Like *Train to Pakistan*, Chaman Nahal’s *Azadi* also focuses mainly on Partition – the factors leading to Partition and its ghastly aftermath. *Azadi* dramatizes the dehumanization of life and the collapse of all values. The novel written on an epic scale, offers a most comprehensive account of Partition. Also, it is a Partition novel with a difference, as Nahal stresses through the protagonist Lala Kanshi Ram the necessity of human forgiveness, laying due emphasis on” the affirmation of life” to which he is “committed”¹ through his stark realism gets dissipated by a heavy dose of romantic love and sex. M.K. Naik’s observation on
Partition novels in general and *Azadi* in particular is at once momentous and interesting:

*Why must Hindu heroes of Partition novels fall, with monotonous regularity, in love with Muslim girls alone? And in describing with intimate detail the liaison between Arun and Chandani, the Charwaoman’s daughter, the author (Chaman Nahal) appears to be aiming at killing with one stone the two birds of sex-interest and social reform. Another serious flaw is the mixing up of the point of view of the protagonist, Lala Kanshi Ram and that of Arun, which destroys the unity of impression.*

In the present Chapter, an investigation is made to understand, assess and justify the contribution of especially the younger generation novelist like Chaman Nahal to Indian English fiction. M.K. Naik’s underestimation is obviously: “the achievement of the post-Independence novelist cannot, on the whole, be said to match that of Anand and his two major contemporaries” as so far as the present work modestly differs from the statement of Professor M.K. Naik. Although Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao, the trio who started their writing career in the Gandhian age and practiced and brought
the novel to maturity, yet the contribution of the younger generation novelists cannot be underestimate. Collectively, the contribution of this generation novelists perhaps even preponderates over that of older generation novelists – and this is no overstatement. The Novelists like Khushwant Singh, Manohar Malgonkar and Chaman Nahal rank for their quality, modern sensibility and technique and they would appear to have a distinct advantage and character.

The freedom struggle, no doubt, gave a fillip to the Indian English novel, and it formed the burden of numerous novels. But even after the winning of Independence, the hangover of the freedom struggle continued. The entire generation that had suffered the pangs of the struggle now viewed it differently, specially from the vantage point of freedom achieved. K.A. Abbas has tried to portray it objectively in his novels, Inquilab as journalism has obviously overpowered the novelist in him. Khushwant Singh has made good use of the theme, adroitly wielding the weapons of irony and satire.

Thus the trauma of Partition has also stirred the creative genius of some Indian English novelists such as Khushwant Singh’s Train to Pakistan, Manohar Malgonkar’s A Bend in the
Ganges and Chaman Nahal’s Azadi. Although these novelists have exploited Partition thematically in their respective works which exhibit their characteristic triumph and failure, there is no doubt that Indian English novelists have noticed the genuine potential and dramatic import of this turbulent political phenomenon rather belatedly. Khushwant Singh enjoys the distinction of being the first to capitalize on Partition as the pivotal theme in his first novel, Train to Pakistan which is by far the best known and the most powerful novel on Partition. Singularised by its symbolic technique, mordant satire, ruthless realism and verbal frugality and the novel depicts the holocaust through a simple plot building upto a spine-chilling climax. But the element of romantic love seems redundant and detrimental to the novel. Like Train to Pakistan, Chaman Nahal’s Azadi focuses also on Partition – the factors leading to Partition and its ghastly aftermath.

Azadi dramatizes the dehumanization of life and the collapse of all values. It is written on an epic scale, offers a most comprehensive account of Partition. It is a partition novel also with a difference, as Nahal stresses through the protagonist lala Kanshi Ram the necessity of human forgiveness, laying due
emphasis on “the affirmat of life” to which he is “committed”, though his stark realism gets dissipated by a heavy dose of romantic love and sex. The trend of social realism which flowered in the pre-Independence Indian English novel seems to be fading gradually in the post-Independence period.

As a writer Chaman Nahal has published some criticism of Ernest Hemingway and D.H. Lawrence, an account of his conversation with J. Krishnamurti and a collection of short stories. But his real promise in creative writing is held out by his four novels – *My True Faces* (1973), *Azadi* (1975) *Indo Another Dawn* (1977) and *The English Queens* (1979). His achievement in the realm of fiction has been recognized by the conferment of the Sahitya Akademi Award for Literature on his *Azadi*. His brief career as a man of letters, only four novels to his credit but his novels give ample evidence of variety, profundity and artistic integrity. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar wrote: “The future of Indian fiction, and of Indo-Anglian fiction, is indeed full of promise. Recent fiction has given ample evidence of vitality, variety, humanity and artistic integrity.” Their thematic content is highly significant.
My Tue Faces (1973) is a novel of philosophical density. Its title which clinches the basic theme, has been derived from a very popular religious song and embodies Vibhuti (Yogi of Divine Glories) enunciated in the tenth chapter of the Gita.

Nahal’s second novel Azadi (1975) enacts the hopeful dawn of Indian independence and the tragedy of the partition, the mass massacres and the vast influx of refugees, spanning the period from the announcement of the cabinet Mission Plan on June 3, 1947 to the ‘aftermath’, the murder of Mahatma Gandhi on January 30, 1948, the novel dramatizes the impact of the momentous events of history on a few individuals particularly on the members of the family of Lala Kanshi Ram, a tradesman of Sialkot, who are uprooted and forced to migrate to India which has neither accommodation nor work for the vast hordes pouring in everyday. It is a novel of special dimensions worthy of its theme. “Bless was it in that dawn to be alive.” But in the very temple of delight, veiled melancholy had her Sovran shrine, and the fruit was discovered to be rotten ere it could be tasted. Was this the face of freedom for which a thousand agitations had been launched? Tagore’s “heven of freedom” had imperceptibly
degenerated into “the other place”. Azadi effectively brings out this irony which is at the root of the novel:

Jinnah and Liaquat Ali Khan were coming into an estate; as Nehru, why else would they rush into azadi at this pace – an azadi which would ruin the land and destroy its unity. For the creation of Pakistan solved nothing.5

The lives and feelings of a few individuals as the framework of the novel are affected by this stupendous drama of history.

The real subject of the novel is ‘man’ – his hopes and fears, his loves and hates, the eternal pull of God and the Devil in him. The false dawn of independence is followed for Lala Kanshi Ram and his family by the black of the dance of passions and the red of bloodshed. His daughter and his son-in-law fall a prey to communal frenzy and since they are forced to flee, his son Arun has to be separated from his beloved Nur (the complementary quality of the two names is significant). The novelist enacts thus:

It was some days before Arun was able to meet Nur at the college. Their classmates had long known of their romance, but after the announcement of Pakistan they had both become suspect. He was now a ‘Hindu’ boy carrying on
with a ‘Muslim’ girl. And the Muslim boys in the college stood watching them menacingly.⁶

Lala Kanshi Ram said there was every hope Sailkot might never go to Pakistan. Arun knew how flimsy these hopes were. The entire tenor of living had changed after the Viceroy’s broadcast. There were hostilities and tensions; hardly a day passed without an untoward happening – a procession, a group quarrel, a gathering.

It was his fifty year at Murray College and second since Nurul – Nisar and he had spoken of love to each other. He loved her ordently, “Will she be able to make it – or won’t she?”⁷ The novelist describes ther beauty as –

*She was a tall girl, exquisitely formed, and there was an alluring resilience in her shoulders and her torso. As she walked, she seemed to disregard the universe completely.*⁸

Embracing Islam for the sake of Nur meant nothing to Arun, embracing death for her sake would be meant nothing, the cry of the new state, the name of Pakistan shouted repeatedly before him as insult, had split Arun a sunder. He knew the conspiracy of politicians behind the whole move.

Nur exorts Arun to become a Muslim for her love:
“Because I’m a girl and am defenceless and cannot force my will on my family and because you’re a man, more independent than me, and I expect you to defend me and make sacrifices for me, that’s why?”

Arun became cruel to her and replied that it will cease to be a question of personal love. He said that his parents would be hard hit. Nur rounded on him:

“Oh! Go and die somewhere, you’re a Hindu, after al-a Hindu, too timid!”

Nurul was Munir’s sister, two years younger than he in age. Munir and Arun had known to each from early childhood, warns Arun not to meet Nuran in the open like this on account of detectiveness that the Muslim boys will lynch if they see him with her.

The long and difficult march to India, the murders, rapes and abductions that take place on the way, are all powerfully deliucated in human terms. Azadi is also a work of deep human significance. Its predominant colours – the red and the black-and the dizzy whirr of events are but foils to the white flame of the eternal human values of love and sympathy steadily burning
through the novel and the necessity and fruitfulness of individual action with which it ends.

In spite of his traumatic experience, Lala Kanshi Ram declares, “I have ceased to hate ... I can’t hate the Muslims anymore...we are all equally guilty... We have sinned as much. We need their forgiveness.”

Lala Kanshi Ram thus takes a stance which clearly demonstrates his freedom from commitment to anything except love, compassion, tolerance and forgiveness in a word “freedom of the spirit and the mind” which alone makes political freedom meaningful.

The superficial differences of religion peel off and reveal the essential humanity of man and the idiocy of the evil that seeks to raise artificial walls of hatred between one human being and another.

Throughout the novel, man is the victim of the forces of history which he cannot control and of the passions generated by them which he cannot repress. The underlying irony of history, of ‘azadi’ resulting in partition, suffuses the author’s attituded and finds expression through numerous ironies of events and characters, of pathetic smiles which are too deep for tears. The vast surgical operation, like the one of the separation of Siamese twins, results in a huge bloodshed. But there is the ever-
rejuvenating presence of ‘life-in-death’ which provides the transfusion of moral and spiritual values so badly needed by the humanity in conflagration. The cosmic pain and bloodshed are but a prelude to the birth of a new humanity, however weak its voice at present may be. The forces of life are triumphant over those of death.

The love of Arun and Chandni arises like a phoenix from the death of Madhu and the loss of Nur. Even in the crowded train to Delhi the responsible love for his wife wells up in the heart of Lala Kanshi Ram. As if these hints are not enough, baby is born in the train – a visible symbol that crystallizes much of what this novel stands for – life, love, compassion, hope.

The train passes through Kurukshetra which subtly reminds the reader of the necessity of action preached there by a great Yogi a few thousand years ago. But to be meaningful action has got to be at the level of the individual – to each his own Kurukshetra. But by the end, the evil, the futility and the stupidity of hatred have been demonstrated and the future which they have to make with their own hands has been symbolized by the whirring of Sunanda’s machine:
The machine went whirring on, its wheel turning fast and its needle moving up and down, murmuring and sewing through the cloth. The door of both the rooms shook with its vibration.¹²

The initiative has now passed into the hands of the individual. No longer a passive victim, he is ‘stitching’ out his own destiny. Love and creative action- these are the supreme values which form this moving drama of hatred and violence. Universal love transcends all social, economic, racial or national considerations. His is a whole and not a fractured vision of life.

Azadi indeed lives at many levels – political, religious, social, cultural, historical, and certain images haunt the reader. Niranjan Singh, straight as a sword, committing self-immolation; Sunanda’s fierce gesture of defiance confronting Inayat Ullah, threatening to kill him should he touch her; Isher Kaur’s giving birth to a daughter in the refugee train just as another refugee train passes it by creeping towards Pakistan full of the dead and dying. It is hardly possible to exercise these images away. Nahal describes this night-marish Trek from Sialkot to Delhi with compelling vividness.
The partition horrors exploded by the criminally short-sighted British rulers and even by our own ‘national’ leaders afflicted with sudden blindness and loss of nerve. This horrendous catastrophe, however, was only the final act of a vaster dramatic sequence. Although the history of India’s struggle for freedom could began with the war of Indian Independence.

Chaman Nahal is more interested in presenting the partition tragedy than Gandhism per se. Thus the focus is more on the people who are otherwise peace-living and who have been ruthlessly misused by the unscrupulous politicians for their selfish ends than on the projection of Gandhian values. For example, a sober character like Abdul Ghani, who is content to live in harmony with his fellow Hindu’s starts to look askance with his Hindu brethren. He is even obsessed with the idea of forming a separate state for the Muslims. As the novelist writes:

But the Muslim League had slowly made him aware of the threat to him in free Hindu India. It was not a question of his personal views, the League of Jinna Sahib knew better; they said, view your Hindu neighbour with suspicion, and he did. They said, there should be a Pakistan, and he shouted for Pakistan.13
Arun, the central character of the novel, finds fault with both Jinnah and Nehru, besides Liaquat Ali Khan, for creating Pakistan which led to the fissiparous tendencies. Niranjan Singh, another character, is very angry with Nehru, for his part in hastening up ‘Azadi’ which would ruin and destroy its unity. Lala Kanshi Ram finds fault with the British for their assurance of Indian independence at the cost of terrible violence that holds no attraction too many right-thinking individuals. And so is Gandhi who refused to celebrate the Independence Day. The novelist holds both Hindus and Muslims responsible for the seourge and seeks to record “the violence unleashed by partition.”

It is as though the people have forgotten the Gandhian values when they indulged in all kinds of heinous and nefarious activities, thus heaping humiliations, sufferings and hardships on one another. All this is attributed to the needless suspicion of each other. As Lala Kanshi Ram says: “whatever the Muslim did to us in Pakistan, we are doing it to them here.” This is basically against the Gandhian tenet of Ahmisa which is no solution to harmony and unity. But at later stage, people seem to realize their mistakes and give vent to their magnificent ways of
forgiveness, a quality which Gandhiji held reverence, as one of the characters observes:

*We have simmed as much. We need their forgiveness.*\(^{16}\)

Also,

*This is the greatest awareness of Gandhian values, even Arun also feels that the tragedy of partition with all its holocaust will eliminate all the barriers of caste and class that alienate man from man and turn them enemies of one another. Really it is a found hope, in Gandhian terms, but the hopes are yet to be realized. In the process of such a realization, the character like Arun found a new identity for himself, an “identity which had partly been thrust on him by the surge of events, and which partly he had worked out for himself metaphysically.”*\(^{17}\)

Chaman Nahal’s Azadi is predominantly political novel. The novelist portrays Lala Kanshi Ram as not too literate but life had rolled him around, misfortunes had come and gone and this had given an edge to his intelligence.\(^{18}\)

Lala Kanshi Ram’s life is restricted to the small circle of his own business with his happy interactions with his family and neighbours. His attitude towards the British Raj is marked with
an element of ambiguity. He is on the one hand moved by the Patriotic exhortations to free the country. Yet he likes the pageants and processions and safety of the British Raj. He never foresees the horrible dimensions with Hindu-Muslim hostility are destined with in a week or so. Hence he is utterly shocked and dismayed by the events that follow and the dreadful reality of his having to leave his homeland comes to him as a most mortifying below. The exodus of the people to the refugee camp, the painful experiences in the camp, the news of his daughter Madhu Bala’s death are a series of experiences that benumb him. But instead of getting defeated he gains a heroic endurance:

Many parts of him had died, but there were others still alive, forcefully and affirmatively alive, and he knew he was not defeated.  

Lala had his fears since February, when the British set up a time limit for independence:

They had clearly committed themselves. They had said that not later than June 1948, India would have its Azadi. They also said if the Indian political parties did not agree on a solution by then, the British would hand over power to any
constituted authority or authorities of the moment; but they must quit. It was this that disturbed Lala Kanshi Ram.20

Meanwhile Gandhiji declared he would never accept that. They would not allow India to be partitioned. Lala Kanshi Ram’s last hope of peace on the sub-continent seemed to be giving in too:

Lala Kanshi Ram scanned the newspaper. Yes, they were all there, Nehru and Jinnah and Baldeo Singh, speaking one after the other, once the viceroy had finished. What accord had they reached on Pakistan, on future of Punjab and Bengal? That’s what concerned him, in the main.21

He was now-talking to Prabha Rani, his wife if Pakistan is created they would have to leave. This was only when the Muslims spared their lives. They feared much killings as there had been much killings going on for the post many months.

Prabha Rani is morecalm than her husband she told him to believe God and not to worry too much:

He was the lord and the master, but in distress it was she who took charge and steered the ship. He was too restless he demanded too quick an answer to a problem and woe himself out too fast. She was women of the soil who
belived in rhythms, in the things happening in their own ordre. She had perforce to move in and take charge each time he felt too upset in the soil. She had her now fears, though. They had just come into that maturity of age when they could sit back and relax. Madhu Bala was married; Arun was preparing for a job. They had everything, as things go. They had even bought land and were thinking of building a house. Now they fear to be pushed out of that safe little nest in the name of freedom. Prabha Rani advised him to put the newspaper away and to go to the store (business centre). Though he followed her advice but he had in his mind to listen to the broadcast that night. It was before seven in the night Lala Kanshi Ram returned home from the store. Through the day he had fortified himself with assurances and he did not look as a gloomy as in the morning. He began to think thus,

The congress had a promise to keep with the people. For the last thirty years, since that wizard Gandhi came on the scene, it had taken the stand that India was a single nation, not two, And Gandhiji was not only a politician he was a saint. He had his inner voice to satisfy, too. Would that nagging voice of his let him accept the slaughter of so many?
That’s what it would mean, if Pakistan did come into existence. And Gandhi was shrewd – surely the saw it all. He wouldn’t give into such butchery.23

Others like Lal Radhe Shyam, Lala Banarsi Das and Lala Shamseer Bahadur agreed with Lala Kanshi Ram. They all knew that Gandhiji was going to save them. They thought that the Viceroy’s broadcast would say nothing new. The British had all along spoken of a united India; they could not change now. There was nothing to despair about reality. The Muslim merchants knew that Pakistan was a certainty.

Pt. Nehru’s speech as Prime Minister of the interim government (since September 1946) had much feeling and with a sense of exhaustion rather than triumph. He sounded so tired:

*He was a brilliant Leader, a very proud leader and in leading the motley millions of his people... he had a right to be impatient with them, to be abrupt....*24

Pt. Nehru told the people several times that freedom did not mean feet-touching but dignity and that was he wanted from them, an uprightiousness the powers to face dangers. He wanted courage and no fears, no fears at all and no slogans no shouting but attention. People shocked to listen to him:
What stupid things was he talking about? Was he really Nehru? The drawal was the same the emotion in the word was the same the disjointed queen thing has happened to his akal, his mind...  

The feelings of the people exploded as soon as his broadcast was over. They were not interested in what Jinnah or Baldev Singh’s were to say. The radio was switched off. Lala Kanshi Ram was there with the people. They looked at each other and more then regret, more than fear, on the face of each one of them ws disbelieve. When the radio was on again all of them heard Jinnah finishing his speech by his last words: Pakistan Zindabad! Long Live Pakistan! Fears prevailed once again and they could not believe how congress agreed to partition.

The same night the Muslims in the city were celebrating, from all over the city huge fire-crckers shot up into the sky and exploded into billions and trillions of little lights of red and green.

Sialkot was a Muslim majority city and many Hindu mohallas had installed gates to protect themselves. Arun, Niranjan Singh and Suraj Prakash feared to visit from some pre-historic monster:
The procession came down trunk Bazar, and stopped outside the eastern entrance to the street. It was a wild sight. The mob was in a transport which exceeded panic or hysteria. As far as you could see, the Bazaar was a sea of heads. They were split into many small groups and before each group there were two or three drummers.... Many of them were deriving the Bhangra, the Punjabi dance of victory. And together they shouted, Pakistan Zindabad Live long Pakistan.26

Though, Deputy Commissioner Pran Nath Chaddha and Asghar Ahmad Siddiquei, Superintendent of police intervened. Lala Kanshi Ram was praying on the roof that no fool would throw a brick or something from the houses along the street. The very last group in the procession was the wildest of all and some of them started throwing rocks and a number of glass panes in a few houses were smashed. There was no retaliation from the Mohalla.

The Viceroy, besides announcement of freedom, also declared the appointment of a boundary commission to decide the precise boundaries of Pakistan and India. Lala Kanshi Ram
was very hopeful that Sialkot, his home town, would never go to Pakistan side.

It was because of the Sikhs who were demanding the boundary live at the Chenab basin. It meant a clean sweep for India right upto Gujarat, including important cities as Lahore and Gujranwalla. That would include Sialkot too, if the demand was accepted. Arun, his son was hopeless for this. He thought that the Sikhs were staking their claim on the ground that they had many religious temples and places of worship in this part of the Punjab. He knew the boundary was going to be at the Ravi basin and not at the Chenab:

Arun knew this, the game of which he and Nur and millions like them were only victims. But politicians gave ideas legs, even though they were the grown kind of ideas.27

While touring Punjab after the 1929 Congress session at Lahore, Gandhiji had to come to Sialkot. During the public meeting, both Choudhari Barkat Ali and Lala Kanshi Ram were sitting at the centre, while Kanshi Ram was afraid, Barquat Ali was curious:

Here was a man who in ten year’s time had revolutionized the spirit of the country. After the Champaran
agitati
o
n of 1917, there was not a city in India where Gandhi’s name was not known. And he talked to peace in place of war and he talked of non-violence in place of violence, and yet he also talked of fights with the British on his own special terms.28

The Choudhary was at heart a rebel. His ancestors had taken part in the Delhi uprising of 1857 for which he was later executed by the British. Therefore, Barquat Ali waited for Gandhi who knew a new way to Azadi. According to the British the Indians must arrive at their freedom slowly. They must get there by stages.

The citizens must first educate themselves to be free. But it was aline of reasoning which smacked of hypocrisy. The British used all these arguments only to prolong their stay here-not in the interest of India, but in their own interest.

The First Riot took place in Sialkot on the 24th of June many cities of the Punjab had been under flames for months. There were large scale killings and lootings in Lahore, Gujrat, Gujranwala, Amritsar, Ambala, Jullundher, Rawalpindi, Multan, Ludhiana and Sargodha. Sialkot remained peaceful because of the vitilant eye of the Deputy Commissioner. On the 23rd of June
the Legislative Assembly of the Punjab had decided in Lahore to opt for the partition of the province. In their excitement, the Muslims of Sialkot broke loose the fulling day and killed a number of Hindus. Then it became almost a daily ritual. There were four or five case of stabbing each day and at least four or five fires. One day the Amritsar train came in at six. The news spread like wild fire that there were Muslims arriving from the Eastern part of the Punjab – some from Amritsar, the rest from other towns. The train carried killed and wounded persons. It made the situation unmanageable.

Late in the afternoon, Lala Kanshi Ram went to his shop accompanying his son Arun. Lala returned in the night and reported that his store had been looted. In the meantime Choudhary Barquat Ali informed that his street was to be looted that night and the Deputy Commissioner was murdered last night by a Muslim bodyguard. All of Lala’s trusts had come to nothing and he began to trust: “credulous people Jiunnah and Nehru were villains enough”.29 With nobility Lala took his defeat. His wife, Prabha Rani refused to speak with anyone for days after the death of Madhu Bala.
There were many other families which had been hit in the camp and a new kind of caste system had grown up. Every one had lost property. The Sikhs were angry to lose fertile lands in the Montgomery area. As a result of partition the two governments made arrangements to transport the minorities from one side to other. People were moved by train or in convoys on foot. Prabha Rani was unwilling to go from Sialkot to Amritsar via Wazierabad because her daughter Madhu was killed. Dera Baba Nanak, the border town on the Indian side, was forty-seven miles from Sialkot. It was decided the convoy would do at least six miles a day, more if possible. There were ten units and Lala Kanshi Ram was appointed the leader of one unit. Lala’s unit was the fourth in the order of the march. The convoy started;

Soon after they had passed the Ramlila ground by the side of Murray College ... Like the nest, Lala Kanshi Ram in his mind was busy adding his losses. They were numerous... The problems that loomed in the future were a thousand fold more complex and bewildering than what he had gone through.30

Major Jang Bahadur Singh pushed them up, but they had seen with their own eyes the extent of the havoc:
In each village they passed, they found the remains of parties that had been attacked and butchered. In many cases, the dismembered human limbs and skeletons were still lying there, and the stench was intolerable. And they saw only bearded Muslim faces in these villages. The Hindu population had been completely driven out – or completely exterminated. Hindu and Sikh places of worship had obviously been defiled, because outside of them there were obscene words written in Urdu.31

The refugees in the convoy had seen all that for themselves and the officers of the Indian Army failed to cheer them up.

From Dera Baba Nanak Lala Kanshi Ram’s family moved swiftly to Amritsar and from there as swiftly to Delhi. They had a few relations at Amritsar but they did not get shelter:

But discovered they were not welcome. The relations smiled. They said they were happy they had safely got out. Some offered them tea. Some offered food. Yet none offered them shelter... Only now did Lala Kanshi Ram discover the meaning of a blood relation. If you were a blood relation, you could shout and force your way in. But, as was the case with
them, if you were distant relation, you could only whine and wait by the other door.\textsuperscript{32}

Lala Kanshi Ram had agreed to come to Delhi as it was the sear of the government. All the leaders lived here and he found the thoughts exciting. He also imagined of opportunities for business. But his welcome was bleak. Lala could not get accommodation for his family and the people with him. Seeing no settlement he decided to see Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru, the Prime Minister:

\textit{There was a huge crowd outside Nehru’s residence. The Police would allow no one in. He waited for hours…. Later, it transpired Nehru was out of Delhi that day. “Don’t you read the newspaper? Panditji has gone to Bombay on tom’, said one police official. They’re liars, said Lala Kanshi Ram to himself, for he saw cars goin in and out of the gate constantly ..... Some in the crowd bellowed, ‘Go to Rehabilitation Minister.’ Some said, ‘Find a sympathetic M.P.’ or: ‘Bribe the Rehabilitation Officer’. Or: ‘Go to the Hanuman Temple near Cannaught Circus and pray.’\textsuperscript{33}

It was in any case beyond him and he felt tired. He decided to look for a house on his own – a house he could rent. With this
idea in mind he returned to Railway Station where he along with his family and friends, was staying for the last few days. He found that Sardar Teja Singh and Isher Kaur were not there except his own family members and friends. Ardar Teja had found out a shelter, through his wife’s relation. For the next three days, Lala engaged himself to search in almost every nook and corner in old Delhi. They dared not to go to New Delhi. The family had to do at the Railway station. Lala was told:

It takes a thousand rupees to put up the Sahib in good mood. Lala Kanshi Ram recoiled at the information. That world leaves him with only a thousand. At each different office, some clerk of the government passed the same information on to him.34

Lala Kanshi Ram became pale and now it seemed there was no blood left in him. Never before in his life he felt so exposed so naked, so defenseless:

He wanted no more of that. He wanted a name for himself once again – not fame, just a name. And the wind that blew nonstop through those tents, it had driven holes through his body. He wanted walls around himself and doors
and he wanted a bed to lie on and clean sheets and he
wanted Prabha Rani to be alone with him.³⁵

Lala Kanshi Ram tried his best once again in the
custodian’s office. He watery eyes looked through space at
nothing. Arun assured him to find out a house. They moved to
Kingsway camp on Alipur Road. They are not in brick huts and
not in tents. He did not give up his attempt to find out a
permanent house allotted from the Rehabilitation office and for
this he visited ‘P’ Block several times in the Dehi secretariat.
While coming back home at Kingsway camp bus stop he sensed
much tension and finally it was reported at home that Gandhiji
was assassinated by a Hindu. He heard Pt. Nehru on air:

    It was no ordinary light, he said, it was a most
    extraordinary flame. It was not gone and India was plunged
    into darkness…³⁶

The politicians made Lal Kanshi Ram a nowhere more along
with a number of people like him as refugees. In the name of
Independence, they played different roles and made India
portioned into two nations, India and Pakistan. Azadi is not only
the story of Lala Kanshi Ram but millions of people like him.
Certainly the novel tells more of the truth about partition and is highly impressive and elegant. It is dramatically and realistically narrated piece of art, deals with a memorable journey. It is one of the rare tragic narratives in Indian Writing in English. It is a sweeping, shattering saga of the colossal tragedy and disruption that accompanied the partition and independence in the Indian subcontinent.

Chaman Nahal, an Indian writer of unusual ability, has come close to answering the question of the slaughter of the innocents in the compelling novel, Azadi, India is portrayed colourfully, penetratingly, amusingly and agonizingly. He brilliantly draws a portrait of a war-torn land and of one family trying to bring order and safety to their lives. The memorable journey has been dramatically and realistically portrayed so as to appeal more to heart than memory. There is strength and continuity in this novel. His detailed description of the daily lives of seven families ... shows how they were swept along by events. Hindus and Muslims spoke and wrote one Punjabi language, implicitly respected each other’s religion, inter-married, shared business interest, attended mixed classes in schools, joined a mixed police force and mixed armed regiments – but in 1947 it all
disappeared. The novelist succeeds in bringing out a simple and moving story.

Reference

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., p. 97


15. Ibid. p. 338.


17. Ibid., pp. 232-33


20. Ibid. p. 40.

21. Ibid. p. 41.


23. Ibid. pp. 48-49.


25. Ibid. p. 65.


28. Ibid. p. 103.


31. Ibid. p. 283.

32. Chaman Nahal, Azadi, p. 325.

33. Ibid. pp. 345-46.


35. Ibid. p. 350.