randhawa’s exhortations to his Sikh brothers and sisters point toward his larger arrangement of creating a distinctive Sikh character. Once again Naipaul’s assertions are relevant: “Religion became the identification with the sufferings and persecution of the later Gurus: the call to battle” (450). The use of religion to commandeer the Sikhs who are as yet moderates and do not subscribe to Dr Randhawa’s exteme views is in evidence at this point in the narrative. Veena Das continues: “The self of the Sikh as it emerges from this particular organisation of images is that of the martyr whose sacrifices have fed the community with its energy in the past, while the Hindu is weak and effeminate or cunning and shy” (179, 1996). The fiery content and rhetoric of instigation used by Dr. Randhawa are italicized by the author only to stress his political intents and his agenda of creating an alternative army
through the immigrant Sikhs. Naipaul also reports that Gurtej had written a paper for a university seminar in 1982 entitled ‘Genesis of the Sikh problem in India’. “Its primary theme was the separateness of the Sikh faith and ideology from the Hindu; its further theme was that the Punjab was geographically and culturally more a part of the Middle East than of India. The great enemy of Sikhism and the Sikh empire of Ranjit Singh had been again-brahminism” (444). This is indicative of the widespread sentiment of Sikhs in the fictional world of the novel as well; the focal point of Dr Randhawa’s refrain is the centrality of territory as a means of preserving identity. He, therefore wants the Sikhs to assume a singular identity that separates them from the others. This separation is sought to be enforced in terms of opposition. Dr Randhawa’s behaviour, his missionary spirit of leadership wanting to direct his co-religionists and his comments on the power figures of recent national history are all designed to underline to his addressee a separatist way of thinking, the need for a religion based split, in other words a separate state and identity for Sikhs.

However, Dr. Randhawa's opinions and views are not yet common among the Sikh community in Canada. Badami uses an elaborate narrative arrangement to show up the tolerance and moderation of Dr. Randhawa's audience. Again, there are some light, even humorous moments as the antics of Laloo's son are described: “"Nothing doing!" said Laloo, who had missed most of the speech because his son had been whispering an elaborate story of planes and ghosts into his left ear” (253). Dr. Randhawa ends his speech with a battle cry: “we lie bleeding, but we are not dead yet. Arise warriors, and shout with me, Our country or Death!” (254). But this fails to wake up the sleeping gentleman: “From the back row, a gentle snore emerged from the open mouth of the old Sikh” (255). Furthermore, as part of her plan, however in the middle of the lecture, full of Dr Randhawa's rhetoric, Badami makes sure that the readers know about Pa-ji's and Bibi-ji's views. “Bibi-ji gazed at the maps one on top of another, her thoughts wandering in a different direction from Pa-ji's. Like me, she thought. A series of tracings, a palimpsest of images, the product of so many histories, some true, some imaginary, all valid, but surely not all necessary?” (255). Bibi-ji’s thought process reveals her feelings of compassion and a sense of harmony.
The humanitarian concerns of the central characters are not so easily shaken by the flaming words in the speeches of Dr Randhawa as far as they able to see his projection as ‘not all necessary.’ The politics of the time do have an effect but this is not yet so great that the characters modify their core values. Thus, amidst all this Pa-ji remains resolute in his outlook. Rajkumari Shanker states: “Identity formation is inevitably a dual process. It is not sufficient for a group of people to think that they constitute a separate entity; those among whom they interact must also recognize this claim” (202, 1994). This explains the reason for the moderation of Dr Randhawa’s audience. They are reacting to the attitude of the supposed others who do not consider them as different and thus Pa-ji, Bibi-ji and their friends do not think it necessary to take on a single identity, they are happy to be contained by a multiplicity that encompasses within it the identity of an Indian. However Dr Randhawa’s standpoint of a detached personality and his insistence on a separate state for Sikhs, Khalistan – the land for the Sikhs, the pure and the brave remains unwavering. People like Dr Randhawa feel that during and after partition under the secular nation of India, Hinduism is assimilating Sikhism and his project is for the promotion of his religion as a separate entity which a further division from India will ensure. But his views are not supported by anybody at that juncture as Badami takes pains to expose.

Badami continues to use her special narrative technique by interspersing thoughts with the narrative voice. Bibi-ji’s voice: “But then she had a deep-rooted suspicion of anyone who wanted to divide up countries, a theme that seemed to run through everything Dr Raghbir Randhawa said” (251). Pa-ji’s thoughts too are revealed at this juncture and later the narrator takes over telling readers that Pa-ji enjoys Dr. Randhawa's company due to his “vast knowledge of Punjabi history” (256). Again the narrator’s voice changes to the character’s utterance. Then the omniscient narrator continues: “Out of politeness, because Dr Randhawa was, after all, his guest and guests were akin to God above, Pa-ji refrained from disagreeing with him on any point. But his sympathies for the visitor waned rapidly” (256). Pa-ji's and Bibi-ji’s opinion of their guest is further made known. When Bibi-ji calls him “Idiot” (257) and Pa-ji says “I don't think much of his
nition of a separate country” (257) and still later: “Pa-ji was relieved when his guest left. All the talk of secession made him deeply uneasy. He hoped this was the last he would see of Dr Randhawa and hear about a free county for the Sikhs. He wished it would all go away” (257). Yet again, the narrative technique assumes importance here. Badami changes the track in a subtle way between the character’s voice and the omniscient narrator’s.

After the elaborate revelation of the character's thoughts and opinions, the narrator in the very next sentence says “But he was wrong. Nine years later Dr. Randhawa would return to Vancouver, and this time he would be greeted by an audience that not only filled the auditorium but flowed out of it as well” (258). This technique of taking the readers fast forward to a time nine years later when Dr. Randhawa's views have become popular and Pa-ji has been proved wrong is Badami’s way of showing the readers that seperatist tendencies are on the rise in the diasporic location of Canada also. As a result of the political events of the home country, the outlook of the Sikh community towards their Hindu counterparts changes. Badami also discloses Bi-biji’s personal loss and the death of Pa-ji signalling the death of tolerance and human sympathies Dipak Gupta makes a significant assertion: “Every movement starts with an idea: an idea of a group of people being wrongfully treated by another” (104, 2008). In the story bound realm of the novel, Dr Randhawa’s speech certainly conforms to this, he does talk about the mistreatment that his group has suffered. Dipak Gupta continues: “Sometimes the offending group consists of "those" who have deviated from the "true path" of a common religious faith; sometimes they are accused of being interlopers with no claim to the land; and sometimes the "others" are seen as the source of economic exploitation” (104, 2008). In Badami’s account, this is seen in the accomplishments of Dr. Randhawa. His foremost attempt to germinate a reactionary and revolutionary spirit among his community fellows that seems to be a failure and ridiculed by the author transforms at a later date as the idea of his community’s manipulation has been planted. His second appearance seems to be powered by much political upheavals to the extent of gaining him wide popularity effortlessly and this time it is his opposers who are in the minority, they are seen
as differing from the right path. His subsequent emergence, after operation Blue Star, is the final stage in this viscid loop.

Badami tells her readers: “Bibi-ji was not part of that audience. Deep in mourning, she was locked up inside the large white house, unable to go anywhere, not even to The Delhi Junction” (258). The reference to Bibi-ji's mourning also brings out one more time the intermingling of the political and the personal. Bibi-ji's loss is personal, but her views change in the public and political sphere also. Devotion to the extreme convictions of a religious movement is not simply a social phenomenon but a personal decision too. In the case of Dr Randhawa, it may be purely political and a well-thought out strategy but in Bibi-ji’s case, it is a spontaneous reaction to her private loss that brings about her affinity for and makes her attracted towards an extreme viewpoint. After the brief episode of foreshadowing, the narrative goes back and one hears about Leela. The action of the novel which was taking place in Canada at the time when the Emergency was declared by the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi shifts to India and the readers soon find Nimmo in Amritsar with her family visiting the holiest of Sikh Temples, the Golden Temple in Amritsar. After elaborate descriptions of Sikh customs and the practice of visiting the Golden Temple by the devout, Badami writes: “She… comforted herself with the thought that no matter what wickedness and violence occurred in the outside world, here at least, within the sacred walls of the Golden Temple and deep inside its heart in the Harmandir Sahib, only peace reigned!” (270). This is ironical as later in the story, the deep peace is disturbed and there is a war-like situation with both sides stocked with arms and ammunition. The interior of the Golden Temple, the abode of peace proves to be a place of intense political activity and violent actions.

3.2.6 The Escalation and Intensification of Sikh Revivalism: The Return of Dr Randhawa, Nine Years Later

Chapter Nineteen titled “The Return of Dr Randhawa” (276-292) is set in Vancouver in April 1980. It is an important part in the novel because in it the rise of religious ideology and a separatist mentality among the Sikhs as a result of the
politics of the time becomes clear. As the title suggests this chapter depicts the return to Vancouver of Dr Randhawa, nine years after his first lecture in that city. Pa-ji asks Bibi-ji “Dr Raghubir Randhawa. Remember him? He stayed with us about nine years ago?” (278). This query takes readers back nine years ago to the omniscient narrator's prophesy about the success of Dr. Raghubir Randhawa’s ideology in the changed circumstances of nine years later. This way readers already know that Dr. Randhawa's fundamentalist ideas have gained support and Bibi-ji and Pa-ji, the tolerant and mild face of Sikhism are in a minority. Their son, Jasbeer is by now a staunch supporter of the militancy of Dr. Randhawa. The omniscient narrator also volunteers the information that this time Dr Randhawa, “is one of the chief guests at this year’s Baisakhi festival celebrations. He is bringing his own group of kirtan singers” (277). However he still wants to stay with Pa-ji and Bibi-ji in their house. Bibi-ji and Pa-ji's antagonism for his views is stressed once again. The narrator informs the readers: “She had taken a strong dislike to the man the first time she set eyes on him” (278). And Pa-ji says: “He hasn't heard? I am allergic to these Khalistani types” (278). However, Pa-ji cannot refuse a fellow Sikh and Dr. Randhawa comes anyway.

This time, however Badami quickly makes it clear that Pa-ji and Bibi-ji are fast losing support: “She had noticed that in the past year, the number of their guests had dropped significantly. No doubt it had something to do with Pa-ji's loud declarations at temple committee meetings that an independent Punjab was a ridiculous idea” (278, 279). Pa-ji's openly declared stance of harmony and peace has been successfully shown to be a movement away from proper religious conviction. Badami adds, “so many people in their community were now arguing for a Sikh homeland apart from India for the Sikhs” (279). Now the Sikh community ignores Pa-ji’s voice for the alternative of a united vision of humanity that believes in staying with India as a part of the nation. Instead the demand is for a separate Khalistan. According to Brian Forst in Terrorism, Crime, and Public Policy (2009), “It is the extreme militant factions of any particular religion that are the source of most episodes of religious conflict that lead to violence, both within and between religions” (130). The intense belligerence of Dr Randhawa brings in others and this group acts in confrontation to the other religions.
Pa-ji’s rational outlook for his religion has not only been ignored by his community but also proves a failure to the extent of weakening his own position in the community. Badami’s observations reveal: “Pa-ji was taken aback by the reception, though he was aware that the mood of the Sikhs in his community had changed considerably in the nine years between Randhawa ’s last visit and this one. A large number of new immigrants from Punjab had come into Canada, and many nursed a deep grievance against the Indian government, which they believed had reneged on its promises to distribute land and river water equitably among Punjab and its neighbouring states” (281). At this juncture, the trope of parallelism is seen, the two characters, Pa-ji and Dr. Randhawa are viewed on corresponding paths; one a moderate and the other militant, they maintain the constancy of their stance, in a non-antagonist and antagonist way respectively. This is exemplified by the following information given by the omniscient narrator on two subsequent pages: About Dr. Randhawa, “there was quite a crowd at the airport waiting to greet him with bouquets and flowers” (281) and “Pa-ji’s religion was as simple and straight-eyed as his own nature” (282). Further about Dr. Randhawa, “his work as an agitator seemed to suit him” (281), while Pa-ji's plea is: “As a Sikh I am interested in putting money into building things-like schools and hospitals-not for breaking up countries!” (283).

But Pa-ji is attacked for his moderate views by the Sikhs in the neighbourhood. In the narrative, this vindicates Forst’s standpoint, the clash takes place within the community too. And: “Lately it appeared to Pa-ji that there were far more immoderate than moderate people in his community” (282). As religious extremism rises, Pa-ji finds his influence disregarded: “Not so long ago, he was a pillar of that community; when he said something, people stopped to listen. These days, whenever he opened his mouth to object to the politics of power and violence that seemed to be taking over their temple, he was angrily shouted down” (282). Under the new conditions, the same people who had benefitted from Pa-ji’s generosity have forgotten his service to his fellow religionists. However, true to his nature, Pa-ji is defiant and refuses to be cowed down. “He increased the volume of his protests against the growing mood of violence in the temple. He
wrote an article that was published in the local Punjabi-language newspaper, urging moderation and asking his fellow Sikhs not to bow to the wave of fundamentalism” (283). However, in the face of Dr. Randhawa’s militancy, Pa-ji moderation stands no chance.

This plea for moderation results in an even more severe reaction and Pa-ji is attacked almost fatally this time. This reveals how the mob psychology falls an easy prey to the propagatory initiative of Dr. Randhawa and other politically powered leaders like him, so blinded by religious antagonism that the efforts of Pa-ji and his advocacy of temperance and oneness in humanitarian living is not only opposed but violated sharply by the reactionaries and as a result Pa-ji has to pay the price of trying to spread his goodwill among his Sikh fellows. Bibi-ji is upset by the occurrences: “It grieved her that members of the community whom Pa-ji had known for so many years, some of whom had stayed at their home as new immigrants, should boycott their restaurant so resolutely. It made her angry that their generosity was being repaid by such ill-will” (320, 321). Moreover, there are attacks on Pa-ji, his property and his personal self are damaged. However, against all odds Pa-ji remains steadfast as a voice who is devoted to his religion but still maintains a stance of rationalism.

Over and above all this, his own adopted son, Jasbeer starts wearing black turbans like some youngsters: “More conservative and religious than their parents, they behaved as if they were God's personal messengers on earth, Bibi-ji felt” (279). The children of the community not having witnessed the earlier cordiality between communities display a way of thinking not just similar to that of the adults but take the variance to a heightened level, their need to belong makes them adopt a more militant posture which finds expression in the strict observance of formal procedures of their religious community. John Rex in Ethnic Identity and the Nation State: The Political Sociology of Multicultural Societies (1995) articulates, “The primordialists pointed out that children born in a particular ethnic, linguistic, or religious group grow up with a definite sense of community, which not only provides them with a shared belief in a number of areas of social existence, but also accords them a sense of psychological comfort of belonging”
This is reinforced in the story when Badami recounts the conversation between Bibi-ji and Jasbeer, the readers learn that Jasbeer plans to go to India and enrol in a religious school, all this under the influence of Dr. Raghbir Randhawa. Jasbeer tells his mother: “He is a great and good man. I don't think you should speak in that disrespectful way about him” (280). Besides this, Pa-ji’s protégé, Lalloo too contributes to the separate state for Sikhs fund. But, this does not deter Pa-ji and he remains a voice of restraint in the increasingly militant community. Others like Satpal and most of his friends too are god-fearing but not fanatical. (295). Therefore Jasbeer’s desire to take a religious education is a cause for concern at least if not worry for Satpal also. During Dr Randhawa’s second visit to Canada, Badami makes the situation clear: “This time the hall was filled to overflowing” (289). The prophesy comes true.

3.2.7 Operation Bluestar: Inside the Golden Temple

Chapter Twenty-two (314-334) assumes significance in the scheme of the novel as in this section, once again, the way in which the merger of religion with politics leads to conflict can be observed. It is set in the holy city of Amritsar. Pa-ji and Bibi-ji are there on a visit to the Golden Temple. The time period as the author herself tells her audience is May 31-June 3, 1984. Although only four days long, this short period is a very significant point in time, as subsequent events reveal, there are references to Sant Bhindranwale and his followers: “Pa-ji had heard of the deeply conservative preacher named Bhindranwale, whose pungent diatribes against the government of India were earning him an ever growing following among the Sikhs” (315). Sant Bhindranwale, ostensibly a priest and a holy man is deeply involved in the politics of the moment and has even built up stocks of weapons in the holy temple itself, again pointing to the role of politics in religious matters. Satpal’s sister Manpreet and her husband, Balraj advise Pa-ji and Bibi-ji to stay in their house owing to the dangerous situation: “They say that Sant Bhindranwale is holed up in the temple complex with his followers and the government is out to get them. I’ve heard that they have been stockpiling arms in there for months in various buildings, even in underground storage rooms” (314, 315). Manpreet tells Pa-ji. Pa-ji’s answer to Manpreet's fears is significant: “How
can your home be safer than a place of God, sister?” (315). As subsequent events reveal the place of god, the holiest of holy shrines of Sikhism does prove to be a more dangerous place and Pa-ji ends up paying with his life for believing in its safety. This is the irony of the situation where religion, which one turns to as a safe haven from the vagaries of the world becomes a source of misfortune due to the danger that it carries when it gets combined with politics.

Manpreet and Balraj, as ordinary followers of Sikhism, are aware of the dangerous stance that some extremist elements have taken and openly acknowledge it. In addition to Manpreet's earlier words are Balraj's words: “The temple is an arsenal and the situation is very unstable” (315). Later descriptions of the Golden Temple Complex, the holiest shrine of the Sikhs are indicative: “It looks like a war zone!” (316), says Pa-ji. In spite of this awareness, their sympathies lie with members of their own religion. Jayaram and Saberwal in *Social Conflict* (1996) express their view of identity formation, “One's identity, may in turn, be constituted in good measure out of the memories, recent or ancient, of earlier conflicts: the others’ intentions, then are inherently suspect” (19). The feelings of the Sikhs at the time can be observed in Balraj’s misgivings about the political authority of the country: “It is not we who are at war,” Balraj remarked bitterly…”It is our government, headed by the Pandit's daughter, Indira Gandhi, who is at war with us!” ” (316). The feeling of sharing community hatred voices in the italicized ‘we’ for all the Sikhs who share the sense of conflicting identity and religious conviction in the emanating ideology of ‘they’ in opposition to ‘we’.

“The narrative moves seamlessly between the personal and political; this is a novel in the truest sense, where issues are explored to their depths through freshly imagined characters and a compelling story” affirms Ami Sands Brodoff (2001). In accordance with this, the characters are seen in the backdrop of political events of the time and Badami explores their feelings. Having witnessed the sentiments of the Sikhs and the situation within the holy place earlier, there is mention of the army entering the Golden Temple. Badami gives both sides of the picture. Bibi-ji says: “What kind of government would send an army inside a
temple, Pa-ji?” (331). And Pa-ji replies: “There are extremists here too, it seems, inside their own sacred temple, defiling it with guns and bombs. It is better not to judge anybody yet” (331). This discussion exposes the other face of the representation clearing the stance of the author, Badami as an objective witness. This chapter is significant also because Pa-ji dies in this subdivision. Pa-ji death represents one wave of optimism ending with his life giving birth to the self destructive rise of religious hatred in Bibi-ji. The passing away of Pa-ji signals the end of the moderate and accommodating visage of Sikhism and the rise of an irate, militant formation seeking the settlement of scores with more violence.

The storming of the Golden Temple is a watershed event because Sikhs felt a sense of humiliation at the fact that the Indian army had invaded their holiest shrine, for them this was nothing less than sacrilege. Again, here political causes get mixed up with religion. Jayaram and Saberwal speak out: “We have to remember, however, that actors in a particular situation may draw upon, or be buoyed up by, ideas and images which carry heavy emotional charges and are deeply embedded in their culture and worldview” (19, 1996). The most sacred symbols of their religion have been violated, the incursion of their holy shrine raises the feelings of betrayal and rage in Sikhs, Badami describes their feelings: “A knife in the heart. A dagger in the back. An insult. An outrage. Shock, then anger, spread across the world like acid, burning into the soul of every Sikh” (336). Further she expresses the causes for this feeling: “Their most holy place had been desecrated by the Indian government. Tanks had rolled across delicate marble floors, crushing ancient inlay … Humiliation, indignity, death” (336). Without probing into details of criminalization, causing legal actions on the part of the government, the outraged multitude of Sikhs seems to be blindly protesting the offence to the dignity of their temple. Jayaram and Saberwal continue: “Such images and ideals as that of the martyr, rooted in hallowed memory of events past, may drive one to endeavours of extraordinary fortitude and sacrifice” (19, 20, 1996). This explains the sense of fury felt by the Sikhs and their subsequent violent actions. This is further reinforced by Bibi-ji’s actions and silences in relation to her friends in Canada. Also there is a conversation between two teachers who have brought a group of children to the Golden Temple on a tour.
Their exchange shows the difference in perception depending upon the side one is on: So, while one calls the Sikhs who have been hiding in the Golden Temple “extremists” (326). The other calls them “freedom fighters” (326).

In Canada, too the Sikhs get together at Bibi-ji’s house and there is talk about a divorce from India and the need for Khalistan. “Because the Sikh religion is young, zealous, and participatory, it is possible to arrive at complete unanimity among the Sikhs when their holy shrines are desecrated” (1681) affirm Dipankar Gupta, Sumanta Banerjee, Dinesh Mohan and Gautam Navlakha in “Punjab: Communalised beyond Politics” (1988). The total unison of the community can be gauged from the fact that one-time moderate elements like Bibi-ji are now part of the extremist group. To add force to the proceedings, when a protest march is proposed Bibi-ji too expresses her desire to join this time. Her thoughts reveal her feelings, “she would march in anger” (338). After joining the march and shouting slogans like “Indira Gandhi, down, down!” “Khalistan forever!” “Blood in return for blood!” (338). Badami reveals: “And she was as hard-eyed in her rage against the Indian government and Hindus as the young men who surrounded her had been” (338). All Sikhs are alike in their expression of anger towards the political administration for the disrespect shown to their religious symbols.

Not just anger but what Badami reveals later about Bibi-ji is more significant: “That night, for the first time since Pa-ji’s death, she fell into a deep and dreamless sleep” (338). In the pain of the husband’s death and the vengeance of wifely conscioussness, Bibi-ji finds her restless outburst in the public march and outcries against Hindus and finally making for herself a psychological relief to rest into ‘deep and dreamless sleep’ Besides this, after Pa-ji’s death Lalloo too starts wearing an Indian salwar suit in place of his earlier pants and he wears a turban instead of a hat now. Also, his beard and moustache grow (338). The cultural significance of dressing to identify one’s religion is conceived by Lalloo to the extent of changing himself accordingly. “Political conflict necessitates mobilization of people around some symbols, slogans, ideology, or programme” (25, 1996) assert Jayaram and Saberwal. Lalloo’s adjustment in attire signals his enlistment to the religious cause. With the change in dress, he assumes a more
detached identity in keeping with the renewed power of the religious convictions in his life. His earlier indifference in matters of religion is no longer in evidence, signifying his willingness to take up disagreement with those perceived as others.

Again, in Canada too, Badami plays fair and gives both sides of the picture when she reports an argument between two Sikhs in the nonaligned location of Canada. The first one says: “Are you saying that it was okay for the Indian army to invade our temple? What kind of talk is that?” (339) The other answers: “All I am saying is that there were militants and snipers from our own community hiding in every corner of the temple complex as well, they too had stockpiled arms, they too committed sacrilege by turning our temple into a war zone. How do we know it was not their bullet that killed our Pa-ji?” (339). The author’s impartiality and wish to be non judgmental is revealed in her repeatedly pointing out the dual side of events through various conversations. This also clarifies two things at once, the first is vagueness of individual perceptions and the other is the blurring of incidental collective truth.

Soon there is a clear division between the Hindus and Sikhs. An argument between the two sides threatens to escalate into a full-fledged fight. A young Sikh calls Balu, Majumdar and Shah, three Hindus who were hitherto regulars at the Delhi Junction "Bastard Hindus” (340). This brings to the surface the verbalization of the psychological divide which occupies the religious consciousness completely. The suspicions of the Hindus against the Sikhs are raised and Balu thinks: “Us and Them … When did we split into these groups? The Singhs were family” (341). This shows how political events in the home country affect all, even people living in another country. Also, that political events create divisions between erstwhile friends and give rise to conflict. The individuals who have shared a common past find themselves split suddenly apart by the waves of communal riots not only affecting their behaviour among themselves but also explicitly operating their language as ‘us and them.’ Balu’s bewilderment about the segregation on religion and communal lines shows how fast and abrupt the development has been. The process of the rise of communalism that began earlier continues relentlessly.
Dr. Randhawa arrives once more in Canada. The number of his followers only seems to be growing and, now, Bibi-ji’s attitude has changed too: “This time Bibi-ji, prepared a lavish welcome for him... She suppressed her dislike of his pomposity, his arrogance. He had been right after all, she told herself. The Indians had humiliated the Sikhs and they had killed her Pa-ji. It was now a question of defending the faith, the thing that gave them a grouping, a face and a distinction” (343). The stage is now set for aggressive interaction with those having a dissimilar identity. This interaction cannot be a single transaction as readers know but a succession of violent events on both sides of the divide, problems could vary but the conflict will continue. Jayaram and Saberwal make a relevant pont in this connection, “contributing to this continuity, amidst changes and transformations in issues and personnel, is a reciprocally acting relationship between 'conflicts' on one hand and 'identities ' and social boundaries on the other” (19, 1996). Bibi-ji is now clear about her own identity as belonging to one particular clan and religion and existing in this identified position is what she has learned from her experience of failure in human understanding through the loss of her husband. Her tragedy trains her to hold back her personal preferences for the sake of the group loyalty.

In Canada, in Bibi-ji's house the atmosphere is charged and there is talk of revenge and Khalistan. In India too things are not very different as a letter from Nimmo reveals. Her son, Pappu too says uncomplimentary things about Indira Gandhi (344). However; more important is the fact that Nimmo, an admirer of Indira Gandhi too feels hurt and anger on visiting the bullet ridden Golden Temple: “I cried with hurt and with fear. And anger-with the government for sending tanks into our temple” (344). She adds for good measure, “I am not the only one who feels this way. Indiraji may have withdrawn the army from the Golden Temple, but she has left a sea of anger behind. I hope we don't all drown in it” (344). The communal violence caused by the policies of the government viz the decision of intruding the sanctity of the Golden Temple consequently creates an open rage in the whole community of Sikhs in India and abroad in Canada, preparing them for further confusion of sense of community and politics.
Stressing that notions of honour are an important discourse in political rhetoric in *Islam Under Siege, Living Dangerously in a Post-Honor World* (2003) Akbar Ahmed says: “A feeling of loss of honor is not new, what is new is the sense of apocalyptic disruption, which forces individuals to reconsider the interpretation of honor and invariably emphasize revenge as its simplest expression” (59). The matter of seeking revenge seems to be the groundwork for the next episode, that of the assassination of Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India which took place in the year 1985. “Indira Gandhi died at 9.15 am” (346) Badami relates. She continues: “Also, at a quarter past nine that morning, the bus carrying Satpal to Modinagar left New Delhi interstate terminus” (346). Both events—one real and a historical fact, the other fictional and an imaginary occurrence—take place at the same time and are related by the author in the same instance. This way the real and fictional worlds coalesce. This makes the action more concrete and readers are able to connect more closely with the fictional world. It also makes the fiction more believable.

The real significance of the killing comes forth later when the priest tells all in the temple: “Indian Gandhi had been shot. By her own guards, both of whom were Sikhs” (346). This brings the role of religion centre stage As the priest rightly points out this could be a cause for trouble. George Bryjak has attested: “Indira Gandhi’s assassination by her two Sikh bodyguards on October 31, 1984 resulted in some of the worst rioting in India since the time of independence and partition in 1947. The Hindus' rage at the death of their "mother" exploded in an all-out attack on Sikhs in many parts of Delhi. Sikhs were savagely beaten, shot, and in many cases burned to death” (44, 1996). This actual fact is observed in the fictional world of the novel also. The effect of religio-political happenings can be explicitly perceived. The death of Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi or rather her killing by her Sikh guards is one more act that continues the process of the animosity, hatred and suspicion on both sides of the divide, Hindus and Sikhs. Badami records this feeling well in the description of the lives of Nimmo and her neighbours, as well as her family. Nimmo fears and worries about the safety of her family and the atmosphere of fear for the Sikhs is apparent: “Nimmo rushed into her house, the black dog of fear that had stayed low for so long rearing up again,
full-grown and monstrous” (349). Badami also takes care to showcase the irrationality of holding the entire community responsible for the actions of particular individuals. Nimmo thinks: “Her prime minister had been killed by men who were strangers to her, so why was she feeling so frightened?” (349). And later her daughter Kamal says: “what will happen to us? why should anything happen? we didn't do anything wrong” (351). But the fear especially in Nimmo's heart is all pervasive compounded by past events: “You can lose everything in one single day, your past, your present and your future” (350). Again, “she worried about how that spark of anger could become a fire without warning” (351). Nimmo’s sense of guilt on the part of her community surfaces despite all her admiration for Indira Gandhi.

The social shame too is in evidence here, a Sikh has killed an unarmed woman, this crime is unpardonable and politics takes over to seek revenge. Nimmo’s sense of insecurity as a member of a community held guilty due to the actions of some members is captured well by Badami as has been seen. The violence against the Prime Minister seeks retribution in the killing of guiltless Sikhs. This act of revenge against innocent persons sparks more anger and hatred as Pappu asks his mother when she tells him “violence does nothing but breed more violence” (352). Pappu replies: “what about violence to get justice, Mummy? Look at what happened to those pilgrims at the temple. The talk is that more than two or three hundred died. And Pa-ji. What did he do to deserve death? He was unarmed and peaceful. Who will bring him justice?” (352). The feelings of justice and retribution that surface divulge the cycles of violence that have been set in motion. Gyanendra Pandey explains in “Community and Violence: Recalling Partition” (1997): “'Revenge’ is a violence which is not treated as violence-only as a just recompense. It is entirely different from the feared violence of the enemy's 'goondas', even though it is exactly the same. Such a distinction between 'our' violence and 'theirs' is crucially dependent on the attribution of agency, and of 'evilness' to the Other”. The youth in this way is trapped between their concerns for justice and righteousness on one hand and the heroic urge for fighting back through violence rather than peace – Nimmo’s moderation and tolerance seems to be a lesson of wisdom learnt through experience while Pappu’s
extremist view is a repercussion of the violence he has witnessed at an early age. So, for him the violence of the other is evil but that of his own side is simply a repayment in the same token.

Past and present intermingle yet again, when Nimmo's daughter, Kamal is burnt inside the safety of the cupboard that her mother hides her in. When Kamal is burning inside, Nimmo’s thoughts are disoriented. In the bewildered state of mind, “She raced to and fro, her hair wild about her face. The fire wasn't dying down. It licked the steel cupboard into a white heat, the green paint curling away, and was that her daughter shouting from inside? It was the last safe place in the world, that bin of grain, stay there, my daughter, stay there, you will be safe. Don't make a noise or they will get you” (361). The declaration of Nimmo’s mother uttered in the past is italicized by the author, drawing attention to the fact of the intermingling of the past and present. This suggests that violence caused by politics is the same in all eras and people suffer from it if they are caught in the religion unaccepted by the mob in action. The time period is immaterial, the actions of the mob continue to be violent and destructive.

Also, the fact that Nimmo thinks that her daughter, Kamal is safe inside the cupboard, suggests the irony that no place in the world is safe from violence. Nimmo answers a question about her daughter's whereabouts: “Inside the steel cupboard, the safest place-she is there, my little daughter…Nobody can touch her there” (362). The mother’s idea of safest place for the daughter proves ironically blind and narrow so much so that she could never imagine the pace of the attacking mob cruelly finding out her hidden daughter to be burnt. When religious fanaticism takes over, nobody can remain out of harm's way. Pappu too is killed, although his father’s partner, Mohan Lal and his family try to help him. He meets his end with a car tyre over his body which is set alight (368). The same fate awaits his father, who too is set alight with a tyre over his body. Both father and son die in the same way. (371) “Burning people with tyres round their neck, chopping off their hair, burning their turbans-these were common sight during the time. Even the Granth Sahib was not spared” <http://info.india times.com/1984/14.html>. This description of the real events in the time of the anti-Sikh riots
accurately describes the happenings in the novel. Thus, reinforcing that Badami uses political events as the background of her narrative.

The horror that Badami felt as a newly married bride at the sight of the Sikh man being burnt is reflected in Nimmo’s story so that readers can feel the same dreadfulness. Killing by burning the victims one after another as happens to all the members of Nimmo’s family symbolizes the innocent individuals falling into the endless fire of communal hatred witnessed by Nimmo and her creator, Badami. Also, this strategy of delineating the three murders one after another intensifies the readers’ sense of indignation of the violence due to political causes. The sequential murders and the destruction they convey becomes synonymous in the readers’ psyche to being devoured by the forces of politics. “My sister-in-law's family was attacked. The women tried to escape but failed. The mob spilled petrol on the men and lit them. But a Hindu neighbour rescued one of her sons-he plaited his hair and dressed him up in woman's clothes. He was the only one to survive in his family.” This true account related by Shyama Rani is echoed in the novel when the Hindu friend tries unsuccessfully to save Nimmo’s son by trying to pass him off as a girl.

3.2.8 The Kanishka Aircrash: Selective Silences

Chapter twenty seven is titled ‘SILENCES’. The title itself is suggestive for it is Bibi-ji's silence on the matter of the sabotage of an Air India flight that causes the death of Leela, her Hindu friend. Bibi-ji and her family are well aware of the plans to cause damage to an aeroplane to India as an act of revenge for the anti-Sikh riots. Alok Bhalla asserts in “Memory, History and Fictional Representations of the Partition” (1999), “My narrative account is marked by a degree of agnosticism towards the idea that those who have suffered treat others with pity. Indeed, it often encourages them to regard themselves as self-righteous victims who can neither be consoled nor urged to forgive”. Bhalla’s assertion illuminates Bibi-ji's deeds after the death of her husband, she begins to regard her friend and neighbour as a channel to relive her feelings of sadness. She does not
think of the grief of her friend’s family, pity and forgiveness are not to be employed; only settling of scores will work.

Badami continues: “She had heard other rumours, wispy and uncertain, that something is about to happen to avenge the invasion of the Golden Temple and the killing of the Sikhs in Delhi” (374, 375). Others like Laloo also confirm this story explicitly, when Jasbeer is going home to his bereaved mother, Nimmo, the narrator tells us: “Laloo oversaw the arrangements, as usual, contacting his travel agent friends to book a flight for Jasbeer. "Not Air India," he said decisively. "There is talk that flights on that airline will be sabotaged" ” (374). And later when Leela calls up Bibi-ji to give her the news that she is going back to India after eighteen years, “There was no response” (383). This silence effectively involves Bibi-ji in her friend, Leela’s death. Leela in her unknowing state reveals to Bibi-ji: “It was very difficult to get seats, but Laloo’s friend who owns one of those travel agencies on Main street managed to get me a seat on the twenty-second of this month". "To India?" Bibi-ji asked, her voice sharp. "On which flight?" "Air India for me" Leela replies. "There is nothing to talk about," Bibi-ji said gently. She hung up the telephone and leaned her head against the wall” (383). In spite of the fact that she clearly understands the implication of her remaining quiet, she resolutely declines to speak.

Bibi-ji’s persistent silence, her refusal to warn her friend reveals the malevolence in her consciousness towards one who still considers her a friend. Jayaram and Saberwal observe, “group conflicts may sour interpersonal relations between two persons” (23, 1996). This observation is accurate in the fictional world of Badami’s creation. There is no source of personal animosity between Bibi-ji and Leela, Bibi-ji’s bitterness is entirely due to her membership of her clan. Badami continues: “But Laloo had said that it was not safe to fly Air India-economic boycott, his friend, the travel agent, had said. Perhaps sabotage” (383). This implicates all of them in the silence that is the cause of Leela’s death. As the omniscient author has already indicated, Laloo, his friend, the travel agent, Jasbeer and even Bibi-ji are all aware of the plans to avenge the lives of their co-religionists back home but say nothing to warn Leela, their former friend. This
clearly illustrates the sentiment of brotherhood and communal filialship that overrules all other sentiments of morality and friendship. The politically motivated happenings in the motherland are powerful enough now, to silence them. And the silence referred to is not just the physical lack of speech but also the silencing of their ethics and morality, of their love and duty towards one who still considers herself their friend. Some remarks made by Veena Das are relevant here. She states, “where active agency is vested in the Sikh as killer, it is framed there by the context of the fight for justice” (188, 2000). The fight for retribution for the wrongs against their community justify the use of violence for the members of the group.

Besides this, Bibi-ji’s further thought process reveals: “But what did Laloo’s friend, the one who had sold Leela the tickets, know? And what did Laloo know? He would have said something to the Bhats if there was anything to worry about, wouldn’t he?” (383). Bibi-ji’s attempts at silencing her conscience typify the situation of people in her position, she passes on the responsibility to others assuming that if the network is true, they would have mentioned this to Leela. By questioning the veracity of her own knowledge, she seeks to renounce her implication in the murky affair. Veena Das goes on: “The effort to justify the use of violence is further supported by reflections about the nature of the present” (188, 2000). The extraordinary events that have taken place in the life of the community and in Bibi-ji’s personal life are used as a validation of the plans underway. Veena Das goes on further: “Precisely because the nature of time is seen as extraordinary, it is also assumed that ordinary morality does not apply” (188, 2000). This is evident when Bibi-ji’s conscience refuses to be silenced she thinks: “Perhaps she, Bibi-ji, should have said something to Leela. But it was none of her business what happened to them. No, it was not her business at all” (383). The dividing line between religious faith and an extreme ideological stance is often blurred by collective thinking. So, for Bibi-ji, regular rules of morality are not applicable to her friendship with Leela, who is seen to be a representative of the Hindu government whose only mission is to destroy the Sikhs. Bibi-ji’s final thoughts make it clear to the readers that she knows the correct course of action for her in this situation but in a final attempt she takes ownership of her silence.
She admits that her silence is purposeful for it is not her job to warn someone who is part of 'them'. This distinct ‘I’ that entails the definite division of the world into 'us' and 'them finally allows her to maintain her silence to support her religious mates so that her creed is successful in their efforts which is true as the next chapter, Chapter twenty eight reveals. In this chapter, on June 22, 1985, Air India Flight 182, en route from Canada to India, explodes off the coast of Ireland killing all 329 people on board.

The events in both countries that the action of the novel is located in helps to elucidate the effect of the home country upon the diaspora. When the break up involving Sikhs and Hindus in India takes place, in the disporic location of Canada too the divide between the Sikhs and Hindus intensifies. About Bibi-ji, the author says: “Over the next few days, she was increasingly conscious that the tension between the Sikhs and the rest of the Indian community already high after the invasion of the Golden Temple, was now closer to exploding. When Bibi-ji hears of the fate of Nimmo's family: "She felt as if the world that she had known for so long, the stable, safe world, had been blown apart, leaving only smoky puffs of whispering poisonous rumours" ” (375). Revenge for actions in the native country is sought by the characters who are now residents of another country. This proves that ties of communalism and religious concord are stronger than those of personal friendship and amity. Ami Sands Brodoff observes: “Badami proves that a novel can bring home the impact of political events with an immediacy and power that newscasts and historical texts cannot” (2001). The novel reaches a devastating climax when the conflicts of the past erupt into the lives of all three women.

Despite all efforts on the part of individuals like Bibi-ji and Nimmo, both have to confront the collapse of human concerns be it neighbourhood or friendship. Both have to encounter the ultimate isolation after the destruction of their family members and the paranoia of rumours witnessed by them. After this, their lonely isolated existence is not secure. They share a similar experience, similar fears and insecurities. Parallelism is a general device used here. The parallel tract portrays social destruction alongside isolated individuals, one in
Canada and the other in India, both lives comparable to each other. The author’s appraisal seems to be that in the politics of the homeland, the religious resurgence in the native soil affects both co-religionists in the motherland and those residing outside in the same way irrespective of the place of residence. Both endure pain, suffer losses and death of loved ones in the cause of their community. In other ways too the account of lives runs comparably in both settings. Very soon after Pa-ji, another influence of temperance, Satpal too dies, leaving the situaton rife for the powers of communalism to take over. S. P. Aiyar states, “violence in many forms runs all through Indian history, even as it does in the history of other nations” (154, 1967). Badami makes sure she depicts this violence in the accounts of her characters. Thus, Bibi-ji’s application of silence to issues that need to be verbalized emphasizes the differentiation between the two communities that she experiences as a result of the events in the Golden Temple Complex and their aftermath. Otherness is reinforced in her utterences, her actions and her stillness as well.

3.3 Cycles of Political Violence in Roma Tearne's *Mosquito*

*Mosquito* (2007) is set against the backdrop of the Sri Lankan Civil War. The year is 1996 and the thread of the ongoing Civil War in the country runs from beginning to end in the novel. Mosquito is primarily a love story celebrating the triumph of the human spirit and the enduring nature of art and beauty through the portrayal of the principal characters, but the novel also explores the subject of violence. The issue of child soldiers is also scrutinized through the story of Vikram, a Tamil boy orphaned by the atrocities of the Singhalese army. Vikram is recruited by the Tamil Tigers until chance lands him in an orphanage. Here, a well-intentioned guardian intervenes to alter Vikram’s fate by trying to remove him from an uncertain future and providing him with a stable home. But Vikram is permanently damaged by the violence and grows up almost completely devoid of feeling; Vikram is once again recruited by the Tamils. He becomes a tool of his unscrupulous controller, Gerard, a man who exploits the traumatized, damaged Tamils by preaching vengeance but who secretly has political ambitions of his own. As in the previous novel, *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?*, in *Mosquito,*
Tearne creates fictional characters and places them in the actual events of Sri Lankan history and political environment, thus creating a mixture of politics and violence. This time the conflict is not only religious but more about language and ethnicity. The nature of the mixed ethnic population of Sri Lanka is the root cause of the hostility and distrust. Explains Chandra Richard de Silva in *Sri Lanka: A History* (1992): “Conflicts between linguistic and religious groups in Sri Lanka have accrued from time to time since 1948…However, by and large, these conflicts have been transitory and relations have been generally amicable and friendly. The exception is the Sinhalese-Tamil rift in Sri Lanka—a rift which has grown with time…these communities have had distinct languages and cultures for a long period” (235). The war originated due to the differences between the Sinhalese and the Tamils and took a very extreme form. The two communities, wishing to preserve their individual identities have been in conflict in the small island of Sri Lanka.

The causes of the rift date back to the colonial period. The effect of colonial rule had a considerable impact on both factions. Romesh Bhandari in “Indo-Sri Lanka Accord: The Challenge Ahead” (1988), speaking about the Sri Lankan situation says: “With the advent of freedom on the departure of the British one would have expected that the two communities would live together as equal citizens enjoying full rights and opportunities as diverse communities do in India. Regrettably, the relations between these two communities became strained soon after Sri Lanka’s Independence” (109). Both groups felt endangered by westernization and hence began to call attention to the individualism of their own cultural heritage, inevitably emphasising thereby the elements that divided one from the other. Bhandari continues, “Such strains owe their origin to a large extent to the way in which the British dealt with the two communities. The passage of time only widened the gulf leading to the Tamils demanding a separate state of their own and resorting to an armed struggle to achieve it” (109, 1988). The problem which has been both a difficult and complex one has become more so, he elaborates: “It has been made even more intractable due to the emotional aspects and the great distrust and lack of confidence between the two communities” (109, 1988). Competition for scarce resources and lucrative positions and the workings...
of an adversarial political system as it developed in the last years of British colonial rule heightened the problem.

The Sri Lankan Civil War was long and bloody, this well-known fact is reflected in Tearne’s treatment of the story. Thus, the novel encompasses violent acts from the first to the final chapter, within the first few pages of the account, the reference to violence begins. In an effort to apprise readers of the origin of the Civil War in her country, Roma Tearne explains in the novel: “The Liberation Tigers had been demanding a separate Tamil state for years with no success. Civil unrest grew daily. Then, after Singhala was made the national language, discrimination against the Tamils became commonplace. A potential guerrilla war was simmering” (15). This is a reference to the LTTE or Liberation Tigers of the Tamil Ealam, a militant organization fighting for the rights of the Tamils. S. B. Singh in “Tamil Minority in Sri Lanka” (1988) provides details about the group: “The Tiger movement took birth in 1972…. At the time of its inauguration the movement called itself "The Tamil New Tigers" and later, on 5th May 1976, the organisation renamed itself as the "Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)" ” (159). Due to the unfairness perpetrated against them, the Tamils came together to fight for their demands. Novelist, V. V. Ganeshananthan in “ An Interview With with V. V. Ganeshananthan” (2008) in which she is interviewed by Suketu Mehta, fiction writer and journalist explicates the situation: “The Sri Lankan government started discriminating against Tamils very shortly after the country gained independence from the British in the late 1940s. This has been well documented” (293). Through these words, V. V. Ganeshananthan puts the situation in plain words. Being a writer and a Sri Lankan of mixed parentage herself Ganeshananthan’s recognition of the injustice against the Tamils of the country shows the reality of the situation prevalent in Sri Lanka.

3.3.1 The Communal Environment in Sri Lanka: Violence, Suspicion and Fear

Throughout the novel, Tearne depicts the atmosphere of Sri Lanka. Violence, suspicion and fear prevail everywhere. This adds intensity to the effect
of the existing atmosphere of hostility. Ronald. H. Bailey in *Violence and Aggression* summarises (1977) this: “Almost as serious as the violence itself is the climate of fear that it engenders” (9). The fear and suspicion in the minds of the characters with the conjoined psychological consequences and the attendant physical violence produce an environment of extreme anxiety and distress that the characters have to undergo. Thus, the protagonist, Theo Samarajeeva is introduced as a famous writer. He had left Sri Lanka to live in London and married an Italian, Anna. After her death, he decides to come back to his motherland. He has written books, one of which is being made into a film. Mr. Samarjeeva is Singhalese but his sympathy for Tamil children is well known. In view of this, Sugi, his manservant feels that it is his duty to warn him: “These were troubled times. Envy and poverty went hand in hand with the ravaged land” (28). This indicates the atmosphere of fear and suspicion that prevails in the country (28). Language serves not only like a connecting force but also as a dividing one with the definite and pervasive prejudice against the ‘other’. Thus collective linguistic consciousness proves an additional device along with ethnicity in sourcing the civil war. It seems that people like Sugi are breathing the very air of fear, suspicion and anxiety against the possibility of violence. V. V. Ganeshananthan elaborating on the condition of her native country says about life in Sri Lanka, “there's a thousand inconveniences, and I think they just have stopped adding them up because if they did-what useful purpose would that serve? And at the same time they haven't known it to be any other way” (297, 2008). The people have accepted the everyday troubles, in fact they know only a life full of problems, of fear and trepidation.

The general atmosphere of violence, the ensuing troubles and the resulting anxiety is represented by a further instance. Nulani, a young girl who lives near Mr Samarajeeva is an artist and paints well. Nulani’s father, another Singhalese was a fearless man. He spoke out against the injustice done to the Tamils long ago. He was warned several times, but ignored the warnings and therefore he was killed. He was educated, intelligent, handsome and principled. He campaigned for the Tamil underdogs, he was not careful and had to pay with his life; now his family is being watched with suspicion. Sugi’s remarks only add force to the
extraordinary atmosphere of fear, he comments: “The things that had happened in
this place were turning people mad. It was not possible to have normal lives any
longer. It was not possible to walk without looking over your shoulder at all times.
Without wondering who was a friend and who a new enemy. Fear and suspicion
was the thing they had lived off, it was the only diet they had had for years” (30).
No one is immune from the difficulties. Sugi’s thoughts continue: “Almost every
family he knew was touched in some way by the troubles, living with the things
they were too frightened to talk about” (30). This underscores the ubiquitousness
of the fear and suspicion.

Despite the violence and the everyday troubles that affect all, nobody
complains or mentions their difficulties as they are afraid of reprisal, so intense
and all pervading is the atmosphere of fear. V. V. Ganeshananthan says further: “I
can't think of many Sri Lankan families the war has not affected. My father left Sri
Lanka because he anticipated this violence. But those who are really affected are
those who were left behind” (296, 2008). The way in which those who were left
behind are shaped can be seen from the intensity of the fear of Sugi and his mates.
Also, Theo’s reaction to happenings around is different: “Twenty-odd years of
living away had made Theo forget” (51). For people who have left there is some
respite in the form of forgetfulness. But for those living in Sri Lanka, there is no
relief: “And seeing this Sugi was frightened. His fear clung to the barbed wire that
pressed against the garden wall. Fear had been stalking Sugi daily for years” (51).
The continued violence around them leaves no room for disregarding fear. Fear
follows people like Sugi as definitely as their shadow.

The violence and consequent fear is omnipresent as is the physical
violence. No one, however rich or influential is safe from harm. This is
corroborated by the news on the radio of two Cabinet ministers and their families,
returning from Colombo after the weekend. They are shot down with machine-
guns: “All that was left of them were limbs, studded with bullet holes, crushed to
the edge of bone, brittle like coral” (108). Furthermore, this happens in a part of
the country that is considered safe, since there is no clue about the perpetrators of
the crime, rumours rule rampant and this accentuates and deepens the atmosphere of fear and nervousness already prevalent.

Later, readers are introduced to the woman who looks after Theo in captivity. Her son relates her feelings to Theo “"She says we are not normal, we cannot speak in normal voices ever again. Even if the peace comes," the boy said, "there is no peace for us" ” (246). Once more, this reminds readers about what is happening and the effect that it has on the people. The woman not only echoes Sugi’s sentiments about the insanity prevailing around but goes one step further saying that after undergoing all that they had, they can never be normal again and even though the bloodshed may cease, they have become incapable of calm. Moreover, all linguistic groups are victims of this: “Singhalese, Tamils what does it matter who they are, everyone spied on everyone else” (51), Sugi tells Theo. This further adds to the atmosphere of distrust and dread. Whether one is a member of the dominant group or the minor faction, everyone is equally susceptible to suspicion and fear.

There are other acts of violence that make the general feeling of hostility and horror more gripping and potent. Sugi has to sacrifice his life so that Nulani can escape from the clutches of her uncle and his men. Tearne puts forth her views in an interview with Paul Simon (2010), “As a country Sri Lanka seems to be going backwards during each decade”. She represents this in her fictional account as well through the portrayal of Sugi’s horrendous end. Describing the scene as the fishermen see it, Tearne writes: “Dragging their nets along the beach, they saw the body. It was completely unrecognisable, blackened and filled with holes, in its stomach, on its legs and what were once arms and face. When the fishermen's gaze reached up to the head, they saw that grey substance had oozed out” (161). Moreover he does not even get a decent burial. His body simply washes out into the sea. (161). This graphic description of Sugi’s body and the manner of his death demands the reader's attention and explicates the conditions in the home country of the author. It is similar to a cry for help on the writer’s part in a world that is oblivious of a small country like Sri Lanka in which the events are bordering on lunacy. Roma Tearne puts her plea for her country into words in an interview to
Paul Simon: “We need to find the way out. I really think it's time to grow up and look at what we are doing,” she says. She continues: “What we want is discussion and all sides have got to come to the table. The impetus needs to come from the citizens themselves” (2010). In depicting the way in which common people like Sugi suffer, the appeal of the author for her country’s release from the senseless violence that it is trapped in is evident. Also, in the novel there are many descriptions of the beauty of the landscape, reflecting the author's longing for her homeland which is being destroyed by the political violence in her country. The beauty of the landscape is also an important contrast to the ugliness of destruction. These descriptions therefore bring to the foreground the political and psychological ugliness in the midst of this beauty.

3.3.2 Mutilated Identities: The Story of Vikram, Gopal and Other Child Soldiers

Vikram's story illustrates many facts about the atmosphere in the country. Vikram is a parentless boy, his mother and sister have been raped and killed. He is enlisted as a soldier, rescued and sent to Waterlily House, an orphanage. He is adopted by Mr Gunadeen, a “good Singhala man” (56). Soon after the mysterious adoption, the guardian, Mr. Gunadeen goes off to work first in the Middle East and then Malaysia. When Vikram is put in school, the writer subtly uses this opportunity to appraise readers about the political conditions in Sri Lanka: “The headmaster knew, but chose to forget, that in the wake of independence the Singhalese had slowly denied the Tamils any chance of a decent education” (56). The attitude of the head master of the school who is aware of the reality but turns a blind eye probably represents that of the general populace. Urmila Phadnis in Sri Lanka: An Island in Crisis (1988) asserts: “The Tamils were systematically discriminated by the governments at Colombo” (53). The discriminatory policies of governments that support strategies of ethnic segregation and refusal of educational opportunities to certain minorities were adopted by the Sri Lankan government as well, dominated as it was by the Singhalese. This resulted in a contentious situation. Urmila Phadnis continues: “Education has become one of the most controversial issues in ethnic relations in
Sri Lanka and has clearly been one of the major causes underlying intensification of ethnic conflict” (53, 1988). The education policy adopted by the government, depriving the Tamils of the privileges to learning distressed the latter and made them militant.

With the passage of time, the situation changes. As the narrator points out, “Well, things had changed and these were desperate times. The headmaster knew nothing about child soldiers and their psychological scars. He thought Vikram was an orphan without complications. He knew nothing about his soldiering past” (56). This is a reference to the military use of children. Throughout history and in many cultures, children have been extensively involved in military campaigns even when such practices were supposedly against cultural morals. “According to the "Child Soldiers Global Report 2008" (produced by the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers), 21 countries or territories around the globe had children engaged in conflicts between 2004 and 2007. Today there are child soldiers in many nations around the world, including the Central African Republic, Chad, Somalia, Uganda, Myanmar (Burma) Sudan, Iraq, Colombia and Sri Lanka”. <http://www.vision.org/visionmedia/article.aspx?id=6684>. Such children are used not only by the army but by opposition forces also; sometimes they are made to carry dangerous exploits as they do not understand the enormity of what they are doing. Mitra Phukan in “Who Killed Mother Teresa? Children of the Conflict” (2010) explains “It is known that many young children join up without understanding the situation, or the ethics of it” (233). Those who enlist children into armed conflict enroll young children early because the younger they are the less likely they are to think or ask difficult questions. Phukan states, “And indeed, given their tender age, it would be strange indeed if they could do so” (233).

Besides, for the user they are a convenient conduit as suspicion does not easily fall on young children. “Amnesty International has drawn attention to human rights abuses in the context of child recruitment both by governments and armed opposition groups in countries such as Angola, Burundi, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, and Uganda” <http://www.amnestyusa.org/children/child-soldiers/about-child-soldiers/page.do?id=1021176>. In A Thousand Splendid Suns Hosseini depicts
Laila’s young brothers as having been compulsorily drafted into the Afghanistan army and in *Half a Yellow Sun* Chimanda Adiche too depicts this. Worldwide, hundreds of thousands of children under 18 have been affected by armed conflict.

The novelist gives more information about the orphanage “He was far away from the brutal place where they recruited underage children into the military” (57). But due to the happenings in his past, Vikram has ceased to care about anything: “At first, when he came to live in Sumaner House, he used to kick the walls, treating the house as though it were a person, scuffing the furniture slyly, gouging holes in the doors when no one was looking, and cracking the firecoloured glass into as many lines as he could, without breaking it completely. Torturing the house. Only the servant woman knew what he was up to. Thercy the servant woman saw everything that went on” (57). These pieces of information bring to the fore Vikram’s repressed anger and frustration with the situation he finds himself in. Elaborating about distressed children in conflict-ridden areas, Mitra Phukan articulates: “Everything that holds true for society in general applies with double force to the children of that society, for the simple reason that they are much more vulnerable to emotional trauma and to indoctrination, leading to an erosion in values” (233, 2010). This applies to the children depicted by Tearne especially the child soldiers like Vikram. He needs help to cope with his pent up feelings but there is no one to assist him. Phukan declares, “They are definitely in need of counselling, even long term emotional support” (237, 2010). However, in Sri Lanka no machinery exists to provide this support. The servant woman is a silent witness, not equipped to lend a helping hand to her young charge.

Every year around the time of his family’s massacre, Vikram gets nightmares (118). The psychological scars have physical effects, sometimes he grinds his teeth in his sleep; sometimes he wakes up with an erection or a wet sheet, “always, he would wake with a skullful of anger punctured as though by knives...for a couple of nights close to the anniversary of the deaths, things were bad” (77, 78). The pathos of memory, similarity of sharing and evidence of the mother’s trauma of being raped brings to mind Anita Rau Badami’s Nimmo in *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?*, going through the frequent haunting trauma of
the past events. The difference is: Nimmo is saved from becoming a violent tool as she does not come across an agency like Gerard, an LTTE instrument and also because she lives in the times of political stability in India while Vikram is left at the mercy of chaos and fear in Sri Lankan politics. Like Nimmo, Vikram's memories too are recounted and reinforced time and again by the writer, adding force to the sadism and it is these memories that Gerard makes use of to conscript Vikram to his way of thinking, to his cause: “Gerard had reminded Vikram that his family needed to be avenged, they were waiting for the day, Gerard said, when, like a half-finished jigsaw, they would be made whole again” (78). The sickening deficiency of Vikram’s childhood caused by the violent behaviour he and his family have undergone is sought to be erased by Gerard in the form of more actions of the same sort. A classic instance of violence begets violence. Such atrocity is bound to cause severe ramifications. Akbar Ahmed elaborates on the after effects of rape: “Bitterness is at a peak, so is the nature of hatred in response. Blood and revenge follow. A spiral of violence is set in motion” (122, 2003). Rape, therefore activates the cycle of violence which results in further such rounds of evil, with each side attempting to beat the opposite. It is for that reason quite easy for Gerard or Rajah Buka to lure Vikram with promises of avenging his family’s murder. Vikram is recruited into the Tamil cause, “the advantage of boys like Vikram were that they were halfway to being recruited already” (63) Gerard declares. The cycle of violence that is initiated can be seen in Vikram’s conduct consequent to the rape and murder of his mother and sister. His conscription into violent activities is an effort to find retribution.

The occurrences in Vikram's violent adolescent life have left their mark on him, his coldness and insensitivity to violence, his indifference and the condition of common people who become victims of violence, is seen in the account of the crash of a lorry and a car, the victims of this crash are tossed carelessly, their belongings have been plundered. One body that of a woman is in the last throes of death but Vikram walks on: “How long would it take for her to die? he wondered idly. Would she be dead by the time he had walked two dozen steps, or half a mile? Vikram continued on his way” (79). The plight of the nearly dead woman who is nonetheless alive thus far, does not evoke in Vikram any feeling of
sympathy, fear or revulsion, rather he walks on as if the ghastly sight is normal. In fact he actually speculates about the exact time of her death. Ervin Staub in “Notes on Cultures of Violence, Cultures of Caring and Peace, and the Fulfillment of Basic Human Needs” (2003) postulates: “Perpetrators of great violence at times had been wounded before, which is one of the influences that led to their violence” (13). This certainly holds true for Vikram and his friends. Staub goes on, “But even if that is not the case, they have almost certainly been wounded by their own violent acts. At the very least, they would have closed themselves to their victims. Over time the decline in their capacity for empathy, guilt, and other moral feelings would be likely to extend to more and more people” (13, 2003). Vikram can be seen treading this path surely in the story bound world; his experiences have made him into a hard living thing, devoid of all emotions. Vikram’s brutality is encouraged and toughened by his comrades. He is asked to massacre seven Singhalese as his first assignment (98) “Vikram’s calmness had stunned Gerard. To his astonishment, the boy had hardly batted an eyelid. He's a tough nut, thought Gerard. Tougher than even I expected” (98, 99). Gerard’s thoughts about Vikram and his resilience, his complete lack of human emotions show that the heartless actions of the army have turned Vikram into a merciless being. “It was the first time he had used the gun, the first time he had killed anyone” (99). Yet he does not lose his nerve and in fact even has a pleasurable feeling since he has impressed Gerard. For Vikram killing people is similar to excitement. The loss of family and the shocking confrontation with his own growing up as an orphan shapes the mind of Vikram into not a passive onlooker but a hard core criminal. The source of crime thus locates itself back into the personal trauma, childhood suffering and instinct for survival. Tearne writes: “Vikram hadn’t been a child soldier for long but Sugi knew once a child soldier always a soldier” (58). Therefore it is not long before he is redrafted and becomes a child soldier once again.

Another child soldier, Gopal’s story is a also depicted by Tearne. “Approximately 250,000 children under the age of 18 are thought to be fighting in conflicts around the world…Although most child soldiers are between 15 and 18 years old, significant recruitment starts at the age of 10 and the use of even
younger children has been recorded” <http://www.amnesty.org/en/children>. This is evidenced in subsequent events in *Mosquito*; children as young as ten and even younger are portrayed to be working as soldiers. Gopal is one such case. He too was at Waterlily House with Vikram. Suketu Mehta discussing children in Sri Lanka mentions, “An entire generation that’s grown up knowing nothing but war” (297). In the story bound world of the novel, Gopal and his friends epitomize this well. These children who have been enlisted into the Tamil cause lead all their lives in mortal danger, they risk their lives for a cause that they have heard about and that needs them. The children are recruited from orphanages and used by the Tamil Tigers, their coaching is comprehensive. They are inducted in stages, first as runners and later allotted more important and violent work. Their programming is deep. They are also given suicide training. For instance the author reveals about Gopal “he knew they were doing it for the glory of the oppressed” (142). Such is their indoctrination. The practice of producing future victims in disguise of activists is so well-planned by the so-called Tamil Tigers that they do not seem to realize the inhuman part of their mission in abusing children not only as a machinery for their conspiracies but also as the fuel for flaming further violence. As if this is not enough, the children are given cyanide pills to swallow if they get caught. (143) Mohan Ram in *Sri Lanka: The Fractured Island* (1989), speaking about members of LTTE in an episode when they were taken into custody by Indian authorities informs: “(Each guerilla of the LTTE has a four-inch cyanide capsule slung around the neck-a symbol of the Liberation Tigers’ dedication and determination never to be taken alive)” (16). The bracketed comment of Mohan Ram’s statement reveals the extremist policies used for misguiding the trainee children with glorifying terminology like determination and dedication. In actuality, they are given poison to consume so that they may not reveal any information to the police if caught and tortured.

Gopal’s story is equally, if not more heart-rending than Vikram’s. He was moved from Waterlily House, on the way the truck is ambushed and he is taken to a camp. He tells Vikram proudly “We did many things… We blew up army jeeps, we carried, messages for the Chief, we stole motorcycles and we threw hand grenades” (140). He remembers little about his family, all the information he
reta is that he was taken away by the Tigers in lieu of his brother in the middle of the night and had never seen his family again. They did not want him back. “It wasn't like your family. Your family died. Mine didn't want me” (141), he tells Vikram. He too cloaks his anger and sorrow in indifference. “But now he no longer cared” (141). There are other similarities, like Vikram, his initiation ceremony too is a trial by fire, nothing less, he was forced to go back to his village and set fire to the cattle there “You have to show you don't care about anything! Your family, your village, anything from the past” (141). He is a survivor: “I have been a spy, a courier, a front-line fighter. I have survived all of it” (141). More important is his information to Vikram about two of his friends, who stepped on a landmine and were blown up. Gopal, says “ 'I was very upset at the time”… He continued chattily. "But you know, now I've almost forgotten what they looked like, It's the way things are in this business" " (142). He is a child, after all but the way in which he converses with Vikram about his dangerous exploits and his innermost feelings reveal the inhuman treatment he has suffered. Also, he is familiar with only this kind of existence, he is so hardened to this manner of being alive that he can even make conversation about this as if he is chitchatting in a cheerful way. He is not ignorant or naïve, he is cognizant of the peril. He knows he is living a dangerous life for he shows Vikram a pair of designer trainers stolen by him but hardly ever used “ 'If my luck runs out', he said, 'take them' ” (142). This underlines the plight of these youngsters who have to risk their lives on a daily basis in order to survive. For them the choice is between not taking a risk and dying or taking the risk and perishing. They are thus left optionless to the impending threats of death despite their will to survive or work. The taking of risk in this pattern is for them a kind of meaning they would be creating by accepting this process of dying. “Around the world, children are singled out for recruitment by both armed forces and armed opposition groups, and exploited as combatants. Easily manipulated, children are sometimes coerced to commit grave atrocities, including rape and murder of civilians using assault rifles such as AK-47s and G4s. Some are forced to injure or kill members of their own families or other child soldiers. Others serve as porters, cooks, guards, messengers, spies, and sex slaves.” <http://www.amnestyusa.org/children/child-soldiers/page.do?id =1051047>. This is true of Vikram, Gopal and their friends, child soldiers all who
are recruited by the LTTE in Sri Lanka. There are many dangers for orphans like these. If they are lucky enough to escape from being drafted into the military, they fall prey to the callous attitude of the Tamil Tigers, either way they are doomed. Tearne represents this in her fiction.

3.3.3 Violence Perpetrated by Both Sides: The State and the LTTE

Two bombs go off near the residence of Dr. Peris; one is a suicide bomber’s work. Later, the raconteur relates:

The new year had not brought peace. They were being buried alive. Someone threw a petrol bomb into a crowd and death stalked the city in a monk's saffron robe. Petrol was in short supply, except when it was needed for random burnings. How had two thousand years of Buddhism come to this? A cabinet Minister was assassinated, seventeen members of the public injured, three killed on a bus. Glass rose like sea spray, shattering everywhere. But the radio stations still played baila music in a pretence of normality although no one knew what was normal anymore. (215)

Afterward, on the radio, Theo in Gerard's charge hears the political news: “There had been a tragedy in Mannar … Hundreds were left to drown. Villages along the northern coast had been burnt down, women and children hacked to death. A British journalist, some foolish man in search of a human story, having strayed through the security system, had his eyes plucked out” (229). It is almost as if the violence is inexhaustible. The countless number of allusions to various acts of violence create a very unsettling impact on the minds of readers to such an extent that they feel not only emotively drained but psychologically distressed to the point of anguish. One can only interrogate about the motives of the author as what really is aimed at by such accounts of violence – is it the objective of the author to create this unsettling distress in the readers or is it to detach them from such horrifying conditions or to motivate them do something serious to stop all this deadly violence? Certainly the author is not aiming at creating the effect of detachment. On the other hand the authorial purpose can stretch itself from disturbing the readers to motivating them to strong action and the need for
reformation. Ervin Staub states, “To prevent new violence and promote positive relations between formerly hostile groups, or individuals, requires not only healing but also reconciliation. Healing can create greater openness to other people and may be an essential pre-condition for and contributor to reconciliation. When there are perpetrators and victims, perpetrators must also heal” (13, 2003).

The viewpoint of Roma Tearne thus seems to reach out with the necessity of awareness for peace and harmony in her native land. At the same time she has the strong perspective of creating a unifying mentality among the diverse communities like the Tamils and the Singhalese. Like all the sublimated writers of fiction she also shares the vision of global humanism as the ultimate perspective. However in the narrow focus of one country, Sri Lanka the inhabitants of the country are not stirred enough to extricate themselves from the constant violence around them, as for them, this is reality to be faced at all times, they cannot afford to feel tired of it. Violence has a propinquity, a proximity to them and has to be suffered inevitably at all times.

3.3.4 State Perpetrated Violence

Many incidents portrayed in the novel suggest the widespread prevalence of violence caused by the official organizations of the State to the ordinary people. Sugi’s words are significant: “There are thugs in the pay of authority” (51). He tells Theo this, when apprising him of the changes that have taken place in Sri Lanka during his absence. Mohan Ram makes a relevant observation, “After the July 1983 anti-Tamil riots, state terror became open and more widespread” (88, 1989). The history of Vikram’s family exemplifies this best. As seen earlier, events in Vikram's past have affected him. It is the army that has been the perpetrator of the violence caused to him in his childhood. Readers learn of this through Thercy, the servant woman's words to Sugi: “The army entered Vikram's home in Batticaloa and raped his mother and sister. They raped them many, many times” (58). The use of rape by the soldiers of the armed forces is a historical fact. Akbar Ahmed elaborates about this reality “But today rape is being used in an almost calculated manner by troops representing the majority, often backed by parts of the state structure” (121, 122, 2003). In the Sri Lanka that Tearne depicts
the truth of Ahmed’s shocking words can be seen to be literally true. The Sinhalese majority represented by the armed forces use the weapon of rape to segregate the antagonistic factions. Ahmed continues: “Rape as a final line divides one group from the other, the state through its male troops, becomes the rapist, raping its own citizens, those it is sworn to protect” (122, 2003). When the keepers of the law become criminals seeking to violate a section of the population all norms of decency and civility stand annulled. Ahmed adds: “All the key notions of modernity-justice, rule of law, nationalism, and civic society-are negated by the criminal nature of ethnic rape” (122, 2003). In such a situation of lawlessness ordinary citizens can enjoy no protection and security.

The lack of safety and security for the general public is borne out in the course that Vikram’s young life takes in the narrative. Thercy continues with the account of his childhood: “Then they took them away...The army never thought to look under the bed. Vikram was hiding there. His father was away at the time. Someone went to find the poor man, bring him the news, they told him, his whole family had been wiped out...what could the poor man do? His grief must have been a terrible thing. He found some poison and, God forgive him, he swallowed it. It was only afterwards, when it was too late, that the people in the village thought of looking under the bed” (58). This story illustrates the violence caused by the state's official machinery, the army to its own citizens. Once again Mohan Ram’s words articulate this: “The abrogation of legal safeguards under the law as well as the Emergency Regulations that applied to Tamil areas made torture to attract information possible. In addition, extra-judicial and arbitrary killings were a regular feature of the government’s drive to crush the secessionists” (88, 1989).

Sugi's response to Vikram’s saga is one way in which the author reinforces the state violence in Sri Lanka: “So much for our wonderful army...what do you expect” (58). This shows the disenchantment of members of the public with the army in Sri Lanka. Rajiva Wijesinha’s opinions in Current Crisis in Sri Lanka (1986) are relevant here: “Undoubtedly the lesson the Sri Lankan troops, described as amongst the worst disciplined in the world, required most to learn was to refrain from alienating the local population. This was what they appeared to have been most successful in doing” (102). This only seems to prove that the
army is high on the special powers bestowed on them so much that cruelty becomes a part of their regularized tendencies and there is not even a granule of awareness that the power is being misused in these practices. The reactions of Sugi, Thercy and others reveal the extent of the fear and disaffection of the populace with regard to the army.

Vikram turns into a “strange, mysterious creature, silent and friendless” (159) as a result of the atrocities that the army has inflicted on him and his family. He also indulges in other dubious activities He forces himself upon a shopkeeper's daughter, threatening to kill her and rapes her repeatedly at the back of the garages near the railway line. Furthermore, Vikram drinks cheap alcohol. He is addicted to crime (109). At the age of sixteen, he meets Gerard and his life changes (62). Mitra Phukan in her remarks about children in conflict ridden areas adds: “In addition their minds are coveted by the insurgents and terrorists for ‘brainwashing’ for the ‘cause’, which is much more successful if started early” (233). As Vikram’s account shows, his mind is already programmed by his awareness of the army’s excesses and as Gerard knows and cleverly exploits, Vikram is easily enlisted into violent activities. This sums up the account of Vikram and others like him who are sucked into the civil war due to their experiences, the violence that they have faced from the army, the very organization that every government pays to protect the life of civilians. Violence, here seems to be a cyclic and contagious effect of social forces on the individual conditions and vice-versa. “It is a truism that violence begets violence, which then assumes its own inexorable logic” (232) says Mitra Phukan. This can be seen in the stories of Vikram and his friends. In effect, the violence that these citizens suffer at the hands of the army and other analogous groupings leads them towards violent behaviour as a means of revenge and retaliation, this in turn leads to more of the same from the other side, consequently resulting in vicious cycles of violence.

More state supported violence is evidenced when Sugi’s brother-in-law communicates his reservations: “This man will make enemies too...And you must be careful. You too will be watched…Sugi knew all this” (80). Anybody who shows some compassion for the Tamils is treated with suspicion by the
authorities. More allusions to state violence and the atrocities committed by the authorities are exposed when Sugi sees the car and lorry that have collided, they are stripped of everything of value, then Singhalese-speaking soldiers set the remnants on fire. “Sugi recognized the smell. It had never been far from his life since the war had worsened” (81). The smell of bodies being burnt is a familiar odour for Sugi and again this fact reveals the part played by the army. In addition to this, from his hiding place Sugi can see, “The soldiers stood at a safe distance from the bonfire” (82). The use of the word bonfire for the fire that burns up the dead bodies and vehicles suggests that for the soldiers, such brutality is similar to a celebration, an occasion to rejoice the killing of Tamils. Their merriment is obvious from the author’s next words: “For a while they strutted around their vehicles, laughing hollowly slapping each other on the back” (82). The killings are due to community background and this is evident from the information that this site is called an “unmarked communal grave” (82).

The state generated violence in Sri Lanka is eloquently articulated by V. V. Ganeshananthan in the same interview: “A lot of people in Sri Lanka over the course of the war have simply disappeared. And so they never turn up or no one ever finds the bodies. So there are probably quite a few people who are dead and just no one knows where they are” (293, 2008). According to her about seventy thousand have been killed in the conflict (293). In the novel, Ganeshananthan’s words are reflected by Giulia’s thoughts: “She couldn't believe Theo was alive. People didn't survive disappearances in this place. It was well-known. The army came for them in the night, and then they vanished. Years later, having waited in vain, having finally given up all hope the relatives received news. Years later the clothes of the missing were sent back. A bundle of torn and bloodied cloth, a pair of shoes with soles hardly worn, a wallet with a photograph in it was all the word they had of an unmarked death. It had happened so many times. Nobody said anything any more, no one dared” (190). The sentiment of terror and apprehension because of the army’s terror tactics is so enormous that people are afraid of even expressing their feelings. Jim McDonald, the Sri Lanka country specialist for Amnesty International USA discusses the situation in Sri Lanka, according to him, “there remain thousands of cases of human rights violations by the Sri Lankan
security forces, including the police, where no one has been prosecuted or convicted.” Events in the novel correspond to McDonald’s statements.

Besides, after Theo Samarajeewa is delivered by Nulani’s uncle to the army headquarters, the army holds him captive and tortures him for his moderate views. He is in solitary confinement at first. Theo’s captivity is described in detail by the narrator: “His lips were cracked and caked with dried blood” (186). His throat feels sore, he can hardly speak. “The guard spoke to him in his native tongue, handcuffed him, pushing him roughly out of the cell.” (186). People who share his native language are the source of Theo’s chagrin. Added to the physical pain is the mental pain, his anxiety for Nulani, the girl he loves, his confusion, his thoughts about the justification of all that is being done to him: “He felt weak, the wounds across his face and back ached dully. And he suspected that his whole body had been repeatedly kicked and beaten. But for what reason? thought Theo, bewildered…He knew he was running a fever” (187). Besides his hands are tied behind his back and a black hood is placed over his head when he is moved to a cell deeper in the jungle. Also, Theo hears a voice mention his book Tiger Lily again in his native Singhalese. “He hears the word "traitor" being used over and over again” (192). He is considered disloyal for writing a book depicting the reality of his country. “However, with tension running high, those who advocate moderate policies are becoming increasingly vulnerable to attacks by extremists on both sides” (246, 1992). These words by Chandra Richard de Silva bring into focus the excesses committed by the army against anyone who tries to be fair to both sides. In the world of the story, this explains Theo’s capture and torture by the army, although he is Sinhalese. The attitude of ordinary civilians in Sri Lanka is also indicated when the author articulates Theo’s mindset: “He knew, in some part of his brain, that capture such as this seldom led to release, and that his only hope was finding ways to endure the minutes and hours of what was left of his life. These were his people. And now, for the first time, he felt the shock of double betrayal” (187). Due to the unfortunate happenings in his life, Theo discerns the situation in his country of origin.
Theo has a two-way lesson to learn from these experiences in his life, one the disillusionment with homecoming which was so hopefully looked forward to, and the other is sudden and unexpected consequences of efforts to reconnect with the native land. To make it a universally felt notion of the long-left-behind mother country as the final destination dreamed by all the expatriates, the encounters faced by Theo deframe the proverbial diasporic bond with the homeland. People who move away from the homeland are in the normal pattern always longing to come back to their native place to feel the completeness of their existence. Nevertheless, it so happens sometimes that many of the expatriates feel estranged when they actually reach back in their native places only to find that they no more belong here. Such an experience creates a sequential disillusionment with their own dream of homecoming and they long for going away from home once again to find the new land that probably will offer them an improved sense of wholeness in existence. In Theo’s case, the homecoming is marred by the senseless violence in the native land and it is this as well as his experiences in the much looked forward to return that finally forces him to depart, perhaps forever.

Later he is moved to a cell where he shares space with others. In the cell “sleep was impossible in the cramped painful position he was in” (193). The cramped conditions in the cell are underlined. “For the first time he became aware of the number of people packed into the small cell” (193). Theo stays in captivity for fourteen months. The congestion is not the only problem. “Apart from the overcrowding, the complete lack of privacy and the stench of the latrine, the main peril was utter boredom” (196). There is fear and apprehension in addition: “Added to this, the tension and the inactivity caused arguments to erupt suddenly and with ferocious unpredictability, turning, occasionally, from verbal attacks to full scale fights” (196). Time and again the writer refers to the abysmal state of affairs in the small room. “The conditions in the cell were so appalling…Paralysed by his situation, terrified by what might happen next, he was unable to go beyond the one, unanswered question of why he was here” (191, 198). Theo’s state becomes even worse for he is unable to understand the reason for his suffering. He loses all hope. “He was trapped in a nightmare from which there appeared no possible escape” (198). He is beaten up so many times that he
soon loses count: “After the brutality of the first days and hours following his arrival, he had lost track of how long they had beaten him” (198). Theo, a respected figure known internationally is subjected to such inhuman persecution for refusing to live in fear and silence. He speaks out his mind in his writings and speeches without trepidation, this is found objectionable by the authorities. The army's role in the violence is drawn attention to once again when the doctor says about the chances of Theo being found: “Once they get into the hands of the army, there's not much hope, you know” (164). This implies that the army’s acts of violence are all-encompassing, they are against both communities, the Tamils and the Singhalese.

In Theo’s cell there are Burghers, Tamils and Singhalese persons who have been imprisoned likewise. Two Tamil brothers introduce themselves: “We were at the medical school in Colombo,” one of them said. “But new laws forced us to leave just as we were about to be qualified, you know” (193). Their sister leaves for London and is training to become a doctor there. V. V. Ganeshaanathan describes the actual circumstances in her country: “For a long time in Sri Lanka, earlier, in the 80s…it was very risky for young men, because either the Tigers were recruiting you and would harass you or kidnap you or whatever, so especially to be a young person there is very risky” (297, 2008). The story of the two Tamil brothers replicates this situation in Tearne’s account: “One day, someone had approached them with a view to recruit them to the Tigers, they told Theo. They had refused but after that their house had been watched. Then the Singhalese army arrived with a warrant for their arrest” (193). “They said we were Tamil spies” (194). And afterward the army takes them away while their mother watches. In captivity with Theo and the others, they are subjected to regular beatings. The story of the two Tamil brothers and their sister continues revealing the damages of psychological violence, Their sister had seen “a man soaked in kerosene and left to burn in a ditch” (197). This had changed her life irrevocably, “she wanted to save the lives that others try to destroy, she told her parents” (197). “For the sounds of a man's screams, her brothers told their cell audience, could not be erased so easily” (197). The brothers refer to events in the world outside the cell: “There is talk of peace negotiations, and there will be a general election in the
new year” (197). And finally the two are summoned. When the two Tamil doctors are taken away the author writes “there was no time for goodbyes” (202). People are killed for their membership of a particular ethnicity which they were born into. When the innocent are captured, there is no room for mercy: “Night descended and with it there arose sounds of screaming...No one spoke as it rose into a lament so pure, so full of pain...But then, there would be another cry of such agony, a cry so low and so filled with suffering they knew it was not over yet” (202). In this way, the two doctor brothers of Tamil origin are tortured all night before being killed (202). They are punished because they belong to the wrong communal group.

The events and the conditions in the cubicle of the prison constitute a form of psychological violence as well. After the disappearance of the Tamil brothers, the atmosphere in the prison cell quickly turned to one of despair. The emotional cruelty has its inevitable consequences on Theo. He is worried about Nulani, “His shock and sense of disorientation were so great he barely registered what was going on. All his anger had been wiped out-crushed by agonising anxiety for the girl's safety. The intensity and the violence of his recent experiences, had snapped him of his usual optimism. His fearlessness seemed a thing of the past” (197). Apart from all this, in the cell there is a small boy captured during the guerrilla fighting. The day after the Tamil brothers were tortured and killed, the boy was taken out to the firing squad and shot. “No one in the cell uttered a word” (205). A small boy of ten who is captured is also held and later killed. A small ten year old child has to pay with his life, this underlines the the degree of cruelty of the army in Sri Lanka which spares no one, young or old. It is not surprising then that when Theo is taken out of the cell, the others assume that he will be killed. “Maybe we'll meet in the next life” (206), they say. The delineation of both, the conditions in the prison and the everyday killings by Tearne stresses the state violence that is prevalent in her indigenous country. The futility of the violence represented thus impacts the readers’ awareness and compels them to consider and reflect on the conditions in Sri Lanka.
3.3.5 Violence of the Tamil Tigers/LTTE

The state backed violence has repercussions in Sri Lanka, the Tamils have traditionally been at the receiving end of this. The situation, in Sri Lanka cannot remain simple for long and the Tamils come together to fight for their rights, organizations like the LTTE also utilize violent means to counter the harm to their community. Mitra Phukan claims, “Once the psychological barrier has been breached it is almost inevitable that there should be a swift descent to the pits of continued violence” (233, 2010). Thus in Sri Lanka both sides, the government authorities and the insurgents answer each other with more acts of violence and Tearne portrays the actitivites of both equally. This is the cause of the unending cycles of violence. In the novel, after Vikram is recruited into the Tamil cause, he is selected for training for about two weeks. The training site is in the eastern province at a special camp (139). Earlier too this place was mentioned: “The Eastern province? Isn't that where the Tigers are trained” (67). Vikram asks Gerard. This is a reference to the actual geographical area in Sri Lanka where Tamil Tigers were trained. Mohan Ram reports: “The LTTE has also become a formidable and self-sufficient fighting force. It makes some of its arms and almost all its own ammunitions. With the exception of some of its cadres, who were trained in India, almost all its recruits are trained in secret camps located in the northern and eastern provinces” (68, 1989). So, Vikram is sent for training to Batticaloa, a city in the Eastern province of Sri Lanka. His travel papers state that he was a Singhalese man of twenty. He speaks perfect Sighalese and even looks like one. Gerard tells him about his prospects after the training “Then there'll be nothing you won't be able to do for the Tamil people. You'll get your chance to avenge your family at last, OK?” (133). The training given to Vikram and other children like him is for fighting with the other group and killing them, in short to change them into slaughterers who can be used and reused free of charge and abandoned.

At the camp, Vikram meets Siva Thruban or Gopal as everybody calls him. A boy only a little older than Vikram, Gopal is the leader of the camp. The camp is situated at a place with newly dug graves of mostly Muslim women and
children. Gopal tells Vikram that the number of the people who were dead was 270. He says: “They were people who should not have been living there. It was not their land, it was Tamil land. And their husbands and sons were all in the Sinhalese army” (139). Land is labelled and marked according to language and ethnicity in the minds of these people. A part of the land thus becomes out of bounds for people who do not belong to a certain way of life. “"First they were raped" Gopal tells Vikram "then we were brought in to shoot them." " (139). After a few weeks the place is cleaned up and turned into a camp.

This shows that those in charge of the Tamil Tigers are just as ferocious as their oppressors. Their dissatisfaction and unhappiness find an outlet in violence. They recognize that their prospects are miserable and this makes them unscrupulous. S. B. Singh states: “The frustration of an unemployed existence and the prospect of a bleak future in higher education and public employment led the Tamil youth of Jaffna to pressurise the TUF leadership to advocate secession and they themselves resorted to political violence” (156, 1988). This finds more validation in the novel through the lives of the children. Vikram joins the Leopards, “They knew the next mission would be dangerous, but that was hardly surprising. Nearly everything they did in this unit was lethal” (143). Only twelve of the original thirty recruits from Waterlily House had survived (143). The information given about Vikram and Gopal is: “As the oldest in the group, they were the leaders. The youngest were only ten” (144). They were the runners and would carry the explosives (144). Readers are also told that Gopal remembers seeing his brother at Elephant Pass before he and his mates blow up the bridge, adding extra force to the brutal conditions of the boys’ lives. Besides, it is not only boys who undergo this form of violence, there is a girls’ camp too (145). The cruelty of the activities of the Tamil Tigers extends across genders and includes girls too. No Tamil is safe or protected from enlistment.

Soon, Gopal and Vikram are handed a task. Their new assignment is near Katunayake Airport. Rai Singh in “Dimensions of Indo-Sri Lanka Relations” (1988) writes about the Tigers, “They have attacked state property, derailed a number of trains, burnt buses, looted nationalized banks, have killed policemen
and murdered those Tamils who had "collaborated" with the Sinhalese" (85). In the fictional world of the novel, the bombing of Katunayake Airport is part of this scheme of attacking state property. Mitra Phukan has said, “the fact remains that once a chain of violence is started, it is very difficult to step out of its downward spiral” (232, 2010) The truth of Phukan’s assertion that violence can beget only violence is repeatedly demonstrated by these sequences in the novel. The Chief has put Vikram in charge of this operation. They are to blow up a plane on the runway, “We shall grind this country to a halt" he said loudly. "We have to let the world see that we mean business. Only then, after we've taught them a lesson, will they listen. There will be no aircraft, no runway, no way out! what will they do then, men?" ” (148). The chief does not think about the value of human lives while inculcating these offensive actions in the followers like Vikram and creates cold-blooded killers out of the inexperienced children. “This was a war, not a game of cricket” (148). The Chief tells Vikram; adding that he is not to think of any people on the tarmac at the time of blowing-up. “Your responsibilities are to the Tamil people, not to individuals” (148). Reminding Vikram of his family, he says: “Don't forget that, Vikram not even for a single moment. It is your duty to avenge their memory” (148). Being a leader, he knows very well the policies of placing issues in the mental focus of his followers and he uses the family-reference to get the desired actions performed by Vikram.

For Vikram the course of action is clear and firm, “He would wait exactly eight minutes...Anything or anyone still on the tarmac after that had only their karma to blame” (148). He blows up the plane in a series of explosions, without even making sure of the safety of his friends. Gurr explains: “Collective political violence involves destructive attacks by groups within a political community against its regime, authorities, or policies.” (Cited in Eckstein, 1980, 137). The bombing of Katunayke International Airport falls within the ambit of Gurr’s expressions. The destruction and violence take place to teach a lesson to the authorities in power. Tearne gives more details about this operation executed by children. Yet again, this shows up the way in which young innocent children are used for hardcore terrorist activities. That the children become hardened to such acts and the danger to their own lives is evident in Vikram’s actions. The peril to
the children is also evident in Gerard’s closing words: “Did you really believe anyone would come out alive from this operation? Count yourself lucky” (152). Once the bombing is over, the operation is considered successful, the lives of the children who die do not matter, Gerard says; “it was a success in spite of the fact that only you survived” (151). Gopal who is injured cannot be saved and swallows his cyanide pill. This again is the author’s way of reinforcing the dangerous lives the they lead and the plight of the children involved in the Tamil cause. The children are used as mere pawns and discarded. Their desperation and the ruthlessness of the adult activists can be seen clearly here in the exposure of the double side of crime depicted through the leader’s training policies and the followers’ blindness in obeying.

Adding additional strength to her earlier depiction of the children working for the LTTE, the author makes known Gerard’s ruthlessness and by silent extension, that of the Tamil Tigers. S. P. Aiyar states: “A person using violence, in the act of perpetrating violence brutalizes himself to an extent” (72, 1967). Vikram has brutalized himself time and again but his brutality is no match for the cunning of Gerard. This is revealed in his thoughts about Vikram. “The boy was no longer of any use to him. After the airport bombings he had shown telltale signs of stress, wanting to save one of the team, risking his life for a lame duck. And afterwards he had been upset” (183). Gerard knows about Vikram’s state of exhaustion and apathy. “He knew that Vikram had come to the end of his usefulness and that his battle fatigue and his nervous exhaustion had made him a liability even to the Tigers” (183). Added to which it would be difficult to use Vikram in any further high profile activities. “He's finished Gerard decided” (183). And so he is literally finished by Gerard. He tricks Vikram to go on an errand to Colombo where he meets a violent death. He is killed in a bomb blast in a train compartment in which seventeen people die including him. The Tiger separatists are ostensibly responsible. This again proves the ruthlessness of the Tamil Tigers who kill their own agents once they have served their purpose. Vikram dies disillusioned, he realizes that he cannot avenge the death of his family and that Gerard had only made use of him, “Gerard couldn't give him
anything much. Avenging his parents was not possible, he saw” (185). But what

Furthermore, when Theo is captured by the Tamils on his way to an
interrogation, he sees clear signs of torture devices in the cell, “he saw four
lengths of thick rope attached to blocks of wood screwed to the ceiling, On the
opposite walls were some metal plates attached to some metal wires” (207). These
are obvious mechanisms meant for torturing captives. Before long, they are put to
use: “Then they hit him, soon he was suspended from the ceiling. His handcuffs
were taken off and he felt something cold being stuck to the palms of his hand and
to the back of his neck. He knew…that he had entered a hell like no other” (208).

Theo is stripped naked, covered with excreta, laughed at and, given electric
shocks (208). The equipment used by the Tigers is akin to that used by the army.
They too are systematic and organized in the violent activities. William H.
linguistic and religious demarcations coincide, as is the case in Sri Lanka, where
Sinhalese, Buddhists and Hindu Tamils confront one another, religious
reformation (or merest affirmation) swiftly merges into political nationalism, and,
in a crowded landscape, what begins as competition for land and for posts in
government can escalate into bitter ethnic conflict and even civil war” (27). In Sri
Lanka, as represented by Tearne, this fact is represented. McNeill continues,
“Rival religious and linguistic nationalisms, disputing the same ground, can be
locally disastrous, as the history of Northern Ireland illustrates, and as recent
events in Sri Lanka portend” (27). Both factions are competing for the limited
material supplies of their country and both use the same methods to harm those
recognized as the other. This is demonstrated by the similarity in Theo’s treatment
in both camps and the author’s description of this.

Once again Tearne depicts the damage caused to Theo meticulously:
“Afterwards Theo Samarjeeva had no idea how many days or nights he spent in
that place. Or how often they beat him…nor how many times he was burned”
(212). The trauma he faces on a regular basis makes him lose his memory, he
cannot remember all that he is put through. Tearne reports, “He did not recall
being dragged by his feet to a cell where, semi-naked and bleeding, he was left for dead” (212). Theo may have forgotten the details of the torment he undergoes in the captivity of the Tamils but the omniscient author makes sure to give readers the detailed information. Teaie writes, “His hands were almost paralysed and there were great weals across his back” (212). The pain and suffering inflicted is so great that Theo loses all will to live. “If he had a wish it was simply to die” (212). That he survived at all was a miracle, for in those last hours, without pity and without witness, humanity itself was violated and what was left of his spirit was broken” (212). Here, also Theo’s hands are tied behind his back and he runs a fever. The torture and its effects on the victim are similar. This shows that the methods of the LTTE are equally fierce. They consider it a war “Don’t forget…this is a war brought on by others” (213). For them it is a war that they are fighting. Thus, in this situation, their brutal actions are justified as this war is of others’ making, as for them, they are only shielding and preserving themselves.

Afterward, Theo’s good fortune holds out and he finds himself in the care of Gerard. Again the use of little children is reinforced. “Two small boys holding Kalashnikovs stood guarding the doorway. They wore camouflage and around their necks were cyanide necklaces” (214). The lethal cyanide capsules are called necklaces by the writer here, reminding the listener that in the prevailing circumstances, the fatal pill is the only ornamentation that is found suitable for little children. These harbingers of death and destruction are seen as appropriate adornment for young children, this in itself becomes a commentary on the conditions of war torn Sri Lanka, especially the Tigers whose cadres are using the means of death and destruction as normal entities. Fatality and devastation thus lose their enormity and terrible meaning for them and in fact is even to be looked forward to as a part of one’s service to one’s communal group. In Gerard’s charge, Theo is in a ‘large and shabby though not uncomfortable’ (223) house. Besides this, “and outside, discreetly out of sight, was an armed soldier, a boy of about fourteen” (223). Again an adolescent boy is a warrior carrying weapons. When Gerard is caught and beheaded, the nonchalance of the men who chop off his head is described too. Theo sees one of them smoke a cigarette calmly: “Then the man threw his half – smoked cigarette away and picked up an axe from the back of the
truck. With a swift movement…he brought the axe down sharply on Gerard’s bowed neck” (245). Killing is a way of life for them, it comes as naturally as living. All these facts add up to the truth that Roma Tearne describes the torture and conditions of prisoners on both sides, Tamil and Singhalese. This indicates her impartial stand. V. V. Ganeshananthan says about the situation in Sri Lanka:

It’s an unfortunate situation. The Tigers at their very beginnings had and still have some legitimate grievances against a government that commits human rights violations. At the same time the Tigers have done incredibly horrible things… and have been ruthless in saying: if you’re Tamil and you don’t support us, we are not going to brook any dissent. It's really sad that this political grievance has led people to do things that are morally reprehensible on both sides. If you're going to talk about it you have to acknowledge that both sides have done things that are horrifying. (298)

This is what, Roma Tearne does, in all fairness, she does depict the atrocities committed on both sides in detail. Both parties are alike in violations of matter and mentality. The author naturally by her creative impulse for justice along with truth as the highly identified universal values cannot take sides. She adopts the position of bringing out the two sides of the same coin as she understands and depicts that violence does exist everywhere and all human beings respond and react to it in a similar way. In this way, once again the universality of violence and its inherent meaninglessness is foregrounded by the author.

3.3.6 The Apathy of International Opinion

There are references to International Politics also. Sugi’s views are revealing: “Ours is a very small country...No one cares about us, why should they? only we care about the differences between the Singhalese and the Tamils. No one understands what this fight is about” (31). C. Joshua Thomas in Sri Lanka’s Turmoil and Indian Government, (1995) provides an explanation of the reason underlying the situation in Sri Lanka: “A question may be asked why the UN had not been involved at an early stage. Surely a UN peace keeping force would have been the proper multinational peace keeping force, with a mandate to
supervise a cease-fire and to ensure a transition to civil society. It should be noted that, a UN peace keeping force could function, only if the parties abided by their agreements in good faith. This was clearly lacking in the Sri Lankan context” (130). In Sri Lanka, the parties involved in the conflict had built up so much suspicion and hatred against each other that even a neutral body like the UN would perhaps be ineffective in its efforts at mediation. He goes on: “Moreover it seemed that neither the Indian nor the Sri Lankan government had seriously entertained the possibility of a UN peace keeping force. This reflected in the attempts by both governments not to internationalise the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka” (130, 1995). Apart from the apathy of international opinion, the authorities in Sri Lanka too were not interested in engaging the service of an international organisation in negotiating peace. Theo adds his opinion to this view: “why should the world care…we aren't important enough for the British anymore, And, unlike the Middle East, we have no oil. So, we can kill each other and no one will notice” (31). The omniscient author adds, “He knew from his life in England, people thought Sri Lanka was a place spiralling into madness; and yes, he thought, it was true, no one cared” (31). This supports the view that ‘no one’ is concerned about a small and poor country like Sri Lanka and the local administration can get away with their own lack of action in bringing about harmony.

The residents of the country are constantly concerned and hopeful about the outside world and their political outlook. In another reference to world politics, Sugi's mother, speaking about Theo states: “they had heard all about his books and now there was to be a film too, about the terrible troubles in this place. It was good, she told her son, the world needed to hear about their suffering” (80). Nevertheless, her optimism and hope is not necessarily validated. A diminutive country like Sri Lanka cannot sustain the attention of the opinion makers of the external globe: “this war no longer interested the foreign newspapers. Sri Lanka was no longer news these days. It was a shipwrecked land. A forgotten place” (122, 123) although an election had been announced. Theo gathers this information from his agent in London. In spite of the lack of concern, world politics continues to play an important role in the minds of the people. A conversation between Gerard and Vikram reveals Gerard’s views: “We're losing a
huge amount of international sympathy these days” (174), he tells Vikram. This is a cause for concern for him. Again: “It's diplomats who move things along, get what's wanted. Not soldiers, And at the moment, the Tamil image is being destroyed” (174, 175). The world may not be concerned about them but when they do form an opinion it matters, therefore Gerard is rethinking the policy: “ "I need to change all that"…”People abroad are getting sick of this Tiger cub business”” (175). The vicious methods employed by the constituents of the Tamil movement have an impact in shaping the attitude of the world at large. In answer to a question by Suketu Mehta, as to why none of the authorities of powerful nations of the world have stepped in and tried to bring about peace on the warring parties in Sri Lanka V. V. Ganeshananthan replies: “I really wish they would. I think it's just unfortunately not economically necessarily important enough and I think also there's obviously the very hairy question of terrorism in the post 9/11 environment” (294, 2008). The methods adopted by the Tigers become for them their own doom, they are labelled terrorists and in this situation lose the moral authority to ask for a resolution, nor are others willing to speak on behalf of a terrorist organisation. Rajmohan Gandhi asserts: “The most horrifying of all Tiger (LTTE) operations have been the suicide bombers… cadres who tie explosives to their bodies and blow themselves and their victims…Thus the Tigers have gained notoriety as a vengeful and cruel terrorist organisation” (317,318). Due to the negative reputation acquired by them, other governments find it difficult to tell the Sri Lankan government to negotiate with the LTTE. This is the reason for Gerard thinking of an alternative plan that involves making use of Theo, the writer to tell the world about the plight of the Tamils. Gerard tells Nulani’s uncle “We need Samarajeeva … He writes eloquently. Foreigners respect him, We need to speak out against the government” (183). For Gerard, Theo is a useful channel to obtain the attention of others and to mould their judgment as well. V. V. Ganeshananthan continues, “Of course they're also dramatically outnumbered…but they're a smaller force using rather extreme tactics, which then makes it hard for another government, the United States for example, which has condemned terrorism, to say to the Sri Lankan government; well, you should really be negotiating with this group to achieve this sort of peace.” (295, 2008). The extreme course employed by the Tamils in their struggle alienated the view of influential global powers
although they themselves consider their course of action logical. Rajmohan Gandhi adds his opinion: “What seemed justice to the Sinhalese—a redressal of the privileges enjoyed by the English-speakers under colonialism, came across to the Tamils as degradation to second-class status” (311, 1999). This is Gerard’s point also and he wants to make this known to the world. As Gandhi’s statements reveal the LTTE cadres have their own side of the story to tell the world. It doesn't justify their violence, but does provide appropriate context. Gerard expects to do precisely this through Theo’s writing. He wants to gain the sympathy of the world by telling them of the background of their struggle, the injustice done to the Tamils.

3.3.7 Internal Politics of the Tamil Movement

In the headquarters of the Tamil Movement, there is internal politics. Lupus sees Gerard as a threat and is skeptical of everything proposed by him because Gerard is different from the rest. “Another factor that militated against any unified approach to the problem was the deep divisions among Tamil groups” (97) proclaims Rai Singh. The author makes these differences clear: “There were terrorists and terrorists, Gerard knew” (64, 1988). He himself is bright and university-educated, has a passion for rhetoric and more importantly has a vision for himself and his ethnicity. Unlike Lupus who wants a separate Tamil state, Gerard wants the rule of the Tamils: “But the difference was that Gerard wanted the new government to be central, not separate. And he wanted the Singhalese out! He wanted a single, powerful Tamil government for the entire island. He wanted majority rule for the minority. Actually, what he really wanted was to be Prime Minister!” (64). Gerard is doing well in his business too: “owned a gem store in the high street, and although there was an intermittent war on, he did good business” (62). Gerard’s case is very different from that of Vikram and Gopal. He has not undergone any hardship or suffered any atrocities due to the war, or his ethnicity. He is simply an ambitious man, who wants to occupy the highest political office of the country, he knows this is impossible due to his minority status; but as the author tells the readers: “He was a patient man and he was prepared to wait. There was a little groundwork to be completed, a government to
be destabilized. It was work that needed a certain amount of brute force, which was where the likes of Lupus came in, Gerard believed” (64). Thus, the two unlike people-Gerard and Lupus come together, they want to adopt the same path, that of violence, destabilization and destruction, their ultimate objectives are dissimilar but their methods are not unlike.

Gerard and Lupus have collaborated in a common cause, nevertheless, both do not trust each other. As of Lupus, the narrator says: “He was sceptical of everything Gerard proposed” (64), Gerard on his part about Lupus and his guerrilla organization believes, “they have no plan...no strategy. Except to blow up as many people, and make as many enemies as possible in the international community. No diplomatic skills” (64). So, although their nature, character and motivation is different the two come together for a violent cause, to become partners in cruelty and crime. Speaking of the Tamils, Rai Singh articulates “Lot of inner splits are taking place leading to ugly shootouts and violence” (97, 1988).

In the story, the internal politics of the groups is referred to as well when Gerard is captured and killed. The boy tells Theo when he asks him who wants to take Gerard: “The chief. He wants Gerard. He told the Tigers, Gerard is traitor. He wants find him. All day they are looking for him. They kill him when they find him” (243). The boy adds “He and chief have big fight. Big fight! ... Gerard wants finish from Tigers. He tells world. Now, everyone look for him” (244). The inside affairs, the differences of the Tamil management override their commitment to the cause and their feelings of brotherhood are obscured by their personal ambitions.

3.3.8 Coming Back and Going Away: The Trope of the ‘Return Journey’

The theme of going back and going away too is present like a watermark in the background. This theme begins early in the novel. Addressing her readers Roma Tearne tells them about her central character, Mr Samarjeeva: “He had not long been back from the UK, some perversity making him give up the modest success he enjoyed there. People thought him mad” (15). This effectively tells readers about the conditions in Sri Lanka, a man wanting to go back to his native
country is considered to be insane. As if this information is not enough, the writer continues: “Why did he want to go back to that hell? they asked. Was he off his head? … What would he want with Colombo? Was it not enough writing books on the impending violence, did he want to *live* it too?” (15). In this way Roma Tearne presents information about the conditions prevailing in her country and her character's vocation, he is a writer who has written also about the violence in his native country. She continues apprising the readers about the character’s decision to return, this pull of the homeland is inexplicable and Theo himself is unable to understand it: “Theo could not explain. He himself barely understood this sudden compulsion, this urgency to go home. It was a time when everyone who could was escaping” (16). Theo who was a Buddhist earlier has given up his religion now.

Theo's feelings of belonging to Sri Lanka become evident in a conversation with Sugi, he tells Sugi about his life in England, “I never really felt I belonged there” (32). Even after all the time he has spent in England, he feels certain: “These are my people. *This* is where I belong” (32). The longing for the homeland and the hope of the return journey to the home country is evident in Theo’s state of mind at this stage.

Theo's first wife was an Italian named Anna. He lived with her in London, she too is a casualty of violence—another kind of senseless violence—mugging. “she was mugged,” he told them, speaking quietly. "It happened quickly. On an empty street in London, robbed for twenty pounds and a credit card” ” (201). His way of thinking, his notions of the right place to be in are tempered by the violence he encounters in his adopted land. He tells his servant, Sugi many times, “They are my people here, Sugi…I have nothing more in Europe” (92). Again speaking of his wife’s death, he says “I simply had to come back home, Sugi…It was the only place I could think of… In the end, I knew, if I were to survive. I would have to come back” (93). The attraction Theo feels for his homeland even after many years of living away lure him into returning. However, this results in a paradox and Theo has to leave for the same reason for which he came back: his very survival. Prabhash Singh asserts, “violence which takes place in gaining the political end is political violence and whenever social violence comes into this area it becomes political” (10, 1989). Theo’s experiences in his own country in
Tearne’s tale fall in line with this position, the politics of his nativeland take over and impact his social life. The violence that he faces in his terrain although social in origin acquires a political basis and can be termed as political violence. That which was meant to hurt the other causes damage to the same side too. As Tearne informs her audience: “He had come home to Sri Lanka, he said, because he felt it was better to put his energy into his own country than waste it on foreign soil” (201). The irony of this is attested later in the novel. Theo who has come back to his homeland to be able to do something for his soil and his countrymen faces the worst form of torture and atrocities on the landscape of his motherland than anywhere else. This serves to show up the hell that Sri Lanka has turned into because of the political happenings in the country. Theo remembers his country as a liberal place before he left, now the county has changed. Sugi feels that it is his duty to warn him “you don’t understand. There can be sudden outbreaks of trouble here. When you least expect it. You must be careful… It’s not as you remember” (29). Sugi adds for good measure that even though Theo is a Singhalese, he needs to be careful of resentful people.

Soon after his arrival in Sri Lanka Theo meets and befriends Nulani Mendis, an eighteen year old girl whose father was murdered. Nulani’s history is poignant. She stops talking because of this trauma and starts drawing. Her father is murdered in the riots in June 1997. The father's death is mentioned again and again. This serves the purpose of showing Nulani’s fixation about her father’s death as the most tragic event in her life. He was set fire to during the rioting in the seventies. “They threw a petrol bomb at him” (22) on Old Tissa Road. People watched him being burnt alive but no one came to help due to the fear. The son, Jim is spared the ghastly sight but the daughter sees it and suffers the consequences. “Always quiet, she became mute after that” (23). The psychologically scarred and wounded Nulani, a painter observes that there is an emotional scar on Theo's body too: “It is all over you, no? … It is under your skin, between the backbones” (26) and that is partly the reason for Theo's return to the country he was born in. As an artist Nulani has the inherent ability to perceive the scars of the mind on his body and does paint accordingly. The author herself a painter, knows the visual powers of an artistic mind to see abstract emotions in
visible shapes. Thus the two injured souls come together despite the age difference, Theo is 28 years older than Nulani. At one point, in a conversation between the two, the omniscient author says: “He noticed they had both slipped into their native Singhalese. Was pain easier to deal with in one's mother tongue” (26). To speak of the psycho-analytical observation, since emotions are groomed in the mother tongue, they find the easiest expression and release in the same language, thus explaining the role of language in a person’s life.

Carrying forward the motif of going away and coming back, when Nulani mentions her father's death for the first time, she also mentions her mother's fears for her son: “she hopes my brother does not leave, go to England. But she also hopes he does go because he will have a better life there. The difference between Jim Mendis, the lucky one and Vikram, who has had a bad start in life is also related to going away: "It was generally expected that Lucky Jim, in spite of having no father, would one day go to the UK because he was so clever" ” (61). It is good, even desirable to go abroad and only clever and lucky people are able to do this. It is the fortunate ones who are able to get away from their country and the violence in it. Vikram's family too has plans to send him to London to study (176). However, Vikram’s luck runs out and he is unable to escape to the sanctuary of a safe haven outside his motherland. But Nulani is also lucky that she meets and falls in love with Theo as this helps her to escape later. She has the good fortune of a successful getaway. She flies to the UK with forged documents (165). The forgery of the documents speaks about Theo's fears but more importantly about the rampant corruption of the country. Rajiva Wijesinha refers to, “the corruption that seems rife in the country and is a common topic of conversation everywhere” (102, 1986). It is due to the corruption in the country that Theo is able to have forged documents ready for Nulani to be used when necessary. Thus when Theo disappears, Nulani flies to London helped by Rohan and Giulia.

Theo Samarjeeva’s friend, Rohan too decides to return to his native country, Sri Lanka. His thoughts and sentiments after returning to his homeland are articulated in his own words “I need some spirituality to keep going in this place. For, you see, my heart is saddened by what’s happening to our beautiful
country” (104). It is for this reason that he prefers to paint in grey. And later: “"They are killing each other," he said softly. "Day after day. Over which language is more important. Can you credit these stupid bastards!" ” (104). The conditions evoking ethnic and language-bias are principally rooted not just in the historical context but also the native versus foreigner consciousness. Soon, Rohan and Guilila want to go away from Sri Lanka due to the violence they have to face (167). “ "I'll never return," Rohan said with finality. "This time I’m finished with this place for good" ” (216). A year and a half after Theo's disappearence Rohan and Guilila leave Sri Lanka for good. Their house is burned that very night. (217). At this juncture, the shift in the attitudes of the characters towards their host and home countries is in evidence. And the trope of the ‘return journey’ to the home country emerges is in the novel.

3.3.9. Mosquitoes: The Women Suicide Bombers of Sri Lanka

The title of the novel also refers to women who are trained to kill-not only others but also themselves. The female suicide bombers are placed alongside mosquitoes in the novel. The symbolism of Mosquitoes is imperative. Mosquitoes are the carriers of a disease-malaria. In the novel they become an important symbol of death and destruction although they are small and insignificant in themselves. Guy Savage in “Has there ever been a country, that once colonized, avoided civil war?” (2009) elaborates on the allegorical employment of the mosquito motif: “While the island’s beauty lulls Theo into a false sense of security, the novel builds with tension. Just as the mosquitoes spread disease and death in Sri Lanka, violence spreads to all the characters in the novel, and no one is immune”. Later in the narrative, Mosquitoes are compared to female suicide bombers in Colombo. Just as mosquitoes are diminutive insects and considered inconsequential, so also the female suicide bombers. Although their lives are insignificant and unimportant, the female suicide bombers assume a singular significance for their violent activities just like the mosquitoes they are compared to, who too become significant when they spread disease and consequent death. Tearne puts in writing:

In Colombo the mosquitoes were back…Arriving with the mosquitoes was a new breed of women from the north of the
island. Like the mosquitoes, they came with the rains. But unlike the mosquitoes, the women were full of a new kind of despair and a frightening rage. Their desire for revenge was greater than their interest in life. They had been trained; a whole army of psychologists working tirelessly on them had shaped their impressionable minds. The female mosquitoes' purpose in life was the continuation of their species, but the suicide bombers cared nothing for the future, steadily they changed the shape of the battle lines, appearing everywhere, in government buildings, at army checkpoints, beside long-abandoned sacred sites. (257)

This comparison between the women suicide bombers and the mosquitoes, the female of which spread the disease of malaria offers the basis for the title of the novel ‘Mosquito’. Jamal Nassar in Globalization and Terrorism (2005); elaborating about terrorism articulates: Whenever terrorism is justified, those who feel that it is just do not call it terrorism. Instead, a host of other concepts are used, including fight for independence liberation, struggle, jihad, or revolution (15, 16). Thus in the story bound world of the novel, the case of the female suicide bombers reflects this reality, they are produced and shaped by specialists who work on their minds inducing them to believe that they are doing everything for a just cause. Just as the disease malaria is spread by the Anopheles Mosquito, the disease in the country of Sri Lanka, the wanton killings, the violent bombings, etc are perpetrated and spread by the women. The Anopheles mosquito subsists on the blood of humans, and the suicide bombers too live off the lives of human beings, and like malaria which is an epidemic they cause the worldwide epidemic of killings and bombings.

They appeared in churches when mass was being said, at roadside shrines and during Buddhist funerals. Neither place nor time mattered much to these women. Nature had not designed their limbs to grow once broken. Killing was what interested them. For these women were the new trail blazers, the world epidemic slipping in unnoticed, just as the malaria season returned. (257)
But the suicide bombers also serve a vital purpose useful for their country, they carry out their operations without any respect for boundaries and political limits and the author tells readers: “Because of them the outside world had woken up to what was taking place and had become interested in the country at last” (259).

What Gerard and others have tried for long to achieve albeit unsuccessfully by taking the lives of others, these women are able to do by giving up their own lives along with that of others and the disease afflicting their country starts to make news in the global scenario. “The suicide bombers, it seemed, had started a cult following. Muslims in the Middle East were beginning to follow suit. At last, Sri Lanka was newsworthy” (259), the omniscient author recounts. The news worthiness and the international interest generated has encouraging consequences and there is an effort to bring about peace: “A few days earlier the ex-governor from Britain had visited briefly. After meeting the Prime Minister he travelled north to shake hands with the head of the insurgents. Peace was a long way away, but it was what he had in mind” (259). This positive development takes place due to coverage of the widespread killings taking place in the country. Also the author is careful to point out that peace is a long way away but at least it is on the mind of the international political figures, this reveals the abyss of violence into which the country has fallen and from which it has to extricate itself. Despite efforts, this is not an easy task as the author points out yet again.

In Mosquito, Roma Tearne refers to many places and events in the history of her country. These help to locate the novel in a particular time and place. However there is violence throughout the novel that is not always specific and does not relate to particular incidents. This is possibly done purposely for the point is not about a specific act of violence or merely politically motivated aggression and riots, etc but rather that there were troubles and disorders all the time, and so, maybe when and in which part of the country they took place did not even matter because violence was so ubiquitous. Suketu Mehta articulates his own thoughts as a writer thus: “Novelists voyeur into invented worlds so it should not be read as biography or memoir” (299, 2008). To avoid this, Tearne has created a fictional world patterned on the real experiences of the people of her nation.
Tearne feels a responsibility to the country where her family originally came from. Paul Simon puts her position into perspective: “Tearne is a supporter of the Sri Lankan Campaign for Peace & Justice and is clear that what is needed before any enduring peace can be established is a greater acceptance of what has already happened there. This includes a more engaged role for Sri Lankan ex-pats as well as an obligation on Western media outlets not to wilfully ignore the ongoing abuses”. This represents Tearne’s commitment to peace in the country of her origin.

In order to juxtapose the exquisite lush beauty of Sri Lanka against the senseless brutality of the opposing factions, Tearne brings her characters together in a time of turmoil in her novel. By doing this, she plays the role of a good writer; her plan probably is to create a parallel vision of nature in its beautiful reflection as a strong contrast to the human in its worst conditions. John Tulloch observes: “Mosquito plays with sensuous mixes of human bestiality and natural beauty. The reader may find some contemplation on viewing beauty alongside with the brutality in the narrative. The depiction of the incidents in the narrative bear out the fact that a lot needs to be done before a semblance of normalcy will return to the island of Tearne’s birth. Tearne says in an interview with Paul Simon “We need a truth and reconciliation process. It’s all about memory and forgetting—but a society has to remember before it can really forget. It doesn’t have to be in the same form as in South Africa or Northern Ireland but it does need a mediator, and probably one from outside the country” (2010). While admitting the need for intercession, she also does not absolve her country men of their responsibility. As Paul Simon reports, “Such mediation does not equate in Tearne’s mind to a removal of the obligations upon Sri Lankans themselves”. Thus, the author says something about her country and the ongoing war and violence not in the voice of an activist but in the voice of a reformer artist. She puts together characters that suffer and endure pain and die without redemption and salvation. Only those who leave the country are saved. But, despite the fact that Tearne depicts the trials and tribulations of her characters conscientiously and readers perceive the pitiful accounts considerately; the novel does not come across as a story of certain characters or a particular family but about a particular country. Many characters
have politics happen to them, they do not actively choose to be political, this sums up the situation in the author’s country of origin. The country seems full of death, violence and torture. Although Roma Tearne lives outside left Sri Lanka, she is deeply affected by the source and consequences of the violence in her native society that has left her country and society in complete disorder.

3.3.10 Present Status of Sri Lanka

In May 2009 the Sri Lankan government concluded a thirty-year struggle against internal terrorist insurgency which affected all communities and divided the nation. To support the drive towards national unity and reconciliation after decades of division, an independent Commission on Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation has been established. Based on international examples of best practise, key areas of interest for the commission are: finding ways to prevent a conflict such as this happening again; looking for any people, group or institution that bears any responsibilities for the conflict; and Restorative justice – the steps that need to be taken to compensate or restore losses, whatever nature or form they may take.

http://www.priu.gov.lk/news_update/LLRC%20news/llrc_home.htm. Sri Lanka has put the violence behind it and is fast on the road to development according to the official government website. The country now has an opportunity to create a multi-ethnic, democratic and peaceful future for all Sri Lankans. According to the cabinet spokesman, the government has “set an example in reconstruction, rehabilitation and reconciliation by re-settling over 10,000 IDPs or 93% of those who crossed over to the armed forces controlled side at the final stage of the humanitarian operation”. <http://www.dailymirror.lk/news/14826-sri-lanka-has-set-an-example-keheliya.html>. Also the Sri Lankan government has commenced development of ports not only in the western and southern parts of the country but in the eastern and northern provinces as well where terrorism prevailed for nearly three decades. The government’s commitment to spread development to the entire nation and bring better lives to all communities is evident through these port development projects in the north and east.

<http://www.priu.gov.lk/Developmentstories/dev200912/20091214ports_develop
Hence, Sri Lanka’s economy is expected to further improve once these ports are in operation. Such development projects have created immense employment opportunities and the entire surrounding areas are expected to develop in the future. The end to three decades of terrorism has brought new hope to Sri Lanka with development activities speedily underway. Sri Lanka is now on an ambitious path not thought possible a few years ago when terrorism was at its heights. Hopefully, all Sri Lankans will soon have equal benefit from the many development activities that the government has now committed itself to.

**Conclusion: Peace Prevails Ultimately**

*Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?* is ultimately a story about connectedness between people and their far-flung worlds. In the novel, Nimmo tries to find a permenant silence in death and hopelessness but her Hindu neighbour’s efforts to help her are heartening and leave readers with an anticipation of better things which seems to be the author’s final message too as the last scene also significantly depicts Jasbeer returning to his mother. The delineation of these two actions by Anita Rau Badami is an indication of positivity. The Hindu neighbour’s concern for the Sikh fellow citizen shows that trust and confidence is nevertheless alive. Jasbeer’s return to his mother again signals optimism in the future represented by the youth.

*Mosquito* too, finally ends on a positive note. Theo and Nulani find each other through their friends and meet in London. Rohan and Giulia find happiness once again and Theo's new book is about love rather than about the grimness and torture he has endured, a fact that he highlights himself. Besides this, Theo's writing changes “For the first time he was attempting a book that was not politically driven. He had no more to say about injustice. Having lived it, he saw the hopelessness of defining it. This book, he saw, was about loving. This book was about something he could speak of” (270). This change could also be attributable to Theo’s experiences in his homeland. Again these are a consequence of his nationality, his citizenship of Sri Lanka. Viewing critically one may ask, is
Theo escaping his responsibility of an author depicting the violence in the country? Why does he think of writing about love in place of violence? What appears to be psychologically appealing about Theo is his confessions regarding the necessity of writing about love rather than violence and is it not very clear that the author can always change his focus for a better impact on society? To answer these queries one may say that Theo is not really evading his responsibility of revealing the violence as he has done that enough, now he is only shifting his focus from violence to love as he feels the need for it. He would like to turn the psyche of the readers to the prerequisite of love as it is only love that can combat the irrational violence that has established itself everywhere. The writer must have his own outlook in deciding what actually should be the focus of his novel and by choosing to write about loving actions rather than violent activities, the fictional writer, Theo Samarjeeva becomes the spokesperson of the real writer, Roma Tearne, persuading the readers to move their focal point to thinking about peace, harmony and happiness rather than suffering, death and destruction.

Both writers write about the violent events in their respective countries and the way in which political proceedings affect the lives of ordinary citizens. Both also give out a message of hope by their depiction of positive developments in the denouement of their works. The concern of both for their motherlands is indicated in their portrayal of the actual historical events in their novels. Accompanied by the commonalities there are some areas of difference also. While Anita Rau Badami’s narrative focuses on both the home and host countries, and the way in which the events in the homeland change personal relationships and identities in the diaporic location. Roma Tearne’s central concern is mainly the home country and the sequences of violence that are unleashed. Also, in Badami’s account, religious matters cause the violence but in Tearne’s language and ethnicity emerge as the source of violent activities and distrust. However, for both, their trauma and pain at the violent happenings in the countries of origin is the motivation to write and express their thoughts and thus to cope with the distress they experience.