CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION
From our study of the depiction of the partition in history and fiction, we can now conclude that-

**I** History and Literature share common spaces – The Historicism of Literature and Literariness of History are closely interlinked. The study showed that History and Prose fiction are two independent systems of expression but share many commonalities. The basic parameters of history are: individual, society, place and time, these are also shared by Fiction.

History is the interpretation of facts and not mere rendering of them. The core of interpretation is surrounded by disputable facts. History of human ideas is a reenactment of the past in the mind of a historian. Hence History is not entirely objective. Objectivity is expected in research and ‘excavating’ the facts but presentation and interpretation entail subjectivity and creativity. A historian’s vision requires artistry; historian also plays the role of an artist. Thus history is often posited on the border line of Social Sciences and Arts or Humanities. The historian is concerned with the past in the context of the present. Therefore it is necessary for history to be rewritten at different temporal points.

On the other hand, literature becomes more meaningful in the context of history. The creation and reception of literature is social and political in nature. Language, the medium of literature, is itself social and communicative in nature. Writing is necessarily a social activity; the reader is aimed at, consciously or unconsciously, while writing. Reading is also a social and interactive experience. The creation and reception of literature cannot be carried out in vacuum. The very inception of writing is social in nature. The reception of experiences and the experiential world of the writer which guides her creativity is shaped by the social background and context of the writer. Hence the creative world of the writer is created from her social milieu. Literature entails a double social ethos- it charts the social course and it is also a social product. It shapes and is shaped by the social context; it is not only the effect of social causes but is also the cause of social changes and events.

The material relics of the past are scrutinized in history while the psychological relics of the past are focused in fiction. Historical Fiction is quite expansive as writers are tempted by history as raw material for their creativity. This is because-i) History is an expansive record of human ideas hence a rich source for raw material. ii) There is a
wide range of personalities, characters and settings to choose from. iii) History is a record of human values and ideals at different times in the past. iv) History is dialectical, hence enticing.

When we think historically, we inevitably have to construct the past in our minds like a novel. This points to the fact that historians and writers both are creative thinkers. History and fiction are social weapons of cultivating particular ideologies. History and fiction are dialectical in nature, and are situated in the space between the established culture and counter culture.

The fiction based on important historical events has a strong affinity with validity and factual truth; it can definitely occupy a space parallel to History texts. This is justified by novels chosen for study. History is rooted in present, is contemporary and reinvents itself. So is fiction. Autobiographical instances in fiction bring it nearer to truth and History. What remains different is the tenor or register of language.

The concepts of subjectivity and objectivity of fiction and History respectively are blurred and occupy overlapping spaces in the context of the Indian partition. The fiction reflects classical Historicism as both are more experiential and narrative in nature. The narratives are also near to speculative Historicism as both share preoccupation with grand master narratives. The novels look at the partition in a way that mirrors the humanistic view that Collingwood adopts when he propounds that the ultimate interest of a historian lies not in material factors but the human reactions to them. One also finds Supra historicism in narratives, where there are random moments of intensity which are ends in themselves. The subjectivity of historian and the author both point towards the Kierkegaardian ‘dialectic of inwardness’.

Thus in a nutshell one can perceive the narrativised manifestation of classical, speculative Historicism, a humanistic view, supra historicism and Kierkegaardian dialectic of inwardness in the fiction studied.

Both History and Literature are preoccupied with veracity, subjectivity-objectivity and temporal-spatial locations.

Thus History and fiction come near as discourses in the context of the Indian Partition. History is viewed as just another kind of literature and it is at this vantage point that the partition fiction can posit itself in juxtaposition with the history of partition.
In the context of the Indian Partition, both History and fiction texts have focused extensively on 1) violence 2) memory 3) language and silence 4) The politics of Partition 5) issues of identity and nationhood 6) The trauma of dislocation and loss at multiple levels.

1) Violence:
The display of violence in the partition narratives is due to the major presence of violence during the partition. The disjunction between cultural and territorial boundaries intensified the confusion and the ensuing violence. Gyan Pandey, in his study has observed that the violence that accompanies ‘progress’ and ‘civilization’ often finds little place in the historical narratives.’ This is because conventional histories accommodate violence only in numbers and figures. On the other hand, violence comes out more profusely in fiction. It is as if the space unavailable to violence makes it come gushing out in most of the fiction narratives. Thus violence on all levels and in many forms is a major presence in the fiction.

i) In the narratives authored by women authors that were taken for study, a different presence of violence is on display as compared to the narratives authored by male authors. As discussed earlier, it is less of the physical and more of the psychological. From the study, it can be seen that the narratives of violence, victimization and traumatic experiences are gendered narratives. The narration has a different tenor that is distinct from the narratives authored by the male authors. For instance as we have seen earlier, although the abduction, rape and recovery of Shanta (Ayah) and Hamida are important events in the narrative of *Ice Candy Man*, there is a restraint on the descriptive accounts of sexual violence.

The Partition narratives that are authored by women focus on victimization that goes beyond the partition. Similarly in *Ice Candy Man* there are minor characters in the narrative that suffer and face life as an ordeal, irrespective of the partition. The narratives imply that the ordeal faced by women was difficult and the violence during the partition intensified it. It did not victimize women as they were already victims of familial and social constraints, it just brought fresh chains and wounds on them. This is a special feature of women partition narratives.

The partition fiction exhibits a peculiar feature in connection with violence. *Azadi, Ice Candy Man*, *Train to Pakistan* and *Partitions* contain a lot of emphasis on sexuality.
In spite of being a partition novel to its core, ‘Azadi’ has deep tones of sexuality. Arun’s relations with various women, including his sister, in different phases of his life affect, and in turn are affected by his sexuality in these different phases. Ice Candy Man has overt tones of sexuality. Lenny’s character portrays the awakening and consciousness of adolescent sexuality whereas the character of ayah thrives on that of sexuality. Train to Pakistan, through its vivid and detailed descriptions of episodes between Jugga and Nooran, and Hukumchand and Chandni, permeates the narrative with quite distinct shades of sexuality. Same is the case with Partitions. The emphasis on the sexuality of the women characters in the earlier part of the narratives, where the women are willing partners, violently and brutally change to women as victims of sexual assault in the frenzied violence of partition. Thus there is deliberate use of technique of contrast. The agency and ‘subject’ position of women is changed to ‘object’ position as women were used as pawns in the power games and the violent disruptions and civil strife.

In the partition fiction taken up for study, the instigators of violence often point towards an external agency. In the case of histories, the prime instigator in the partition of India is the ‘British’ agency. The fiction perpetrates this suggestion by painting a harmonious communal picture of pre-partition era. At the same time, one should not forget that communally shared history is constantly under threat and scrutiny against the backdrop of the partition.

Violence is portrayed on various levels. One would assume that the physical violence with its gory visual details would make a deeper impact than psychological one; but the texts studied point towards a different inference. Whether it is Manto or Sahni, their works show that brutality of visible or physical violence pales in juxtaposition to the chilling realization of how common men easily transcended the border line to resort to violence. This ‘turning to violence’ which unleashed the beast within us in more chilling and unnerving and disturbing stories like “Assignment” or the episode of initiation by Devvrat is an illustration of this. In “Assignment” the betrayal of faith is more chilling that the actual act (which does not even appear in the narrative). On the other hand Tamas makes a brilliant and successful attempt at tracing the genealogy of violence.
2) Memory:

“It’s a poor sort of memory that only works backwards”, the Queen remarked.

-Lewis Carroll, 

*Through the Looking – Glass*, chapter 5.

Memory as a tool is foregrounded in the partition narratives. Memory evokes nostalgia for the pre-partition era, it accentuates the sense of loss, it contrasts past and present, it fills anxiety and apprehension in future; and it is a dangerous tool too as it re- evokes the sensitive past. As Krishna Sobti has put it aptly in the context of the partition – ‘It is difficult to forget and dangerous to remember’. Memory is a key aspect in fiction but it comes as filtered/distorted/selective, even as amnesia as one cannot afford to ‘bear pure memory’.

Memory has a far greater function here than imagined. It is a tool for looking back in time and space, with ‘subjective’ filtering. In this process the ‘filtering’ assumes greater importance. Salman Rushdie has used memory in this sense in writing *Midnight’s Children*.

“When I began the novel my purpose was somewhat Proustian. Time and migration had placed a double filter between me and my subject, and I could only imagine vividly enough it might be possible to see beyond those filters, to write as if years had not passed, as if I had never left India for the West. But as I worked I found that what interested me was the process of filtration itself. So my subject changed, was no longer a search for lost time, had become the way in which we remake the past to suit out present purposes, using memory as our tool”.  

In partition fiction and the new histories, fragmented memory is often used to ‘re-create’ the past. Partition-fragmentation of a Nation, has also worked on individual and communal psyche, fragmenting the way of looking at past. This fragmentation is not deficient in any way, in fact it is all the more meaningful and vital. Rushdie’s works, for instance, thrive on this fragmentation. He finds the partial nature of memories evocative. “The shards of memory acquired greater status, greater resonance, because they were *remains*; fragmentation made trivial things seem like symbols, and the mundane acquired numinous qualities. There is an obvious parallel here with archaeology. The broken pots of antiquity, from which the past can sometimes, but always provisionally, be reconstructed, are exciting to discover even if they are pieces of the most quotidian objects”.  

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The memory as a tool is broadly used on three levels in Partition studies: Private/Personal Memory, Public/Communal Memory and Institutionalized/State Memory. The Private/Personal memory finds its way in fiction and the narratives of subaltern histories. This memory is interspersed with gaps, fissures, pauses, fragments and even alterations. The public or communal memory comes through interviews and narratives. It has a stronger voice, but also more alterations. In Descartean terms, it comes nearer to historical fantasy building.\(^3\)

Ravinder Kaur’s study has illustrations of this: the narratives by the resettled refugees mould into the tone of heroic “Punjabi” spirit. The master narratives of the Punjabi migrants contain masculine elements of pride, hard work, bravery, honesty to create an ideal spirit of this kind. The popular story of partition migrants is built around the proud male Hindu and Sikh characters that were thrown out by treachery of greedy Muslims. These men were homeless but not helpless. Their heroic spirit was all the more fuelled in the face of adversities. They worked hard and earned their living honestly. Many of them came to Delhi and preferred starvation to beggary (the Punjabi pride). These refugees survived by working in all available occupations and in no time began giving tough competition to the local Hindu traders. Their hard work brought them good fortune and success. The different narratives may vary in details but follow this main course. The narrative progresses from chaos and adversity to order and prosperity on the basis of ‘the masculine Punjabi spirit’.\(^4\)

The institutionalized or state memory remains absent for a longer time. This has been pointed by Butalia, Pandey and Hasan. The uneasiness and guilt resulting from the state’s inefficiency to handle Partition Violence effectively leads to this amnesia on state level. So the past is selected and remembered in terms of heroic sacrifice by nationalist leaders, leading to freedom and formation of one’s own independent nation, and beginning of a ‘golden age/present’. The trauma of partition remains at the underside of institutionalized memory. As a result of different versions, a hybrid memory-history has evolved.
3) Language and Silence:

“What one cannot speak of, one should pass over in Silence”.

Ludwig Wittgenstein.

“Silence too must be understood as a function of memory”

Ranajit Guha (A Small Voice of History).

The entire ethos of silence comes out more in fiction than in the histories. It comes out only in the subaltern histories where interviews and memories use narratives as a tool of retrieving history.

It is only then that an attempt is made to retrieve the ‘Other Side of Silence’. The lapses in the narrative, the fragmentation, the hesitation, flitting back and forth is observed only then.

This space is absent altogether in the traditional Histories as they thrive more on objective, unchallenged, established facts rather than lack of them (in form of silences). Many scholars have pointed to the fact that the conventional language was incapable of containing the horrifying experience of partition. A different vocabulary, a new language is necessary to capture the effect of psychological and physical violence on such a large scale. This need is also reflected in fiction. Whether it is the long silence of Bebo or the gibberish of Toba Tek Singh or the silences and fragmentations in the other narratives- all point to the fact that conventional/ordinary language is incapable of holding extraordinary and benumbing experiences. The other dimension is that of things that cannot be translated in language. Alok Bhalla says that it sometimes leads to ‘historical corruption’; the experiential reality is distorted and corrupted. He points to the difficulty of knowing the ‘other’ in the real sense. He also feels that these “untranslated and untranslatable spaces should be acknowledged and accepted.” Only then the differences can be accepted and respected. Bhalla also shares the opinion that particular human experiences cannot be translated in any other language. Language of our own learning and finding has to be developed and retained on individual/communal/societal level. This points to the need of forming our own vocabularies.

Thus silence itself becomes a powerful language in partition narratives and subaltern histories.
4) The Politics of Partition:
Politics of Partition has acquired more space in history than in fiction. Furthermore, the dimension of politics that comes out in the history texts is quite different from that displayed in the literary works. The history texts concentrate on the politics of division. They ponder on questions like: Who was responsible for the partition? Was the Independence hurried? Was the leadership fragmented?
They also dwell at length on issues like politics of individual political parties and the power politics involving Congress leaders, League leaders and the British.
The literary works look at the politics of partition from an entirely different dimension. They look at the actual event of partition and what happened to common people during it. The politics of class, caste, gender, religion and bureaucracy is included in this focus. Tamas, Train to Pakistan, Sunlight on a Broken Column and numerous short stories taken up for study illustrate this. One aspect needs to be mentioned: in the conversations between the characters, the politics of leadership, the politics of class, gender and the corruption emerging out of weak and misguided leadership is discussed in great detail.
Fiction becomes a significant tool in revealing the power politics of state influencing individuals. It is in this sense that literature is political in nature and description is itself a political act. Salman Rushdie’s insight in this matter is valid, “……At times when the State takes reality into its own hands, and sets about distorting it, altering the past to fit its present needs, then the making of the alternative realities of art, including the novel of memory, becomes politicized. ‘The struggle of man against power,’ Milan Kundera has written, ‘is the struggle of memory against forgetting.’ Writers and politicians are natural rivals. Both groups try to make the world in their own images; they fight for the same territory. And the novel is one way of denying the official, politicians’ version of truth.”
Thus fiction becomes a tool of subversion and it is in this context that the partition literature should be studied. It becomes a highly significant way of resisting the ‘official versions’ and offering alternate realities in the form of subjective narratives.
5) **Issues of Identity and Nationhood**

The issues of Identity and Nationhood are studied both in histories and fictional works but again from different dimensions. Histories trace the official identity like passport, permit system, citizenship issues, resettlement of refugees and the journey from refugees to citizenship. They have studied the various laws, acts, committees, organizations that were formed during partition. The formation of two nations is also studied from the official perspective.

In juxtaposition, the fictional works trace the experiential aspect of Identity and Nationhood. According to Alok Bhalla, identity seeking is an intensely emotional process, punctuated by explosions of collective frenzy and collective and community identities born and survive through acts of self-assertion. The experience of being uprooted, being a refugee and the confusion of inhabiting a new found nation-all this find place in the fiction. The crisis of identity is experienced over the parameters of gender, caste, religion and migrant status on the backdrop of partition.

The problem of identity on individual, communal and national levels, coupled with dislocation (either geographical or emotional, or both) made the issue frustratingly complex for the Muslims. It was earlier felt that their cultural and historical existence was identical with the geographical space of India. The partition changed these pre-existing equations rudely, abruptly and aggressively. The notions of Muslim identities were shattered. They were suddenly, without any preparation, forced to redefine their cultural, communal and national identity and heritage. Thus they were forced to rewrite a changed, dislocated past and future pointing to a vulnerable, insecure and fractured future. This question of identity was really a complex one. They were forced to be bewildered about their past that they had left behind in India. Their legacy of generations of ‘Islamic Past’ was now a part of India. With no past to fall back upon, the definition of identity was impossible. Where and when did their history begin, it was as if the partition had snatched them of their historical legacy. These were just some of the excruciatingly painful questions they had to tackle on emotive plane, apart from the more urgent material realities of dislocation and identity. This automatically changed their relations with the Hindus. Krishna Sobti has commented upon this, ‘… Once people became conscious of their separate identities, their modes of living and expectations changed. The same thing happened to the relations between Muslims and Hindus. … Once upon a time there was an accepted and traditional way
of defining relations with each other. New political awareness brought with it new expectations- It raised new questions about our inherited assumptions.”

6) Trauma of dislocation and loss at multiple levels:
The trauma of dislocation goes unrecorded in traditional histories whereas it assumes an important place in fiction. Similarly, traditional history records only material loss, whereas psychological, emotional loss and loss of homeland, honour, identity and nationhood come out only in fiction. All the partition novels studied have the locale of a culturally embedded community. This need is created by its absence during and after dislocation. Mano Majra, Lahore, the town depicted in Tamas, Sialkot- all these locales have deep culturally embedded communities. This need is generated by its absence in traditional history which is more impassive and impersonal. The sense of loss is profoundly reflected in the partition fiction. Loss is experienced at multiple levels- identity, honour, material, religious identity, homeland, citizenship status and at various other levels. The loss of homeland is acute and irrevocable. Rushdie expresses it in a slightly different context- not as refugee but as a migrant,

“It may be that …… exiles and emigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt. But if we do look back, we must also do so in the knowledge- which gives rise to profound uncertainties- that our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind.”

This is reminiscent of Kamleshwar’s “Aur Kitne Pakistan?” where the narrator feels that the partition is not only physical but in the psyche; he carries it with in him through his continuous journeys through various cities like a dervish. This story captures the pure essence of dislocation, rootlessness and the sense of permanent loss. Although the narrative concerns itself with the unfulfilled love relationship of the narrator, it is more about the dislocation and the realization that ‘things have changed forever, nothing can be set right again.’ It is the psychic cosmic universe of the individual and the community that has altered forever. Azadi, Tamas and Sunlight on
a Broken Column too thrive on this sense of loss and displacement. As observed earlier, the subaltern historians have concerned themselves with this trauma of dislocation and loss at multiple levels.

III. With the exception of Partitions and Tamas, the other novels were written immediately after the partition. Even Tamas is not really an exception- the reason being in its genesis- the partition memories were evoked by witnessing the Bhiwandi riots. Secondly, Bhisham Sahni completed it in seventies which is nearer Partition than today on a temporal scale. Therefore Partitions is the only selected work that is far removed from the partition in the sense that it is contemporary. Significantly this is reflected in the narrative. It is strikingly different from the other narratives selected for study. Although the theme is the same, the treatment is definitely different. The setting although temporally located in the time of partition is more contemporary as compared to the other works studied. The tenor of the novel has subtle suggestions of looking back at an event far removed in time and space. The location of Amit Majmudar confirms this fact. Weaving a partition narrative in 1950s in Amritsar, Delhi or Lucknow is very different from writing it in Ohio in 2011. Thus another important central argument of this study is reaffirmed – ‘Looking back at the past especially at a historically significant point from different temporal and spatial location would yield different insights as the perspectives would differ’. The urgency would vary with time, and the changing spatial location would reinterpret the vision. In other words, looking at the past is formed by the present and also provides important markers for the future. Thus looking at past becomes a responsible activity firmly anchored in present and future. History becomes contemporary and reinvents itself in the form of temporally and spatially changing narratives like the changing patterns of a kaleidoscope.
Study of migration, dislocation and resettlement has been undertaken extensively. Vazila Fazila Yacoobali Zamindar has looked into the issues of mass migration, entry, permit system, passport system, dwellings of the migrants and the economies of displacement in her study.

Urvashi Butalia has probed into the psychological trauma of ‘up rootedness’ through the interviews and narratives emerging from them. She has also studied the State’s formation of a system during the mass exodus of the partition. Ritu Menon and Kamala Bhasin have studied the entire issue of abducted women and their recovery operation in their work. Ravinder Kaur has studied the next stage of displacement- the arrivals of refugees in Delhi and the process of their resettlement. She has traced the process from their arrival to right up to their emerging, and later, emerged status of new found citizenship becoming locals from migrants. Thus each stage and aspect of dislocation has been studied by the subaltern and feminist historians.

The concluding discussion would be incomplete without the parameter of text and context. Most of the historians and authors were extremely conscious of their location in the context of the Indian Partition. They were keenly aware of their personal engagement with the trauma and dislocation, not to forget the violence, while undertaking the project of writing. Some historians have a personal connection with the dislocation. Ravinder Kaur’s parents had migrated in 1947 from Sargodha and Lahore in Pakistan. She herself grew up in one of the neighbourhoods where Punjabi migrants had made their homes after moving from Pakistan. She declares her deep involvement by saying that, “In that sense I am technically a native writing my own history.”

Butalia’s maternal uncle and some other relatives stayed back in Pakistan while her mother came over to India. Butalia went to meet her uncle and this triggered her study on The Other Side of Silence. Vazira Fazila- Yacoobali Zamindar describes her location as hailing from an Indo-Pak divided family. Similar is the case with the other historians.

These observations lead to the conclusion that the location of the author and the historian is crucial in context of the fiction and new histories of the partition. They have a deep personal engagement in writing about the partition which makes it easier for them to be subjective. At the same time their discipline of writing also gives them objectivity. Thus the location of the authors and historians, along with their respective
disciplines, and the knowledge bodies contained within them, becomes an important means of blending subjectivity and objectivity in writing on the partition.

V. While studying the literary and historical perspectives one of the important parameters that emerged was the Text and the Context of the writer with reference to the Partition.

The study of Manto is a study of the absurdity, irony and trauma of the partition. The trauma of partition and departure to Pakistan left Manto a broken soul and this is reflected in his works. The writing period of Manto spans over two decades. The Indian Partition and its repercussions on the fringes of the society is the key aspect of the majority of his work. His work has an intense commitment to the Indian Partition. One can never take Manto out of Partition, nor Partition out of Manto. Both are incomplete without each other. The ‘angst’, the shock and despair of the black post partition universe pervade his work.

Manto’s keen perceptive sensitivity was captured by ‘unattended moments of truth’ and wronged times. He was strongly drawn into the turmoil of the partition. He was affected by the troubled time when he was growing up. Manto’s sensitive self-took a long time to come to grips with the grim consequences of the partition. While it sunk in, along with it came the bewilderment, the incomprehension of the swift turn of events, the rapid, bewildering change in all spheres of life- and all this seeped into his works. Manto acknowledges the deep impact of partition on his writing:

“For a long time I refused to accept the consequences of the revolution, which was set off by the partition of the country. I still feel the same way; but I suppose in the end, I came to accept this nightmarish reality without self-pity or despair. In the process I tried to retrieve from this man-made sea of blood, pearls of a rare hue, by writing about the single minded dedication with which men had killed men, about the remorse felt by some of them, about the tears shed by murderers who could not understand why they still had some human feelings left.”

Manto’s works are on human life on the backdrop of the turbulent changes during the partition. This enables him to look at the partition objectively and obliquely with a detached sense. At the same time the concern with the changed, unpredictable behavior of men and women maintains his engagement with the partition. Thus Manto’s detached objectivity is steeped in concern and subjectivity.
Manto’s last years were spent in Lahore. It was a period of creativity- his greatest literary output was achieved during the last seven years of his life when he was facing financial and emotional hardship- ill health, excessive drinking, poverty and a deep nostalgia for Bombay. Manto regretted leaving Bombay and migrating to Pakistan. The despair of Partition comes out brilliantly in the final output of these seven years. Thus, the partition, Manto’s life and his literary output is one organic whole that cannot be broken apart. Manto’s example finely illustrates the text and context of writing with reference to the Indian Partition.

Bhisham Sahni’s *Tamas* is also an outcome of the direct, ‘lived’ experiences of Partition. Sahni had witnessed the worst of Partition. He was actively involved in freedom struggle, was jailed and was also an office bearer of Congress. He was in Lahore and later on, in Amritsar. Then he moved on to Delhi. Sahni witnessed the Bhiwandi riots of the 70s and was struck by their similarity to the 1926 riots of Rawalpindi that he had witnessed as a 10-11 year old boy. He visited Bhiwandi during the riots and this visit had a deep impact on him. This impact generated *Tamas*. The recollection of memories of Rawalpindi haunted Sahni and the setting of the work evolved. As Sahni put it, the novel started ‘writing itself’. Considering the genesis, *Tamas* is bound to be autobiographical. The past experiences of participation in *Prabhat pheris*, the tension in the city, the stone-throwing incidence, the fire set to the grain market, Sikh women jumping in the well to save their honour – all these find a place in the narrative. Inspite of this, the novel does not become personal at any point. This is a deliberate attempt on part of Sahni.

“Part of the novel is autobiographical. But the centre of it is not about my own experiences. It is concerned with more general experiences.”

The novel was written in an emotional fervour. Sahni could feel himself “continuously deluged with emotion.” He wrote as one scene after another poured forth, rushed from his memories, he was barely aware of the objective process of structuring his work.

Bapsi Sidhwa’s *Ice-Candy Man* is also contextually placed in time and location. One prominent feature of the novel remains the autobiographical overtones in the narrative. The novel is full of events and characters which have direct-indirect references to Sidhwa’s life during partition.

Attia Hosain’s life and times have shaped *Sunlight on a Broken Column* to a large extent. So much so, that Laila becomes a persona of Hosain. Hosain has a definite
political agenda in choosing the backdrop of this novel. Hosain exhibits a strong consciousness of her privileged, ‘elitist’ location but she is aware of it in an objective manner and so is not conscious of owning up to it. It is quite evident that the novel has autobiographical shades. But the point is this parallelism is not so important in facts or characters as it is important in opinions, views and reactions on Partition and independence struggle. This gives a discursive edge to the novel. At the end, one is left with a feeling that the narrative is not so much of events as those of ideologies. The context of Partition and Hosain’s own location has shaped the novel.

The same is the case with Khushwant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan*. The location of Khushwant Singh, his involvement in Indian Politics and deep understanding of the events taking place, his stay at Lahore followed by migration to Delhi, his later involvement in Indian nation State at national and international level through his position as a Diplomat in the High Commission, his in depth knowledge of religion and history, and above all, his robust fearlessness and brutal frankness, all went into making *Train to Pakistan*.

A distinguishing feature of women partition narratives is that they have more autobiographical overtones as compared to other novels. The other novels thrive on the experiences of respective authors during and around partition but *Ice Candy Man* and *Sunlight on a Broken Column* are more autobiographical. Laila and Lenny become the persona of Attia Hosain and Bapsi Sidhwa respectively. Such is not the case with Sahni, Nahal, Majmudar or Khushwant Singh. Hosain and Sidhwa have made the narrator their own selves and have seen and experienced partition through them.

Thus the women writers are distinctly different in their narratives. It can be confirmed and stated that the narratives of violence, victimization and traumatic experiences are gendered narratives. The narration has a different tenor that is distinct from the narratives authored by male authors. The study of all these authors point to the significance of the location of the author and the context in which the novel was written. Thus text and context remains a very crucial parameter in the genesis of the partition literature.

**VI** The historical perspective on Partition Studies points broadly to two trends: one is the emphasis on the ‘event’ through the perspective of the State- pacts, policies, negotiations, committees etc. The second trend, which emerged as a reaction to this, was from a more humane perspective looking at the entire experience and
repercussions of the partition. They thrive more on narratives, interviews, dialogues, letters, diary entries and memoirs.

In both these trends the cross lines of religion, gender, caste and class in intersecting spaces of the structural differences which instigated violence are not exhaustively identified, analysed and resolved. The first trend focused exclusively on the event. The second trend which looks at the experience of the partition also falls short of interrogating the categories that instigated violence to such a large extent that an attempt at mass exodus went done as one of the worst massacres in the history. The arguments that could serve as a theoretical base for a new trend of this analytical study have emerged through S.L. Bhairappa and Khushwant Singh; and to some extent Mushirul Hasan and Gyanendra Pandey.

S.L.Bhairappa argues that it is true that today’s generations are not responsible for the mistakes of the past but on the other hand if we keep on reinforcing the feeling of “we are their inheritors” and continue the psychological bonding of relation of belonging, then we will also have to take the responsibility of the actions of the ancestors in the past. If this is not done then the historian’s vision is eclipsed and history then becomes a futile exercise. The historian has to be judiciously cautious on selection and presentation of facts. In the present scenario, the history of colonial and pre-colonial era is posited in binaries- only two positions are available, one is always identified with its reference to the other, and no other objective frame of reference is available readily. Unless this deadlock is broken, one cannot proceed in the real sense. S.L. Bhairappa argues that one has to approach the past without the binaries of guilt-blame, sympathy-anger or defense- antagonism. While dealing with the past, one has to choose the subjectivity and objectivity respectively at appropriate spaces carefully and with great responsibility. Alok Bhalla also adopts the same stance. He says, “Historical writing in India must become free from the fears of sparking off religious hatred. It must be able to point to idiots and murderers on both sides, even as it must insists on the fact that at the daily level in India there were strong civilizational bonds between the different communities, that we did live in agnostic spaces and that these spaces, unmarked by religion, were available almost all across the land and in nearly every generation. Without such a complex interweave, history in India will continue to be used for pernicious political purposes by the Left and the more fanatical Right.” 13
As this is a dangerous location, loaded with a lot of unease and incomprehension – a lack of ability in the existing vocabulary to deal with this perspective, most mainstream partition histories choose to remain silent on this. Thus the preoccupation of mainstream partition histories with the political discourse can be understood as a safe haven to escape this unease and vulnerable position as far as contestation is concerned.

Khushwant Singh has explored the genealogy of the binary of ‘us’ and ‘them’ – the ‘self’ and the ‘other’. He traces the growth of Hinduism from a folk and bhakti religion with a resilient identity to the present day image. During the Moghul and British periods, it was confronted and to a great extent, contested with Islam and Christianity. This confrontation triggered off two attitudes in Hinduism: i) The liberal, which emphasized the essential tolerance of Hinduism towards other religions. ii) an isolationist, chauvinistic aggressive attitude which equated India with Hindus and rejected other religions not of Indian origin as foreign abominations. These two attitudes give rise to two positions. At this juncture Bhairappa’s work points brilliantly to a new course. He wants us to be brutally (and even apolitically) objective while examining the pre-colonial and colonial time period of India. The balancing act between subjectivity and objectivity becomes very crucial. One should not confuse the ‘secular’ approach with the ‘subjective-objective’ approach. The selection and representation of past has to be done with utmost care and responsibility. These concerns are urgent in the context of the present research as in the context of Indian Independence and Partition, religious identity was continually contested with national identity and vice versa. The concerns and anxieties reflected in the works of Mushirul Hasan and Gyanendra Pandey are precisely located here.

The strength of subaltern histories lies in their interrogative stance. In spite of this, the narrative mode and relating of events blunts the analytic and interrogative edge. Although different positions of writing are at one’s disposal, one valid, legitimate and empowering position of new histories could be to locate themselves exclusively in the interrogative and contested spaces in the context of the Indian Independence and partition. When the questions raised and teased out come out of our contemporary emerging socio-political realities, then it would provide important markers for the future of nation State – the politics of difference and exclusion.
The communal dialectics ought to be wedged against the realities of partition. The emerging politics of identity on the levels of community, state and nation, and that of religion, can inform and in turn, can be informed through this study.

Annetta Beavouris, a British Officer’s wife has revealed the marginalization of women in history by commenting, “British men were building empires in some parts of the world and we women were making and building their homes. We were creating rulers in the form of children. History needs inheritors, we provided them. But will this be at least acknowledged in History?” The feminist narratives emerging through studies done by Butalia, Bhasin and Menon, Kaur, Zamindar, as mentioned earlier, have focused on the gender, caste and class politics of partition. Women and Partition is the core issues in the studies of Butalia and Menon and Bhasin. These studies show how the partition provided the rationale for making women into symbols of nation’s honour. There were instances of patriarchal consensus, resulting into honour killings. Women were not only victims, but also perpetrators or agents, especially in cases of mass suicides. There were polarities of hierarchies, class and status between the victims. The entire issue of the recovery of the abducted persons and restoration act also throws light upon the plight of women. The kidnappings, rapes, forcible conversions, questions of national, religious identity of children born to women post abduction, the recovery of such women, their rehabilitation turning into forced dislocation- all these crucial issues have been dealt in detail in these works. The changing identities have also been studied.

Bhasin and Menon have grouped the study of gender and partition into six thematic clusters: i) Violence ii) Abduction and Recovery iii) Widowhood iv) Women’s Rehabilitation v) Rebuilding vi) Belonging.

The location of women is examined and it is found that, rather than at the periphery, women are located at the intersection of community, class, caste with wider political, economic and social forces. But again this location is contested, mobile, present and absent, and thus not precise.

In summing up the study the following significant conclusions have emerged:

• The histories and fiction both have focused extensively on violence and displacement.

• Fiction provides more space for the lived experiences and the trauma of partition.
• Traditional main stream histories are more on the politics and the ‘event’ of partition while the subaltern histories are on the experiences and effect of partition on the common man.
• New histories have assumed the form of narratives to bring out the authenticity of the experiences, blending them into subjective and objective positions.
• Feminist narratives have been crucial in uncovering facts that were hidden from main stream histories.
• Temporal location along with the location of the author provides important keys for text and the context of the partition.
• The responsibility of a historian and an author in being discreet in using the positions of subjectivity and objectivity while looking at the past is crucial.
• The new histories to be written could be posited exclusively in the interrogative and contested spaces in context of Indian Independence and partition. This could make for more contemplative studies and these could be relevantly used for connecting the past and present to solve the emerging problematic issues of the future.

Future possibilities of research in this area would be to study:
• The newly emerging body of literature on communal riots and violence. It can try to find linkages in partition literature and this body of literature on communal riots and violence.
• The partition in the present context of large scale migration in and out of India, and the body of such immigrant literature.
• The Indian Partition in juxtaposition with the Partition of Bengal based on the respective bodies of literature.

Finally there is another related key area which I intend to attempt in future- to examine how the cultural beliefs and the ‘community psyche’ of a community are shaped by its communal history, and to use the literature of that community as a valid tool of enquiry for this research.

This research has pointed to an inference – there is a shift, a drifting of literature and history to culture studies. Further debates would definitely be more situated in the space of culture studies, fusing literature, history, sociology, feminist studies and social anthropology.
NOTES


2 Ibid. 12.

3 Distortion of history is done by the historians by making it appear more splendid than it really was.


5 Alok Bhalla’s plenary address – *International Seminar on Theory at Work: Text, History and Culture* at Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi on the 10th Nov. 2010.


12 Ibid.