CHAPTER TWO

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE INDIAN PARTITION
‘History is messy for the people who must live it.’

Michel-Rolph Trouillot

*Silencing the Past: Power and Production of History*

**Introduction:**

The Indian Independence Movement culminated into two events placed on extreme polarities. One, the freedom, was a much awaited event. The other, the partition of the Indian subcontinent into Pakistan and India, was one of the most tragic events of not only Indian but World History. The irony was both these events were coupled together like Siamese twins joined at birth. The only difference was here it was separation instead of coupling. Thus the History of independent India begins with Partition. Logically, then this topic should have been dealt with in great detail by historians.

This chapter first attempts gaining an insight into the epistemological study of History. It contains various approaches to history, which is followed by a brief review of the purpose of history and the historian. It was also considered necessary to view the discipline of history vis-à-vis the Art and Philosophy of History. This forms the third part of the epistemological study. The fourth part deals with the concepts of Truth, Validity and Accuracy within the framework of historical discipline. This became all the more relevant as the chapter is followed by the literary perspectives and literature as fiction posits itself on the intersecting space between truth and imagination. Finally this subsection deals with some key concepts that are useful in the present topic of research.

The next subsection deals with a study of selected History texts on the partition, which are grouped under two heads: The first group is that of Conventional or mainstream history texts. These texts have dealt with the Indian Independence and Partition with the eyes of a historian. They have largely focused on the happenings and the material realities. They cover the entire body of happenings – the alliances, the meetings, the announcements, the officers involved, the statistics of the entire operation of Partition and also the violence of partition. The second group is of the scholars striving to uncover the ‘underside’ of history. Their parameters of understanding the event of partition are different from that of the scholars of the first
group. Their parameters, aims, focus of study, sources used and conclusions drawn put them in a different group as compared to that of the earlier group.

This study of selected history texts is followed by an examination of issues emerging out of the study of historical texts, which are the various aspects of the partition on which this study of partition is pitched. The issues are grouped and studied in the following manner:

1. Pre-Partition: The Making of the Breaking

2. Partition:
   i) The migration and the journey
   ii) The arrival and settlement of refugees
   iii) The recovery of abducted people
   iv) Migration and counter migration

3. Aftermath and Continuum

These issues include the official announcements, plans, missions, and committees set up etc. It also comprises a study of the exchange of immovable property, the division of movable property, geography, military forces, prisoners, lunatics, ‘citizens’- the material possessions and human beings. The study also looks at the initial stages of exodus and then the later stage, that is, the journeys carried out by migrants by train, bus, other vehicles, through air and sea, and in the foot convoys. The next important factor is the process of dislocation and relocation, and the physical, emotional, mental and social trauma on the level of the individual, community and nation. Trauma also includes the phenomena of memory and erasure. The materiality of the partition has entailed a study of the resettlement process, the refugee camps, the inhabitants of these camps, and the possession and dispossession of home and land property. Finally, a synthesis is attempted by looking at the partition through locations and hierarchies of religion, gender, caste and class.

The analysis is followed by concluding arguments. The emerging arguments and findings are consolidated. A critique of the histories along with the politics of narratives and the subjectivity and objectivity rendered in recounting histories is
attempted, with specific reference to the religious, communal and national upheaval during the Indian partition.

Epistemological Study of History:

‘All history is the history of thought.’

– Hegel.

History, as a discipline, has had a close relationship with philosophy. The historians have laid down theories on the nature, functions and important parameters of history. It is useful to look into some of these theories to understand the epistemological structure of history.

Collingwood has laid down the four facets of the nature of history: ¹ It is scientific; it begins by asking questions. It is humanistic; it asks questions about things done in the past. It is rational, that is, the answers are based on an appeal to the evidence. It is self-revelatory: it lays bare open the nature of man by looking critically at his past.

The features of the Philosophy of History of certain important thinkers are as follows:²

Descartes notes four characteristics of History and Historians. ³ The first is Historical Escapism. This means the historian lives away from the present and thus becomes a stranger to his own age. Historical Pyrrhonism states that historical narratives are not necessarily trustworthy accounts of the past. The third characteristic, Historical Anti-Utilitarianism follows from the second idea that untrustworthy narratives cannot really assist us to become effective in the present. Finally Historical Fantasy Building is the distortion of history done by historians by making it appear more splendid than it really was.

The Hegelian notion refuses to approach History by way of nature, it separates nature and History. Hegel sees nature as meaningless in the sense of being non-progressive due to its repetitiveness (Hegel disregarded the evolutionary theory). On the other hand he saw the movements of history not as circular but as spiral. Hegelian History is the history of thought, with reason as the mainspring force. Since his notion of History was based on reason, he considered it as a logical process. Finally, Hegelian History ends not in the future but in the present.
Approaches to History:
Classical Historicism gives importance to idea, spirit, essence, relations and experience. In this approach, there is a shift from the materiality of things, events and nations to human relations, emotions and experiences. Thus experiential level gains more importance as compared to the material plane. Speculative Historicism is preoccupied with grand master narratives. The empirical approach is more concerned with facts. The genealogical approach traces production and values within culture and history. The secular approach maintains that the historian is a theoretical scientist, not a practical one and his mode of activity is always representational and not judgmental. This approach looks at History not as a valuing science but as a value relevant science.
Collingwood has upheld the humanistic view of History. He says that the ultimate interest of a historian lies not in the material factors but the human reactions to them. Thinkers like Nietzsche, Schopenhauer and Kierkegaard take a sublime view of history in Supra historicism, as random moments of intensity which are ends in themselves. For Nietzsche this ‘random moment’ is essentially a phenomenon of change rather than time; his world is made up not of units of time but of ‘pathos’ (not pity but the original Greek meaning of incident or event).
Kierkegaard calls for ‘dialectic of inwardness’. He propagates a personal effort to become subjective for proper historical perspective. Structuralist Systemic history views history as a system of signs rather than a system of events. It prioritizes the deciphering of the ‘codes’ of history rather than uncovering the logical structure of historical happening.

History, Language and Literature:
‘History is a cultural subject that cannot be dissociated from literature and language.’

-Richard Cobb

_Experience of an Anglo-French Historian._

Althusser’s postulation in _Narrative Form_ that History can never be known prior to its textual representation emphasizes the relation between history and language. The
relation between history and language was redefined by the structuralist view; it emphasized system rather than happening as the essence of history. It saw Langue-mythic structure of history as the main and true object of history, the parole-events were seen to be meaningful only as their position as the particulars of general systems of history. System became the essence of history and not the happening.

This reduction of history to its discourses had the effect of leveling the distinction between history and literature: for instance, Barthes views history as just another kind of literature and it is at this location that the partition literature can posit itself in juxtaposition with the history of the partition. On the other side, it suffers the disadvantage of not having the temporal perspective. This is due to the fact that in narrativist structure, history is viewed as a fixed set of relations which are static and timeless, dynamic or a-temporal. Thus we have Levi-Strauss defining narrative of history as ‘a-temporal matrix’ detached from historicity. Even Roland Barthes argues that in narrative, temporality only exists in the form of a system, ‘true’ time merely being a reality effect of language. As mentioned earlier, Nietzsche evades this problem of time as a phenomenon of change rather than units of time. He along with other Supra historians – Kierkegaard and Schopenhauer views the horizon of the moment as unhistorical. Supra historians view the horizon of the eternal repetition of the moment through history. The supra historians (Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard) take a sublime view of history as random moments of intensity which are ends in themselves. An attempt to integrate everything in History is resisted. These ‘momentary presents’ can be accessed only from within the living experience (of individual subject), and any attempt to situate the meaning ‘out there’ objectively is an error. Paul Ricoeur encloses the ‘objectivity of history’ as conditioned by four subjective contingencies: choice in choosing data, theories of explanation used, imagination used to bridge the historical distance between now and then and the subjective experience of the historian.

There are two ends of History: the World-historical view sees the Generality of the System and the Supra historical view sees the singularity of the event. An historian attempts to interpret history between these poles.

Some thinkers view the present as the extension of the past in the historical discourse. Thus time has been juxtaposed with history and the temporality of the history has been examined from various perspectives. Deluzes, in “Memory as virtual coexistence”, states that the present distinctly contains the ever growing image of the
past. Thus the temporal aspect has always been an uneasy one in History. On the other hand in the case of literature, the uneasiness is not experienced as a-temporal becomes timeless, forever, from ever to ever.

**Concepts of Truth, Accuracy and Validity within the Historical Framework:**

Giambattista Vico (1668-1744), was the first advocate of Historicism. He said that the true (verum) and the made (factum) are convertible. Vico, thus, accepts the fact that True can be construed. The etymology of ‘made’ –factum, reveals that fact is made, construed. Then the interchangeability of the word ‘fact’ in modern English with ‘true’ comes under scrutiny.

Nietzsche looks at truth as a movable host and a sum of human relations which have poetically and rhetorically intensified, transferred and embellished; and which after a long usage, seem to be fixed, canonical and binding. Nietzsche sees truth as illusions which we have forgotten are illusions. This can be a parallel to Plato’s analogy of cave in relation to reality.

Foucault is not concerned with the absolute truth of history but with forms of historical knowledge which are provisional, fragmentary and plural. The Historical Truth which can be produced is not a mere reproduction, but is an intellectual activity, according to George Simmel. This can be paralleled with the Aristotelian notion of Mimesis where art is not a mere imitation, but a refined, modified imitation of the physical world, with the advantage of the location of an artist. An artist uses imagination and so is imagination used by a historian. Thus a poet and a historian both use imagination. A historian uses his imagination by filling in and connecting disjointed fragments of observation. But a crucial difference between the historian’s and the poet’s use of imagination is pointed out by Wilhem von Humboldt. A historian subordinates his imagination to experiencing and investigating reality; imagination here is not pure fantasy. Collingwood and Gadamer have also emphasized the role of presuppositions in philosophy and history.

That total accuracy in history could be a hypothetical possibility, is a fact acknowledged by many thinkers. Kierkegaard holds the view that all historical knowledge is only an approximation. Kierkegaard says that definitive history is impossible, and that all historical knowledge is only an approximation. Objectivity is not final because absolute can only be accessed introspectively. And for this very
reason Kierkegaard calls for ‘dialectic of inwardness,’ he propagates a personal effort to become subjective for proper historical perspective. History does not insist dogmatically on accuracy. Some historians, even if technically painstakingly accurate, might fail to produce the enhanced insights which should be their ultimate end. Three levels of historical discourse can be construed. The ‘primary’ level is reporting from the front. A ‘secondary’ level refers to commentaries and memoirs that aspire to the status of history. Lastly, a ‘Tertiary’ level- this might be described as history proper, with the full “paraphernalia of referencing and footnotes, objective attitude and ‘scientific language’.”

II. iii. Traditional Histories of Independence:
The gaining of independence, the partition and the formation of two nations was a rich ground for history writing. The formation of two nation states and the end of the colonial rule gave rise to a whole discourse of events, speculations, theories, arguments and other issues to be contained in these history books. The first wave of books, falling in line with the traditional histories, were more focused on the various issues leading to independence and the partition namely the treaties, agreements, contracts, events and the leaders.

Ian Talbot’s Pakistan: A Modern History brings out a picture of Pakistan as a nation searching for its national identity. It charts out a clashing of regional, religious, cultural, ethnic and Pakistani identities on individual, social and national level. This clash of various conflicting identities comes out very clearly in the declaration of the Pushtun nationalist Wali Khan- he had been a Pushtun for four thousand years, a Muslim for fourteen hundred years and a Pakistani for forty years.

Talbot has identified five important influences on Pakistan’s emergence of a new identity: 6 The clash between regional identity and Muslim nationalism, the problematic relationship between Islam and Muslim nationalism, the culture of political intolerance forged in the Muslim League’s desperate struggle against
Congress and powerful regional opponents, the Colonial state’s practice of ruling indirectly through intermediaries such as landlords, tribal chiefs and princes and the historical traditions unique to each of the regions which were to comprise it.

Rafiq Zakaria’s *The Man who Divided India* is a study of the making of Jinnah – from the individual to the ‘creator of a separate nation state’. This study begins with his biographical details, shifting into a psychological insight into the nature of Jinnah. “Jinnah’s tragedy was that he was so full of himself that nothing else mattered to him; what he thought had to be right. He has never belonged to a party unless he himself was the party. Jinnah was self-absorbed. He regarded no one as his master. He rarely bent and never bowed. He was too strong-willed a person to be subjugated. He had his way irrespective of the price he or anyone else would have to pay for it.”

Jinnah’s weak, almost non-existent popularity with the masses has also been stressed by Wali Khan in *Facts are Facts: The Untold Story of India’s Partition*. Wali Khan maintains that Jinnah and the British perfectly complemented each other for their own selfish motives. The British saw Jinnah as a crucial pawn in their divide and rule strategy. That was the reason for the British support to Muslim League and the portrayal of Jinnah as its sole authority. They had tried their divide and rule strategy on various factions: with Sikhs, with Dalits or even with Hindu Mahasabha. Jinnah made use of his power as a breaker by bargaining for power in return. It cannot be ignored that Jinnah’s role as a leader without popularity or being rooted, owed a lot to the British clout that he enjoyed, flaunted and used to its maximum advantage. Wali Khan’s study has a very sound base of validity. He has used a rare but crucial source for his findings. When in London, Wali Khan got access to certain top secret and highly confidential documents in the India Office Library, London since the British law places every document as public property after a lapse of a thirty year period. These papers included weekly correspondence between the British Viceroy in India and the Secretary of State for India in Britain. In other words, this correspondence was a blueprint of the British policy employed during their rule over India. Rafiq Zakaria’s book traces part-by-part account of Jinnah’s political rise, his changing loyalties, and his differences with Nehru, Gandhi and diplomatic relations with the British officials.
The fourteen points of Jinnah make his intentions crystal clear. Jinnah came out with a series of proposals which were characterized by the press as the “fourteen points.” These fourteen points were:

1) The form of future constitution should be federal with residuary powers vested in the province, central government to have control only of such matters of common interest as may be guaranteed by the constitution.

2) Uniform measures of autonomy shall be granted to all provinces.

3) All legislatures in the country and other elected bodies should be reconstituted in the definite principle of adequate and effective representation of minorities in every province to a minority or even equality.

4) In the Central Legislature Muslim representation should not be less than one-third.

5) The representation of communal groups should continue to be by means of separate electorates as at present, provided that it should be open to any community at any time to abandon its separate electorate in favour of a joint electorate.

6) Any territorial redistribution that might at any time be necessary should not in any way affect the Muslim majority in the Punjab, Bengal and North West Frontier Province.

7) Full religious liberty that is, liberty of belief, worship, observances, propaganda, association and education should be guaranteed to all communities.

8) No bill or resolution, or any part thereof, should be passed in any legislature or any other elected body, if $\frac{3}{4}$th of the members of any community in that particular body opposes such a bill or resolution or part thereof, on the ground that it would be injurious to the interest of that community or, in the alternative, such other methods be devised as may be found feasible and practicable to deal with such cases.

9) Sind should be separated from the Bombay presidency.

10) Reform should be introduced in the North –West Frontier Province and Baluchistan on the same footing as in other provinces.

11) Provision should be made in the constitution giving the Muslims an adequate share along with other Indians in all the services of the State and in self-governing bodies, having due regard to the requirements of efficiency.

12) The constitution should embody adequate safeguards for the protection of Muslim religion, culture, and Personal law, and the promotion of Muslim
education, language, religion, personal laws, Muslim charitable institutions, and for their due share in grants-in-aid given by the State and by self-governing bodies.

13) No cabinet, either central or provincial, should be formed without there being a proportion of Muslim ministers of at least one-third.

14) No change to be made in the constitution by the central legislature except with the concurrence of the states constituting the Indian Federation.

Royle Trevor’s *The Last Days of the Raj* traces just that—the last days of the Raj, the shifting of power and consequences. It discusses the Quit India Movement, the Cripps Mission, Poona Pact, Gandhi- Ambedkar debate, Churchill’s policy, Wavell, Mountbatten, Attlee, the general election: in short, everything that went on to contribute to the freedom on 15th August 1947. This book tries to discover the past through some unconventional archival sources—diaries, accounts of administrative officers, defense personnel, soldiers, BBC reporters, writers and others. This book thus tries to look beyond the public happenings, events, pacts, plans, commissions and meetings. Some of the diary entries are illuminating. America’s rise as a super power post World War, Britain’s war with Germany, the Japanese War: all these changes were reflected in the pre and post partition power relations of India and Britain.

Violence during the partition is also recorded first hand in this book through the reporting of Richard Sharp of BBC. A similar account of violence is recorded through General Candeth’s account of violence on trains plying between India and Pakistan.

“…..An unending stream of people moving in both ways—trains stuffed to the brim with people riding on top and long convoys moving on roads. The Muslims were going west and the Hindus and Sikhs coming east: we had to arrange camps along the route and also to see that the two columns didn’t meet or impinge on one another in any place because if they had there would have been absolute mayhem. So, different routes had been prescribed for those coming in and those going out. Where the trouble started was when the trains from Pakistan used to come in with only dead people and bodies. This would enrage the local population and so when a train carrying Muslims going west came, this would be attacked and the passengers killed. When the same train got to the other side exactly the same thing happened, so it was a vicious circle. Our job mainly was to see that these attacks didn’t take place and, by and large, once we got sufficient troops into the Punjab we were able to control it and to some extent
we stopped or minimized the number of incidents that took place. You couldn’t stop it entirely because trains are easy targets." 8

All these accounts are humane, focusing on emotions rather than events.

Thomas Metcalf’s *The New Cambridge History of India-III.4: Ideologies of the Raj* and Percival Spear’s *A History of India (vol.2)* can be categorized as studied, thorough accounts but they reflect what one would call as the traditional historical approach. They place primacy on events happenings and are devoid of human touch. Only a couple of pages are devoted to the partition and its aftermath in an otherwise exhaustive study made by Percival Spear. He extends his study right till Nehruvian era but the Indian Partition does not figure much in the priorities of his study.

Spear’s account also reflects the attitude of the British towards the natives. He refers to Gandhi as Mahatma, adding that this is how he *must be called* now (italics mine). Percival Spear also ignores the social, political, historical happenings in India in the crucial period of the late 18th century. He states that there were only two creative achievements in India of the late 18th Century: the rise of Urdu to the status of a major language and the work of Shah Wali –Ullah and his school of theologians in Delhi, to which some trace the early seeds of the Pakistan Movement. This observation made by Spear reveals his perspective in selecting and presenting facts- his location is defined.

II. iv New Histories:

The modern histories written are definitely different than those written in the fifties and sixties. The contemporary histories have more subjective narratives and fewer determining tones. Another striking feature is now the narratives focus on women, minorities, children and the dispossessed- the margins. These histories also strive to explore alternate narratives, formed by distinctive renderings and local and marginal experiences.

The histories written in the later years attempt to look at Partition with a more humane engagement. A survey of works by Urvashi Butalia, Ritu Menon – Kamla Bhasin, Suvir Kaul, Vazira Fazila – Yacoobali Zamindar, Mushirul Hasan, Gyanendra Pandey, Alok Bhalla and others needs to be done as each of them has chosen to
explore aspects of the partition which were unexplored in the earlier works. Moreover
the approach is different; it uses different sources of historiography, cultural
materialism and new historicism.

Urvashi Butalia states her location in *The Other Side of Silence* she categorically
refuses to be a historian, and stresses her personal and political engagement with
history, contemporary communalism and a deep and abiding belief in feminism.
Butalia states that her objective in looking back is not to question the veracity of facts
but the adequacy of facts. She also refuses to foreground only the listing of broad
political negotiations while thinking about the history of the partition. The merging
and juxtaposition of personal and political enumerates her feminist stance. She
questions if the history of the partition equates only to the history of a state or if the
documentation also make up a sense of events (feelings, emotions, indefinable
things).

As an illustration of this argument she gives excerpts from a letter to AICC (All India
Congress Committee) addressed to J.B. Kriplani, which reflects the fragmented and
hurt psyche of partition victims. The letter quoted by her is reproduced here. This
important document opening up the wounds of anguish is very difficult to edit, and
the full impact emerges with the entire text.

“The Congress….. now comes with the advice of migration. Can you please let us
know what areas have been allotted to the migrants? What provisions have been made
to get them settled honorably? Where should they migrate, in what numbers and in
what manner? What they are to do with their immovable property? Will you be please
able to find jobs for everyone, or some business for all. Are they to come like beggars,
settle like beggars in your relief camps and depend and subsist upon cast away crumbs
of your people in U.P, C.P, Bihar, Bombay etc……. We cannot migrate like nomads
or gypsies. We shall fight to the last, and God willing shall succeed and survive…….
It is better – far better – far, far better to become Muslims than to remain Hindus and
be beggars to peep for alms at your doors and be scorned and laughed at by you and
your descendants.

If you can’t protect us we can’t accept your advice. We are human beings just as you
people are. Our lives are as precious and worth living as yours. We don’t want to be
‘Butchers’ for your magnanimity or elevation. We want to live and live honourably. If
the Congress is impotent to protect us then dissolve Congress organization in the
Punjab and let the Hindus have their own course. We need no messages or sermons from high pedestals or from the skies that you soar in. Cowards that you are, cowardly that your gospel, and cowardly that you have stuck to it: we bid you adieu. We may perish or survive; we may die or live as Hindus or as whatever we may like, for Heaven’s sake if you are not to render us any material help, please go off, keep off and do off.”

This letter reveals the anguish of being deserted by the state, the insecurity to life, nationhood, geographical or physical location and religious identity. Apart from this psychological insight, it also points to the inadequacy of material arrangements like the migration and relocation of the refugees, the issues of nationhood, citizenship, employment, relocation of immovable property etc. But above all the most striking impact of this letter is to show the hurt, the deep scar and the bleeding wounds. The question is – how many traditional or earlier histories of partition have acknowledged such sources as valid or have used them extensively in their chronicling of the events?

There are other important points emerging from Butalia’s study. The first is violence. Butalia traces the pre-partition violence in Rawalpindi, Bengal, Noakhali, Bihar, Garh Mukteshwar etc. She has pointed out that the idea of pre-partition harmony was mythical, there were concrete material differences. Butalia does not see the violence of partition as simplistic as outer versus inner or victims versus victimizers. She unravels a more complex nature of violence within ‘our selves’ through families and communities. Often the roles of victims and aggressors were played by the members of the same family or community. So do we sweep these complexities under the carpet by bunching it with the violence between two communities?

Violence was, in an ironic manner, a great equalizer as the dislocation was common across classes. Of course the suffering varied in intensity with class, but the fact remains that one could not escape the adverse effects of partition in spite of belonging to a favored class.

During the partition, both *dalits* and women were marginalized. But the dalits were organized, hence had a stronger voice. On the other hand, the women resisted more on individual level. There was no representation as a group, no collective mobilization. Therefore their voice was dispersed, resulting into it not being inserted into the official discourse of partition history. Their only collectivity lay in their silence, according to Urvashi Butalia.
Butalia has recorded the official attempts at structuring of the large scale migration. For instance, the fact that Ten Expert Committees were set up to deal with various aspects of partition:


The debate on who was the originator of the idea of partition is also discussed by Butalia; the names of figures like Chaudhari Rahmat Ali, Mohammad Iqbal, Lajpat Rai and of course, Jinnah are discussed.

Urvashi Butalia deals with the core issue of her book: women and partition, with dexterity. Using illustrations, narratives and arguments, she enumerates how the Partition provided the rationale for making women into symbols of the 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. In the vein of a true feminist, Butalia points out to the polarities of hierarchies, class, and status between the victims.

This work looks at the entire issue of the recovery of abducted persons; the definition, the recovery strategies of India and Pakistan; the actual implementation; the abducted person’s recovery and restoration acts and other relevant details. The question of children born to women post-abduction, their nationality, identity and location posed a major challenge to both the countries.

Butalia brings into forefront an important issue: the use of Identity in the partition. She states that it was a twilight zone, with blurred identities, with identities fluid, changing, challenged under a constant threat of violence. Often, the identity was used to one’s advantage or disadvantage, thus it became a ‘category of use’ during the partition. Cultural, linguistic, geographical, economical- all markers of identity were put aside in favour of only one marker- religion.

Butalia acknowledges that historiography attempts to dissipate amnesia and cultivate memory. The memory in rendering of the past is crucial in the sense that what we choose to focus, i.e. the selection of events and facts not only justifies our present but also provides a blueprint of the future that we wish to work towards. This is all the more true in the case of partition history which is a process, a continuum; it lives in the present in a variety of ways. Ironically, in subsequent conflicts, strives and
communal riots, the partition has provided a reference point; it is invoked again with a sense of horrific nostalgia. Suvir Kaul emphasizes that partition is not a closed chapter, it is not forgotten. On the other hand, ‘we remember by refusing to remember’. Kaul points out that the “ghosts of Partition” have revisited us again, after 1947: Operation Blue Star, RSS Shilanyas, Babri Riots, Bombay blasts, Surat Riots and Bombay riots. The Bombay Shootings in 2008 were the latest revisitation. The history and recovery of ‘voices’ and ‘silence’ is urgent because it defines, and also projects self-identities of the people involved. There are different strains of voices: immediate (reflecting concern of here and now), reflective (coming after a gap of many years and after many tellings or silence), dominant, self-muted, even a purposeful silence is a voice not to be ignored. The real voice lies in the interplay of these voices. For instance, in case of Attia Hosain, a purposeful silence was used as a mark of protest. She was against the idea of choosing one nation over the other, in protest; she maintained a silence on writing more about the partition. Vazira Fazila – Yacobali Zamindar interviewed many women and men of families divided across the border during the course of her study. She also often encountered silence during interviews. This silence according to her was a result of being caught between ‘not-being-able-to-speak’ and ‘ought-not-to-speak’. While interviewing joint families she found that in most of the cases, the people wished not to remember the Partition; there was an attempt to erase it from the memory.

Urvashi Butalia poses an important question- there is no institutional memory of partition, no memorials or monuments, no particular places like marking at the border, site of refugee camps- Why? She argues it is so because it is the dark side of independence and hence institutionalized memory would mean the State recognizing its own complicity hence such histories are not easily memorialized. The only mention is a category of women known as partition widows in the terminology of the State. On the other hand, the private memory is very much alive through renderings of narratives, rituals and stories.

This is true if one compares Holocaust and the Indian partition. The period of holocaust spans from 1933 when Hitler came to power, to 1945, when the Nazis were defeated. During this period, eleven million people, out of whom there were six million Jews, were tortured and killed in numerous concentration camps. It is reported that two third of all European Jews were killed. There are many holocaust museums today. On the other hand, there is no museum, no memorial that documents the
horrors of a partition that led to the largest ever displacement of human population in history. There are private and library collections but no State managed collections for generations to visit and to understand the price that the country had to pay for freedom. Forgiving is a different matter but forgetting may not be the wisest thing to do because as poet and philosopher George Santayana said, “Those who cannot remember the past, are condemned to repeat it.” More than sixty years after the horrifying partition, that was the most ghastly religious and ethnic cleansing in history, India does not have a single museum documenting the division of a nation and birth of two nations; except for a tiny one at the Wagah border.

Gyanendra Pandey also raises this question. He evokes the spirit of Holocaust museums in Vietnam memorials and questions as to why similar institutionalization of the memory of Pakistan is not available. He feels that there is no distancing (in time and space), that is a sense of proximity. Pandey also feels that the convergence of attitudes in Indian, Pakistani and British writings point to a common effort at distancing the writer’s own history from such extraordinary and brutal violence.

Menon and Bhasin also see cultural memory as a group’s history freed from rootedness in time. Its truth value is contained not in its veracity but in the archetypal material it contains.

Kaul also agrees with Butalia: Partition is recalled more through social and community narrative. One major disadvantage of this is the absence of cultural and historical sense of important lessons to be learned.

In studies of trauma, ‘collective memory’ is combined with narrative memory and traumatic memory. Narrative memory remembers events by locating them at a specific time with a beginning, middle and end. In traumatic memory the subject is often incapable of making the necessary narrative called memory, regarding the event. To convert traumatic memory into narrative memory, the traumatic event itself has to be integrated into a story, which in turn must be addressed to someone. This traumatic memory is often replaced by the terms ‘cultural memory’ and ‘group memory.’

Butalia’s study has become a pivotal study in the new histories of the partition. It has gained an almost iconic status as it was for the first time that a fresh look at the partition was attempted for the first time, which was daringly different from the traditional histories. She, along with Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, paved the way for new histories on the partition.
Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin’s study is in line with Butalia’s study. They also approach the recording of partition history with their critique and in turn also provide their own model of this history. As a start off point, they have identified the key concerns raised by political historians: The first concern is to look at the Indian partition as a result of a combination of social, historical and political factors. Secondly, to see the two nation theory’s formation as an ideological reply to secular nationalism and it deriving a large part of its emotional appeal from Muslims who feared political vulnerability after British quitting India. The political historians also see the partition and independence as not overnight events but the culmination of a slow process of mobilization through 1930s: a series of political negotiations, Jinnah’s 1940 Lahore Resolution, declaration of separate electorates for Hindus and Muslims, Cripps Mission among others. The next concern is to view the crucial and decisive role of Jinnah as a sole spokesperson for a Muslim homeland and finally, to study the gradual crystallization of ‘Muslim ness’ among Indian Muslims, particularly in 30s and 40s.

Menon and Bhasin point out that a large number of political histories on partition are imbalanced by the lack of social histories. They wonder if this silence by other social sciences is a result of the cultural, social and psychological ramifications of the partition. In this context the role of the partition literature created in large number in the immediate post partition period becomes all the more crucial because it approximates reality and is the only significant non-official record, apart from reportage. Thus it almost fills in the gap of social history. Menon and Bhasin quote Jason Francisco’s identification of three thematic concerns in texts of partition literature: Rupture, Protest and Repair. They correspond to three motifs: memory, pain, healing. Partition Literature- autobiographical, oral, historical and fragmentary is acknowledged as a valid and official source. In other words, social and private memory is recognized as a valid tool in forming official and institutionalized memory. Thus fragmentary record is marginal, particular and individual, and it presents history from below. This perspective leads one to an alternative reading of the master narrative.

Menon and Bhasin locate the questions posed by feminist readings of the partition and then embark on the quest for answers through their study. These crucial questions are: How do we embark on a feminist reading of the partition? What questions are to be raised? What sources are to be used? How do we approach the question of identity,
country and religion, of the intersection of community, state and gender? How do we separate women’s experiences from others to enable us to problematise the general experience of violence, dislocation and displacement from a gender perspective? How do we evaluate the state’s responsibility to refugees in general and women refugees in particular as articulated in the policies and programs of the government? How do we, as feminists, concerned with the issues of identity politics, the complex relationship of a post-colonial state with religious communities in the aftermath of convulsive communal conflict, look at the partition?

Menon and Bhasin foreground two concerns in speaking to women- To see how the lives of those who are non-actors in the political realm are shaped by an epochal event, and how their experience of it enables a critique of political history and the means of writing it differently, and to study a time marked by massive disruption and crisis through life-stories that would both bear witness, and allow us to attempt a gendered social history.

They have used varied sources like interviews, Government Reports and records, private papers, memoirs, autobiographies, letters, diaries, audio-tapes, parliamentary debates and legal documents. This deliberate juxtaposition of documented and personal history reinforces the need to examine the ‘historical narrative’ and also question the factual element as the only mark of legitimacy.

Menon and Bhasin have grouped the study into six thematic clusters: Violence, Abduction and Recovery, Widowhood, Women’s Rehabilitation, Rebuilding, and 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, absent and thus not precise.

Partition violence is viewed as a feud-“a pact of violence between social groups in such a way that the definition of self and the other emerges through an exchange of violence.” The victims of such violence are not individually placed, they are the ‘bearers’ of the position of their group, they are the means through which the pact of violence continues to be executed. There was a preoccupation with women’s sexuality during partition violence among all the three communities: Hindu, Sikh and Muslim. Woman’s body was used as a marker for honor/victim/ traitor/victory.
Javed Alam’s differentiation of violence can be applied to Partition violence. He differentiates three types of violence: when the complicity of the state in acts of brutal and apparently meaningless violence is all too well established, those occasions when a state or state-like body directly carries out genocide or massacres, a very large organization incites mass killings where the state isn’t there as a perpetrator but it could have controlled the violence and it didn’t, and where people become victims of violence where at a moment of a loss of sanity they start killing each other. Partition violence was more located in the second and the third types.

Recovery and rehabilitation operation was carried out on an elaborate scale. But the question remains- how does one ever achieve ‘real settlement’? And even if one succeeds in doing so, how does one quantify it (as it needs to be quantified, recorded for government record)? Rehabilitation exercise was just another rape on the mobility connected with sexuality, religion, community and nationality of the women. And worse, this was endorsed by the state.

While assessing the aftermath, Menon and Bhasin say that partition did bring some liberating effects on women like, there was an escalation in the education of girls, the physical spaces narrowed but enlarged social space thus resulting in an upward swing in educational mobility and employment of girls and women, and the partition instigated many people into finding their own feet. Men and Women, on the whole, were affected differently by the partition: men were either killed or they escaped, so they were spared further traumas. Whereas in case of women, it was not so easy: women who were left behind were raped/brutalized/converted. They had to live with these traumas for the rest of their lives. Even after ‘Recovery and Rehabilitation’, they were looked as ‘soiled’, ‘impure’ in their own homes and community. Thus their private and public space was snatched from them, pushing them into the point of no return.

Vazira Fazila – Yacobali Zamindar’s *The Long Partition and the Making of Modern South Asia* is based on extensive ethnographic and archival research. She is located as an academic-historian and in thus study she has focused on the North Indian Muslim families divided between Delhi and Karachi. Her study positions the lives of ordinary people affected by the partition with the bureaucratic interventions of both post-colonial states to manage and control refugees, and administer their property.
She also discusses the history of the making of the Western Indo-Pak border: The core of her study is the ‘Muslim question- the marginalisation of north Indian Muslims- pushed out and divided by both emergent nations states- in this sense, it is a long, ongoing partition with displaced nation hoods and locations. 

Zamindar groups the partition violence and its aftermath into five categories: genocidal violence, forced conversions, abductions, rapes and displacement. Zamindar looks at ‘Muslims’ as a constructed category of community and political mobilization that emerged under colonial conditions, in the context of the partition. Because, according to her, Muslims (or for that matter, Hindus) are definitely not a monolithic category. So she feels that the idea of Muslims as a separate political community was mobilized as a part of the Pakistan Movement.

Isolation reflected through violence: Zamindar uses language as a tool to expose the isolation of Muslims in the bureaucratic terminology. On the Indian side, the refugees were grouped in two categories: Muslim refugees and Hindu/ Sikh Refugees (or non-Muslim refugees). Two inferences can be drawn from this grouping: One- religion was consistently used as the only marker of identity on both fronts: common people’s discourse and State/Bureaucratic discourse. Second- Categories of Muslim and non-Muslim refugees show the ‘we’ and ‘them’ groupings (‘self’ and ‘other’ as seen in the post-colonial discourse). The isolation of Muslim refugees in relation to Hindu and Sikh Refugees is evident.

On the Pakistan side, Muslim refugees were termed as ‘panaghirs’/ ‘mujahirs’ while the Hindu and Sikh refugees were termed as ‘sharanatis’ (sic). This differentiation had enormous impact on the entire exercise of refugee rehabilitation and its relation to Hindu-Pak divide. At this point, one also has to remember that the making of refugees was not a ‘one time set of events bounded in time and space.’

In the partition violence, the house (‘makan’) became the centre, instigating violence. Forced dispossession and possession of the houses took place in great numbers; custodians were appointed to look after the ‘abandoned’ properties in trust. The labels of the houses changed in quick succession: ‘evacuated’ houses became ‘abandoned’, then ‘vacant’ and then ‘empty’. Thus the violence was erased by relabeling and new labels also made these houses open for rehabilitation by Hindu refugees from Pakistan.
The refugee camps also became the means of power; the Muslims who wanted to but found it difficult to stay back in India went through a lot of anguish. There was no space for them in India, or a resting place in Pakistan. Thus in 1948, large number of North Indian Muslims began to return to their homes in India. This led to the first restrictions on movement in the region in the form of emergency permit system by the Government of India. And this eventually caused introduction of citizenship provisions ahead of the constitution itself.

With the introduction of the permit system started the problems in coming back. The returning refugees were asked to stay back in Pakistan. And after obtaining a permit to return, if they did manage to come back to India, they were dismayed to learn that their property had been declared evacuee. Many instances are quoted by Zamindar where the refugees fought cases of citizenship to be declared citizens of India in Government gazette.

The permit system was suddenly implemented on July 14, 1948 in India across the Western frontier with Pakistan. As a response to this, Pakistani government put its own permit system on Oct 15, 1948 known as Pakistan Control of Entry Ordinance, 1948. For many, this was ‘the real partition’; and the permit system was replaced by the passport system in 1952.

Thus the banning of access on geographical entry turned into a permanent inclusion and exclusion, it did not remain a onetime phenomenon. From April 3, 1948, the Delhi CID police began quantifying Muslim arrivals and departures in the city in its weekly reports. This gave rise to the myth of ‘problem’ appearing in local Government reports and this later on provided a rationale for drafting of Permit system Ordinance. According to CID reports, only 11,900 Muslim refugees were added to Delhi’s population and not 40,000 as was the suggested figure.

The attitude of the Government toward the Muslim refugees returning from Pakistan was not very supportive. It was pro- Hindu/ Sikh because it was felt that any attempts by the Government to ‘support’ Muslims would be interpreted by Hindus and Sikhs as being directed against them. The question here is: Why it has to be either/or relation and why can’t it be ‘and’ relation? The zones created by the refugee camps of these Muslims were seen as a central impediment to the rehabilitation of Hindu and Sikh refugees. Hence this gave rise to a lot of politics within the bureaucracy. For instance, Sahibzada Khurshid Ahmed, the Chief Commissioner represented the voice of the marginal, he was one of the few senior Muslim officials in Indian Civil Service (ICS).
who opted to work for India and remained the Chief Commissioner of Delhi through post-partition violence. He was criticized for his weakness; he was blamed for cowardice, not showing favour or support to Muslims. On the other hand, he felt a deep frustration as the Deputy Commissioner Randhawa bypassed him to collect orders directly from his supervisor. As a result of this, at the time of the imposition of the permit system, he was transferred from his position as the chief commissioner of Delhi to a less significant position as the head of an ICS training facility. During the rehabilitation process, minorities were pushed to the margins, with chilling political legitimacy on both sides of the nations-in-making.

A crucial clause of the evacuee property agreement was that the displaced maintained a right in their properties left behind- people who had moved and their immovable property separated from them, remained tied to it, in what would come to be called ‘imaginary ownership.’ This led to the issue of compensation and squabbling between India and Pakistan. The Indian Government claimed that the evacuee property left behind by non-Muslims in Pakistan was far greater. A rough estimate was that evacuee property in Pakistan totaled Rs. 500 crores as against 100 crores in India- a ratio of five to one. Agricultural land left in India was 48,00,000 acres and in Pakistan 31,39,000 acres. Pakistan argued that the Indian claim was not based on any reliable figures, the evacuee property left on both sides was more or less equivalent, and hence the refugees were to sell or transfer properties on individual basis, without any intervention from the State. A considerable section in the Indian Government favored Pakistan’s argument. There was a deadlock and it was only after the protest fast of Mahatma Gandhi- who was appalled by the damage which the non-payment of dues to Karachi was causing to Indo-Pak relations- that India paid Pakistan’s share. Finally the most important negotiations on evacuee property were culminated in Karachi Agreement in 1949. The Karachi agreement reaffirmed the rights of evacuees in their property and agreed that laws would encompass only ‘agreed areas’ from where mass migration has occurred due to “disturbances”. It also agreed that the free sale and exchange of urban immovable property would be allowed and finally, while the properties could be used temporarily for rehabilitation, with allotments made for up to 3 years, the custodians would collect rent on those properties and transfer the amount to the other dominion. Thus the evacuee property became the root cause of corruption. The **muhajirs** were divided into two- **sarmayadar muhajirs**, those who...
were able to retain or compensate their property and *tabah-o-barbad muhajirs*, who were refugees without any material belongings.

As mentioned earlier, the ‘house’ became the major cause of violence. Zamindar provides an interesting, lesser known fact- in many homes; the family’s history (not just through emotionally laden memories) building of the house etc. was written in a scroll, was placed inside a bottle and buried under the doorway of the house. At some time, historically, when the house was destroyed, then the scroll would be excavated to know the history of the house. It became a ‘written’ record for posterity, for recovering a particular history in which was located the very belonging. This need to remember and tell that which was on the verge of being lost is in sharp contrast to the refusal to speak, by clinging to long silences in the post partition remembering. It is quite obvious from the above discussion that through displacement and evacuee property, the social order for *muhajirs* was changed, and old relationships between class, descent and property were disordered.

Zamindar, then, presents her critique of the passport system between the two countries in 1952 at the Pakistan Government’s insistence to curtail the “flood” of UP Muslims into the proclaimed homeland. She traces the etymological origin of the word ‘passport’: the original meaning given in the English statute of 1548 is a ‘license given by a military authority to a soldier on furlough.’ Its alignment with nationality came up by the nineteenth century but it was not required, as a rule, to cross a national boundary. It was only during World War I that it became mandatory to possess passports while crossing national boundaries. The meaning of passport has shifted from that of a travel document to a ‘means of controlling movement’, to becoming a certificate of citizenship and a means of establishing State-bound national identity. In post-partition era, passport has assumed an uneasy dynamics of controlling mobility and determining citizenship, in the context of India and Pakistan. The Passport system came into existence in 1952 and its status was made clear as late as in 1967: ‘as essential political document for safe travel and an aid in establishing citizenship and evidence of the holder’s nationality,’ thus securing a relationship between travel, citizenship and national belonging.

On 8th April, 1950, Nehru- Liaquat Pact was signed which assured minorities of freedom of movement as well as complete equality of citizenship, equal opportunity to participate in public life, hold political office and serve in the Defense services. It also put down that people returning before the 31st December would have their
properties restored. As a result of this pact, most of the displaced returned to their homes. As part of the agreement, the Indian Government agreed to take back (in addition to the Muslims displaced in the East) Muslims from UP who had left for Pakistan between Feb 1 and May 31, 1950 and restore their properties to them. However in actual practice, all those who had registered in West Pakistan to return home were not allowed back by the Indian Government. Their fate was uncertain - they could not be rehabilitated in Pakistan nor was it possible to send them back to India.

There were two important debates to restrict the entry of Muslims from India. The first was on April 17, 1952: there was a Government proposal to add a ‘limit date’ to the citizen laws. Many relaxations were made in the form of citizenship Bills like removal of Domicile (for government servants posted abroad), registration for acquiring citizenship for Muslim refugees from India. This meant that those who arrived in Pakistan before 13 April, 1951 (commencement of Citizenship Act) were granted citizenship; as a result obtaining Pakistani passports were fairly easy as compared to Indian passports. The second debate was a demand to push and increase territorial limits of Pakistan to rehabilitate Indian citizens ‘pushed across the border into Pakistan.’

The emergence of passport pronounced a final ‘talak’ and ‘the formal and official burial of the Delhi Pact which had once promised ‘freedom of movement.’ This was more final than permits because as compared to permits passports had a documentary power; since the life of a permit lasted only the duration of a single journey and it did not require a declaration of citizenship.

Most importantly, women were not entitled to autonomous citizenship laws which meant their ‘domicile’ vested in those of their father/husband. Thus women, incorporated with documents of fathers/husbands moved between the two States without directly engaging contestations of citizenship. With the implementation of passport system for women applicants, their legal status as ‘dependents’ became important. This was due to the definition of domicile- not only a permanent home where a person resides with the intention of residence but also having so resided there, he retains the intention of residence, though he in fact, no longer resides there. Women were not entitled to the above as they did not exercise an independent volition so as to lose or acquire domicile. As a result, there was a change in pattern of cousin marriage preferences among Muslim; there was a decline in cross border marriages.
Marriages did provide mobility for women while men could not move at all. There were also cases of women who chose not to leave their homes in India while their husbands went to Pakistan but under this they lost their rights to citizenship without even leaving their houses.

Thus the entire process of migration was untouched by bureaucratic politics; it also was hinged on the economic materiality. Finally women bore the brunt in the form of marital mobility and citizenship status.


At the outset, Ravinder Kaur defines her own location and engagement with the study. Her parents had migrated in 1947 from Sargodha and Lahore in Pakistan, and she grew up in a neighborhood of Punjabi migrants. She defines herself as “a native writing my own history” but at the same time clarifies about her awareness of the complexity of terms like ‘authentic native’ or insider and ‘foreigner’ or outsider, when travel, mobility has replaced ‘rootedness’ as a feature of today’s life. At the same time she is aware of the relation she shares with her study in terms of objectivity. If one adds to this her personal location- residing at Copenhagen, married to a foreign national and academic location- her study was backed financially and academically by Danish Social Sciences Research Council, Institute for Society and Globalization at Roskilde University and Danish Institute for International Studies, then her unique location as ‘insider- outsider’ provides her with a more privileged and empowered perspective which is a curious and advantageous mix of ‘subjective- objective’ position. I feel this is a crucial factor as it gives new, evolving dimensions to the whole ‘subjectivity- objectivity’ discourse of the Historian.

The important questions considered by Ravinder Kaur in her study are- the whole process of transformation of refugees into locals, the single experience of forced
migration experienced differentially through divergent categories of caste, class and gender; and the social conflicts seen and dealt through in the state policies of refugee re-settlement (in other words state vis-à-vis society and individual).

Narratives

‘When we remember, what is it that we choose to remember?’

In her study Ravinder Kaur has grouped the narratives into three broad themes: everyday life before partition, the last journey and life after partition. Ravinder Kaur has inferred that the partition narratives have multiple themes embedded in them. She finds a co-relation between these sub themes and the class/ caste of the narrator; they are directly proportional. Thus the upper caste / middle class narrators not only tell their own story but also define the experiences of others. Ravinder Kaur identifies three levels of narratives based on the above mentioned location of the narrator. The first level is that of the ‘Rais’ where the narrator was born into a wealthy family with a key position in social political causes of the community. Next came the ‘Sarkari Afsar’ (government officers) - this was a newly emerged social category within the colonial administrative system. Finally, was the level of others – included narrators from various spheres like traders, businessmen, teachers and local community leaders. These three levels of narratives progress on the following areas: larger picture of events and others, narrating own experiences and going deeper into one’s own experiences. Kaur has analysed with a focus on two objectives – to restore the absences, blanks or breaches (untouchables, single women, the urban poor) in the history of partition migration and to challenge the master version from a deeper level where the narrator’s own experiences depart from it and therefore challenge it.

Memory and Production of narratives: Kaur’s study of the process of production of narratives delineates the importance of memory. Memory making itself operates on the level of private, collective, public and state / institution. In these narratives, the private or autobiographical memory is also used for collective purposes. A psychological dimension is added to the autobiographical memory by grouping it into three operative levels: the first level is of life periods measured in bigger chunks of chronological time with themes of self and goals during that period. Then is the level of smaller chunks of time with a record of extended and repeated general
events. Thirdly, the further micro level of event specific knowledge that consists of sensory perceptual features associated with an event.

In the context of memory, there is often a thin line between real experience and imagined perception or recall. There are attempts to map one’s own personal experiences and narratives with that of the expected authentic experiences during partition migration. A study of these attempts provides an insight into the intersecting spaces of personal – real and state – expected narratives. Another tool to decipher is the framing device: how we tell or position our story. Each frame prepares the reader to receive it in a specific manner. In the collective memory, ‘framing becomes all the more important as it leads one to context and the sensitive, empirical explorations in a given theme. 19 The final tool to interpret memories is from the location of the gender studies- to look at the performances of the narratives; how the experiences are narrated and who narrates them.

Ravinder Kaur has identified three broad categories to understand Partition: She sees it as a by-product of the religious nationalism that surfaced during the Indian national struggle for independence and its culmination. She also views it as a logical beginning of post-colonial nation building exercise.

Then she uses the category of the partition as a central cathartic event that has shaped the collective national psyche in India and Pakistan.

Kaur has dwelt at length on the entire process of settlement of migrants. She deals with the Evacuation Operation, means of transport, government policies, the role of State in practices of resettlement, the Government narrative of rehabilitation work, the State narrative, permanent and temporary measures for resettlement, compensation claims, construction of housing colonies for refugees, and the gradual change in State-refugee relationships and the class, caste, gender politics.

Ravinder Kaur concludes her study by focusing on the evolving and evolved image or identity after relocation in the context of the important markers of language, religion and politics.
Gyanendra Pandey’s *Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism and History in India* critiques the history of partition with a sharp political consciousness. He starts by outlining the extraordinary features of the partition— the remarkable suddenness, confusion over boundaries of Nation-States even after the partition, the terrible blood-bath of violence and the permanently marked love-hate relationship between India and Pakistan.

Pandey points out three particularities in which the Indian Partition has been different from that of Holocaust: its absolutely violent character, its abrupt eruption and the ideological function. The contextual presence of violence in communal discourse makes it very specific. He proceeds to investigate into Partition history, not with the agenda of fixing guilt-blame on opposing sides, but with the aim of studying the justification of violence and a study of violence in the context of community and nation.

Pandey’s study focuses on dialectics between violence and community and affirms that social history and narratives of violence constitute community and the subject of history. In contradiction, the discipline of history still proceeds largely on the hypothesis of a ‘fixed’ subject. He also points out that the agent and locus of history is not pre-designated but formed by narratives and accounts. In this constitution and reconstitution of shared past, violence became a powerful language, it intercepts the historical and non-historical subject.

Pandey poses two questions: How does history work to produce the truth (of 1947 violence) and to deny its force at the same time to name an event and yet deny its eventfulness? How does one write the moment of struggle back into history?

History and memory: Pandey argues that in the history of a struggle, there is exclusion of the dimensions of force, uncertainty, domination and disdain, loss and confusion. This is done by normalizing or defending and justifying the struggle, emptying it of its messy contradictions and fusing it into a narrative of assured advance towards specific resolutions. Thus the history of the partition appears different from different locations. Not only this, there are different versions of the historian’s account of 1947 and a more popular, survivor’s account.

Pandey points out a wide gap between historian’s rendering of 1947 and a more popular survivor’s account, between ‘history’ and ‘memory’ after 1980s and 1990s. The historians’ accounts view it as a new constitutional political arrangement that did
not deeply affect the central structures. The survivors’ accounts focus on violence tearing the world apart, a new beginning and a reconstruction of community. Pandey quotes Peter Novick for the form of collective memory and historical perspective. According to Novick, a historical perspective includes an awareness of complexities, of multiple perspectives, ambiguities and moral-ethical dilemmas. This is in concurrence with the established view of ‘objectivity and scientficity of history.’ But the collective memory works towards simplification, has singular perspective and even reduces events to ‘mythic archetypes’. In this sense it is a-historical or even anti-historical. Furthermore, a new ‘historical memory’ has evolved which is based upon increasingly institutionalized sites of memory.

Pandey gives the argument of Halbwach; he suggests that different memories are evolved by different groups in altered historical forms. The evolving ideas of nationalism, modern state and new sites of memory lead to history appearing as national memory. This ‘hybrid memory – history’ is one of the distinguishing marks of our age and it even challenges the separation between memory and history.

Pandey feels that there is a gap in the disciplinary concept of history (as an objective statement of significant events in the past) and as a purposeful statement. The Hegelian view sees the state as the condition of history, as the state constitutes self-consciousness and the overall purpose of identification of progress and regress. Hegel sees history as progress of freedom which is possible only in a state. For him, the story of individuals alone, and even of the individuals in the still emotional irrational community of the family is not yet history. Historiography has long been in line with this view of the centrality of the state ‘in history.’ Pandey points out that within the academy, history is often presented as a scientific description of significant moments in the human past. So even when reflexive, history continues to work within a context defined by modern science and state.

Pandey argues disintegration and demise of memory history, with multiplication in the number of private memories and individual histories, historical memories everywhere. As a result a new kind of historian has emerged who is entirely dependent on his subjectivity, creativity and capacity to recreate.

Thus according to Pandey there is a definitive shift from historical to psychological, from the social to the individual and from the concrete message to its subjective representation. We have nearly reached a stage where memory has become the discourse that replaces history.
Turning to the Indian partition, Pandey infers three different conceptions of partition that went into the making of the partition of 1947: The Muslim League demand for ‘Pakistan’ from 1940 onwards with two aspects- This was to be a Muslim majority state, and it would be a State which would protect all the sub-continent’s Muslims who could stay on wherever they were. This partition entailed the splitting up of the Muslim majority provinces of Punjab and Bengal. The culmination of all these factors caused in the actual event of the partition of 1947.

The contradiction of Partition histories is to produce ‘truth’ of violence and elude it at the same time. Some techniques used for this are: declaring such violence non-narratable, transforming the history of an event into a history of its causes or origins—which themselves become the event. It is also done by localizing it in time, as a freak occurrence, like a natural calamity, which requires no historical explanation. Finally, the partition demands explanation and the Indian History draws distinction between cause and event by suggesting that the investigation of the former was the primary task of a historian and also by consigning violence to a realm outside the domain of history.

Pandey traces two characteristics of nationalist history writing in India. It developed as a reaction to colonialism, yet in an ambivalent relationship with it. Secondly, it was driven by an urge to show the antiquity, wisdom, ‘manliness’ of Indians in the past and also to demonstrate the unity of India’s diverse peoples and traditions. Writings on Partition bear the marks of it until today. So in the Indian context History has been led by a major organizing principle—the process leading to national independence, as if that culminated into the end of history. Even in school textbooks the time period after partition smoothly shifts over to political science and economics.

The two events—Partition and Independence come as separate culminations of history of communalism (conflict and strife) and history of nationalism respectively. In other words, the Indian historians have drawn an important dividing line between the history of ‘nationalism’ (leading to Independence in 1947) and the ‘history of communalism’ leading to the partition. Historians remain overwhelmingly concerned with causes of the partition whereas the event, the moment of violence requires greater attention as this violence intersects the space of communalism. 20

Since this violence lies outside the domain of State and thus progress and history (in Hegelian sense), it is not accounted for. On the other hand, the Indian nationalist historical interpretation of violence has to fit with a representation of India’s history
of the last century, and more as the history of its progress. Thus what is foregrounded is the heroism of its people in the face of ‘odds’, the extraordinary heritage of tolerance, enlightenment and outstanding leadership, whatever the aberrations or occasional lapses.

A counter argument to this is- The state shies away from responsibility and accountability of partition violence (as this untamed violence seems to surface whenever the State power has been weakened or broken down) in the excuse that the State was in the process of formation. In that case, how does one (history and State) account for the violence erupting and surfacing time and again after the formation of the nation State?

Pandey affirms that History is always equated with the national, the rational, and the progressive. It should be recognizable, traceable and of course relevant. Local and Global History are often mistakenly understood to be questions of scale, sometimes they are better seen as perspective. Thus the local is of little importance, being sporadic and particular in contrast to the national, universal and historical. Pandey draws on two connotative meanings of local-the particular, concrete, detailed and small scale, and on the other hand, that which is not general in a quite general sense: that which is not mainstream or universal, or at one with the trend of local history. This second context refers to aspects of our own past and present that cannot, apparently, be narrativised; they have no beginning, middle and end. They are simply awaiting incorporation and changes by forces of history and progress. And it is this sense that India, and the Orient, are local for the colonialists- self-evident, one dimensional and unchanging.

II. Analysis:
‘To forget and….. to get one’s history wrong are essential factors in the making of a nation’

– Ernest Renass.

Trends in Partition Studies:
Two trends are observed in the Partition Studies: The traditional histories focus on socio-political events and the new histories focus on violence and displacement. The
first trend uses the well-trodden ‘safe’ route of authorized and sanctioned versions. The second trend is the one which interrogates, intercepts and investigates: it is reflected in the new histories alternatively as histories of the underside/silence/alternative narratives. The first trend presumes and builds on ideas of collective subjectivity and religious identity. These studies also subvert the rhetoric of sameness as assimilation is contested by actually regenerating differences through stereotypes. A very obvious example of this would be the school textbooks or the government slogans or messages where the representatives of each community (Hindu, Muslim or Sikh) are markedly different from each in their language, dress and mannerisms, carrying the markers of stereotypical identity.

In the partition studies examined, the entire process of Partition is looked at through the perspective of two locations. The first location is of individual and community and the other is of the State. The narratives of partition in these studies are in the form of interviews, dialogues, anecdotes, monologues, letters, memoirs etc. They are of different dimensions. The narratives are verbal, written and silent. They also differ in the degree of willingness ranging from readiness to share, to reluctance. This degree also undergoes change during the rendering of the narrative, usually becoming more verbal as the interaction progresses. This results in their being effortless or having friction. Each version of the narratives is not necessarily the same, there are modifications and changes. Thus the objectivity of validity and veracity of the narratives is challenged. The narratives also differ in the manner of being spontaneous or projected. As far as the presence of memories is concerned, they crop up in the narratives in form of public and private memories. Based on the temporal location from 1947, the narratives are either focused on immediate concerns, or are more reflective. They are also a blend of self- experiences or anecdotes. Finally, these narratives often posit themselves on the borders of imagination and reality. Most of the above mentioned modes are in the form of binaries.

In all narratives the location of the individual is emphasized and underlined often but the role of the state either remains simply absent or recedes in the background. In the informative part of the texts the state appears as an agency in forming committees, legislation, bureaucratic process of setting up the camps and later housing arrangements but this is missing in individual narratives, here the human agency comes forth and takes the lead. This fact has been pointed by Kaur, Butalia and others.
The entire process of partition can be broken into three stages for the convenience of analysis:

A. Pre partition: the making of the breaking


C. Aftermath and Continuum

A. Pre-partition: The making of the breaking:

In July 1928, there was an All Parties Conference to draft the constitution for India. The most debated issue in this Conference was the Muslim demand for separate electorate; this was opposed by Hindu members. Jinnah put forth certain conditions: acceptance by Motilal Nehru of the formation of Sindh as a separate province, introduction of reforms in the North West Frontier Province and Baluchistan, and a certain fixed percentage of representations for the Muslims at the centre and in the provinces of Punjab and Bengal. Congress took an ambivalent stand on this.

Jinnah came out with his demand for “Fourteen Points”. A careful scrutiny of the Fourteen Points led to the following demands of Jinnah: i) Centre to have less power and provinces to be autonomous along with power of State and Self-governing bodies.. ii) Minorities to be highlighted iii) One third Muslim representation in Central legislature and Cabinet with one third Muslim ministers to safeguard the interests of the Muslims in the spheres of religion, culture, personal law, education iv) Separate identities of communal groups to be maintained thus thriving on politics of difference v) Territorial redistribution to favour and maintain Muslim majority of Punjab, Bengal and NWFP vi) Separation of Sindh from Bombay Presidency, thus demarcating separate leadership arenas. vii) Reforms for NWFP and Baluchistan viii) Religious freedom and identity.

Two nations Theory: Jinnah vehemently argued in favor of two nation theory. He declared,

“……it is a dream that the Hindus and Muslims can ever evolve a common nationality, and this misconception of one Indian nation has gone far beyond the limits and is the cause of most of our troubles and will lead India to destruction if we fail to revise our notions of time. The Hindus and Muslims belong to two different religious philosophies, social customs, and literature. …..they belong to two different
civilizations which are based mainly on conflicting ideas and conceptions. Their aspects on life and of life are different. It is quite clear that Hindus and Mussalmans derive their inspirations from different sources of History. …..To yoke together two such nations under a single state, one as a numerical minority and the other as a majority, must lead to growing discontent and final destruction of any fabric that may be so built up for the Govt. of such a state.” 22

Jinnah was, undoubtedly, a staunch champion of the two nation theory. He had commented to Mountbatten,

“India has never been a true nation. It only looks that way on the map. The cows I want to eat, the Hindu stops me from killing. Every time a Hindu shakes hands with me he has to wash his hands. The only thing that the Moslem has in common with the Hindu is his slavery to the British.” 23

The third illustration of Jinnah’s stance is a piece of conversation between Edward Thompson (an eminent British journalist) and Jinnah.24

Jinnah: Hindus and Muslims are two different nations who can never live together.

Thompson: Two different nations, Mr. Jinnah, confronting each other in every province, every town, every village of India?

Jinnah: Yes, two different nations confronting each other in every province, every town, every village of India. It is indeed unfortunate but it must be faced. That is why they must be separated. That is the only solution.

Thompson: That is a terrible solution Mr. Jinnah.

Jinnah: That is a terrible solution but it is the only solution.

These three illustrations bring home the fact that Jinnah maintained that there was an inherent difference between Hindus and Muslims pervading their entire existence: right from the microcosmic world of eating habits to the macrocosmic world of ancestry and history.

To counterpoint Jinnah, Azad and Gandhi had their own arguments as to why India should be undivided. Azad’s answer in negation of the two nation theory was,

“…………Eleven hundred years of common history have enriched India with our common achievements, our languages, our poetry, our literature, our culture, our art, our dress, our manners and customs, the innumerable happenings of our daily life, everything bears the stamp of our joint endeavour. This joint wealth is the heritage of our common nationality and we don’t want to leave it and go back to a time when this joint life had not begun….. The cast has now been moulded and destiny has set its
seal upon it, whether we like it or not, we have now become an Indian nation, united and indivisible.”  

Gandhi argued on the basis of the Indian Muslim identity of conversion of religion. “The vast majorities of Muslims of India are converts to Islam or are the descendents of converts. They did not become a separate nation as soon as they became converts. A Bengali Muslim speaks the same tongue that a Bengali Hindu does, eats the same food and has the same amusements as his Hindu neighbours……Hindus and Muslims of India are not two nations. Those whom God has made one, man will never be able to divide.”

Thus Gandhi prioritized cultural and national ethos more than religiosity which he held as secondary, especially in case of Indian Muslims.

The problems of communalism and casteism were prevalent and they were aggravated by the partition. Each group (Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, princely states, Dravidian movement, Kashmir, Hyderabad) acted to preserve its own identity.

The major blow to casteism came in form of Gandhi-Ambedkar debate. Gandhi wanted to absorb the untouchables into ‘sudra’ class but Ambedkar wanted a separate political identity and agenda for them; he saw them as an important minority. This was not in keeping with Gandhiji’s integrated vision of ‘Sarvadharma Samabhav’.

Ambedkar never overcame this difference of opinion. He said after Gandhi’s assassination, “I refuse to call him Mahatma. I never in my life called him Mahatma, he doesn’t deserve that title. Not even from the point of view of morality.”

Complexities of causes were responsible for partition. Ram Manohar Lohia has identified eight immediate factors: The craftiness of British rulers, the senior age of Congress leaders, circumstances arising from Hindu-Muslim riots, lack of determination and strength in the people, Gandhian non-violence, the dissipated policy of Muslim League, the ‘pride’ of Hindus and Hindu Fundamentalism.

Lohia has outlined four root causes of partition. One cause was the love – hate relationship between Hindus and Muslims for the last eight hundred years, which was more hatred than love. Secondly, Indians (Hindus and Muslims) were in the effeminate image of the conquered against the invaders (Moghuls/British) which were in an aggressive and virile, masculine image. This was never accepted, acknowledged or rectified by the Indians. Then there was the policy of British, British Colonial rule which activated separatism of Hindus and Muslims. The final cause of the partition
was the electoral politics and exploitation of Muslims through the hypocrisy of Congress leading to further widening of the rift.

In late March 1942, Cripps mission which preceded Quit India Movement was an outcome of the British policy to involve India more deeply in the World War, with the promise of ‘some kind of independence.’ The Cripps mission was the handiwork of Clement Attlee, the Deputy Prime Minister. It comprised of Sir Stafford Cripps (The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons) and Sir Frank Turnbull, the private secretary of Leopold Amery, the Secretary of State for India. Cripps had chosen, in addition, two secretaries of his own- A.D.K.Owen and Graham Spry. But Stafford Cripps was in charge of powers and functions as the sole leader of the mission. The Mission had three motives- to get Congress support, to soothe left-wing opinion and to placate the USA, which was Britain’s ally during the War.

Cripps Mission offered a newly elected constituent assembly, with the princes’ participation through their own representatives. There was a choice for India- to remain within the Commonwealth with dominion status or to go for full independence later. These offers were on the long term. The short term offers included more places for Indians on the Viceroy’s Executive Council.

Cripps Mission was not favoured by Nehru and Raigopalachari. Gandhi sarcastically compared the long term plan to a postdated cheque on a bank that was failing. Cripps Mission also faced opposition from Britain herself in the form of Linlithgow (the Viceroy), Leo Amery (the Secretary of State for India) and Mr. Churchill, the prime minister. The majority of Indian leaders demanded an immediate and unconditional handover of power and retreat of the British from India. Thus the mood was charged with ousting the colonial rule and this culminated in Quit India Movement, three months later, in Aug. 1942. Thus the failure of Cripps Mission marked a major turn in Britain’s relationship with India.

The acceleration to independence was also propelled by Lord Wavell taking over the office of the Viceroy in 1943 and retaining it till March 1947. Unlike Churchill, Wavell believed in the necessity of Indian Independence. Churchill wanted Wavell to bid time till the completion of the War. When Wavell arrived in India, two crucial steps were taken- the decision to quit India within 18 months of the war’s end and the reluctant adoption of the need for partition. After the war ended, in a bid to open Cripps negotiations, he ordered release of all Congress leaders. He also invited them to join his Executive Council. Wavell was aware of the political muddle in India, he
commented on post-war situation in India with a parody of Lewis Carroll’s ‘Jabberwocky’

“T was grilling; and the Congreelites
Did harge and shobble in the swope,
All jinsy were the Pakistanites
And the spruft Sikhs outscrope.”

Wavell was not confident of Congress leadership to take over the charge but he decided to go along the choice of Indians. Excerpts from his diary of 12 Aug, 1946 reflect this-

“I feel that it is honest to say that we are going to hand over the power, that it is right that we should do so and leave Indians to govern themselves; that while Congress is not a body one would have chosen as the representatives of the great mass of the Indian people, it is the body that the Indian people have chosen for themselves and we have to do business with the men of their choice.”

Lord Wavell conceived of India as a single geographic and administrative unit, and, therefore, was desirous of preserving its political unity. In pursuance of precisely such a goal, he came up with a secret scheme which has come to be known in history as Wavell’s ‘Breakdown Plan’. This Plan required two steps to be taken for a phased withdrawal of British authority from India: firstly, a withdrawal from the four Hindu majority provinces of Bombay, Madras, Orissa and the Central Provinces; secondly, a general withdrawal from the rest of the country, before March 1948. Wavell believed that this would avoid the division of India as well as the possibility of a Civil War. However, before he had a chance to put his plan into operation he was removed from his position as the Viceroy of India.

The formation of Cabinet Mission Plan was another attempt to avoid partition. This Mission was sent by British Prime Minister Attlee in May 1946, and had three senior ministers: Lord Pethick-Lawrence, Sir Stafford Cripps and A.V. Alexander. They were to work out a constitutional settlement in consultation with the representatives of the major political parties, in particular, the Congress and the League. In the Cabinet Mission Plan, the Union was to be restricted to defense, foreign affairs and communications due to Muslim fear of Hindu domination. The Union was to have an executive and a legislature; and the representation was to be in proportion to the population in various provinces. The Union or Federation was to be the first Tier; the second Tier was to be a sub-federation of three groups: Hindu majority provinces,
Muslim majority provinces in the North West and the Muslim majority provinces in the North East. Most of the powers of governance and legislation were contained in these groups. This second Tier was to be followed by the third Tier of the provinces with limited autonomy. A choice was given to the provinces to opt out but this choice could be exercised only after a lapse of ten years. This was the long term scheme of the plan. It was combined with a short term scheme which was the immediate formation of an interim government. The government would consist of 5 caste Hindus, 5 Muslims, 1 Sikh, 1 Christian, 1 scheduled caste and 1 European and this scheme was to be made integral to the long term plan.

The Mission Plan was accepted by Congress with some apprehensions. Congress wanted a strong centre; it was also not keen on grouping of provinces, with powers entrusted to them. But a very strong reaction came from Jinnah who refused to compromise on his demand of Interim government regarding the parity between representatives of Congress and the League as he wanted the sole right to nominate the Muslim members. The Mission did not agree on the demands of Jinnah.

The crucial post war change in Britain was Attlee replacing Churchill, and this paved the way for the Indian freedom. Attlee ordered an immediate general election in India, indicating that the newly elected representatives would co-operate with transfer of power. Thus it was no longer a question of ‘if’ but of ‘when’.

Lord Mountbatten replaced Wavell at the beginning of 1947; he realized the inevitability and urgency of Partition as soon as he took post. He was also aware of the crown of thorns placed on him but he was not bothered about it. He, on the aftermath of partition, said to Khushwant Singh. ‘I don’t care what people say about me, I will be judged at the bar of history.’

On the 20th Feb, 1947, the deadline of handing over of the power was announced as June, 1948 but after assessing the volatile situation in India- Bengal, Bihar were in throes of violence and Punjab was on the verge, Mountbatten accepted the urgency. Finally the plan to partition India was announced on June 3, 1947 simultaneously by PM Attlee in the House of Commons and by Mountbatten on All India Radio. Cyril Radcliffe was entrusted with the job of deciding maps of India and Pakistan. He felt helpless with a short time span- he arrived on July 8- and the award was announced on the 16th Aug, 1947 as all the leaders insisted on boundaries being drawn before or on 15th Aug, 1947. The date of independence was selected by Mountbatten as it held a special significance for him. On the 15th Aug, 1945, Japan had surrendered bringing
about the six years old World War to an end. Mountbatten was then the Supreme Commander of the South East Asia Command (SEAC) and so the date was etched in his memory.

The political muddle was getting murkier, the leaders were either confused or helpless. Ram Manohar Lohia’s impression regarding this is vital as he, along with Jaiprakash Narayan, was a special invitee (as a socialist) to the meeting of Congress Managing (Working) Committee to decide about Partition. In this meeting, the leaders who spoke against Partition were Jaiprakash Narayan, Ram Manohar Lohia, Gandhi and Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan. Maulana Azad was so distraught that he did not utter a single word throughout the meeting; he just sat smoking in a corner. Kriplani, the President, was in a pathetic condition; he complained of severe headache and was either dozing or sat with his head bent. Lohia rightly infers that there was a shadow of old age and fatigue on Congress leadership at such a crucial juncture.

During this meeting, Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan spoke very briefly and expressed sorrow over his colleagues’ acceptance of partition. He raised two crucial questions on the Frontier in the context of the Partition: did they (the public) want the Frontier to be included in Pakistan or India? Alternatively, did they want to have a separate, independent existence? Jaiprakash Narayan was very brief, spoke only once but opposed partition sharply. Lohia also opposed partition.

Gandhi’s intervention was very important in the meeting. He complained that Nehru and Patel gave him no idea about partition earlier and Nehru aggressively denied this. Gandhi accepted that since Congress leaders had given their word, partition would have to come through. But he made an important suggestion, which was not taken up seriously for discussion: Congress should announce that once the policy of partition was agreed upon by League and Congress, the British Government and Viceroy should disengage and retract leaving League and Congress to work out the details of partition. Gandhi made utmost attempts to avoid partition. He even suggested that instead of partition Jinnah and Muslim League should be allowed to rule the Centre but all disagreed with this proposal.

The impressions of this meeting along with the inferences drawn by Lohia portray the Hindustani political leadership as shallow and weak around the most critical period, the only exception being Gandhi, Patel and Jinnah. There was absolutely no sense of clarity of aims or any carefully drawn plan or policy to achieve the goals.
Nehru and Patel pleaded with Mountbatten to preside over the Emergency Committee in these very words, “Please take over the Country. You have got to take it. We pledge ourselves. We will do whatever you say. We will be far more obedient than when you were viceroy……. We will find ways of disguising this.”

No wonder, Mountbatten described them as ‘a pair of chastened schoolboys’. In the midst of all this chaos and massacres, Mountbatten was holidaying in Simla. Finally Nehru and Patel urged him to come down immediately with the mediation of VP Menon. VP Menon was quite blunt and direct with Mountbatten,” If your Excellency isn’t down (from Simla) within 24 hours, don’t bother to come. It will be too late, we will have lost India.”

Finally on July 18, 1947, the Indian Independence Bill was passed by the British Parliament and became law. Ten expert committees were set up to deal with various aspects of Partition.

i) Organization, Records and government Personnel
ii) Assets and Liabilities
iii) Central Revenues
iv) Contracts
v) Currency, Coinage and Exchange
vi) Economic Relations-i
vii) Economic Relations-ii
viii) Domicile
ix) Foreign Relations
x) Armed Forces.

A cursory glance at the above list is sufficient to bring home the fact that administration, finance, bilateral relations and defense were the main concerns for the State. It was only on the 6th September, 1947 that the Emergency Committee was set along with Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation for the refugees.

The prime ministers of India and Pakistan met on Aug 17, 1947 at Ambala and agreed to an exchange of population. Ironically, by this time, 5,00,000 had already migrated each way. This shows the inefficiency of State intervention in the context of the stark reality.
B. **Partition:**

“Before I built a wall I’d ask to know
What I was walling in or walling out,
And to whom I was like to give offense,
Something there is that doesn’t love a wall.”

Robert Frosr,
*Mending Wall.*

i) **The Migration and the Journey.**

Confusing and overlapping identities of the refugees and the citizens:
The Muslims affected by the partition were not a monolithic category. Zakaria groups
three segments of Muslims of undivided India victimized by partition: i. The Muslims
who remained in India and now number almost 140 million. ii. The mohajirs who
migrated mainly from East Punjab and the Hindu majority provinces of India. iii. The
Biharlis, comprising Muslim immigrants from Bihar and parts of Uttar Pradesh and
(and because of their alignment with the Pakistan forces during the War of Liberation
in 1971), are now unwanted in Bangladesh).

Vazira Fazila Yacoobali Zamindar simplifies the grouping into Muslim refugees and
Non-Muslim (predominantly Hindu/Sikh) refugees.
The non-Muslim community affected by partition was grouped in 1) Sikhs who stayed
back in Pakistan 2) Hindus who stayed back in Pakistan 3) Sikhs who migrated to
India 4) Hindus who migrated to India 5) A small section of Hindus and Sikhs who
migrated to Pakistan from India. [sic].

If one looks at the categories of people of the sub-continent after the partition in 1947,
the number of groups increased. Naiyer Masud has listed 12 such categories:
1. Non-Muslims who after the partition, migrated to India from those areas which
came to be called Pakistan.
2. Muslims who lived in India and after the partition migrated to Pakistan.
3. Non-Muslims who were already resident in India.
4. Muslims who already belonged to Pakistan.
5. Non-Muslims who belonged to Pakistan and continued to live there even after the partition (these were few in number).

6. Muslims in India, who even after the partition, remained in India (these Muslims, perhaps, outnumbered those that had stayed back in Pakistan as well as those who had migrated from India).

7. Very few instances of non-Muslims belonging to India, migrating to Pakistan and Muslims belonging to Pakistan, and migrating to India.

8. People belonging to areas of divided Bengal who migrated to a different city within the same region (for instance Dhaka to Kolkata).

9. People belonging to areas of divided Punjab who migrated to a different city within the same region (for instance from Amritsar to Lahore).

10. The aged.

11. The young.

12. The children.

Categories eight and nine found a familiar cultural environment despite having crossed newly constituted national borders and so did not experience the sense of ethnic and cultural alienation in the same degree as the other migrants. Categories 10, 11 and 12 are grouped according to the age and corresponding temperament. The aged who had spent most of their lives in one place were nostalgic and most reluctant to migrate. The young were not as resistant as for them a new beginning was not very difficult and the children were more adaptable to changes because of their ignorance of the long term impact.

To these categories can be added a thirteenth category of people who were multiple migrants – shuttling between India and Pakistan till the permit system and later on the passport system made mobility difficult. They shuttled to and fro due to material reasons (retrieval or purchase of property, house etc.) or familial reasons (reunion with the fragmented family) or psychological reasons (inability to come to terms with the change and lack of reconciliation to the altered identity).

There was a mass exodus, one of the largest in the world and the largest in the Asian sub-continent, between August and November of 1947. The sheer logistics was overwhelming: 673 refugee trains moved 28,00,000 refugees in one month, Military Evacuation Organizations used 1,00,00,000 gallons of petrol to evacuate people in East Punjab. By the third week of November 32,000 refugees had flown in both directions and 1,33,000 people moved by sea route (this could have been a larger
number but for the fact that port authorities at Karachi allowed departure of only 2000 people a day). People migrated on foot convoys called as ‘Kafilas’, each comprising of around 30,000 to 40,000 people. The largest Kafila was of 400,000 people and it took 8 days to cross a certain spot. Within a span of 3 months after partition, 24 Kafilas of 8,49,000 people crossed the borders, in all a million crossed on foot 32. The movement across border was collective, people sought for security and safety in numbers. The community feeling was very strong, people were anxious to be with people from their own community. They were allowed to move but prohibited from taking any property with them; the reclamation system would come later.

**Permit and Passport System:**

Permit system was established in India across the western frontier with Pakistan on July 14th, 1948. In retaliation the Pakistani government put its own Permit system, a parallel Pakistan Control of Entry Ordinance, 1948. For many this marked a real partition as the mobility was controlled and regulated by the state; one had to get a permit for crossing the border and again a permit to return, if one wanted to come back. A Permit was a temporary document to be replaced by the Passport only by 1952, at the Pakistan government’s insistence, to curtail the ‘flood’ of U.P. Muslims in their proclaimed homeland.33

The passport system between India and Pakistan implied a strained relationship between controlling movement and determining citizenship in a newly emerging national order on both sides. The passport system was introduced in 1952 but its status was made clear as late as in 1967, in the Passport Act of India. The Passport was designated the status of an essential political document for safe travel and an aid in establishing citizenship and an evidence of the holder’s nationality, thus a relationship between travel, citizenship and national belonging was secured.

Permits were ephemeral and of transitory nature while passports had documentary power, the life of a permit lasted only the duration of a single journey and it did not require a declaration of citizenship. Although the passport system for travel between India and Pakistan was introduced at the insistence of Pakistani government, Indian Muslim Muhajirs remained transitory categories. The confusing stature of passports, coupled with the Pakistani High Commission’s unwillingness to issue Pakistani passport to those presumed and declared by Indian state to be Pakistani nationals gave
rise to the emergence of a new category – the 'Undefined' which was the category of moving people that were ensnared in the nationalizing order of the passport system.

**Gender Issues in Mobility and Citizenship:** Women were dependent hence their domicile status was decreed by that of their father or husband. So during the permit system, women could move between the two States without confronting contestations of Citizenship. This changed with the introduction of passports, the women applicants’ status as dependents became decisive. Women could move through marriage while men could not. In other words this influenced the marriage patterns in the places near the border. There were women who chose not to leave their homes in India while their husbands migrated but under these citizenship laws they lost their rights of nationality without ever leaving their homes.

**Migration and Counter Migration in the context of Bureaucracy, Politics and State:** During the chaos of migration, various migrant figures were issued by different ‘authorised’ sources. During mid-March, 1948, Indian High Commission in Pakistan reported that every day one thousand Muslim refugees were returning to India. In mid May 1948, United Kingdom High Commission in Delhi quoted local newspapers, 2,000 Muslims returning daily. UK High Commission, in a report to Commonwealth Relations office reported a total of 1, 00,000 to 2, 50,000 Muslims returned. Finally from April 3, 1948, the CID of Delhi Police began quantifying Muslim arrivals and departures in the city in its weekly reports. All this gave rise to a myth of ‘influx problem’ described as indiscriminate, steady, inordinate continuous influx of Muslims. This, in turn, proved threatening for the Hindu and Sikh refugees who had occupied vacated Muslim houses and now feared ejection. The Inspector General Report suggested that any attempts by the Government to ‘support’ Muslims would be interpreted by Hindus and Sikhs as being directed against them. Thus Government reports adopted a pro-Hindu and pro-Sikh position. In other words, the Hindu Sikh interests were pitched in opposition to the Muslims. Muslim zones were seen as a central impediment to the rehabilitation of Hindu and Sikh refugees. This poses a vital question- Why Muslims and Non-Muslims are posed always as binaries in either / or relation, why not in ‘and’ relation? This was the politics of exclusion. This whole
debate was not just centered on the banning of geographical entry or access into a state but it concerned larger issues of belonging, rights and citizenship. This was not a one-time phenomenon as even today almost all cities in India including the cosmopolitan metros have their own ghettos, own pockets of Muslim zones. Another illustration stated earlier reflects the politics of religion in bureaucracy. Sahibzada Khursheed Ahmed, the chief commissioner of Delhi through post partition violence, walked a precarious tight rope and was criticized for his weakness as he was wary of showing favour or support to Muslims. On the other hand, he was deeply frustrated to realize that Randhawa, his subordinate, was bypassing him to collect orders directly from his superiors. The previous debate and the above illustration perpetuate the politics of exclusion.

The flight was sudden, frantic and hurried. It was not planned with deliberation – only a few members of influential and rich social strata could afford to plan their migration after proper disposal of their estate and property. For the majority, it was a hurried gathering of clothes and utensils bundled in cloth or gunny sacks or an occasional tin trunk, with an odd piece of belonging in the form of a string cot. There was hardly any time for packing anything else before they would be deposited in refugee camps and from there loaded into trucks or packed into foot convoys.

The exodus is captured deftly by Mountbatten, ‘You have never seen anything like this (refugee movement). I flew over them; the entire roadwork of India was like a bank holiday crowd (sic) choked from end to end. Look at some of the photographs. In a refugee train they were not only in compartments, they were lying on top of each other, like in a sardine box. They were hanging onto the windows, standing on the running boards, and standing upon the roofs of the trains. It looked like a living sort of caterpillar.’ The journey was undertaken through five modes – by air, by train, by trucks, by sea and on foot. The accessibility to air was available to a select few influential people belonging to the upper strata of society. It was pre-planned, safe and comparatively free of complications. The journey by sea was also less frequent as port authorities at Karachi allowed departure of only 2000 people a day. Another reason was that geographically the coastal area of India was not near the provinces of Punjab while most of the migrants were Punjabis.

The people undertaking journeys by trains and convoys faced the maximum brutality of violence. The exodus was mainly by trains, in spite of the number of trains being
far less than that required. This was due to the fact that a great number of trains and army units were deployed for the departing British; as a result of which the people covered every inch of space in and on trains, making them an easy target for violence. The first incidence of train violence occurred on the 9th August 1947, when a train carrying Pakistani government employees was derailed in East Punjab and all its passengers either killed or wounded. This was followed by a series of train attacks on both sides of the border. Trains became a metaphorical image for violence, dislocation, escape; and these images are explored in partition fiction. These trains were known as ‘India specials’ or ‘Pakistan specials’ – symbolic of the last journey of the masses. The violence on trains came in the form of direct attack by weapons, burning, arson, boulders, derailment and drivers abandoning the trains. The climax of Khushwant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan* is based on such an event. In spite of the trains being vulnerable to the maximum brutality of violence they were the preferred mode by the migrants. This was due to the fact that they provided quick means to get away from risk zones, as compared to the convoys. In addition, the train was a symbol of state organized transport; this indirectly instilled a sense of security among the people, however deceptive that security might be.

The inner space of the trains was also occupied with a lot of violence in terms of encroachment on the established norms of social mixing. The gender barriers were challenged and pushed to their limits. Kaur points to this through a couple of incidents. The proximity to male company, the touch of bodies or pushing the women inside through the windows violated all the established social conventions. The purdah was abandoned and the privacy was intruded on. After the journey these conventions might have re-established themselves but there was definitely a break and change in them. Even the most private of events on the plane of female biology – child birth, took place during these journeys on almost non-existent isolation of the mother from the public. Chaman Nahal’s *Azadi* narrates such incidents.

The journey on foot was also vulnerable. These convoys were a combination of vehicles and people walking. The old, children and women, along with some heavy belongings were packed off in trucks and the others walked. These convoys were provided with armed soldiers but it was of little use. There are numerous narratives of such violence in the works of Butalia, Kaur and others. Works of fiction like *Azadi* also contain such narratives.
ii) Arrival and Settlement of the refugees

“Own Country? Of what feather is that bird? And tell me, good people, where does one find it? The place one is born in, that soil which has nurtured us, if that is not our country, can an abode of a few days hope to be it? And then, who knows, we should be pushed out of there too, and told to find a new home, a new country. I’m at the end of my life. One last flutter and there’ll be no more quarrelling about countries. And then, all this uprooting and resettling doesn’t even amuse anymore. Time was, the Mughals left their country and came to create a new one here. Is it a country or an uncomfortable shoe? If it pinches, exchange it for another?”

Ismat Chughtai

Roots.

If the exodus was on a gigantic scale, the relocation provided no less a challenge. There was a staggering figure of 5.5 million refugees to be rehabilitated in India in 1948. After a year, there were still 7,52,600 refugees. Fifty years after the Independence, the State still records 1,100 ‘displaced persons’ in permanent liability homes in India. One has to keep in mind these are ‘recorded’ figures, the actual number could be far greater. Even before the resettlement, came the arrival.

Right from the arrival of the refugees, the politics of the class operated on a very subtle level. Ravinder Kaur describes the process of arrival in India. A refugee reception centre was operative at the Old Delhi Railway Station-known as Wavell Canteen. All the refugees were registered and given a number and a card. Following this, they were directed to refugee camps if they did not have any provision for shelter. While directing the refugees to the camps, they were asked if they needed food and clothing from the state, and their answer would decide the allotment of barracks or cloth tents in various camps. The ones who could manage their own food and clothing were relocated in concrete barracks while those who could not would be sent to cloth tents from World War II.

Even within a single camp area, there were two different zones: a privileged and an ordinary one. In the privileged zone, water and food was supplied, there was no standing in the long queues for them. Here, the prestige and status afforded by wealth
became an easy vehicle of access to networks of official machinery. Thus class hierarchies did play a role in refugee resettlement.

Alternatively community politics came into play in the Evacuee Property Management. Zamindar in her study, states that Muslim zones were seen as a central impediment to the rehabilitation of Hindu and Sikh refugees. The occupation of houses from which Muslims were evacuated were labeled in succession as ‘evacuated’, ‘abandoned’, ‘vacant’ and then finally, ‘empty’. Thus the violence was made invisible by relabeling and it also made these houses open for rehabilitation of Hindu and Sikh refugees coming from Pakistan. Evacuated from their houses, the Muslims who wanted to stay back were helpless. India denied them space; Pakistan denied them entry on the pretext of ‘overcrowding’ of refugees.

Compensation: The pre-requisite for compensation, that the refugees should have owned some form of property, prohibited the homeless and poor refugees from any kind of claim. The next hindrance was the compensation process itself, which was extremely complicated and time consuming. It was divided into three phases that could in reality take as many as 10-15 years. The complicated procedure, along with sorry state of affairs made the things all the more difficult.

The first phase of compensation involved a maze of applications, forms and affidavits. The official details to be furnished included identity card numbers of refugee registration, nature of family organization, receipt of refugee allowance, any debts owned, date of arrival, proof of residence in camp, any independent exchange of property, claim to ownership of property, type, description and location of earlier owned property. The personal details of the claimant included details of caste, sub-caste, total number of male members in the family, names of father and grandfather. The patriarchal aspect was firmly established with details of husband, his father and grandfather required from widows and married women. Most importantly, any possibility of single women establishing a legally acceptable independent existence was denied by the state agencies; this was not totally unexpected as in the Hindu united Family, the ‘Karta’ or the head of the family is male.

In the second phase of compensation claim, the papers were assessed and the claims were verified. This included a lot of mathematical equations and detailed charts and maps of property value. The general belief of the State was that the claims were
exaggerated and so had to be ascertained and trimmed down if necessary. Then a certificate of final claim was issued.

In the final phase, the property file, along with a suitable property was allotted. The claimant was given a choice for compensation: through allotment of actual property or by compensation or by selling the final claim certificate to another individual.

**Housing Colonies:** The Housing colonies constructed for the refugees by the Rehabilitation and Development Board had cramped living spaces, with poor provision of water and electricity, no proper roads, filth and squalor. Different standards were adopted for colonies for different classes (economic levels). These colonies were grouped into A, B and C types.

These types had a gradation in terms of quality, area of construction, provision of civic services like water, electricity, sewerage, garbage disposal, drainage etc. Kaur quotes from a state document (File no. 90(1)54-H1 (A), Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation, 1954) to emphasise the class differences,

“"The Ministry decided that services in (such) cheap colonies are to be provided on austerity standards, viz., there will be no provision for underground sewerage and street lighting, and water supply will be by means of hand-pumps. Other colonies in this area will have normal standards subject to the availability of out-fall sewers and water main on the Nazafgarh Road.""  

Gender images were evident in the roles of the State; it was as if the State worked as a gendered agency. The resettlement process had two aspects- the actual field work of the resettlement process, and the Ministry or the administrative aspect. The field work involved social work, mothering and nursing the refugees, and settling them in camps. These relief activities, as Kaur has rightly pointed out, became the institutionalized symbols of traditional feminine stereotypes of nurturing, caring and mothering. As a response to this, women took an active role in rehabilitation field work as camp leaders, primary level teachers, first aid workers etc. On the other hand, the ministry involved in finance, policy making and documentation had a predominantly male presence. Of course, there was overlapping and shared space due to which this gendered role of State was not evident easily. Thus Anis Kidwai, Mridula Sarabhai, Kamlaben Patel, Premvati Thapar, Damyanti Sahgal and others who took a lead role in recovery and rehabilitation of abducted and missing women did display a fair amount of authority in their work but the fact remains that a limited
space was accorded to them in policy making decisions of the Rehabilitation Ministry. Thus there was definitely gendering of work in resettlement process.

Caste Politics also existed in the migration and resettlement Process. There were resettlement colonies of the untouchables, although they were not as evident and numerous as the colonies differentiated on the basis of class. The untouchables did not migrate from the violence prone areas before the actual partition; they also fully acknowledged the government’s support in resettlement. Their identities were fluid and changing during the entire process of migration and resettlement. Many of these groups came in contact with the Arya Samaj and thus acquired a new Hindu identification which was more evolved and empowered than the earlier one. Although they were on the fringes during migration, large scale violence was a great equalizer. In addition to this, dislocation or homelessness was common across caste and religion, thus some kind of equalizing and leveling did take place. One more reason was that most of them had already reinvented their identity earlier in the form of Sikh or Christian identity through conversion. As a consequence of all these factors, the personal or collective narratives of untouchables during violence and migration do not come in significant numbers or as a separate entity. They are not absent but at the same time, they are not emphatically visible as a separate construct, as they are merged and their tales woven with other identities.

iii) **Recovery of Abducted People:**

“There are many young, half-mad women who keep laughing-
perhaps at all of us, at the country,
at religion and the propagators of the these religions,
at governments and their laws.
Maybe they laugh at freedom-
Who knows what they are laughing at?”

Anis Kidwai

*Azadi ki Chaon mein.*
An important step in resettlement process was the recovery of abducted people. Urvashi Butalia has focused on this through the narratives. Ritu Menon and Kamala Bhasin have made an extensive study in their work *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India’s Partition*. Kamala Patel has written on her direct experiences of recovery and rehabilitation work. This critique, in giving the factual information, draws from the texts selected for study.

One of the violent faces of the Indian partition was the abduction of women followed by forced conversions, marriage or rape. After partition, a systematic effort was made to locate and rehabilitate these women. The State’s formal role was evident in the Inter-Dominion Conference held at Lahore on Dec 6, 1947. The two countries agreed upon the action plan to be implemented for the recovery and restoration. Mridula Sarabhai was appointed as the Chief All India Organiser for recovery and restoration operation. This recovery operation was to be run under the women’s section, Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation, with Rameshwari Naidu as the honorary advisor. A machinery of police force was set up. Between Dec. 1947 and July, 1948, 9,362 and 5,510 abducted women were recovered in India and Pakistan respectively. Later on, the numbers dwindled so a binding agreement was reached between India and Pakistan on 11 Nov, 1948, setting out the terms for recovery in each dominion. Ordinances were issued in 1949 in both the countries. The politics of number game operated here too, Mridula Sarabhai believed that the number of abducted women was ten times the official figure.

The Abducted Persons Recovery Act of 1949 defined an abducted person as “a male child under the age of 16 years or a female of whatever age who [sic] is, or immediately before the 1st day of March 1947 was missing and who on or after that day and before 1st Jan 1949, has become separated from his or her family and is found to be living with or under the control of any other individual and family and in the latter case includes a child born to any such female after the said date.”

The concern with children below sixteen was obviously to do with forcible conversion. The ordinance laid down implicit acknowledgement of the policy that the child would belong to the father, Hindu or Muslim, and should be left behind in either country but the ordinance did not make it clear as to what were to determine the religious or legitimate identity of such children. There were other complications in the form of women pregnant at the time of recovery or those who delivered in the
recovery camps. A large number of recovered women, who were in the early stages of pregnancy, underwent abortions (arranged by the State); to ‘come out clean and pure’ to be received by their family. The nature of these abortions – forced or voluntary, leaves a grey area in the ethical structure of state policy.

The Recovery and Restoration of Abducted Persons Bill was introduced as late as 1949, when most of the recoveries had been made. This persistence was not experienced in Pakistan; there the guiding force was more in the form of pressure from India. Menon and Bhasin have tried to give arguments as to why the Indian nation State was so insistent on this bill. One obvious reason was the need to reestablish itself as a responsible State, adopting a patronizing stance. The other reason was not so naïve: it had to do with the anxiety and insecurity of Hindu Community being diluted by pathways of conversions to other religions, especially to Islam and Christianity. In this light, recovering their women, restoring them to their Hindu families and thus ensuring that the future progeny would belong to Hindu Community was on the agenda. Thus women were used as objects; their biological ability to reproduce was abused to increase the legitimate members of a particular community or religion.

The rationale behind the abduction of women was rooted in the image of women signifying the honour of the nation or community. So violating the honour by abducting the women amounted to the marker of the victory by the ‘other’. Women’s bodies were used as sign-posts to inscribe the territory by the community. Stripping, branding, tattooing, parading naked, disfigurement, dismemberment and mutilation of the sexual organs were some of the heinous violence that the women were subjected to. Many women tried to escape this by mass suicide or even genocide by their own family or community. Others who were abducted became symbolic of transcending borders and boundaries of social, cultural and political thresholds. Abduction violated women’s sexuality, conversion violated her communal identity and further violation of her biological freedom came in the form of forced cohabitation and reproduction.

At the other end, recovery and rehabilitation also transcended its humanitarian function when State agency came into action; it became a matter of national pride and honour. Thus women were objectified and exploited in not only abduction but throughout the entire process of recovery and rehabilitation. The actual process of recovery was riddled with difficulties. There was a lot of hostility and resistance not only from the abductors, but ironically, from many women themselves who had
formed a bonding with the abductor. This bonding was either emotional or marital or material but the fact was that it existed, and gave rise to a lot of resistance.

iv) Migration and Counter Migration:

“Just before sunrise, Bishen Singh, the man who had stood on his legs for fifteen years, screamed and as officials from the two sides rushed towards him, he collapsed to the ground.

There, behind barbed wire, on one side, lay India and behind more barbed wire, on the other side, lay Pakistan. In between, on a bit of earth, which had no name, lay Toba Tek Singh.”

Saadat Hasan Manto

“Toba Tek Singh”

It would be a mistake to assume that the migration during partition was linear. There were people who moved to and fro and counter migrated. Sometimes it was voluntary and at times it was enforced by State. The voluntary counter migration was also not entirely willful, it was also enforced. The only difference being that no external agency was enforcing it. In case of voluntary counter migration, the reasons were chiefly material, familial or psychological. The material reasons were related to property, especially immovable property issues. Many people went back to dispose off their houses, fields, business or other belongings. The familial reasons included search and recovery of missing family members, persuading the members who stayed behind to migrate and to meet and unite with the divided family. Then there were people who found the psychological trauma of changed location too difficult to face. They remained indecisive of their own land, the homeland was left behind or snatched away and they were to assume a new place as their rightful own country. So they kept on wandering to and fro, shuttling across the two countries. This trauma is deftly portrayed in many fiction narratives.

The counter migration enforced by the State came in the form of the logic of overburdened cities and excessive one-sided migration. For instance, the Muslim
exodus from Delhi became an important point of contention. The Pakistani Government insisted that only those in Purana Qila who had opted to work for the Pakistan government should be allowed to board the special trains to Pakistan, for it had not agreed to the movement of any refugees from Delhi or Uttar Pradesh. This was described as ‘dumping’ of Muslims across the Pakistan border and it was objected to. Karachi, too was staggering under a housing crisis as with most of the migrants landing up there, housing refugees became a critical issue. Thus a considerable number of refugees were tossed and turned around. Zamindar uses the term ‘The Push and Pull of Displacement’ for this. So if one visualizes all the migrants making a conscious choice of migration, keeping in mind the best of their interests, arriving and after a rough patch, settling down in their chosen land, it would be building a false image of migrants. There was a lot of counter migration that continued right till the permit system and then ceased with the check on mobility through the enforcement of passport system. The Permit system was put into action quite abruptly and this resulted in strange cases of people visiting the other country for a short visit (collecting documents or attending a marriage) and finding themselves declared as nationals of that country. The interviews taken by Butalia and Zamindar bring out such cases.

C. The Aftermath and Continuum:

“Now, from which other place can I flee? Where can I run to escape from Pakistan? Is there any place where there is no Pakistan? Where I can become whole again, and live with all my emotions and desires intact? Banno! Every place is a Pakistan that wounds you and me, defeats us. It still hasn’t stopped beating and humiliating us.”

Kamleshwar.

How many Pakistans?

The aftermath of the partition is not done away with but is evoked and revoked whenever there is a crisis or a decisive event on national or local level. It is a continuum which modifies and reinvents itself with time and is emphatically present in public and private discourse. If one proceeds to pin down the span of the aftermath,
it concluded with the migrants becoming citizens and finally establishing themselves as locals but in actual practice it does not happen so. Although the passage of time has worked a lot towards healing and modifying the state of affairs, it cannot be done away with, considering the fact that it is coupled with the genesis of our nation. To do away with and deny the existence of the partition today would be denying the existence of the nation with the lame excuse that the nation was formed a long time back in the past. If one regrets the partition, one has to still acknowledge that it took place and is a decisive moment of our past, the presence of which continues in the present and will play an important role in shaping the future. Almost all the studies examined reflect this tone towards the conclusion.

The after effects of partition can be traced in the evolving images of Citizenship, State, Identity and new beginnings. The image of victims whose lives were torn apart by partition has undergone a huge change. The victims gradually evolved into migrants. These migrants after a challenging journey of existence turned into refugees. The helpless image of refugee barely surviving in the non-existent basic amenities in the camp changed over time. Compensations came through, the conditions of living underwent a change, and camps were replaced by housing colonies. Simultaneously, the dominion status was reinforced with citizenship status, passports, voter cards and ration cards. Socially, the identity evolved with marriage in local families and close interaction with local social groups. All this was a gradual journey of entry, acceptance and establishment. Religious identity was reaffirmed with the establishment of local Gods. Language also became a marker with the Urdu interspersed Punjabi language of pre-partition days being exchanged for Hindi interspersed Punjabi dialect of the migrants to India. Kaur notes how the next generation of Delhi migrants has rejected Punjabi in favour of Hindi. Political identity has evolved with grouping of Akali Sikh, Arya Hindu and the further community based political associations and networks, especially with extreme right-wing alliances.

In this manner the major markers of identity- politics, language and religion have worked towards providing a face to the migrants. Kaur infers that in Delhi, the two identities- Hindu and Punjabi, frequently contested with each other to share a common space but over the years the identity of being an Indian has evolved as the most powerful identity.
This journey of evolving identities has not been necessarily a progressive one; there have been contradictions, complexities, contestations and regressions. The point to be noted is the evolving character of identities working towards establishment and belonging.

**Conclusion:**
The preceding critique or analysis reveals the complex nuances involved in the entire process of the partition. It is observed that there are two trends in partition studies: one is to emphasise more on the political events leading to partition - the official policies, pacts, negotiations, procedures etc. As a reaction to this, the second trend that emerged later (around 80s) was to look back upon the violence and displacement. The factors of religion, gender, caste, class that still persist in the social fabric, do not figure prominently in the second trend.

This results in ‘lack of lessons to be learned’ and hence the ghosts of partition visit and revisit. In other words, unless the structural differences which instigated violence during the partition are identified, analyzed and resolved, the violence would erupt time and again; it would assume the nature of an inert volcano.

These studies, focusing on the analytical category of differences would be undertaken only when the critical tools, vocabularies to examine and analyze the post-partition intellectual, human, material, psycho-social are developed. These studies would need to be an ongoing process, in cumulative stages. These studies should locate it at various temporal stages. It is very crucial to put partition as the fixed reference and study it by positioning the changing structural differences at various temporal points.

One possible change could be: one has to come out of the binary of the ‘guilt/antagonistic –aggressive’ positions. While studying the violence with relations to socio-communal differences, the positions taken is either of the above mentioned. It is equally important to detach oneself, along with attaching oneself to the past. This is the stance of the mature understanding of the past in the context of the present. The noted Kannada writer S.L. Bhairappa presents a thought-provoking argument in this regard in his landmark work- *Avaran* (translated from Kannada- Uma Kulkarni). The meaning of the title is layer or covering but S.L...Bhairappa explains his intended
meaning of ‘avaraana’ in the following way: The maya which covers truth by forgetting is avaran and the work which reinforces falsehood is ‘Vikshepa’. This process on individual level is ‘avidya’ and on collective or universal level is ‘maya’. The argument presented is thus: 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 both history and historian is engulfed in ‘avaraan’ their vision is eclipsed and then History becomes a futile exercise. I feel that S.L.Bhairappa is pointing out to the responsibility of the historian in ‘selecting’ and presenting the past events; this is a perfectly logical argument.

When the pre-partition and more particularly, pre-colonial history is reexamined the historians should ask if there is eclipsing of vision in selection and presentation of facts. This is what I mean when I say that today chiefly two positions are available for looking at the past – one that is labeled as sympathetic, slightly guilt-ridden and the other one which is labeled as antagonistic or even communal. The problem of elaborating this argument is precisely what Kaur directs at when the inadequacy of present vocabulary to tackle the past is painted at. In simplistic terms if only two positions are available – a and b, a is always named with reference to the location of b and vice versa, no other objective frame of reference is available readily. It’s always ‘them’ and ‘us’, ‘we’ and ‘they’, ‘self’ and ‘other’. Unless this maze is broken, one cannot proceed in the real sense. The markers of the new path are brilliantly pointed by Bhairappa – one has to examine the past without any guilt / blame, sympathy / anger, defense / blame.

These binaries would not serve the purpose of history. Agreed that history is and needs to be subjective but one has to choose the type of subjectivity with great responsibility. This argument is loaded with a lot of uneasiness as one is treading on dangerously shaky grounds. To get to a safer course is very reassuring and tempting. Thus the preoccupation of mainstream partition histories with the political discourse can be understood as safe haven to escape this uneasiness and vulnerable position as far as contestation is concerned.

Khushwant Singh has traced the genealogy of the above mentioned two positions:
“When we go over the history of the country it will be noticed that during the Muslim and British periods it was the folk religion and the sociological make up of caste that
gave Hinduism its resilience. Confronted with Islam and Christianity, Hinduism evolved two distinct attitudes: the liberal, which emphasized the essential tolerance of Hinduism towards other religions; and an isolationist, chauvinistic, aggressive attitude which equated India with Hindus and rejected other religions not of Indian origin as foreign abominations. The liberal attitude was nurtured by the Brahmo Samaj, the Prarthana Samaj, the Theosophists, the Ramkrishna mission and manifested itself in the teachings of Sri Aurobindo, Gandhi and agnostics like Nehru and his daughter, Indira Gandhi. The second attitude was expressed in the glorification of warriors who fought the Muslims: Prithviraj Chauhan, Rana Pratap, Shivaji and Guru Gobind Singh and later in the revivalist movements, chiefly the Arya Samaj of Dayanand Saraswati and is today the philosophy of the Bharatiya Janata Party(formerly Bharatiya Jana Sangh) and its paramilitary wing, the RSS(Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh). The clash between the two opposing attitudes was climaxed in the murder of the liberal Gandhi by Godse, a fanatical member of the RSS. 43

These two attitudes give rise to the two positions of looking at the past. This is not to disregard the importance of the other two attitudes mentioned earlier: i) the one adopted by the traditional partition histories. These histories come from the discourse of political science and there is obviously more focus on the political discourse of the partition. They focus more on ‘what’ and ‘how’ rather than ‘why’. ii) The more ‘humane’ approach of the later historians, originating from the discourse of sociology, feminism and culture studies.

These histories serve an equally valid purpose in the recording of the past, and these locations are also equally important. But the point under consideration here is the two positions of looking at the past that have evolved from the two attitudes pointed out by Khushwant Singh. And it is at this juncture that one finds S.L.Bhairappa’s work directing us to a new course. He wants us to be ‘brutally’ objective while examining the pre-colonial and colonial time period of India.

The other inference which emerges from the above argument is: In the case of India, history of religion and history of nation have crossed courses at intersections which have the potential to be contested, and hence these ‘shared spaces’ of history and religion and history of nation have to be dealt with a lot of responsibility and care. It is here that the balancing act between subjectivity and objectivity becomes very crucial. One should not confuse the ‘secular’ approach with the ‘subjective-objective’ approach at this juncture.
All these concerns are urgent in the context of Indian History because of the events leading to Independence and partition, where religious identity was continually contested with national identity and vice versa. The concerns and anxieties reflected in the works of Mushirul Hasan, Gyanendra Pandey and others are precisely located here.

As mentioned earlier, the selection of the past is very important, and hence it often becomes a political activity. One classic illustration is that of Khudai Khidmatgar movement, which receives no place in the school history books (of Pakistan). Instead the image construed is the formation of a Muslim state, whose precursors run directly from Mohammed to Jinnah, and this completely wipes out the Khudai Khidmatgar’s sympathetic links to the Congress or its opposition to Partition. It is not to be forgotten that the North West Frontier Province was the only Muslim majority province to have three Congress ministries between 1930 and 1947. Pathans were allied to the Indian National Congress since 1930, and were political and ideological opponents of the All India Muslim League. The Khudai Khidmatgars totally disregarded the idea of their geographical proximity with Pakistan, but emphasized their ideological identification with the Congress (in spite of their relation being fraught with ambiguities and misunderstandings: Badshah Khan’s primary allegiance was to Gandhi personally and only secondary to the All India Congress Committee) prompting them to ask, “If East and West Pakistan could be separated by India, why could we not form West India and be separated from the rest of India by Pakistan?” And so Badshah Khan’s last words to the Congress, “you have thrown us to the wolves,” reflect betrayal, profound sadness, helplessness and bewilderment in which the struggle ended abruptly in 1947. What makes the case of Khudai Khidmatagars more tragic is that this betrayal was felt towards both - Congress and League: Congress for agreeing to the referendum on their behalf and by League as they were never recognized as freedom fighters in the new nation of Pakistan. There were no records of members of nationalist movement in North West Frontier, no recognition, no pension. There were no memorials or museums. Thus the State has blocked the historical truth of *Khudai Khidmatgar* movement. Thus this is an instance of forceful intervention of State History in order to create a break in the next generation’s understanding of the past.
The important points emerging through the narratives of selected Partition studies are:

- Violence
- Loss
- Relocation
- Evolving Images of Citizenship and Nationhood.

The areas of Interrogation established through these studies are:

1. The Politics of language
2. The Politics of silence and memory in retelling
3. The Politics of statistics
4. The Politics of State and Institutions
5. The Politics of Gender, Class and Caste / Religion

The study of the Partition from the perspective of history texts reveals a shift from ‘anxiety of chronology and causes of partition’ to the focus on violence, the whole subjective experience and need of the ‘responsible’ subjectivity of the contemporary historian. It is also seen that in some cases, the new histories have attempted to study the lived experiences by adopting the structure of narratives in some part of their work. This attempt is particularly observed in case of Urvashi Butalia, Ravinder Kaur, and Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin. This can be seen as a silent acknowledgement of the hypothesis that narratives provide more space and language to relive the past in terms of crisis, violence and loss.

It is then but logical that one studies the literary perspective on the partition. This is attempted in the next chapter by study and analysis of selected fiction in the form of novels and short stories.
Notes


3 Ibid. All the references to the various thinkers in this sub section are derived from this book.

4 For Nietzsche, this random moment is essentially a phenomenon of change rather than time. His world is not made up of units of time but is made up of ‘pathos’ (not meaning pity but the original Greek meaning- incident or event.).


10 Almost all the scholars of Partition Studies acknowledge the important connection between past, present and future. Alok Bhalla, “How we in turn read these (Partition) stories, based upon our own presuppositions will determine the kind of politics we choose to practice in future.” (*Stories of the Partition* L.xxxiii ).
This reasoning could be affirmed with the argument of Alessandro Portelli. He opines that ‘affirmative discourse’ is ready made, articulated and available. On the other hand, ‘Rank and file” histories or a vernacular version ‘must piece itself together from scratch every time and is burdened by the fear of disapproval and isolation ……. It is distorted, buried, deviated and allowed to emerge only in between the lives as dreams, metaphor, lapses, digression, error, denigration.’ Suvir Kaul, ed. *The Partition of Memory: The Afterlife of the Division of India* (Delhi, Permanent Black, 2001).

Ananya Jahanara Kabir, “Gender, Memory, Trauma: Women’s Novels on the Partition of India,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*  25.1(2005).


Vazira Fazila- Yacobali Zamindar terms it as ‘Bureaucratic violence- of drawing political boundaries and nationalizing identities that became, in some lives, interminable. Paradoxically, these structural differences are reinforced through the discourse of sameness. ‘All Indians are brothers and sisters’, in school textbooks: these messages are often accompanied by pictures of stereotypes of Muslims, Christians and Hindus. Butalia points this out succinctly by stating that history writing is a parameter of technology of education and history teaching is a parameter of politics of education (Suvir Kaul, 2001).

For example, in mid-March 1948, the Indian High Commission in Pakistan reported that everyday 1,000 Muslim refugees were returning to India, in mid May 1948, United Kingdom High Commission in Delhi quoted local newspapers – Muslim refugees were 2,00,000-3,00,000. In a later report, it quoted local news that 2,000 Muslims were returning every day.

Kaur clarifies that what she means by class is far beyond Marxist terms. The notion is more of accessibility and ownership of social, cultural, economic structures generated through affiliation with educational and other elite social institutions, this is not directly equated only with economic up-gradation, it can only be accumulated through generations.

Collective Memory is a set of ideas, images, feelings and beliefs about the past which is situated in the resources shared by people and not in their individual minds.

Pandey defines communalism in terms of L. Dumont- that ideology which emphasizes as the social, political and economic unit the group of adherents of each religion, and highlights the distinction, even the antagonism, between such groups.

Arjun Appadurai’s consideration of locality as primarily relational and contextual rather than as scalar or spatial, quoted by Pandey.


Ibid. 82.

Ibid. 98.

Ibid. 82.

Ibid. 83.


Madhav Godbole, *The Holocaust of Partition: An Inquest* (New Delhi: Rupa and
Company, 2006) 158.

30Ibid. 158.


33 The word passport has an interesting genealogy of meaning. The original meaning as given in the English Statute of 1548 was a license given by a Military authority to a soldier on furlough. During the First World War the Passport system in its modern sense was introduced in most countries. A passport has a history of travel document – a shift to ‘a means to control movement’ to becoming a certificate of citizenship, a means to establish state bound national identity and this shift needs to be critically understood rather than accepting it as given. This is discussed by Vazira Fazila – Yacoobali Zamindar in her work


36 With the exception of Sindhis. A remarkable feature of partition histories is the exclusion of Sindhi migration. One presumes that this migration did not face violence and large scale destruction as the Hindu, Sikh and Muslim communities did elsewhere. This is not to ignore the fact that the Sindh refugees also incurred heavy, irreparable losses in terms of property and divided families.

The cult of Sheran wali Mata linked to the Punjabi Hindu migrants of 1947 is studied closely by Ravinder Kaur and shows how religion is used as an effective marker for establishing community identity.


*Marathi Text*