CHAPTER THREE

LITERARY PERSPECTIVES ON
THE INDIAN PARTITION
‘Art takes us to the very ‘Idea’ of life itself removing ‘mist of objectives and subjective contingencies’. This is where art and philosophy exceed history, which represents life but cannot express it.’

-Schopenhauer

The partition of 1947 was a cataclysmic event in the life of the nation. As literature is a reflection of society and lived reality, it was no wonder that after the initial shock, the writers gave vent to this unmanageable grief and trauma through their writings. Writings of all types and genres poured in- novels, short stories, plays, poetry, memoirs, sketches, essays, letters, articles and other various forms. They were written primarily in Hindi, Urdu, English and Sindhi. The fiction produced during this period answered a range of needs: the initial response, thawing of shock, outlet for grief, coming to terms and the healing process. There has been a huge amount of fiction and the process still continues.

As Alok Bhalla has rightly expressed in relation to the partition literature, the partition was a traumatic break in the moral, social and political continuity of the subcontinent’s cultural history. It actually made the novelists unsure about the narrative traditions still available to them. Thus in a way, the “partition actually erased all sense of an available past and a possible future for millions of human beings.”

Partition fiction attempts to assimilate the enormity of the experience and presents the history of the lives and experiences of the common people who lived through the partition. The trauma of partition still haunts the national psyche, thus the partition continues to engage the consciousness of the writers of the Indian subcontinent even today. This also reaffirms the fact that partition is an ongoing a- temporal process, expressed time and again through partition fiction.

Krishna Sobti, Rahi Masoom Reza, Intizar Husain and Mohan Rakesh, Qurratulain Hyder and Saadat Hasan Manto wrote some of the finest and thought provoking fiction on the partition. The landmarks of partition fiction include Tamas, Train to Pakistan, Ice Candy Man, What the Body Remembers, Midnight’s Children, The Shadow Lines, Aur Kitne Pakistan, Zindaginama, A Bend in the Ganges, Sunlight on a Broken Column and A Heart Divided.
This chapter on literary perspective on the partition attempts a critique of selected texts of fiction. Before going into the detailed study of each text, it would be pertinent to have an overview and introduction to them.

Bapsi Sidhwa is an award winning Pakistani novelist striving above all to bring women's issues of the Indian subcontinent into public discussion. She was born in 1938 in Karachi to Zoroastrian parents Peshotan and Tehmina Bhandara but her family migrated shortly thereafter to Lahore. She was two when she contracted polio and nine in 1947 at the time of Partition. She married at the age of 19 and moved to Bombay for five years before she divorced and remarried in Lahore with her present husband Noshir who is also a Zoroastrian. Sidhwa claims to have had a rather boring childhood, with the exception of the years of strife surrounding the Partition, due partly to a bout with polio, which kept her home schooled.

As a young girl, Sidhwa witnessed first-hand the bloody Partition of 1947, in which seven million Muslims and five million Hindus were uprooted in the largest, most terrible exchange of population that history has known. The Partition was caused by a complicated set of social and political factors, including religious differences and the end of colonialism in India. Sidhwa was also witness to these evils, including an incident in which she found the body of a dead man in a gunny sack at the side of the road.

Her home city of Lahore became a border city in Pakistan, and was promptly flooded by hundreds of thousands of war refugees. Many of these were women - victims of rape and torture. Due to lasting shame and their husbands' damaged pride, many victims were not permitted entry into their homes after being "recovered." There was a rehabilitation camp with many of these women adjacent to Sidhwa's house, and she states that she was inexplicably fascinated with these "fallen women," as they were described to her at the time. She realized from a young age that victory is celebrated on a woman's body, vengeance is taken on a woman's body.

Bapsi Sidhwa's third novel marked her move into international fame. *Cracking India,* was published in several other countries in 1988 under the title *Ice-Candy-Man.* Told from the awakening consciousness of an observant eight-year-old Parsi girl, the violence of the Partition threatens to collapse her previously idyllic world. The issues dealt with in the book are as numerous as they are horrifying. The thousands of instances of rape, and public's subsequent memory loss that characterize the Partition are foremost. In the hatred that has fueled the political relations between Pakistan and
India since that time, these women's stories were practically forgotten. The narrator, Lenny, is astute beyond her years, yet the questioning nature of the child is portrayed so skillfully that it allows the author to effectively deal with serious subjects both firmly and with subtlety, whichever suits her purpose. Lenny's perceptions of the differences in people change at the same time.

Women's issues, the implications of colonization, and the bitterly divided quagmire of partisan politics that the British left in their wake are reevaluated in the novel, picked apart by the sharp questions of a child. The Parsees remained neutral during the Partition, a fact well remembered by two countries that are enemies to this day over the highly disputed events of the Partition. Sidhwa uses this impartial position to its fullest, contributing greatly to the national discourse on the matter. The novel was made into the visually and emotionally stunning, highly acclaimed film Earth, by Pakistani-Canadian director Deepa Mehta in 1999.

Attia Hosain was born into a wealthy landowning family in northern India. Her father was educated at Cambridge University, and her mother was the founder of an institute for women's education and welfare. Hosain attended the Isabella Thoburn College at the University of Lucknow, becoming the first woman from a landowning family to graduate in 1933. Influenced by the left-wing, nationalist politics of her Cambridge-educated brother and his friends, Hosain became involved with the All-India Progressive Writers’ Association, a group of socialist writers which included Ahmed Ali, Mulk Raj Anand and Sajjad Zaheer. Encouraged by the poet and political activist Sarojini Naidu, she attended the 1933 All-India Women’s Conference in Calcutta, reporting on it for Lucknow and Calcutta newspapers. In this period, she also began to write short stories.

In 1947, determined to avoid going to the newly created Pakistan, Hosain left India for Britain with her husband, Ali Bahadur Habibullah, who undertook war repatriation work. In 1953 she published her first work of fiction, a collection of short stories titled Phoenix Fled. This was followed in 1961 by her only novel, Sunlight on a Broken Column.

Tamas is posited at a unique location temporally. The author, Bhisham Sahni, born in Rawalpindi on 8th August 1915, had witnessed the worst of the partition. He participated actively in the Indian freedom struggle and was jailed for involvement in Quit India Movement of 1942. He went on to become a district secretary of the Indian National Congress. When communal riots broke out in Rawalpindi in March 1947, he
worked with the Relief Committee. Like his elder brother, the legendary actor Balraj Sahni, Bhisham also studied in Lahore and after completing his masters in English, started a life of commitment to teaching in Lahore City, then considered the bastion of social radicalism. Sahni was forced to move to Amritsar in 1950 after the aftermath of the partition. Curiously, the novel was not penned then. Sahni continued his active association with radical causes. Later Sahni joined the Indian people’s Theater Association in Bombay. He was a long time general secretary of the Progressive Writers Association and was the founder-chairman of SAHMAT, a platform for cultural intervention founded in memory of the slain theatre artist and activist Safdar Hashmi. In 1950, he joined Delhi College as a lecturer in English. He lived in Moscow from 1957 to 1963 and worked as a translator from Russian to Hindi with the Foreign Language Publishing House, Moscow. This was chiefly because in addition to his work in Hindi, he also had proficiency in other languages. Besides writing more than a hundred short stories, compiled in several volumes, most notably Bhagya Rekha (1953), Pahla Patha (1956), Bhalakti Rakha (1966) and Nischar (1983), Sahni has written another fine masterpiece on the partition – a short story titled “Amritsar aa gaya hai”. It is a brilliant portrayal of how people are totally dehumanised by mass frenzy to a level that they are reduced to either limp helplessness or unreasoning rage. It portrays the victim becoming an aggressor and the aggressor a victim. Alongside Saadat Hasan Manto’s “Toba Tek Singh”, “Amritsar aa gaya hai” merits a place of honour in the literature of India’s troubled partition.

Among the many awards received by Bhisham Sahni, such as the Shiromani Writers Award in 1979, the Lotus Award from the Afro-Asian Writers’ Association in 1981 and the Soviet Land Nehru Award in 1983, Tamas bought home to him the Sahitya Akademi Award and the Uttar Pradesh Government Award in 1975.

Chaman Nahal is an award-winning Indian novelist. His work Azadi, a riveting narrative of the conflict-ridden effects of Partition in 1947 was considered as a very fine work of fiction. His trilogy - The Crown and the Loincloth (1981), The Salt of Life (1990), and The Triumph of the Tricolour (1993), is again largely popular and speaks a lot about modern history and Gandhi’s thought process. Nahal’s autobiography Silent Life talks about his life as an academic, globe-trotter and renowned Indian English fiction writer.

Chaman Nahal was born in Sialkot. He was educated at the University of Delhi and the University of Nottingham. My True Faces, his first novel, was followed in 1975
by Azadi, which is regarded as his best. His other novels, which are noted for realistic writing with a lot of emphasis on the Indian middle classes, include Into Another Dawn (1977) and The English Queens (1979). Azadi which won the Sahitya Akademi Award, is one of the four novels which constitute the Gandhi Quartet (Gandhian Ideology). It is a modern classic which presents a comprehensive vision of life demonstrating the havoc that the partition played on the people of the country both at the social and individual levels. It depicts the realistic historical record of the horrible incidents caused by the partition through literary perspective. Nahal has used the seven families of a Muslim-dominated city Sialkot to represent thousands of sufferers like them. Nahal himself was one of those refugees who were compelled to leave Sialkot for India. So, he wrote what he had observed with remarkable penetration and realism.

Train to Pakistan by Khushwant Singh is a brutal picture of the partition violence that took place. Khushwant Singh, born in 1915 in Hadali, Punjab, was a direct witness to the partition and its aftermath. He did not face the trauma directly as he belonged to an affluent family of contractors and well before Partition, he was sent to India and was relocated in secure and comfortable life. But living through those times in the troubled areas gave an edge to his writing which is quite evident in Train to Pakistan.

Partitions by Amit Majmudar was written recently as compared to the other primary works taken for the study. Its temporal and spatial location is markedly different and hence the study of this text becomes important. It reflects the contemporary perspective of looking at the Indian Partition a cataclysmic event that is separated from the present by more than sixty years.

Majmudar is conscious of his location, he is aware that neither he nor his parents had direct experience of the partition. Majmudar states that the influence on him was the Partition Literature. He especially mentions Urvasi Butalia’s The Other Side of Silence and Collins and La Pierre’s Freedom at Midnight.

Majmudar’s family – ancestry is connected to partition and pre partition days. His family is from Junagadh which was ruled by a Muslim Nawab in pre-partition days. Majmudar’s ancestors had close relations with the Nawab, one of his ancestors had tutored the young princes. In recognition the Nawab had gifted land and the title ‘Majmudar’; his ancestors earlier had a more Brahmin –sounding name ‘Vaishnav’, meaning devotee of Vishnu. This Nawab chose to join Pakistan on Independence, but over Pakistan’s protests, Junagadh was annexed by India. To this day some maps of
Pakistan insist on inking a green dot in in Gujarat, indicating that Junagadh is rightfully theirs. Due to this curious family history, Majmudar feels that his ancestry acquired a duality – he belongs to a Hindu family whose very name was chosen by a Muslim benefactor and whose home can be thought of as either Indian or Pakistani of both.

Saadat Hasan Manto was born on the 11th May, 1912 at Sambrala in Punjab’s Ludhiana district. He belonged to a middle class Kashmiri family of Amritsar. In his formative years, Manto was influenced by Bari Alig– a writer, journalist and political thinker. Manto arrived in Bombay in 1936 to edit a film weekly ‘Mussawar’. Manto left Bombay only twice: once for a brief stint at All India Radio at Delhi in 1941, and then permanently in 1947 when he migrated to Pakistan. In Bombay he was engaged with Imperial Film Company, Film City and Filmistan. He also edited two magazines. Manto’s last years were spent in Lahore. It was a period of creativity – his greatest literary output resulted during the last seven years of his life when he was facing financial and emotional hardship – ill health, excessive drinking, poverty and a deep nostalgia for Bombay. Manto regretted leaving Bombay and migrating to Pakistan. Manto died in Jan.1955 in Lahore.

The writing period of Manto spans over two decades. His literary output include 22 collection of short stories, one novel, five collections of radio plays, three collections of essays, two collections of reminiscences, portraits, letters and many scripts for films. Manto was tried for obscenity six times – thrice before and thrice after Independence.


The second section which consists of essays is a set of four critical commentaries. The first is on Manto’s “The Dog of Tetwal: The Dog of Tetwal in Context: Nation and its Victims.” The second is on Kamleshwar’s story; “How Many Pakistan? : An
Overview.” The third is on Sahni’s work:” Pali and Communalism Today.” The last is a critical commentary on Surendra Prakash’s work: “Against Forgetting: Memory as Metaphor in Dream Images”.


Partition literature has multiple layers and faces: some of the aspects not fore-fronted often, come through the Sindhi Stories of Partition. The uniqueness of this community lies in the fact that Partition left the Sindhi Muslims as bewildered and uprooted as it left the Sindhi Hindus. The loss of home, language, culture and feeling of unwanted and a secondary status – all this was confronted by Sindhi Muslims as the notion of Sindh as a nation was dissolved in the new Islamic State of Pakistan.

The erroneous phenomenon of equating nations with religion, and shifting the sub continental identity with that of nation, echo through Sindhi Partition literature. The fact that inhabitants of Sindh had a composite culture and a unified sense of belonging to their geographical community, irrespective of religion, as compared to the rest of the subcontinent made the Partition all the more incomprehensible and difficult for Sindhis, whether they were Hindu or Muslim and whether they migrated or stayed on. Sindhi stories of Partition share many common features with Partition literature yet it also has some striking aspects of its own – Unbordered Memories brings forth these aspects.

Bapsi Sidhwa points out that ‘Literature can dig into painful memory and try to make sense of it more successfully than history can.’\(^2\) She has deftly illustrated this through Ice Candy Man. Bapsi Sidhwa’s Ice Candy Man enjoys its own unique place amidst Partition Literature. This work captures the turmoil of the partition that is laced with tinges of wit and humour. The narrator, Lenny, is a nine year old Parsee girl growing up in Lahore during the turbulent times of partition and its aftermath. Her family comprises of her younger brother Adi, her parents – the Sethis, her Ayah, the cook and other servants. Ayah’s numerous boyfriends, Lenny’s godmother, her husband and sister, Lenny’s aunt and her cousin complete Lenny’s world.
The book acquires its unique quality owing to the fact that Lenny is a young Parsee girl. Her age makes her an impartial narrator free of adult prejudices as she is naïve and innocent. Secondly, there is no need for accuracy or political correctness. In fact Lenny gets away with alarmingly politically incorrect images of Gandhiji, Nehru and other leaders just because she is a child and also because she belongs to a community known for its quirky humour. “There is nothing like a good dose of bathroom humour to put us Parsees in a fine mood.” Finally, Lenny, being a child, can afford to be candid and fearless, in her own way.

Sidhwa’s choice of the narrator as a girl allows her to transfer her own feelings, impressions and expressions of the turbulent times. She also has another preconceived agenda: to explore the sexuality of adolescence, its awakening and understanding, a theme which recurs with variations in a different form during the communal riots at the time of the partition through the brutality of forced sex on women of the ‘other’ group. Sidhwa recognizes the fact that a woman’s or girl’s sexuality has found scanty space in literature hence she tries to do so through the character of Lenny on a subtle level as for a more overt level she uses the ayah’s character. “And I wanted to write about sexuality too: the little girl’s – Lenny’s sexuality, Ayah’s sexuality. This has been a theme in all my works… I wrote truthfully, without inhibitions, so when I started to write about children I included their sexuality. I know how strong teenagers’ sexual feelings can be. So even in Lenny’s case and in Ayah’s case, I described female sexuality because I feel that men tend to describe it very differently, more exploitatively; there is more of a sexual fantasy when they describe sexuality… Even our fathers, brothers, mothers hate to admit their children’s – especially their daughter’s, sister’s sexuality. So I wanted to bring this out into the open; little girls-not only little boys- also have sexual feelings. So there is where Lenny and Ayah and all come in.”

The third feature of the narrator, along with age and sex, is the community. The turn of events seen from the eyes of the Parsee community lends it a curious location of insider-outsider. The location of ‘insider’ because Lenny and the other members of Parsee community are well established locals in Lahore, they ‘belong’ there; and ‘outsider’ in the context of the politics of Sikhs/Hindus against Muslims. Another important fact is the proximity of the Parsees to the colonist rulers which provides them with a superior upper hand.
Through the characters of Col. Bharucha or Lenny’s father and others, the unexplored facts within Parsee – British relations are revealed. The first fact is that Parsees were also full of dislike and hostility in their attitude to the British. Sidhwa brings out this fact most often through the character of Col. Bharucha, “If anyone’s to blame, blame the British! There was no polio in India till they bought it here.”  

But this dislike conceals itself under a veneer of a cautious approach which refuses to be politically incorrect. So such comments are only in private; during a public speech, the same Col. Bharucha, who happens to be the President of Parsee community in Lahore, cautions,

“We must tread carefully…. We have served the English faithfully, and earned their trust… So, we have prospered! But we are the smallest minority in India… Only one hundred and twenty thousand in the whole world. We have to be extra wary, or we’ll be neither here nor there…. We must hunt with the hounds and run with the hare.”

The vulnerability of the Parsee community is the next trait. Parsees were not completely empowered due to their proximity to the British rulers. The community was wary of taking sides, as it was unsure of its location after the partition. They felt the need to play safe and antagonize neither Muslims nor Hindus/Sikhs. This vulnerability is reflected in the prayer meeting as a part of celebrations of British victory in the World War in 1944. The intense class consciousness “There’s such a demand for A-Class in jails that there’s no room left for folk like us!” is coupled with a feeling of isolation and neglect. “The Congress gangsters provoke the Police and get rewarded with free board and lodging. It’s a shame! I propose that the Parsee Anjuman lodge a formal protest with the Inspector General of Police. Why should we be left out of everything?”

Thirdly, the anxiety of not being in power after the gaining of freedom is evident,

“…. this short cut to fame and fortune is not for us. It is no longer just a struggle for power. Who’s going to rule once we get Swaraj? Not you; Hindus, Muslims and even the Sikhs are going to jockey for power: and if you jokers jump in the middle you’ll be mangled into chutney! I hope no Lahore Parsee will be stupid enough to court trouble, I strongly advise all of you to stay at home- and out of trouble.”

This political strategy of ‘stay at home and out of trouble’ is also fraught with doubts of disloyalty to fellow men; which is countered by the difficulty of the decision to be taken as to on which side to be loyal to,
“I don’t see how we can remain uninvolved… our neighbours will think we are betraying them and siding with the English.
That depends upon who’s winning, doesn’t it?
No one knows which way the wind will blow….There may be not one but two-or even three- new nations! And the Parsees might find themselves championing the wrong side if they don’t look before they leap!
….If we’re stuck with the Hindus they’ll swipe our businesses from our noses and sell our grandfathers in bargain: if we’re stuck with the Muslims they’ll convert us by the sword! And God help us if we’re stuck with the Sikhs!”

The novel portrays Partition as a reality looming large over everyday lives right from three to four years before the actual partition took place. It comes out at sporadic moments like Col. Bharucha examining a child is infuriated at the father’s (who happens to be a Muslim) indifference to the details of his daughter’s illness, and bursts out,

“……And you all want Pakistan! How will you govern a country when you don’t know what goes on in your own house?”

The possibility of the partition, concern at violence erupting in far off cities like Delhi and Calcutta to nearby villages like Pir Pindo and anxiety at the decisions taken by League, Congress and British at every step: all these issues appear and reappear at various points in the novel.
A simple conversation at the dinner table turns into a scathing critique of politics of leadership,

“They’re like the three bloody monkeys! They refuse to hear, or see that Jinnah has the backing of seventy million Indian Muslims! Those arrogant Hindus have blown the last chance for an undivided India…. Gandhi and Nehru are forcing the League to push for Pakistan!”

Similarly the conversations of Ayah with her admirers in the garden flit across topics like resignation of Wavell, influence of Indian leaders in London, affinity between Nehru and Mountbatten (especially Mrs. Mountbatten), isolation of Jinnah as a consequence of this and the politics played between Congress and Muslim League.
It is not only the talk but the way it is said: it is bursting with vehement passions ready to burst. It is as if the language has already caught on the tenor of violence. One of Ayah’s admirers, the butcher, literally spits out these words, “That non-violent violence monger – your precious Gandhiji – first declares the Sikhs fanatics! Now
suddenly he says: “Oh dear, the poor Sikhs cannot live with the Muslims if there is a Pakistan!” What does he think we are – some kind of beast? Aren’t they living with us now?13

The Ice Candy Man’s comments, wrought with emotions, provide insight into Nehru-Mountbatten relations at that particular junction, “The English are not to be relied on, yaar, …..They’re too busy packing off with their loot to care what happens… But that Nehru, he’s is sly one…He’s got Mountbatten eating out of his one hand and the English’s wife out of his other what-not…He’s the one to watch!...Jinnah or no Jinnah! Sikh or no Sikh! Right law, wrong law, Nehru will walk off with the lion’s share… And what’s more, come out of it smelling like the Queen-of-the-Kotha!”14

The violence, present in the backdrop as a threat, is vividly captured in the story of Ranna, a small boy, who is related to Iqbal, the cook. The narrative acquires an emphatic significance as it starts with a separate subtitle ‘Ranna’s Story’, which is the only subtitle in the novel. It is significant to note that this incident is based on a real life incident of a person whom Sidhwa met in Houston. And although the narrative is brimming with the unspeakable horrors of violence, Sidhwa admits that what she has described in the novel was much less horrifying than what had actually taken place.

Violence also makes its impact when we see the two untouchable Hindu servants taking recourse to conversion to escape violence and mutilation of their bodies and also to safeguard their family members towards the same. One of them converts to Islam and the other embraces Christianity. They bargain for changed religious identities instead of threatened minority ones. This also shows how caste played its own role and the poor lower caste members of religious minority were the most vulnerable victims during partition. This was because they were devoid of power and hierarchy on the level of caste, class and religion.15 This probably also explains why the poor, lower caste women of the minority community wore the brunt of the partition violence as they were on the margins of all hierarchies- class, caste, sex and religion. This observation also appears in the studies of Urvashi Butalia, and Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin. Within these hierarchies, sex and class was a major deciding factor as religion was being contested along with communal differences across all types in the partition violence. In other words, upper class men were the most protected ones during this violence. In Ice Candy Man, the threat of death is so over-powering that Hari undergoes the conversion the full way – right from
circumcising to learning the ‘Kalma’ (Muslim prayer). Papoo’s narrative reflects the plight of women. Papoo is Moti’s daughter and she has had a hard life with her mother continuously abusing her. She is also burdened with mothering her younger brother. At the age of eleven or twelve, she is married off to Totaram, a dark middle-aged midget with pockmark pitted face, who has been married many times earlier. Papoo is given opium and sleeps throughout the marriage as her mother fears that she will rebel. Thus Papoo’s gender, class, caste (even religion as her father has converted to Christianity to escape violence) put her on a marginal space and makes her a most vulnerable victim.

The third point of violence comes with the unexpected death of the masseur. Lenny stumbles upon a swollen gunny sack. Hari, who is accompanying her, pushes it with foot and out tumbles the body of masseur with his sides hacked. Violence also comes out in great detail in the burning of the main market area.

The next important issue in the novel is the rape, abduction and recovery of abducted women. Lenny’s ayahs – Shanta and Hamida are victims of this. Shanta is forcibly removed from the household and taken by a group of Muslim men as she is a Hindu. One can very well imagine what happens to her. Sidhwa has refrained from the actual description; she does not give us Shanta’s narrative, as she has given Ranna’s. We understand that after Ayah’s abduction a search goes on for her. She goes missing and is wiped out from Lenny’s world. She is replaced by Hamida, a member of recovered women’s camp. Through the suggestive, oblique references made by Hamida, one can get a glimpse of the ordeal that she has gone through. Later on Shanta is traced – she has turned into a prostitute. When it is feared that she might be ‘recovered’ and sent to her parents in Amritsar, Ice-Candy man who has been acting as a pimp for her, traps and forces her into marrying him. He knows that once Shanta’s identity changes to Mumtaz who is married to a Muslim, the doors of escape would close on her. It is an entirely different matter that finally Shanta manages to flee across the border to India. Whether it is Shanta’s abduction or Hamida’s recovery it is evident that many such women were objectified and used as pawns in the patriarchal politics of abduction and recovery process.

The issue of sudden flight and evacuation of houses also finds space in the texts through the characters of the Singhs and the Shankers. Mr. Singh has married an American and has two children Rosy and Peter who are Lenny’s friends, and the
Shankers are a newly married couple. The vacated houses are taken up by new occupants who are the Muslim refugees coming from India. The economics of displacement is discussed through the conversation between Ayah and her friends.

“Masseur says; ‘If the Punjab is divided, Lahore is bound to go to Pakistan: there is a Muslim majority here…’

‘Lahore will stay in India!’ says the government house gardener cutting him short. He is sitting next to the butcher. ‘There is too much Hindu money here,’ he says in his quiet, seasoned way. ‘They own most of the property and business in the city and …’

‘But there are too many Mussulmans!’ insists masseur. ‘So what? People don’t matter…Money does!’ “. 16

The novels, especially the ones based on important national or public events, employ the technique of fusing and mixing personal and public worlds. Thus a remarkable feature of ‘Ice-Candy Man’ is the weaving of personal and public narrative. Lenny’s first impression of the British is that of the wrong doers, responsible for her polio. This impression is formed by Col. Bharucha’s remark, ‘it’s no one’s fault really…if anyone is to blame, blame the British! There was no polio in India till they brought it here!’ 17 Another instance is when her birthday falls on the very same day that the partition takes place. No one has time for her; she meets with a cold response from all family members including Ayah, as they are preoccupied with their own affairs. This mixing of personal and national narrative is used by many fiction writers, including Salman Rushdie in Midnight’s Children.

Shifting images also find a place in the text. One prominent example is that of Jinnah. His image from that of an ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity shifts to that of a monster, from that of a rational western educated mind to that of religious fanatic, the one who is responsible for partition and instigating the rift between Muslims and Hindus in his greed for power.

One prominent feature of the novel remains the autobiographical overtones in the narrative. Bapsi Sidhwa was affected by partition as a child, and also as an adult. 18 She used to come on annual visits to India to meet her mother’s relatives. These visits suffered due to restriction on visas; and the family ties were weakened. The other impact was on her marriage. She was married in India and divorced at the age of 23. Although she had an Indian citizenship, she was not able to take her son to Pakistan with her and he grew up without her. Thus when Sidhwa says that literature can dig
into painful memory and try to make sense of it more successfully than history can, it has a ring of experiential truth to it.\textsuperscript{19} The novel is full of events and characters which have direct-indirect references to Sidhwa’s life. Some instances are as follows:

There was a recovered women’s camp next to Bapsi Sidhwa’s house, the same finds mention in the novel. One of the neighboring houses of Lenny is used as a camp and her second ayah – Hamida, is an inmate there.

The dinner party argument between Lenny’s neighbors is based on real life incidents. “I remember that there used to be regular fights over the issue (partition) in our house. I don’t recall the details of the arguments. Once or twice visitors even came to blows with each other during a particularly tense argument over politics.” \textsuperscript{20}

Lenny meeting Gandhiji is based on an actual encounter with Gandhiji. When Sidhwa was a young girl, Gandhiji was on a visit to Lahore and her mother took her to visit him. Of course there was no conversation between him and her or her mother, that part is imaginary.

The feminist position helps the writer to shape the narratives of both ayahs and also the perspective of Lenny’s location. Shanta’s narrative oozes with the negotiations made using the tool of one’s own sexuality. Her various admirers and boyfriends bestow favours on her as she slyly uses her sexuality to bait them. The later part of the novel traces the victimization of Shanta. It also portrays the victimization of Hamida.

Lenny’s position, as discussed earlier, enables one to have a subjective-objective view of the partition.

Bapsi Sidhwa does not see the partition as a closed chapter. She sees the legacy of the partition still continued. She also views the Muslim community as easy victims all over the world wherever and whenever there is civil strife. She stresses the impact of the partition as far reaching, calls it as the most defining moment in history of India and Pakistan as it has changed the map, the way of life, politics, education system and it is still very much on people’s mind. Sidhwa says, “Partition is still so immediate for us. It is not over, it is going on; its problems stay and they affect each of our lives.” \textsuperscript{21}

Thus \textit{Ice-Candy Man} emerges as a mirror of the grim realities of partition. The grim portrayal is accentuated due to the backdrop chosen – the idyllic life of a Parsee young girl growing up in the safe, secure world of family, domestic helps and relatives.
"Sunlight on a Broken Column" is a portrayal of a young woman’s personal crisis set against the larger historical backdrop of pre-partition and partition era. Change with time and events is one of the key themes of this novel—this change is reflected on various levels of individual, community and Nation. This change on individual level is also suggestive of “Bildungsroman”, a coming of age novel: innocence giving way to maturity learning ‘the ways of the world.’

The novel, a story of three generations, written in four parts captures twenty years of Laila’s life, an orphaned girl who is securely ensconced in the care of her grandfather, aunts, and later, her uncle. The theme of "Sunlight on a Broken Column" is the change leading to the disintegration of a feudal, joint family. This disintegration takes place against the backdrop of national disintegration in the form of the partition. So as in the case of "Ice Candy Man", the personal and political are juxtaposed. There is a difference though, in "Sunlight on a Broken Column", the juxtaposition charts its course through the major part of the novel whereas in "Ice Candy Man", it comes out sporadically through comparisons made by Lenny. As a part of the change, Laila comes back to the house after a gap of some years and becomes a mute observer of the change that has taken place at the end of the narrative.

As is the case with Lenny, Laila also looks at the entire course of change and the partition through a privileged and safe location. Lenny’s location has the canopy of religion, Laila’s that of class and community. Laila is brought up in a distinguished Muslim family of taluqdars, the feudal landlords. She, along with her cousin Zahra, grows up in a very orthodox atmosphere. In the early years, Laila’s surroundings ooze oppression and control. Zahra accepts and adopts this way of life readily while Laila is always restless and stifled. She even attempts rebellions—like attempting to rescue Nandi, the washer man’s daughter, when uncle Mohsin, himself of a dubious character, attempts to ‘control’ Nandi with his ‘silver-topped cane’, abusing her as a slut and wanton. Later when Laila is rebuked for standing against her uncle, ‘ ‘How could you have interfered? Aren’t you ashamed?’ She replies back, ‘Yes, I am, I’m ashamed to call him uncle.’” 22 This enables her to look with some detachment at the political events which affect the members of her family. Thus Laila is thoughtful, has a mind of her own which is further fuelled by education.

On the other hand, Zahra is a representative of her age, very conservative and orthodox. This same Zahra turns outwardly ‘modern’ because her husband, a civil servant, wants her to ‘fit in’ with the British ladies. Laila wants to be true to her own
convictions. When her loving aunt Abida advises her to be dutiful to elders, Laila retorts, “Dutiful to whom? To what? To what I believe is true? Or those I am asked to obey?”

In her adolescence, after the death of her grandfather, Laila shifts in with her uncle Hamid, who is also now the head of the family. Uncle Hamid is liberal but autocratic. Laila’s stint at the college further makes her a fiercely independent woman. Her cousins, Kemal and Saleem, her distant cousins-Asad and Zahid, her friends- Ranjit Singh, Raza Ali, Nadira, Nita, Joan, Sita- fuse her with a different dimension. Each of these characters represents a position or stance but Laila is unable to conform to any cause or position. She is definitely a liberal but she has problems identifying with uncle Hamid. Laila has her own agenda; her own fight for personal independence makes her a rebel. She breaks away from the claustrophobic traditional life by marrying a man against her family’s wishes; they are against her marrying him as he is far below their aristocratic stature. This enables her to take a tolerant view of the Hindus when the matter of the partition crops up.

Thus *Sunlight on a Broken Column* rides the two paths of personal and political effortlessly. Laila’s personal life, her home is the personal domain and the outer world is the political one relating to the Partition era. This novel, even though focused on a personal narrative, has a firm political agenda. The sense of dislocation had become a part of Attia Hosain’s psyche, “Events during and after partition are to this day very painful to me. And now in my old age, the strength of my roots is strong, it also causes pain, because it makes one a ‘stranger” everywhere in the deeper area of one’s mind and spirit except where one was born and brought up.”

Attia Hosain, in these lines, bares the permanent scar and trauma of permanent loss of one’s homeland. Attia Hosain has moulded Laila in her own persona; like Attia, Laila is a passive observer of political change but indirectly a central agent of the personal drama in her own personal and familial life. She is simultaneously an insider-participant and also an outsider-observer. More importantly, towards the conclusion of the narrative, Laila is shown to carry the pain of one’s own location, and the feeling of rootlessness resulting from this.

As is portrayed in other Partition Fiction, close relationships between British and Muslims, Hindus and Muslims, and British and Hindu are depicted. Laila’s grandfather- Babajan- Syed Mohamed Hasan has close friendship with an English man - Mr. Freemantle, a Muslim-Raja Hasan Ahmed of Amirpur and a fierce and
generous Rajput, Thakur Balbir Singh. Later on the novel tries to trace the cause of communal hatred between the communities. The narrative shows how the British and partly the leaders of both communities were responsible for this. The novel also portrays the rift in Congress Muslims. The ‘secular’ Muslims remained loyal to the Party, and Uncle Hamid is a representative of this. On the other hand, the ‘communal’ Muslims started breaking off from the Congress after terming it as a Hindu favored party. In a contradictory way, Hamid also represents the taluqdar community which opposes many of the Congress’s socio-economic programs. Uncle Hamid’s son-Saleem, is the representative of such Muslims. This group was ridden with the fear of Hindu majority ruling over Muslim minority post-Independence. This fear gave birth to Muslim League and later- Pakistan. The element of division spreads through and through in the later part of the novel. The breaking up of the family comes at the end of the novel. Saleem is determined to shift to Karachi, his mother supports him but Kemal is apprehensive that it will break the family forever.

“‘As a family more than individuals it is important. I don’t want the family to split up. There is too much of that in the air nowadays. I want us to remain united. As it is we get together so seldom. Imagine it if you went to Karachi—’

Aunt Saira interrupted, ‘I do not understand, son. Saleem is in Calcutta; he will go to Karachi. What is the difference? This will still be his home.’

‘Mother, I wish it were as simple as that. He will, in fact, be going to another country! Don’t you see, we will belong to different countries, have different nationalities? Can you imagine every time we want to see each other we’ll have to cross national frontiers? Maybe even have to get visas,” he added wryly.

‘Oh come on, Kemal,’ Saleem laughed, ‘there is no need to be dramatic as all that. Visas indeed!’

………………..

Saleem tried to calm him. ‘Kemal, let’s not become emotional about this…… I think we have no future here, and our children have even less.’

Kemal’s voice quivered with suppressed emotion. ‘I see my future in the past. I was born here, and generations of ancestors before me. I am content to die here and be buried with them.’
The separation of Kemal and Saleem at the time of the partition is representative of the division of thousands of families during the partition and is also symbolic of the event of the partition itself: a part of the country breaking off from the other.

The various faces of the partition find place in the novel - the tragic death of Zahid is representative of thousands of people dying in train violence during the partition. The trauma of forced migration of refugees also finds place in the narrative. The novel does depict communal fury but it lacks the traumatic impact of *Ice Candy Man*, *Azadi*, *Train to Pakistan* and most of other partition fiction. It appears that Hosain is impartial and objective while depicting communal frenzy. This can be traced back to Hosain’s privileged class location. Due to this, adult Laila can rationalize her reactions to communal violence. In the concluding part of novel, Laila’s disillusion puts a question mark on the ‘mythical’ concept of national identity. She is left with the realization that ‘nationalism’ is not really achieved - it is only ‘used’ for convenience.

As mentioned earlier, Hosain has a definite political agenda in choosing the backdrop of this novel. She felt an urgent need for partition fiction to be written because she felt that people were forgetting all the things of the world that her generation belonged to; the present is forgetting the past - “People are forgetting all those things, they are forgetting that other world that I actually lived in, existed. There were people then who believed in the future.”

*Sunlight on a Broken Column* has distinct autobiographical overtones. This, in a way, explain Hosain’s attitude towards the partition. Hosain’s childhood was spent under the influence of two distinct strands. Her father was educated, a progressive talqudar and a politician. “….. he was also one of those people who was involved in his life politically at a time (in the 1910s) when it wasn’t a question of confronting the British as happened later when Gandhiji came on the scene. It was when there were questions in the minds of all the people who were interested in the country’s future independence, how to go about it.” As a result of this, Hosain grew up knowing Ali Imam, Abbas Ali Baig, Sir Sultan Ahmad, Motilal Nehru etc. The second strand was from her mother’s family. She had a rich cultural inheritance and frequent interaction with poets, writers, judges, professionals, intellectuals etc. “My mother grew up with that atmosphere around her, so that I was used to having in our home, as we grew up, people who behaved as if they were in salons where poets could sit- the poets being one’s own relatives because everybody felt that they had to compose poetry or be
interested in classical music or anything that had to do with culture. I was fortunate I had that background.”

Thus Hosain exhibits a strong consciousness of her privileged, ‘elitist’ location but she is aware of it in an objective manner and so is not conscious of owning up to it. She is amicable towards the privileges of her location but is also critical of its hierarchical superiority. Along with her ‘elitist’ location, there was the influence of western education on Hosain. She was educated in ‘The Martiniere’, a school originally meant for the children of the British. Later on, she was educated in a College run by American Methodists. She was also ‘politically conscious’ as she calls herself, and she was influenced by Congress- especially the Left Wing ideology of Pandit Nehru and the secularist and humanitarian views of Gandhiji. Thus the whole ethos surrounding Attia Hosain in her formative years is manifested in Laila. Even the close family friends of Laila’s Babajan from all religions- are reminiscent of the close friends of her father. The atmosphere of Laila’s family reflects some of Hosain’s own background, progressive yet orthodox in many ways, providing a mix of sheltered-progressive life. For instance, Hosain did not observe purdah but the car had silk curtains and she was not allowed to mingle in mixed society freely. She had to reason out with her mother to let her take college education; her mother reluctantly agreed on one condition- it would be a girls’ college. Hosain’s mother, Nisar Hosain Kidwai herself never ventured out but was equally confident and courageous, bringing up her five children single handedly after the untimely death of her husband. Later on, Hosain went against the family wishes and married her cousin; this is also reflected through Laila. Thus Husain had to face a lot of negotiations in her personal space, everything was not available to her smoothly inspite of her ‘elitist’ location.

In spite of all the autobiographical overtones, Attia Hosain is clear about the distinction between history and literature, in the approach being factual in the former and imaginative and reader centered interpretative in the latter. It is quite evident that the novel has autobiographical shades and this parallelism is important in opinions, views and reactions on Partition and independence struggle. Laila, Nadira, Joan, Sita each becomes a spokesperson for a particular position on the whole flurry of changes engulfing the country during the Partition turmoil.

This gives a discursive edge to the novel. At the end, one is left with a feeling that the narrative is not so much of events as those of ideologies. In a sense, it is can also be seen as a ‘psychological novel’, especially in the last part, where Laila returns for a
last visit to her ancestral home and becomes reflective. Attia Hosain was extremely conscious of her national identity all the more when she opted for England after independence. Earlier she was influenced by The Nationalist Movement and The Progressive Writers’ Group. Attia was grounded in her roots when she affirmed, “In spite of living in England, I know more (about partition) because I had to identify much more ‘coz I am challenged the whole time, my identity is.” 29

Hosain’s religious attitude was striking- radical yet conservative. She had faith in her religion, was aware and conscious of her Muslim identity but at the same time, was radical enough to rationalize and keep it separate from her national identity. She was definitely not for the creation of a country based on religion. She did not follow her husband to Pakistan when he was called on duty, she stayed back. Here fierce nationalism and loyalty to nationhood was zealously guarded by her: thus Hosain took a definite position on her principles, not caring about her personal life. She was always for unity, Partition was not what she had envisaged

Taking into consideration all the above arguments, it can be inferred that Hosain had a definite political agenda to her writing. Attia Hosain has exhibited the futility of the partition through her novel. She has also definitely argued her attitude to the entire discourse leading to the partition that included the leadership from various factions, their corresponding ideologies, the politics of the partition, the futility of the partition and the pain and trauma involved. This also explains why she stopped writing altogether after partition, her silence marked her protest.

_Tamas_ is posited at a unique location temporally. Sahni witnessed the Bhiwandi riots of the 70’s and was struck by their similarity to the 1926 riots of Rawalpindi that he had seen as a 10-11 year old boy. He visited Bhiwandi during the riots and this visit had a deep impact on him. He recounts this visit vividly,

“As we entered Bhiwandi, I felt as if I had seen the scene in that town somewhere: silence all around, only one or two people on terraces and verandahs, empty streets, as if time had slowed down. As we entered the town, there were one or two tents of the police with the policemen sitting outside, in uniform – but some with their caps off, some with loosened belts, as if resting the fatigue of the riot. Here and there, stray dogs meandered around. The pall of silence – people on balconies and terraces seemed like statues - pervaded a kind of desolation”. 30

This made such a deep impact that this picture was reflected in _Tamas_ as its locale.
Sahni found similarities between Bhiwandi riots of the 70’s and not only the Rawalpindi riots of 1926, but also the partition riots.

“But crossing the streets the sound of my feet, hearing my footsteps, I felt as if I had heard those sounds before as it I had ‘heard’ the sounds of that ‘silence’ before. As if I had experienced that excruciating eeriness before. As if I had crossed those deserted streets before. When the houses have families living in them there’s laughter here, some calling there, gurgles of a baby somewhere, a child running across the street, running into one house from another, a housewife on the doorway waiting for someone. An inhabited town is like a garden in bloom. Shadows of misfortune cast their gloom on a deserted town. But I hadn’t just experienced this silence and desolation. I had also seen the vultures and kites perched on trees. I had also seen the flames of fires leaping across half the sky. I had also heard the sound of footsteps running through the streets and roads, the chilling, goose–flesh causing screams, the fanatic religious slogans that went up here and there. I had also heard loud wails. Crossing the streets of Bhiwandi, I began to hear different kinds of sounds.”

When Sahni returned to Delhi, the novel started ‘writing itself’. All that Sahni had witnessed in Rawalpindi flooded his memories after a long gap of years. The characters emerged in a flood of memories. This sparked the genesis of Tamas.

“I also felt that the conditions that had caused the riots in 1947 were still present. The partition of the country should have put an end to the riots, but it didn’t. I started writing. When I had begun, I had no clearly conceived objective in mind. Perhaps I merely wanted to recollect and relive my past”.

Thus Sahni started working on Tamas in 1971 and it was published in 1973. The experience of partition is crystallized and ‘recollected and relived’ in a temporal space distanced from the event by a good 26 years. The mere fact that he lived with the story for over a quarter – century and brought it to fruition after much reflection speaks of the deep emotional investment that Sahni brought to this novel.

Sahni belonged to a generation of Hindi writers that was moulded in the struggle against imperialism and continued the fight for a dream of social, political and economic equality in intimate knowledge of how it turns humanity against itself. It is this sensitivity that led him to see haves versus have – nots divide lurking behind the periodic eruptions of communal madness. Thus Sahni’s location was vital in the creation of Tamas.
Recognition and a claim for a masterpiece came almost instantly. It was made into a tele–serial by Govind popular common sense, that too in public space. There were angry protests against continuing the screening of Tamas. Sahni and Nihalani received threats to their lives and were provided with security guards. There were violent demonstration at various Doordarshan centres in Punjab, Delhi and Bombay demanding the immediate withdrawal of the screening of Tamas. A writ petition and appeal were filed and were dismissed by the Supreme Court. Before the Supreme Court there was a proceeding by a Muslim representing the Muslim sentiments and a petition by a Hindu representing the Hindu sentiments, both of them asking for a ban on the film. The Court dismissed the petition and pointed out.

“The attempt of the author in this film is to draw a lesson from our country’s past history, expose the motives of persons who operate behind the scenes to generate conflicts and to emphasise the desire of persons to live in amity and the need for them to rise above the religious barriers and treat one another with kindness, sympathy and affection. It is possible only for a motion picture to convey such a message in depth and if it is able to do this it will be an achievement of great social value”.

This entire episode reveals the interventions in looking at the past in an objective manner. In public space, the past is often seen through the lens of communal locations and is forced to be distorted. Hence in this context, the order of the court to dismiss the petition of ban is a very critical decision. Of course, one cannot ignore the fact that law can be secular but the agencies have their own political interests. For instance, the slot time given to Tamas by Doordarshan was 10 pm, hardly prime time, in 1988.

Considering the genesis, Tamas is bound to be autobiographical. The past experiences of participation in prabhat pheris, the tension in the city, the stone–throwing incidence, fire set to the grain market, Sikh women jumping in the well to save their honour – all these find place in the narrative. Inspite of this, the novel does not become personal at any point. This is deliberate attempt on the part of Sahni.

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

The novel was written in an emotional fervour. Sahni could feel himself “continuously deluged with emotion.”

He maintains that a novel is created by a heart moved by emotions. He wrote as one scene after another poured forth, rushed from his memories, he was barely aware of the objective process of structuring his work.
“Now one scene emerged before my eyes….The trip to Thoa Khalsa appeared before my eyes. I am standing near the well where tens of Sikh women drowned themselves in attempt to save their modesty……. Every now and then a Sikh breaks down into sobs, but then to suppress his crying, trying to remain calm, bows his head and begins to mumble words from the Gurubani.”

Tamas is a medley of real and imaginary characters. Nathu and his wife both are imaginary. According to Sahni, the fact “That one character is imaginary and the other is real does not make any difference. What is essential is that both have to be believable.”

Tamas opens at a point of crisis. Nathu, the tanner is tricked into being used as a pawn by Murad Ali, who tells Nathu to kill a pig. Incidentally, this decisive incident of the killing of a pig is imaginary. An imaginary incident is the cause of unfolding the events in Tamas, and Sahni is not uneasy about it as he believes that, “the yardsticks for measuring the truthfulness of a novel are not dependent on whether a certain incident actually took place or not, but whether that incident becomes believable in the context of the overall reality of life.”

This pig is later thrown in front of the mosque to fuel the communal tensions. The small town is on the brink of violence. Members of Congress, activists of ‘prabhat pheris – Mehtaji, Bakshiji, Shankar, Deshraj, Ajit Singh, Master Ram Das, Lala Lakshmi Narain, Jarnail and others try their best but are helpless in front of the turbulent events unfolding in the fiery times of communal violence during Partition. Some characters are players while others are pawns in the dramatic game of conflict and violence. Tamas shows how the town is thrown in throes of riots and violence with the British (represented by the Deputy – Commissioner Richard) taking the position of either passive onlookers or instigators in reality, but keeping a face of concern and able administrative helper.

It is interesting to note how Sahni creates the character of Richard as oscillating between impassive spectator and instigator. Sahni maintained that the British were solely responsible for communal tensions as before they arrived on the scene there was a patient acceptance of differences between the communities. He has elaborated this in an interview with Alok Bhalla, “If a person belonging to one religion convert to another religion, there is bound to be interaction, bound to be give and take. A different kind of life, a different kind of social life, begins to develop. Certain things were just taken for granted. Differences in faith were taken for granted. Differences in
customs, ways of life and eating habits were taken for granted. This helped in the process of accommodating one another. There was cordiality between people of different faiths. Therefore there was no reason why people should not have learnt to live as good neighbours. So, I think, communal antagonism was a development that took place in the British period….. they were responsible for communal tensions. The pity is that we have not learnt from our experiences. We are still carrying on from where they left off.” 38

*Tamas* probes deep into the phenomenon of communal riots: their inception, maturity and aftermath. It reveals how riots are engineered and administrated by segregations, divides, rumour and communal politics. One prominent feature of *Tamas* is the insightful attempt to establish the nexus between religion and communal tensions or conflicts. The novel depicts Hindus assembling for weekly ‘*Satsang*’ (spiritual discourse) which would culminate in meetings of ‘inner circle’ members for consultations and discussions of defense strategies. It was no different with Sikhs. The Gurudwara had become a bastion of armed Sikhs and a shelter for the entire community. Thus places of worships became ‘warships’.

*Tamas* probes deep into the psychology of violence. Violence of individuals is focused more as compared to that of the mob. The metamorphosis of Ranvir engineered by Dev Vrat and the killing of Milkhi by Shah Nawaz are studies into the psyche of violence.

“‘Killing is not difficult’, Ranvir thought, ‘I could have killed this man easily. One has only to raise one’s hand and it is done. It is fighting that is difficult, particularly when the other person stands up against you. To stab a man to death is far easier. It poses no problem, killing poses no problem’”. 39

This attitude to violence in the mind of a mere fifteen year old is the result of the ‘initiation’ carried out by Dev Vrat by forcing him to kill a hen.

For Ranvir killing is not difficult, especially when he is dealing with strangers. But killing an acquaintance was quite another matter.

“Twice Ramzan raised his pick axe to strike, but both times he let it fall. It is one thing to kill a kafir, it is quite another to kill someone you know and who has sought shelter in your house. A thin line was still there which was difficult to cross, despite the fact that the atmosphere was charged with religious frenzy and hatred.” 40

Violence is also an unexplained phenomenon – something incomprehensible – especially when Shah Nawaz kills Milkhi purposelessly. It is as if the dilemma and
inner conflict in Shah Nawaz’s mind regarding his friendship with Raghu Nath culminates in killing Nanku.

“…….when something snapped in Shah Nawaz’s mind. How and why this happened cannot be easily explained……” 41

Violent abduction also gets transformed into seductive relationships like in the case of Parkasho and Allah Rakha.

“Parkasho raised her eyes and looked at him. She had seen Allah Rakha several times earlier too but never from such close quarters. She noticed his thin, black moustache. Allah Rakha had put collyrium in his eyes, combed his hair and was wearing clean clothes. Parkasho’s fear grew less somewhat, but she continued to look frightened and subdued……..

Slowly Parkasho began to feel as though the fear of Allah Rakha was subsiding within her…….It appeared to Allah Rakha as though a flicker of a smile had crossed Parkasho’s lips. Parkasho raised her eyes to look at Allah Rakha…………she saw Allah Rakha’s eyes full of eager desire and Parkasho’s hand went up to Allah Rakha’s mouth.” 42

Thus violence is seen from various perspectives.

*Tamas* touches upon the psychology of riots, tries to decode it. A riot is the outcome of an attempt by an ethnic group to ‘take revenge’. A large number of people who form a rioting mob do so for the first time. Through a series of stray events, Sahni does a sketch of the rioters’ minds brilliantly. But these are only stray incidents. Most of the partition literature thrives on the gory description of violence enacted by the two communities; *Tamas* is an exception to that. That is the very reason that the sparse incidents stand out strikingly in contrast like the death of Nanku, Ranvir’s metamorphosis or the forced conversion of Iqbal Singh to Iqbal Ahmed.

*Tamas* highlights the darkness (‘tamas’) of communal intolerance and riots, the handiwork of vested political interests, implemented by the innocents’ involvement. The title of the English translation of *Tamas* was to be ‘*Kites shall fly*’ a recurring line from the book. (Kites and Vultures shall fly over this town). But then the original title was retained. ‘Tamas’ has multiple layers of meaning; all applicable to the novel with different perspectives. Its original root is in ‘Samkhya’ school of philosophy.

*Tamas* (darkness) is one of the three gunas (or qualities), the other two being rajas (passion and activity) and *sattva* (or purity). *Tamas* is the template for inertia or resistance to action. It has also been translated from Sanskrit as “indifference”. *Tamas*
is considered as the lowest of the three gunas (qualities). *Tamas* is a force which promotes darkness, death, destruction and ignorance, sloth and resistance. The result of a *tamas* – dominated life is demerit by *Karma*: demotion to a lower life – form. A *tamasic* life would be marked by laziness, irresponsibility, cheating, maliciousness, insensitivity, criticizing and finding fault, frustration, aimless living, lack of logical thinking or planning, and making excuses. *Tamasic* activities include overeating, oversleeping and/or the consumption of drugs and alcohol.43

*Tamas* brings out many more issues, along with that of violence and riots. One of the recurring issues is the rift in Congress.

“Congress is the body of the Hindus. The musalmans have nothing to do with it….. You may say whatever you like but the incontrovertible truth is that the congress is the body of the Hindus, and the Muslim league of the Muslims. The congress cannot speak for the Muslims……. We do not hate the Hindus, but we detest their dogs.’

‘Is Maulana Azad a Hindu or a Muslim?

Maulana Azad is the biggest dog of the Hindus who goes wagging his tail before you.” 44

There are four parties in the town, each with a different perspective on the changing scenario and the threat of violence and communal riots. The Congress is an established party with respectable members like Bakshiji striving hard to keep things under control. The Muslim League, with Hayat Baksh as its leader, is riddled by their constant discontent with Congress regarding it being a party for Hindus. As a result, the attention, focus and strength of these two parties are constantly diverted to divisive politics. The ‘Singh’ or Hindu Mahasabha, represented by people like Vanaprasthi, Devvrat and Lala Laxmi Narain has a strong militant stance, having no qualms about violence; their only contention is self-protection and ‘giving tit for tat.’

“After they had all sat down, the Vanaprasthi continued in his somber voice, ‘Our primary concern is self-defence and safety. Everybody must immediately store in his house, a canister of linseed oil and a bag of coke and charcoal. Boiling oil can be poured over the enemy from the roof-top, red-hot coals can be flung….. It is absolutely necessary that our young men are activized. They must be given training in lathi-wielding. I would suggest that two hundred lathis be purchased today and distributed among them.” 45

The fourth party which comprises of communists, with the young Dev Datt as it leader, is more realistic in its attitude to prevention of violence although they are
focused on safety for the working class. “…… Every effort must be made to stop communal riots from spreading to the labourers’ colony.” 46 The communist party is also plagued with the divisive faction of religious faith, as the narrative mentions a Muslim comrade losing faith in the party and joining the Muslim League. The communists strive to overcome the weaknesses of divisions and to build upon the strength of unity. The party tries to unify all four parties by planning, and later, convening a joint meeting of the representatives of all parties. Another noteworthy feature of the communist party is that while other parties are thriving on the emotional surge, the communists empathically keep away from emotions as a political ideology. Dev Datt opines, “To view things emotionally can be very misleading for a communist. It is necessary to understand the evolutionary process of society.” 47

In this manner, the Congress, Muslim League, Mahasabha and Communist party; all the factions have different eyes to view the simmering atmosphere of communal riots and violence in the town, and act accordingly. These parties have differences with each other and also within themselves. This adds to the confusion.

The ‘Colonial Gaze’ or location is established through Richard, the Deputy Commissioner. His conversations with Liza, his wife, reveal his attitude. He talks about the natives:

“These people know only what we tell them most people have no knowledge of their history. They only live it…… well all Indians are quick – tempered. They flare up over trivial things. They fly at one another’s throat in the name of religion. They are all terribly self-centered. And they all adore white women.” 48

The relation of the rulers to the natives is clearly defined, “But gradually, she (Liza) came to realize that the servant was a mere native and that his presence was below notice.” 49

The politics played by the British to fuel up Hindu – Muslim divide comes forth in Richard’s conversation with Liza,

“A riot may break out in the city. Tension is mounting between the Hindus and the Muslims’.

‘Will they fight one another? In London you used to tell me that they were fighting against you.’

‘They are fighting both against us and against one another.

.......................
‘In the name of religion they fight one another; in the name of freedom they fight against us.’

‘………In the name of freedom they fight against you, but in the name of religion you make them fight one another – Isn’t that right?’

‘It is not we who make them fight. They fight of their own accord.’

‘You can stop them from fighting, Richard – After all they are from the same racial stock. Didn’t you say so?

…………

‘Darling, rulers have their eyes only on differences that divide their subjects, not on what unites them.” 50

The above conversation lays open the divide and rule policy of the British. Of course pre – colonial unity is also a myth. Differences did exist amongst Hindu and Muslim but these were accepted and maintained, there was no violence or communal hatred involved. Sahni recall that Hindu – Muslim friendship existed but eating taboos were maintained in his childhood. There was no interaction with Muslims in the personal space (homes); Muslims friends were not invited to his house. He had some Muslim friends but he and his siblings were discouraged from playing with them by their parents.

Richard’s policy reflects a studied purposeful indifference to communal tensions. He reveals this with a sardonic smile to Liza.

‘…… what can I do if there is tension between the Hindus and the Muslims?’

‘You can resolve their differences’.

Richard smiled and staking a sip of his coffee said in a calm voice,

‘All I can say to them is that their religious disputes are their affairs and should be resolved by them. The administration can only render any help that they may want.’………………..

‘I hope there is no danger to you, Richard.’

‘No, Liza. If the subjects fight among themselves, the ruler is safe.”’51

The entire issue of freedom and independence is seen from the perspective of a common man.

“……One coolie said to the other, “I was carrying a babu’s load from the Ganj Mandi when the babu said, “Azadi is coming. India will soon be free.” I laughed and said. “Babuji, what is that to me? I am carrying loads now and shall continue carrying them
then.” And he burst out laughing, revealing the bright – red gums over his teeth. Our lot, is to carry loads, he repeated laughing.” 52

The changing patterns of relationships in the context of religious identity against the backdrop of the partition violence are also traced in Tamas.

“As the friends sat down, Raghu Nath said in a somber tone, ‘Things have taken a bad turn. One feels so bad. Brother killing brother.’

But after saying this, Raghu Nath suddenly felt that his utterance had created some sort of a distance between them. Their mutual relationship had been on a different plane whereas the Hindu –Muslim relationship was a different matter. He had, by this utterance, unwittingly linked the two kinds of relationships, their personal relationship with that existing between the two communities, about which both of them had their own individual perceptions.” 53

The changes during partition were politicized. The British and the Indian leaders of the Congress, Hindu Mahasabha, Muslim League and others were involved in it. The riots and communal violence were engineered and instigated. The following illustrations show this:

“‘Why do you shout? Don’t I know that riots are maneuvered by the British?
Hasn’t Gandhiji said so umpteen times?’

‘What were you doing then?’

‘Why, what have we not done? Didn’t we approach the Muslim League to work jointly with us to preserve peace in the city? Didn’t we go to the deputy commissioner and ask him urgently to take preventive measures……’

‘I have seen many…..members of the Congress are seeking contracts from the government for supplies to the refugee camps.’ 54

The frustration of not finding an able leadership also finds its place in the narrative.

“……I have seen many fellows. They are all Gandhi’s parrots. Gandhi, sitting in Wardha makes statements, and they go on repeating them. They have no mind of their own.” 55

The politics adopted by the British in ruling this country is also commented upon by the political workers.

“This is the role the British have all along played – they first bring about riots and then quell it; they starve the people first and then give them bread; they render them homeless and then begin to provide shelter to them.” 56

A sense of betrayal also pervades through the life of common people.
“No one gave us shelter where I know everyone, our shop was looted and our house set on fire. Many of the villagers had been my childhood playmates, we had grown up together.”

The world of *Tamas* reveals the community life on three microcosms –

The most evident is the ‘Bazaar’ or the market where most of the events take place. Whether it is the burning of grain markets or riots, the main market place, the mosque, the Gurudwara are the major sites. This site unfolds all the characters – Congress workers, common people, shopkeepers, tanners or even cunning characters like Murad Ali. The second layer is the private space or homes of some characters like Nathu, Lala Lakshmi Narain, Raghu Nath and others. These are the internal spaces where the threat of violence is simmering (in contrast to the first public space of bazaar where the killings, lootings, burnings actually take place). The third microcosm is entirely different, secluded and isolated from the other two – the world of Liza and Richard. Here the riots and violence are mere presences in their dispassionate conversation. This is a world of archeological interests, long walks, rides, Buddha statues and such stuff. The outer world is kept at bay through long, thick curtains. The servants who are natives are present, but their presence does not count.

The simmering violence in *Tamas* reaches a crescendo with both the communities involved in warfare. All the Sikh women along with their children jump into the village well to save their honour. The Congress and Muslim League workers pay repeated visits to Richard, and make strong pleas to take measures to control the riots. Richard keeps on playing with the issues as he is interested in keeping the communal fires burning. Finally after the worst is over, he takes some steps to maintain the façade of peace – maker. Things ‘seemingly’ turn back to normally but one wonders if the *Tamas* is actually over.

This novel is set in pre – partition era and so one knows that more *Tamas* is going to descend on the town with partition; things will never be the same again.

*Azadi* by Chaman Nahal traces the trauma of migration and the actual journey on a large scale. It also brings out the futility in the conclusion. The protagonist of the novel, Lala Kanshi Ram, a grain merchant, has led a peaceful life in Sialkot. His immediate family comprises of his wife Prabha Rani, son Arun Kumar and a married daughter, Madhu Bala, who is with her husband in Wazirabad. His extended family
includes his neighbours- the family of Sardar Teja Singh, Padmini, other fellow tenants and his landlady, Bibi Amar Vati’s family.

The novel is structured in three parts- Lull, Storm and Aftermath. The temporal setting is declared and the political setting is hinted at in the first two lines of the novel, “It was the third of June 1947. This evening, the Viceroy was to make an important announcement.”

Lala Kanshi Ram’s character, described in the beginning of the novel, is a representation of the assimilation of language and culture- the entire ethos forming a mixed and composite identity shared by the members of many religious communities living in the same locality or town. For instance, Lala’s ‘official’ language entered in the census is Hindi but it has never been used by him. All the entries in his shop are made in Urdu while he uses Punjabi for speaking. Although he does not know Sanskrit, he upholds it as his ‘true’ language as it is the ‘true’ language of the ‘true’ Indian. This view is a result of the influence of Arya Samaj. As far as his identity is concerned, his association with Arya Samaj has provided him with a commendable identity owing to his Hindu lineage:

“Was he the son of a rich man or poor? Did he inherit landed property or did he not? These were the questions the Arya Samaj did not care one bit for. So long as you could tie a white turban on your head in a becoming manner, and so long as you boasted of an upright moral character, you were a khandani, a worthwhile citizen. And the Samaj taught him in no uncertain terms that the true heritage of an Indian was the Vedic heritage, and the true language of an Indian, Sanskrit- the language of the Vedas.”

Contradiction and composite mix marks Lala’s persona in other spheres too. For instance, he has contradictory feelings towards the British- hatred and admiration, dislike and awe.

The impending possibility of Partition looms large over everybody’s mind right from the beginning. Nehru’s announcement of Partition over the radio on the 3rd June 1947 is described in detail in the novel. The voice of Nehru sounded ‘tired, meek, gentle and sad’ to Lala Kanshi Ram. The initial reaction to Partition is disbelief, shock and protest. At this point the possibility of forced migration has not occurred to Lala or his neighbours. The talk is centered on the national and public loss of division. The impossibility of the logistics of dividing everything is discussed by the Deputy Commissioner Pran Nath Chaddha and the Superintendent of Police, Asghar Ahmad Siddiqui. They were bonded with their allegiance to the Public Services and this bond
had been stronger than the ethnic bond but now with all the earlier parameters changing, they are no longer sure. Pran Nath asks if Asghar Ahmad Siddiqui will opt to serve in Pakistan, to which Asghar retorts with “Will I have a choice?” Pran Nath’s chain of thoughts reveals the absurdity of dividing the services between the two countries,

“The announcement had said that the services would be divided. But how? No one knew. Maybe they would be herded together and colour dyes put on their heads, as they did with cattle, and some would be sent to one side and some to the other. The Country was to be split up and down to the last peon, and not even senior officers like them were consulted or informed or forewarned about it.”

What is reflected here is shock, disbelief, absurdity; but what strikes us above all this is the deep hurt and pain at the assault on human dignity.

As mentioned earlier, after hearing the announcement of the partition on Radio, the issue of displacement does not occur to any of the characters. The first threat to their peaceful existence occurs with the procession of Muslims in their mohalla after the announcement of Partition. Initially the Hindus and Sikhs of the mohalla close the gates and prohibit the entry. The situation gets tense as the Muslims insist on the procession and go ahead even with the intervention of the police. The frenzy of the procession, the shouts of ‘Pakistan Zindabad!’ stone pelting and breaking the glass panes in a few houses set the turbulence of the future disruption. With the threat of displacement springs the reaction of rootedness and belonging in the psyche of Arun and his father. This belonging and fierce loyalty is on a personal/individual level as well as political/state level.

Kanshi Ram, along with his neighbours, is forced to flee from Sialkot. While leaving, they have to face a tragic event. His neighbour, Mukanda, is in jail. Hence his mother refuses to come with them as she wants to be home when her son comes back. She also does not want to leave her home. Vazira Fazila –Yacoobali Zaminadar lists makaan or homes left behind as a major parameter of trauma of uprootedness. The same fact is manifested through the refusal of Mukanda’s mother to leave her home. Her tragic end owing to her staunch refusal shows her attachment to her son and her dwelling.

Nahal uses three positions of looking at the Indian Partition: Arun is the representative of the Hindu community; the Muslim community is represented by Munir, whereas Sergeant Davidson acts as the voice of the British. Munir and Arun
represent the responses of their respective communities to the Indian Partition. They are sad, full of apprehension, feeling inadequate to cope with the acceleration of changes hurled at them and also with the changing national, communal, social, individual identities. Coupled with this is a keen new awakened sensitivity and awareness of their communal identities, springing to their defence. Sergeant Davidson’s responses are less emotional than those of Arun and Munir. He feels that the Partition is “the most damaging, most negative development in the history of the freedom struggle.” He also realizes that British are pushing things in their hurry to leave India. They were leaving India embroiled in a messy state of affairs. The state of affairs on each critical front was chaotic- logistics of dividing the country in all aspects, the partition violence, evacuation and resettlement of the refugees, political agreements and pacts as a concluding part of the curtain falling down and the merging of princely states into the Nation State. Davidson felt that the Cabinet Mission Plan was the best alternative. He also blamed Wavell of mismanaging things. Anguish and emotional turmoil come to the forefront in *Azadi* at many junctures. The trauma of Mukanda’s mother, Lala Kanshi Ram’s anger at the State’s inability to protect them and at the forced migration as an outcome of this, his deep hurt at the sense of betrayal by the British and the Indian politicians: all instances reflect this reaction. *Azadi* also emerges as a narrative of growth and change. Lala Kanshi Ram and Arun portray a link, a passing over from one generation to the next. The Lala at the beginning of the novel turns into a different person towards the conclusion of the novel. His vigour, determination and emotional strength crystallize into a more practical outlook, and the enthusiasm and optimism are diminished. He is a tired old man at the end and the fatigue, letting go is clearly evident at the end of the novel. The euphoria of the freedom is ebbing, the disillusionment has set in, the grim reality gnaws at the remaining emotional and physical strength; the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi accentuates the mood of cynicism and all this provide a perfect back drop for the dying spirit of Lala Kanshi Ram. On the other end of the spectrum we have Arun who is boyish and a fresh teenager at the beginning but he quickly matures during the narrative. It is not the physical years but the experiences that mature him faster. Searching Madhu’s body in the heap of mutilated remains, killing Captain Rahmat- Ullah Khan, losing Nur, Madhu and Chandni are some of the experiences that hurtle him towards manhood. Arun’s growth from a raw youth to a man initiated in the harsh lessons of life is clearly charted in *Azadi*. At the end it appears that Lala
has handed over the baton to Arun. This coincides with the assassination of Gandhi. The Gandhian era is over and the baton is passed over to the Nehruvian Age. Thus the progression of changes on national level is reflected on individual level. The individual becomes a mirror of the nation. This ‘passing over’ from Lala Kanshi Ram is a gradual process which culminates in the conclusion of the novel. In a similar manner Gandhi had gradually retraced from the centre of ‘agency of change’ long back and the process was finally completed with his assassination. What emerges is-old order passing over to new through a turbulent, unsettling phase of ‘in-between’ on all levels- to Arun’s family to national political scenario. Thus one can say that identities emerging from the nation to individuals are seen in the novel.

In spite of being a partition novel to its core, *Azadi* has deep tones of sexuality. As stated in the case of *Ice Candy Man*, here too this sexuality provides a contrast to its perversion and degeneration into the abductions, rapes and mutilations of women that occurred during the partition riots. Arun’s relations with various women, including his sister, in different phases of his life affect, and in turn are affected by his sexuality in these different phases. Arun’s adolescent awakening of sexuality is propelled through the dominant and aggressive sexuality of Madhu. After this raw awakening of physical changes and new urges hitherto unknown, comes the phase of youth with a sweet promise of first love in the form of Nur. This love is also full of passion. This budding love comes to an abrupt end with Arun and his family leaving Sialkot for India. Nur tries to persuade Arun to stay back, convert to Islam and marry her. Arun refuses to do so as his loyalty to religious faith and family wins over the love for Nur. Finally the strange solace found through physical proximity with Chandni in moments of strife and grief adds a new dimension to Arun’s sexuality.

Arun’s relation with Chandni illustrates the fact well acknowledged by the subaltern historians of partition (Butalia, Menon, Bhasin, Kaur et al): In a way the violence and trauma of Partition was an equalizer of caste and class, it threw individuals from diverse class, caste, religion and social milieu in proximity to each other. Thus Arun could connect to Chandni, who, otherwise had nothing in common with him, expect for the fact that both were co-sufferers in the turmoil and trauma of partition. The identities were in a flux and new identities were emerging in defiance of the old rules and order.

‘None of these things, her education, her status, her breeding, her poverty, mattered to Arun in his present disposition. He had found a new identity for himself, an identity
which had partly been thrust on him by the surge of events, and which partly he had worked out for himself metaphysically. He did not want to give that identity up." Arun’s raw physical passion for Chandni comes to an end with her abduction. Thus each relationship of Arun with women dies unnaturally-the one with Madhu, with her marriage, and later, her death, the one with Nur with the partition and migration, and the one with Chandni, with her abduction. This abrupt ending in each case signifies the incompleteness in life. These endings, metaphorically, preempt the emptiness and lack in his relationships after moving to India.

The logistics of migration and resettlement, both these concerns are dealt with in detail in Azadi. The organization of refugee camps and the convoy is described in Part 2: ‘The Storm’, through the journey of Lala Kanshi Ram’s family. The stops taken by the convoy, their duration and the interim arrangements, division of convoy into various sections, the route to be taken, the security, the arrangement of people, trucks and carts: all this entailed detailed planning. This detailing was often turned into a chaotic state by the attacks on the convoys. Lala Kanshi Ram’s convoy was attacked near Pasrur when it was moving, and later on in the refugee camp at Narowal. These descriptive passages throw open the violence and trauma of migration during partition.

The picture of resettlement comes later in the novel in the third section of ‘The Aftermath’. When the convoy reaches the Indian side at Dera Baba Nanak, everybody is elated as they have arrived at their destination. In no time, it is realized that the hopes are false; the sense of stability is an illusion. The opening of chapter 12 is set two and a half months after Lala Kanshi Ram’s arrival captures all this. The wait for settlement is never ending. The bureaucratic process is a lengthy and tedious one and full of futility. This fact also comes to light in the work by Ravinder Kaur. Daily visits to rehabilitation office have almost become mechanically habitual for Lala without any hope. It only provides him with a weak and fragile sense of purpose.

The concluding part of the novel is a strange mix of hope and despair, more despair than hope. One comes to the concluding part with a hope of fulfillment and new beginning but it sadly dissipates into uncertainty of purpose. In a strange manner, it reminds one of T.S. Eliot’s Hollow Men. Lala has lost his purpose of life; all his attempts to catch the threads and weave a new beginning are halfhearted because the fire in the soul is extinguished. The tragedy is all the more accentuated by the realization that all the ordeals have culminated into insignificance. As a result, even
the tragic element fails to rise to the occasion and plunge the readers into great depths of pathos. Lala’s world echoes that of Eliot,

“This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends,
This is the way the world ends,
Not with a bang, but with a whimper.’ 62

At the end, Lala evaluates the freedom with the gains and losses. He sees the gains in the self-respect, dignity and pride of citizenship. There is a new found confidence in the new national identity. These gains pale in the face of losses suffered on individual level. He has lost his earlier identity and personality, lost his dear Madhu and also the communication with his own family. He faces isolation, and all this at what cost?

“And he saw years of bleakness before him, years of desolation. Queues and long waits and filing of petitions and more petitions and further bleakness. He felt himself standing before a tunnel, where he could not see the other end. How long was the tunnel? And it all looked so unnecessary, so superfluous, to him- what they were going through…..Coldness and bleakness, close the eyes or open them.” 63

This passage brings out the sense of permanent loss acutely. Lala Kanshi Ram’s disillusionment at the end is no different than that of Laila at the end of Sunlight on a Broken Column.: it exhibits a similar breaking up of illusion and false hopes, a waking up from euphoria to the hard and sterile ground of reality. This is exactly what was happening in sixties in the discourse of national politics and the same is reflected in the lives of individuals like Laila or Lala Kanshi Ram. Thus the whole idea is that in the partition fiction each character becomes a speck of dot, tiny but important because the motif of these dots is reflected in the mosaic design, macrocosm is formed by the collective echoes of microcosms. The destiny of an individual is tied to that of a nation and vice versa. Later fiction like Midnight’s Children, albeit written in the different mould of magical realism, reiterates the same idea.

Azadi reflects many faces of partition; the violence, the trauma, uprootedness, sense of permanent loss along with other issues like it being an equalizer or the sexuality of characters.
Structured in four sections- Dacoity, Kaliyug, Mano Majra and Karma; Train to Pakistan opens in the summer of 1947 in the small, sleepy village of Mano Majra located on, what would later constitute the border of India and Pakistan. Mano Majra has around seventy families comprising of Sikh farmers, Muslims artisans and field labourers, a few converted Christian menial labourers, and only one Hindu- The money lender, Ramlal, who is killed by the dacoits in the opening part of the novel. The main characters are Jugga- the village ruffian, his girlfriend Nooran who also happens to be the daughter of the maulvi, Iqbal- an idealist communist social worker who is city bred with western education and sensibilities, the magistrate and deputy commissioner of the district Hukum Chand, the dacoit leader Malli and others. The disturbances of partition start echoing in Mano Majra at the same time when Ramlal is killed brutally by the dacoits. Jugga and Malli are rounded off as suspects and so is the unsuspecting Iqbal whose only crime is being an outsider. He comes to the village the next morning after the murder but this fact is cleverly concealed by Hukum Chand and the sub inspector. They have a grim task at hands – to maintain peace in Chandan Nagar district in the face of the fact that the first of the trains full of dead bodies has arrived. The disposal of the bodies, the murder of Ramlal, the only Hindu and the ticking time bomb of the onset of the violence turn Hukum Chand and the sub inspector into scheming manipulators and Iqbal, Jugga and Malli into pawns. Thus the stage is set for a frenzy of communal passions, leading to the climax of the planned slaughter of the Muslims of Mano Majra travelling to Pakistan on a train. The narrative reaches its conclusion with the heroic attempt of Jugga to avert this tragedy at the cost of his life.

Violence is one of the prominent themes of Train to Pakistan. The novel opens with a reporting of large scale violence that took place from 1946 in Naokhali, Bihar, and Punjab; followed by large scale migration of Hindus and Sikhs from North West frontier to the East. The tenor of violence continues with the murder of Ramlal, the money lender, by dacoit Malli and his gang. The audacity of dacoits in openly challenging the villagers to dare to stop them and the stunned silence and closed doors reveal the threat present to life and honour – the threat is in existence before the partition. The murder of Ramlal brings home the fact that internal violence was very much a part of daily life in Mano Majra and numerous other Indian villages. Of course, one needs to take into account the fact that the murder of Ramlal was not communal, it was driven by money. Still, one needs to acknowledge that violence
and brutality was a definite presence in the Indian villages. This presence is also evident in emotion of love, the love scene between Nooran and Jugga are more of violence than soft passion. The brutality of passion reiterates the presence of violence. The Partition violence is, also, not questioned but accepted as inevitable. While discussing the situation in Chandan Nagar district with the sub- inspector, Hukum Chand wonders, “How long will it be before it (violence) starts here?” So it is not a question of ‘if’ but ‘when. The first act of violence in the opening chapter is the brutal murder of Ramlal, the moneylender by the gang of dacoits from the neighbouring village. Thus internal violence is present right from the beginning; it forms the backdrop on which violence related to partition is attempted. This partition violence is described in the narrative; it does not become a part of the action, like the description of the train full of carcasses coming from Pakistan. The action of violence taking place in the narrative is either internal or unrelated to partition. The only partition – violence which occurs in the narrative is at the end and that too ends in failure. Thus the presence of violence in Mano Majra and Chandan Nagar is essentially preexistent to partition and is not related to partition. Violence seeps through other unexpected areas; for instance, the love making scenes between Jagga and Nooran are full of raw and violent sexuality- the brutality is more overpowering than the romance; albeit this violence is more of raw passion and not of killing or destruction. The novel focuses on- the train violence during partition, the politics of independence and the dynamics of existence in a small remote village in pre-partition India. The scenes of train violence come alive through the memory of Hukum Chand who is shaken up dealing with scores of dead bodies and limbs and his exhausted mind plays up the images later in the evening. The horror of death, cruelty and violence numbs the mind as he draws the images with brutal force of reality. But then Khushwant Singh pictures this violence not as it occurs but as a memory of Hukum Chand. Thus the violence is twice removed from the present; Hukum Chand sees the train heaped with dead bodies when it reaches Mano Majra, so the violence has already been committed. And again, the readers don’t see it immediately through the eyes of Hukum Chand , it only when he is tired, numbed and shaken up and returns to the rest house and the images that he has witnessed throughout the day play in his mind, that we get a glimpse of the sight on the train. It is as if the horror is unspeakable, unutterable to exist on material plane, it can only have an ethereal existence in the nightmarish mental images.
Even though the novel hovers on the partition violence, Khushwant Singh has made a vital point but in such a subtle manner that if not attended to closely, it might go unnoticed. The internal instances of violence are not communal as explained above. The partition violence unleashes itself on Mano Majra only when it is instigated by the external agency of the refugees or the military officer in charge of the evacuation of Muslims from Mano Majra or the militant Sikh leader who is an outsider. They persuade and literally force the villagers to join them as volunteers to attack the train. The novel makes an appeal not to mix the threat of violence with that of partition communal violence, forcing the people to turn against their own villagers. After all loyalty to one’s own fraternity is a much esteemed and much preserved value cherished and zealously preserved by the villagers. This is quite evident when Jugga is outraged not because he is whisked off as a suspect for Ramlal’s murder but because Ramlal is his fellow villager and thus he is indirectly accused of disloyalty and treachery to his fraternity. The same issue is reaffirmed when during a village meeting, one of the Sikh youths who is full of verbal violence for the village Muslims and wants to punish them because “they are Muslims” is outraged at the thought of the possibility of the ‘outside refugees’ harming the village Muslims.

“How could outsiders dare do ‘something’ to their fellow villagers? Here was another stumbling block to logic. Group loyalty was above reason. The youth who had referred to Muslims as pigs spoke haughtily: ‘We would like to see somebody raise his little finger against our tenants while we live!’” 64

Thus the agency of violence becomes important: the State represented by Hukum Chand, the Sub-inspector and the Sikh Evacuation Officer are full of antagonistic passions for the departing Muslims but they want the Sikhs of Mano Majra to project that venom on the Muslims and oust them from their village, and their country. The sub-inspector complains to Hukum Chand about the ‘apathy’ of Sikhs,

“‘I believe our R.S.S. boys beat up Muslim gangs in all the cities. The Sikhs are not doing their share. They have lost their manliness. They just talk big. Here we are on the border with Muslims living in Sikh villages as if nothing has happened. Every morning and evening the muezzin calls for prayers in the heart of a village like Mano Majra. You ask the Sikhs why they allow it and they answer that the Muslims are their brothers. I am sure they are getting money from them.’” 65

The Evacuation Officer is irked by the lack of hatred for Muslims in Mano Majra and taunts Meet Singh, “‘The only way people like you will understand anything is by
being sent over to Pakistan: have your sisters and mothers raped in front of you, have your clothes taken off, and be sent back with a kick and spit on your behinds.’”  

The young militant who plans the attack on the train going to Pakistan has the villagers eating out of his hands at the end of his rhetorical appeal. They ask him for guidelines on what is to be done and he spits the venom in their minds,

“‘…… Listen and listen very carefully.’ He paused, looked around and started again. He spoke slowly, emphasizing each sentence by stabbing the air with his forefinger. ‘For each Hindu or Sikh they kill, kill two Mussulmans. For each woman they abduct or rape, abduct two. For each home they loot, loot two. For each trainload of dead they send over, send two across. For each road convoy that is attacked, attack two. That will stop the killing on the other side. It will also teach them that we also play this game of killing and looting.’”  

The motive is not only the act of violence but to sow the seeds into the self about the ‘otherness’ of the ‘other’. This transcends the acts of violence to create new agencies of violence which would have more far reaching implications in future. The Politics of Partition, the selfish motives of the leaders, the power politics - all this is exposed by the very innocuous sounding yet worldly –wise logic of the villagers,

“Freedom must be a good thing. But what will we get out of it? Educated people like you, Babu Sahib, will get the jobs the English had. Will we get more lands or more buffaloes?”

“No,” the Muslim said. “Freedom is for the educated people who fought for it. We were slaves of the English now we will be slaves of the educated Indians- or the Pakistanis.”  

Similar insight is shown by the residents of Tamas. Many of the villagers feel that British Rule was far better than freedom, thus echoing the sentiment that India was not prepared for freedom, it was bought in hurriedly by the leaders of Congress and Muslim League in their hunger for power and freedom.

“The winds of destruction are blowing across the land. All we hear is kill, kill. The only ones who enjoy freedom are thieves, robbers and cut throats. We were better off under the British. At least there was security.”  

There is a sense of disappointment which would come out stronger much later and keep onlingering for a long time after the euphoria of freedom has worn off and grim realities of dislocation, fractured psyche-individual, communal and national,
weakening of leadership at the centre, the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi and poorer modes of existence have to be confronted.

The veneer of Idealism had already started chipping off to expose the corruption beneath,

“Gandhi disciples are minting money……. They are as good saints as the crane, shut their eyes piously and stand on one leg like a yogi doing penance; as soon as a fish comes near- hurrup!”

It is not only the corruption, the call of duty is also not idealistic or full of patriotic fervor. The bureaucracy and Police want peaceful evacuation not to save lives or to avert violence but to save their jobs. Hukum Chand is not really worried about the attack on the train; he has resigned to violence but is shrewd enough to see that it does not cost him his job. He instructs the Sub-Inspector to send message for extra help to the Head Office and to keep a record of his correspondence so that they remain safe. One needs to understand that in doing this, Hukum Chand is not a coward or a villain. He is just a normal human being with his own narrow needs and fears and apprehension, he is not a larger than life hero. Similar is the case with Iqbal, one does not belittle him when he does not have the courage to stop the attack on train, he just hides in his room in the gurudwara, and gets drunk to silence his conscience. The heroism is reserved for Jugga, whose inherent dare-devil attitude is fuelled further by the fact that his Nooran is on board and her life is in danger. Jugga, a rogue who is out on parole, emerges as the only one with integrity of character and courage to stand up for his convictions and lay his life in an heroic acts. Before going to perform the heroic act, Jugga goes to the gurudwara and persuades Bhai Meet Singh to read a prayer for him. This is one of the most endearing scenes where one can actually get a glimpse of the innocence and goodness of a person who is branded as a badmash by everybody, including himself.

The persona and the voice of the author comes out prominently twice in the last part of the novel. It comes out through the inebriated Iqbal’s chain of thoughts when he fights and reasons with himself on not going to save the Mano Majra’s Muslims. He ponders on the value of sacrifice, religion, culture and the sense of past in the Indian context. Iqbal finds himself giving a rationale for violence by saying that unless the slate is wiped clean, one cannot write afresh.

“Consciousness of the bad is an essential prerequisite to the promotion of the good. It is no use trying to build a second storey on a house whose walls are rotten. It is best to
demolish it. It is both cowardly and foolhardy to kowtow to social standards when one believes neither in the society nor in its standards. Their courage is your cowardice, their cowardice your courage. It is all a matter of nomenclature. One could say it needs courage to be a coward.” 71

The second time the authorial voice comes out quite vehemently is in the despair and anger of Hukum Chand. He is helpless and recognizes his incompetence in taking charge of the situation.

“Magistrates were responsible for maintenance of law and order. But they maintained order with power behind them; not opposing them. Where was the power? What were the people in Delhi doing? Making fine speeches in the assembly! Loudspeakers magnifying their egos; lovely-looking foreign women in the visitor galleries in breathless admiration. He’s is a great man, this Mr. Nehru of yours. I do think he is the greatest man in the world today. And how handsome! Wasn’t that a wonderful thing to say?” ‘Long ago we made a tryst with destiny and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure but very substantially.’ Yes, Mr. Prime Minister, you made your tryst. So did many others.” 72

This despairing outburst is followed by a rhetorical passage where tragic events involving individuals are narrated; ending with the refrain that each one had made his or her tryst with destiny, only this tryst was very different from what Nehru meant. Thus the historical phrase- ‘tryst with destiny’ assumes horrifying and tragic metaphoric meanings in an ironical manner. This tirade reveals the huge gaping chasm between the leaders basking in the glory of freedom in Delhi and the catastrophe that had befallen thousands of people along the entire Indo-Pak border. The Centre did take cognizance and steps were taken on both sides to avert the violence but this outburst shows how the attempts to restore order were pathetically weak and insufficient to control the seething volcano of fury and violence that had engulfed the north west belt of the subcontinent.

The location of Khushwant Singh, his involvement in Indian Politics and deep understanding of the events taking place, his stay at Lahore followed by migration to Delhi, his later involvement in Indian nation State at national and international level through his position as a diplomat in The High Commission, his in depth knowledge of religion and history, and above all, his robust fearlessness and brutal frankness, all went into making Train to Pakistan a forceful document of ‘how things starting changing for the worse and then it was no longer the same.’
Amit Majmudar feels that most partition texts ‘describe the politics, not the people’. This is where the fiction comes in, it fills in this gap as it deals more with people. Majmudar has a definite agenda. “To me, as a novelist, it’s the people that matter”. 73

Partitions is structured in six sections –

1) Connection  
2) Departures  
3) Dispersal  
4) Convergence  
5) Arrivals  
6) Settlements.

The narrative has a significant narrative technique. Dr. Roshan Jaitly, the narrator is already dead before the partition. He died due to delicate heart condition. Here, he follows his twins – Keshav and Shankar, and their mother – Sonia as they are trying to flee to safety during partition. In an attempt to board the last train to Delhi, Shankar and Keshav are torn from their mother. They now embark on a terrifying journey to fulfill a difficult task – to unite with their mother and move to shelter, safety and Delhi. They are vulnerable, six years old twins. Furthermore Shankar is very weak and suffers from a weak heart condition since his birth. Keshav and Shankar spend a difficult time searching for their mother but it is futile. In the meanwhile they sail through many turbulent events, including one in which they are sold to a Muslim childless widow; they run away, facing the threat of conversion and new religious identity.

The other main characters are – Doctor Ibrahim Masud and Simran. Doctor Masud, unnerved by the attack on his clinic and threat to his life, embarks on a journey to safely. His timid personality envelopes a noble soul as he treats all the injured and sick people along the way. Masud struggles on his way to the new state of Pakistan. Simran Kaur, a young Sikh girl, has a more dramatic escape. Her father, uncle and other male members of the family had planned honour death for all the women of the family as they are under threat of kidnapping, conversion and rape by the Muslim attackers. They plan to drug the women by giving opium in milk and then shoot them. Simran senses that something is wrong, throws the milk out of the window and bolts for the door. Her younger sister also tries to join her, and is killed by her father.
Simran horrified by the violence, starts running, never once turning back. She is a devout Sikh and hence yearns for her refuge, a spiritual sanctuary at the temple of Amritsar. She is innocent and her idea of danger is limited only to a forced religious conversion. She cannot imagine anything beyond that. She plans to commit suicide if her religious identity is under threat.

“How difficult, she thinks, how impossible it is to kill yourself in time, before the bad things happen to you! Beside a blade or a pistol, nothing works quickly enough. Even a blade would have to be used correctly – across the throat; she had heard of people dying with their throats slit. The throat would work. But would she be able to do it, if she had to? The body is so careful to protect its heart with ribs, everything vital inside a fortress. You can’t enter without setting off pain, and the pain weakening your arm”.  

The narrative traces the three journeys – of Simran, Masud and Shankar – Keshav. The common linking thread is that of the narrator who knows that fate is going to throw them together. The turmoil, violence and destruction continue. Simran is forcibly put in a truck by Qarim, Saif and Ayub. They have rented a truck to abduct girls and later sell them off. They have also hired the services of a prostitute Alisha alias Kusum to cajole and convince the girls. Simran tries to jump from the truck and run away. She is caught by Saif who is tempted by her youth. He abandons the thought of selling her and tries to rape her. Simran attempts to run and is saved by Masud. In the meanwhile, Shankar – Keshav face threat to their life by a bunch of Hindu hooligans, who take them to be Muslim boys. They too run and meet Masud and Simran. They decide to stick to each other. The boys abandon the hope of reuniting with their mother after making a last attempt to look for her.

The last part of the novel reveals Sonia’s whereabouts and dark secrets from the past tumble out: Sonia’s physical relationship with Ghulam Sikri, the foreman, whose men had been working a few houses down from theirs. The relation continued even after the birth of the twins and ceased only after Dr. Roshan Jaitely fell ill and stayed at home. Sonia refused to meet her lover even after the death of her husband. It was as if a chapter was closed, which was not really. Sikri kept a watch on Sonia and hence knew of her departure. He followed her to the station and the idea of separating her from her children was conceived and he planned to keep her with him. He let the twins board the train and pulled her back as she was boarding the train.
Sikri keeps Sonia under lock for four days and weakens her spirit. She wants him to get back her sons at any cost. Instead he promises that he would give her new life, new sons, new religious identity and a new name. Then he rapes her and the broken Sonia drowns herself in a well. But the death too does not come easily; she has to make space as the well is full of bodies.

“She believes her boys are dead and that she because of her sin has caused their deaths. She steps into the well. The splash she makes is small. There are other women in the well. Cold arms and cold hair stroke her scarred arms and chest. She is only neck deep. She lowers her face. She kicks to make room for herself. At last, the bodies under her shift and give, and she sinks a little, the part in her hair still visible above the water. It takes a few minutes. Bubbles rest on the surface. At last they break, and she is released. I follow her into the universe”.

The novel concludes with a flashback where the narrator relives his own death. As mentioned earlier, the study of *Partitions* becomes important as it is located differently from other partition literature studied, spatially and temporally. The novel is strikingly different from other fiction in the following aspects:

There is absolutely no reference to the politics of partition and freedom movement. The names of leaders, the facts, the important meetings, the events—all these are excluded. There is a very definite agenda to do away with ‘why’ and focus on ‘how’. The state is entirely missing in the narrative; the people and their lives take precedence.

As compared to the other novels selected for study, this novel has few characters. There are only a handful of main characters with a couple of minor characters.

The narrative technique of the novel is markedly different. The narrator is dead when the narrative opens. This gives him an easy flexibility and permeability across time and space, which he flaunts and uses to its maximum. The narrative jumps across time and space, and ends with a recounting of the narrator’s death that occurs much before the narrative opens.

The narrative is focused on the partition and its aftermath but there is a strong presence of a sub narrative of Dr. Jaitley’s personal life. His marriage with Sonia shocks his family and he is disowned by them. He was a widower for eleven years, she was fifteen years old. Furthermore, Sonia had no origin – no family ancestry to claim for.
“That is part of why I love her, that quality of being found, of having no origin. Portuguese missionaries had discovered her sleeping naked in a furrow, her body strangely scarred no language on her tongue. Neither Muslim nor Hindu nor Sikh: some fourth natural creature sprung from the soil”. 76

At the end Sonia’s shameful past in the form of extra marital relationship with Ghulam Sikri is revealed.

This characteristic has a strong presence in the novel, many a times pushing the devastation of the partition aside: it recedes in the background. It remains a family narrative as much it is a partition narrative.

The religious identity and origins of the characters are mixed up, combined, tossed and turned with a forceful vigour. Sonia’s origins are unknown, hence Shankar-Keshav are half upper caste Hindus and half of unknown origin. When their paths cross with their new family, again there is a mixed pattern of religious identities. Dr. Masud is a Muslim, Simran is Sikh. It appears as if Majmudar wants to interrogate the fixedness of religious identity by using a mixed pattern.

The fact of partition which divided a country into two resounds throughout the narrative with metaphorical connotations.

Keshav and Shankar – twins – stand for the two countries. The idea of parting crops up a number of times, for instance-

“……two children embrace until parted by a wind”. 77

“……so his face remains divided one side clean-shaven, shadow on the other”. 78

There are numerous such instances.

Majmudar points out how religion became the major marker of identity during partition and all other identities. The identity of individuals is decreed only by religion.

“It’s taken the smell of smoke to prove to him he isn’t Ibrahim Masud to anyone but himself now. His profession, too, means nothing. Muslim: that’s suddenly the defining presence thing about him. The only detail, everything around it is effaced”. 79

Thus the violence of partition was charted on the religious identity and boundaries. It assumed a different form depending on the ghettos of respective communities.

“…..He marveled how the violence respected borders, how the unspeakable in one place could be conversation in another. There was no partition, no check point or sign, but he had left, appreciably, the Muslim part of the city”. 80
Partitions, removed in time and space from the other partition literature is different from other texts chosen for study. The impact of partition is lessened; temporal and spatial distancing has lent certain objectivity in the entire rendering of events. The narrator’s presence not as a physical entity but as a spirit signifies that the physical presence and reality of partition has receded in the distant part, only the ghosts or shadows of the memories linger on. The location also makes all the details that went into making of partition, redundant. So the politics of partition is completely swept aside, not even remaining a part of setting, as is the case with Train to Pakistan and Azadi or other texts. What remains – survives the passage of time and space is the partition violence and trauma – physical and mental. This definitely finds a place in the narrative.

The truth is that we neither know how to live nor how to die.’

Manto

Letters to Uncle Sam

The trauma of partition and departure to Pakistan left Manto a broken soul. He could never relocate himself in Lahore. Manto loved Bombay with all his heart so much that his friend Ahmed Rahi opined, “In my opinion Manto begin to die the day he set foot in Pakistan”. 81 Manto always felt like an outsider and rootless in Pakistan.

“……you may call it my imagination but for me it is the bitter truth that so far I have failed to find out a place for myself in this country called Pakistan, which I love greatly. That is why I am always restless. That is why sometimes I am to be found in a lunatic asylum and sometimes in a hospital. I have yet to find a niche for myself as an important person. I believe that I have a name and a place in Urdu Literature because, frankly, if I did not have that delusion, life would become quite unbearable.” 82

Manto’s stories have an intense commitment to the neglected and exploited sections of the society. Often his characters comprise of prostitutes, pimps, professional failures, ‘brazen’ girls and others. He adopted a style full of sarcasm and irony, attaching the ‘double-faced’ nature of the society. The stories of Manto are unforgettable because they are the outcome of a rebellious but sensitive soul clashing with the hypocrisy of the society. His stories are shockingly punched with the bitter truth. Manto’s stories on partition have their own unique place among the plethora of
partition literature. He has the capability, as a sharp mind, to see the absurdity evocatively through the scalding narratives. It is an undisputed fact that majority of partition narratives are staggeringly full of the impact of violence; this violence becomes a stumbling block in the sense that it becomes a preoccupation bordering on the limits of obsession. It obstacles the vision to go beyond and the finer truths remain untold. Manto’s stories transcend this fixation. His stories retell the horror of violence but they go beyond that. Manto often skips the vivid detailed imagery of the impact of violence. More than violence is the ‘angst’, the shock and despair. Jason Francisco points out the mastery of Manto, “Manto’s achievement and the reason for treating him foremost as writer of rupture – is to place his readers in the beat of depraved, senseless and twisted universes from which he offers, in what is perhaps his own vengeance, no clear escape. We are left only with speed and violence coursing in the blood of his characters, span off without soothing messages or disclaimers.”

Manto’s narratives on partition are significant because of another aspect, they perform another important function. In discourse of gender or nation, gender has often been translated as women. In other words, the area of masculinities as the object and not the agency of partition violence is a largely neglected one. Manto’s stories accord a space to the victimization of men on physical and mental level during partition. At the same time he also focuses on the fringes and margins of the society- the prostitutes, the pimps, the homeless, and their plight during partition. Thus it can be said that he gives space to margins and violence in his writings.

Manto’s stories will never be redundant and the times will never outgrow them. To give a more specific instance, Kamleshwar’s “Hail Freedom” written fifty years after the freedom pictures the meeting of Manto and Kamleshwar. They go for a walk together and meet various creations from Manto’s stories. The story tries to show that the saga of pain, suffering and differences continue under new garbs, times haven’t really changed much, and the issues remain unresolved. This story starts with the absurdity of the division, “As it transpired, I went out for a walk with Manto. It was a momentous occasion- the fiftieth year of freedom. I was not aware as to which country it was. For all I knew it could be any of the two countries – India or Pakistan. Because the same country had gained freedom at the same time by dividing itself in two. One of them being India, that is Bharat, and the other Pakistan.”
After a long turn of events in which the characters from his stories meet the narrator and Manto, the story concludes with the stark reality – partition is never really done and done away with. It still continues in various forms.

“I asked Manto, ‘Did you hear those wails? From where had that sound of weeping come?’

‘From across this side and that side. From both sides, Manto said philosophically, like one demented. ‘My friend, countries grow old but pain never grows old……………………………………………………

In a state of mental turmoil, I looked around for Manto. But he seemed to have disappeared. Perhaps once again he has taken refuge behind his stories and locked himself up in his books.” 85

In “Mozail”, Mozail is a Jewish girl, staying in the same building, as that of Tarlochan, a young Sikh. Tarlochan is madly in love with Mozail but Mozail a carefree soul, does not want to be bound by commitment. She leads a bohemian life and sees no reason to marry the ‘outwardly conventional’ Tarlochan. She is headstrong and does not take him seriously but loves him in her own way. When Tarlochan in faced with the difficult task of rescuing Kirpal Kaur (sister of his friend who comes from his village, and whom he intends to marry now) from a Muslim mohalla, Mozail comes to his help in an unexpected manner. Beneath the text of this narrative, runs a stranger sub-text. Mozail always ridicules Tarlochan in an offending manner, over his beard and turban, and he being a Sikh. She refuses to be bound by any religious conventions, she ridicules them. The same Mozail saves Kirpal Kaur at the cost of parading herself naked, slips down the stairs and lies bleeding. While dying she tries to save Tarlochan,

“The men who were trying to break into the flat had also gathered round in a circle, forgetting temporarily what they were here for. They were staring at her naked, bruised body. Tarlochan bent over her. ‘Mozail, Mozail’. She opened her eyes and smiled. Tarlochan undid his turban and covered her with it. ‘This is my lover’. He’s a bloody Muslim, but he’s so crazy that I always call him a Sikh’, she said to the men. More blood poured out of her mouth. ‘Damn it!’ she said.

Then she looked at Tarlochan and pushed aside the turban with which he had tried to cover her nakedness.

‘Take away this rag of religion, I don’t need it’.

Her arm fell limply on her bare breasts and she said no more” 86
Thus Mozail answers to a higher God; she has her own sets of ‘goodness’ and she does not require ‘the rags of religion’ for that. This subtext lends a framework of challenging, despising and rejecting religion. The setting of partition becomes a cause for further action. Mozail detests the outer signifiers of religion but adheres to the supreme religion of humanity. She has her own codes of morality. It is a significant fact that Mozail is Jewish, an objective location, albeit on the fringes in the whole turbulence of Hindu- Sikh and Muslim violence during the partition. Betrayal from the very quarters where faith is placed brings a chillingly dark tenor to many of Manto’s stories. It brings out the apocalypse of a dark universe with no light of redemption. “The Assignment” is one such chilling narrative of how no longer anything holds true as years of relations are snapped with a moment of betrayal. This story set in Amritsar of 1947 pictures a dying Muslim judge alone with a teenage daughter in a locality overtaken by non-Muslims. The judge, Mian Abdul Hai, was absolutely confident that things would return to normal soon, which was why he was not worried. His daughter, Sughra, is worried. He has a visitor in the form of Santakh Singh, son of deceased Gurumukh Singh. Mian Abdul Hai had once done a favour to Gurumukh Singh. He had been involved in a false legal suit and Mian sahib had acquitted him. That was a long time ago, but every year, on the occasion of Id, he would come all the way from his village with a bag of *sewwaiyaan*. This time he was not well so he had sent his son Santakh Singh with the gift. He talks very courteously with the father and daughter, and goes out. Four men with oil, explosives and oil torches are waiting for him to come out. He tells them that he has completed his assignment; they can complete theirs if they like. Thus this story reflects the chilling realization that nothing can set things right. It shows a dark universe where the human is dead and the beast is unleashed, with no hope of redemption. This betrayal is more unnerving than the actual, physical violence as it privileges religious hatred above all human values. “The Return” also uses the theme of betrayal to expose how the good faith of Sirajuddin is exploited by his daughter-Sakina’s rapists. Sirajuddin was beaten unconscious and when he regained consciousness, his daughter Sakina was missing. He looked for her far and wide but it was of no use. Finally he finds help in form of eight men who had guns and a truck. They assure him that they would search his daughter for him. After many days, Sirajuddin finds his daughter, in the camp hospital. She had been found lying unconscious near the railway tracks. In the end the
unconscious Sakina is brought to the hospital, Sirajuddin finds her and the doctor asks him to open the window- ‘open it’. The words work like a spell on Sakina, she opens the shalwar and her thighs. The doctor is shocked but Sirajuddin is happy that his daughter is alive. It is as if Sirajuddin’s faith is robbed and raped through Sakina. The story brings out the macabre horrors of the atrocities in a chilling manner.  

Manto has also touched upon the turbulence and confusion in leadership during partition. At times it assumed the form of directionless movement and often led to disillusionment on part of the workers. This element is captured in the narrative of “The Price of Freedom”. The narrative is an autobiographical account of Shahzada Ghulam Ali a political leader and local hero of excitement and fervour in Amritsar before partition. Shahzada marries Nigar, a nurse and congress worker. While getting married, Shahzada vows celibacy till freedom, in a patriotic fervour. Times change and the euphoria dies down. The narrative reflects, “At that time most of us were convinced that the ousting of the British from India was a matter of days away. However, the Raj was cleverer than we were prepared to give it credit for. It let the movement come to a boil, then made a deal with the leaders, and everything simmered down”.  

Shahzada and Nigar are faced with the predicament of not consummating their marriage. The narrator meets him after eight years in Bombay, a changed person. He owns a shop and is now a family man. Shahzada, while telling his story, registers his disillusionment with the Indian leadership. “I swear upon God that I was prepared then, as I am prepared today, to sacrifice even my life for the freedom of India. However, after much reflection, I’ve come to the conclusion that both the politics of India and its political leadership are immature. There are sudden storms and then all is quiet. There is no spontaneity”.  

Manto has captured the changing dimensions of relationships on the backdrop of partition in many of his stories. “The Dutiful Daughter” explores the relation between an abducted daughter and her mother. Manto has a keen sense of spotting the ‘absurd’ within a tragic situation. In this story, he records his amusements, and thus mocks at, the entire process of recovery of abducted people. “It always amused me to see that such enthusiastic efforts were being made to undo the effects of something that had been perpetrated by more or less the same people. Why were they trying to rehabilitate the women who had been raped and taken away
when they had let them be raped and taken away in the first place? It was all very confusing, but one still admired the devotions of these volunteers.  

The old woman pines for her abducted daughter. After many days, the daughter passes with her Sikh abductor. They hurry, avoiding her and the officer who is a witness to this, tells her mother, “Your daughter is dead”. In a metaphorical manner it means that the daughter’s identity is completely wiped out and nothing remains of the pair, it is a complete erasure, when the daughter refuses to recognize her mother and hurriedly walks away ignoring her, one is left with the ambiguity of reason – did she care for her mother so much that she wants to avoid the hurt for her or did she discard her mother as an unwanted rag of the past? Thus the reader is left oscillating between angry and sad reactions towards the daughter. This story subverts the normal relation between a mother and her estranged daughter. All the behavioral pattern of human transactions of normal times had turned topsy – turvy during the partition. This was felt by Manto in his own personal life too. Manto recalls his mental state during the partition through the narrator:

“They were strange, illogical times. I had boarded up all the doors and windows of my mind shuttered them up. It was difficult to think straight.”

Another story focused on human relationships against the backdrop of partition is “The Last Salute”. Ram Singh and Rab Nawaz are childhood friends who have also fought together in army but now are on two sides of the border. They meet each other while fighting and Ram Singh is accidently shot fatally by Rab Nawaz. Rab Nawaz rushed to his side and Ram Singh talks about the past memories in a delirium of excruciating pain and Rab Nawaz also responds, with all the boundaries melting down in those moments. This story drives home the point that war makes enemies out of friends. One of the well-known war poets, Wilfred Owen, imagines a bizarre meeting of dead soldiers in the hell in *The Strange Meeting*. One of them tells the other, “I am the enemy you killed, my friend”.

“A Tale of 1947” is a character sketch of Sehai who sacrifices his life for a prostitute. This narrative is ‘a story within a story’ where Mumtaz, leaving for Pakistan, tells the story of Sehai, a pimp. In this story, Manto puts forth his views on the futility and absurdity of dividing nations on the basis of religion.

“The great tragedy is not that two hundred thousand people have been killed, but that this enormous loss of life has been futile……
Only the naïve can believe that religion can be eliminated with a gun. Why can’t they understand that faith, belief, devotion, call it what you will, is a thing of spirit; it is not physical. Guns and knives are powerless to destroy it.”  

Sehai shatters the stereotypical image of a pimp. He is a man of extremely fastidious habits. He was very straight, never cheated or never spoke lies. Moreover, he treated all the girls he supplied to his customers as his own daughters. He looked after their well-being, arranged for their saving accounts and subsidized personal expenses for some of them. One day he is found dying by his friend, Mumtaz. He is stabbed in a pre-dominantly Muslim area in the communal riots following partition. He recognizes Mumtaz and,

“With an almost superhuman effort, he unbuttoned his shirt, slipped his hand in but did not have the strength to pull it out. Then he said in a voice so faint that I could hardly hear it, ‘There’s a packet in there….it contains Sultana’s ornaments and her twelve hundred rupees…. they were with a friend for safe custody….I picked them up today and was going to return them to her……these are bad times you know…..I wanted her to have her money and the ornaments….Would you please give them to her…..tell her she should leave for a safe place….but……please….look after yourself first!'”

Manto shows the greatness of the common man, the spark of humanity and values kept alive in difficult times in a person belonging to one of the most detested marginal spaces of the society. Sehai has the purest of hearts and retains it even amidst the communal poison in the times of the partition. This story, along with few other stories, shows a glimpse of a glimmer of hope in the dark times.

“Bitter Harvest” captures the frenzy and insanity of violence. After Qasim’s wife is murdered and daughter raped and murdered, he goes in a fury of madness, and goes on a killing spree. In that fury he rapes and kills a young girl, almost his daughter’s age, to avenge the violence on his family.

“Qasim threw away the axe and pounced on her like a wild beast, throwing her to the ground. Then he began to tear at her clothes and for half an hour he ravaged her like an animal gone berserk. There was no resistance, she had fainted. When he finished, he realized that he was clutching her throat with both hands, his nails embedded into her soft skin. He released her with a violent jerk.”

The girl’s father comes, is shocked as he and Qasim know each other. But Qasim doesn’t recognize him in his insanity of violence. This story unleashes the world of
anarchy where there is no hope. The sense of apocalypse can be paralleled with W. B. Yeats’ image of ‘the new God’ in *The Second Coming*.

Manto also unravels a much unexpected response to violence in narratives like “The Great Divide”. Karim’s father is killed in the massacre, and so is the brother of his wife, Jeena. When his father died, Karim did not drown himself in sorrow. In fact, he was proud of the bravery of his father who had fought nearly thirty armed men single-handed, till he fell. Karim had a deep, abiding faith in humanity and refused to look at Hindus with hatred. He had lost his father, “…. his standing crop had been burnt to the ground, two of his houses had been gutted, but he had never once tried to recount his losses. The nearest he had come to doing that was, ‘Whatever happened was because of our own mistakes.’”  

He had never gone into details. Karim’s fellow villagers are threatened when the news spread that the Indians were going to dam the rivers which brought water to their villages in Punjab. They gossip, and Karim invite their wrath by asking the villagers not to abuse the Indians. He has an uncanny ability to feel the situation from both sides- self and the ‘other’. Karim defends his stance, “I am not talking nonsense. When it is war, everything is permissible. Haven’t you seen two feuding wrestlers in a ring, fighting to the finish? There are no holds barred in such contests……. It follows that then they have every right to dam our rivers. It may appear to us an act of cruelty, but it is no such thing to them. I think it is fair.”

The other villagers are outraged but Karim retorts further by saying that they should do something about it rather than just criticizing the Indians. When asked about how one should go about it, Karim is at a loss of words, albeit he is still mulling over the matter when he reaches home and gets the news that his wife has delivered a baby boy. In this climax of the story, Karim hits upon a novel idea of making amendments and setting things right. When the midwife Bakhto asks him if he has thought of a name, he proclaims,

“‘Yes, I have,’ he answered. ‘Yazid, that’s what he is going to be called.’ Bakhto’s face went white because no Muslim child is ever called Yazid as no Christian child can be called Judas. It is an evil name because it was Yazid at whose orders Hussain, the Prophet’s grandson, and his companions were deprived of water and finally massacred.

Karim Dad ran into the house, Jeena was lying in bed……….Karim Dad touched him on his cheek. ‘My little Yazid,’ he said proudly

‘Yazid!’ Jeena almost screamed.
‘Yes, Yazid….. that is his name ,’ Karim Dad said looking at the baby.

‘What are you saying?’ she asked in a shocked voice.

Karim Dad smiled. ‘Yes, that’s right; it is only after a name after all.’

‘But do you know whose name that is?’ she asked.

‘It is not necessary that this little one here should be the same Yazid. That Yazid dammed the waters; this one will make them flow again.’

Thus here Manto presents a fresh perspective on the future. It is one of the few stories that end on a positive note. Here the damming the rivers assume a factual and metaphorical dimension. Factual as there were problems of these kinds in the post partition era. Metaphorical because waters flowing between the two divided lands again envisage a coming together of divided hearts and divided lands in future. Although this story ends in an idealistic way that seems unrealistic, it is one of the significant creations as it stands out in stark contrast to the otherwise dark universe with no hope of redemption, created by Manto.

“The Gift” is the story of Sultana, a prostitute, who has moved to Delhi from Ambala and finds herself out of money. Ambala cantonment gave her more money as it was full of ‘goras’. (British soldiers) Shanker brings her the much needed gift of a black shalwar for Muharrum but she realises what cost she has paid for it through Shanker. This story is not focused directly on partition but it reveals the economies of migration and the departure of the British.

“The Room with the Bright Light” is on the exploitation of a woman for prostitution. Still the setting is of the partition decade. The description of the Qaiser Gardens reveals the deterioration of the locality due to the strife ridden situation.

“There had been riots, accompanied by massacres and rapes. The violence Qaiser Garden had witnessed had left its ugly mark on everything. The once splendid commercial buildings and residential houses looked sordid and unclean. He was told that during the riots women had been stripped naked and their breasts chopped off. Was it then surprising that everything looked naked and ravaged?”

“The Woman in the Red Raincoat” is set amidst the loot, arson and abduction of women during partition. The narrator too abducts a woman. It is a dark rainy evening. The woman is wearing a raincoat with a hood and so her appearance is obscured. There is no electricity; the narrator’s house is covered in darkness. The woman is hysterical with fear but the narrator manages to calm her down. She is scared as she fears that he would murder her and the narrator assures her that he would not kill her.
When she understands his intentions, she gives in easily, only with a slight initial hesitation. The narrator is happy and excited. What proceeds next is a play between desire and derailment. The woman is hesitant to show her face and body and she is more comfortable with the darkness. At the end there is a rude revelation ending in tragedy. When finally, the narrator manages to see her, he is shocked.

“I put my hands on her shoulders and pulled her closer. God, I can’t explain to you what I saw. It was the face of an old woman, deeply painted and yet lined with creases. Because of the rain, her make-up had become patchy. Her hair was covered, but you could see the roots, which were white. She had a band of plastic flowers across her forehead. I stared at her in a state bordering on shock. Then I put the lantern down and said, ‘you may leave if you wish.’”

Thus the narrative hinges on the unfulfilled sexual desires of an ageing woman. At the same time Manto takes a totally different take on the surging flood of sexual atrocities that were occurring during the partition.

‘The Girl from Delhi” is the sad tale of betrayal of Nasim Akhtar, a nautch girl who migrates to Pakistan during partition. It brings home the sad realization that one can leave behind the country but not one’s life. The life of a courtesan follows her like a shadow to Pakistan till she finally succumbs and returns back to her old life.

The setting of abduction of women during partition is used in “Harnam Kaur”. The narrative explores deeper issues of sexuality and masculinity. In many of the short stories, Manto has thrown together the subthemes of sexuality and partition violence. In “Colder than Ice”, Ishwar Singh, a Sikh, abducts a Muslim girl during the riots and rapes her, only to realize later that she has been dead all along. This puts him in a shock and he meets his mistress Kalwant Kaur in a disturbed state. Kalwant Kaur suspects another woman as she is unable to arouse his passions. She slashes his neck with his kirpan and before dying, he tells her the incident. This story had brought a charge of obscenity on Manto.

Manto has the ability to contain the tragedy of partition, and go beyond it to infuse it with satire and irony. It is debatable whether he was able to do, so in his own life but it is evident through stories like, ‘Three Simple Statements”. This is a compact brief story which uses the graffiti scribbled in a public urinal, strategically located near the Congress House and Jinnah Hall, as a caustic comment on the public outcry and protest against political and communal changes in the undesirable direction. This filthy and obscene graffiti is first directed towards the Muslims and creation of
Pakistan. After some days, the narrator finds an addition to it – another obscenity, this time directed towards Hindus and ‘Akhand Bharat’. Finally, with the changing political equations and the partition, appears a third and final rejoinder, this time, contributed by the narrator himself, with a new obscenity related to ‘Mother India’ and both, Muslims and Hindus. This story is a powerful portrayal of the sentiments of the common man expressed in the most uncensored and free space available to him-the public urinal. It also tries to reflect the fact that majority of the common men were not communal or villains, they did not partake in the mindless violence, as painted by history. In fact, they abhorred both the religions, Islam and Hinduism in favour of true democracy and humanity.

“Free for All ” looks at the irony of partition with a different location. There are nine briefly sketched situations and Kabir’s reaction to each situation. These situations deal with the inadequacy, tragedy, ignorance, irony and hypocrisy of partition. This bunch of situations is similar to the sketches in Sihay Hashye. There are thirty two sketches in Sihay Hashye (Black Margins). There are images full of irony like in “A Sweet Moment” where a couple of lines from a Pakistani newspaper reporting that after Gandhiji’s death sweets were distributed in some Indian cities; or in “Division” where two looters plan to divide the loot of a heavy chest equally: it opens – a man with a sword springs out and cuts each one of them into equal pieces. In “Miracle Man”, a man, in an attempt to avoid police action, tries to dump two ransacked sacks of sugar in a nearly well but he falls in, help comes but he dies. Next day people find the water of well sweetened, they declare him a holy and lamps are illuminated on his grave. In “The Garland” a statue is desecrated, police firing is opened and the injured were taken to the hospital named after the person where statue was desecrated. The irony of lives flourishing is sketched in “God is Great” where a courtesan’s business flourishes after she migrates during the partition. In “Socialism”, the owner fleeing away with property is mistaken for a robber by other robbers, thus diffusing the boundaries of ‘Self’ and ‘other’. “Double Cross” tells us that petrol used for burning of shops was impure hence the shops didn’t ‘burn properly’.

“Mistake Removed” is the chilling ironical tragic fate of a Hindu who circumcises himself to fake identity and buys safety while passing through the Muslim area. He crosses the area safely but is now crossed, interrogated and ‘examined’ by Hindus. He is now unable to prove his real and original religious identity and killed by his own community men. This story interrogates and challenges the religious markers as the
signposts of one’s identity, the markings inscribed on one’s own body. It also critiques the fact that during the communal frenzy of violence during the partition, religious identity overshadowed all other dimensions of existence, and became a sentry of death, heralding or forestalling it, depending on the fact whether you were with the hunters or the hunted.

Many of the other sketches thrive on ‘shock value’ by juxtaposing incongruent universes of realities. “Wages” sketches a labourer running with a sack of rice, who is caught by the police. He offers to give rice as a bribe and only want his ‘wages’ for carrying the heavy sack till the police station. “Co-operation” has a house owner helping the hooligans to loot his house in an orderly manner, and thus avoiding any destruction. Then there is the plea of a man facing attack on his life in “Permanent Vacation”. In a desperate attempt to come up with some excuse to save himself, he cries out, “please don’t kill me, don’t kill me please…..you see I am going home on vacation”. “Tidiness” sketches a passenger betraying his friend. When the killers are about to slash the throat of the victim, his friend who had betrayed him says, “No, no. not here! It’ll mess up the carriage. Take him out.” He doesn’t realize that his act of betrayal has messed up his moral existence and integrity of self. Some of the most chilling narratives include “Resting Time”, where taking rest between killings, the killers are satiated and full of fatigue and lethargy of killing. This sketch is untranslatable in its critique. It has to be read in its entirety.

“He is not dead. There is still some life left in him. O leave it, my friend, I am exhausted.”

“Mishtake” sketches the mistake of killing a person of the same community. This mistake is discovered when the killer stairs the victim down his stomach, and the cords of the pyjamas and pyjamas are tore open.

‘The one with the knife took one look and exclaimed regretfully, ‘Tut tut tut …… Mishtake.’” The regret expressed here is a parody on the tragedy. Two disturbing facts are thrown in our face- if they would have killed the right person, was it not a mistake, i.e. is killing itself in the name of religion not a mistake? For that matter, is the very act of killing not a mistake in the ethical universe? Thus there are concentric circles of ethical dilemmas, one enclosing the inner whirl and so on and so forth. The second disturbing fact is the tragedy of a life lost is pooh-poohed with a mere ‘tut tut tut……’, thus the grave is met with the frivolous.
“Losing Proposition” sketches the strange predicament of two friends who purchase an abducted girl from the ‘other’ community and rape her. In the morning, they ask her name and discover that she is from the same religion. They are outraged, claim they are cheated and decide to return her back. This sketch is a study in the extremities of ‘objectification’ of women. The girl becomes an object, a commodity which is used, abused and then returned to the seller as a ‘wrong buy’. Like ‘Mishtake’ this sketch also raises a disturbing question: What is wrong – raping a girl of the same community or raping a girl per se’?

“Out of Consideration” shows the ‘considerate ‘abductor’ who proceeds to kill a girl and when the father cries out, “Don’t kill my daughter in front of my eyes.”; the abductor ‘kindly’ orders his companions to parade the girl naked in front of her father and spares her life!

Thus all the sketches of Black Margins have a powerful impact. Manto’s sketches are biting, sharp and gnaw at one’s conscience. He was puzzled by the frenzy of killing that was sustained over a long duration and was maddening in its intensity. One feels that the terseness and the short span of these short stories is complementary to “the single minded dedication with which men had killed men” and the momentary insanity of violence, the unleashing of the beast within, ripping off the veneers of the civilization.

The dedication of ‘Siyah Hashye’ runs as follow:

“Dedicated to the man, who, in the course of narrating his bloody exploits conceded: ‘When I killed an old woman only then did I feel that I had committed murder.’”

This dedication shows how Manto contains the horrors of partition. The conscience of the wrong-doers is pricked and punctured only by a specific location of the victim, not the heinous act or the victim per se’. Here, Manto tackles the very core of Ethics-what is wrong or right is no longer objective. It is a dark universe in which the earlier order is disrupted, wrong becomes right and vice-versa. Wrong and Right become contextual values, they lose their absolute values. Mushirul Hasan calls Manto a writer of rupture because he places his readers in the beat of depraved, senseless and twisted universes from which he offers no clear escape. One is left only with speed and violence without any hope of retribution or justice.

The black humour underlining many stories of ‘Siyah Hashye’ (Black Margins) is grotesque, chilling and unnerving. It is the horror of the irony of the gap between the
‘ideal’ and ‘the real, which comes nearest to the chaotic ethos of universe presented through ‘The Theatre of the Absurd’.

Manto, in going beyond violence, accepts and acknowledges the horror of violence but also tries to see what it does to people in effect. Manto discards and disregards all the moral issues as he is not bothered about the charges of obscurity. He delves deeper and deeper through the body and flesh and looks at the souls troubled by the horrors. It is as if the ‘whiteness of the bone’ of reality is penetrated through and through. Manto’s sensitivity was always captured by ‘unattended moments of truths’ and wronged times. It was not incidental that he was drawn into the turmoil of partition. He was affected by the troubled times when he was growing up. Manto took quite a long time to accept the reality, and more importantly, the consequences of partition. The bewilderment, the incomprehension of the rapid turn of events, the puzzlement – all this finds its way into the plight of “Toba Tek Singh”. The insanity gives an edge to his plight- it also brings home a chilling realization- what happened to people during partition was nothing short of insanity. Manto himself admits to this refusal to accept the fact of partition.

“For a long time I refused to accept the consequences of the revolution, which was set off by the partition of the country. I still feel the same way; but I suppose, in the end, I came to accept this nightmarish reality without self-pity or despair. In the process I tried to retrieve from this man-made sea of blood, pearls of a rare hue, by writing about the single-minded dedication with which men had killed men, about the remorse felt by some of them, about the tears shed by murderers who could not understand why they still had some human feelings left”. 102

This bewilderment is on a more personal note too. He was unable to decide where his homeland lay, after the partition. The partition left him with many questions, the answers for which were difficult and perplexing, as he lays his soul open in “Shyam”,

“I found it difficult to decide which of the two countries was now my homeland- India or Pakistan. Who was responsible for the blood that was shed mercilessly every day? Where were they going to inter the bones that had been stripped of the flesh of religion by vultures and birds of prey? Now that we are free, had subjection ceased to exist? Who would be our slaves? …… Were we even free? Thousands of Hindus and Muslims were dying all around us. Why were they dying? All these questions had
different answers: the Indian answer, the Pakistani answer, the British answer. Every question had an answer, but when you tried to look at the truth, none of those answers was of any help…….murderers and terrorists marched on unchallenged, writing in the process a story of blood and fire, which was without parallel in history.”

Manto uses technique which shows his brilliance as a master story-teller; he, in his many partition narratives does not focus on partition as an object of enquiry. He often puts it as a setting or as a prop, places the characters in midst of the upheavals and then watches how they behave or react in the ‘changed times’. This roundabout way enables him to look at the partition objectively and obliquely with a detached sense. At the same time the concern with the changed, unpredictable behaviour of men and women maintain his engagement with the partition. Thus this detached objectivity actually is steeped in concern and subjectivity. This technique gives a double edge to his narratives.

Manto’s stories bring one at close encounters with the experience of the partition but so does most of other partition literature. What is unique to Manto is the fact that even after responding, analyzing, criticizing and discussing his work, something remains which is untranslatable, ‘something’ which is ‘unnamable’, ‘unspeakable’, which can be felt but cannot be translated in language. In other words, he reaches the core of experiential level that transcends the linguistic level. In this aspect, Manto’s works transcend far beyond the other partition literature.

A study of *Translating Partitions* throws light on the characteristics of the short stories penned on the back drop of the partition.

“The Dog of Tetwal” by Sa‘adat Hasan Manto: The narrative opens on the backdrop of idyllic surroundings. The portrayal of the peaceful nature is in sharp contrast with the forthcoming violence. This can be seen as an attempt to compare the pre partition and post partition social atmosphere on metaphoric level. But one does want to question if pre- partition social milieu was really ideal and peaceful. There was internal strife and inner violence in the social fabric. This view is endorsed and reconstituted by Sahni in *Tamas*, and Kushwant Singh in *Train to Pakistan*. In these novels, the catalyst to violence may be an outer agency but the performers are the locals belonging to the town or village.
The setting of the story is the Tetwal camp with army platoons holding post on both sides. The bizarre juxtaposition of singing lustily with the shooting of bullet rounds in the air reflect the gaiety of life in the face of death, happiness in the face of grief, joy in the face of trauma. The vulnerability of life makes each moment very precious and dear for the soldiers.

One day the soldiers of the Indian side find a stray dog. They feed him and tie a card around its neck- ‘Chapad Jhunjun. This is a Hindustani dog.’ The next morning the dog strays back again in the enemy’s camp. There is an outrageous reaction on the proclamation of the nationality of the dog as Indian. The card is replaced promptly-‘Sapar Sunsun. This is a Pakistani dog.’ The dog is then purposefully left near the dividing hill. When the Indian soldiers at post see the dog coming from the enemy’s side with something tied around its neck, they suspect foul play. They don’t want to take any chances and shoot at the dog. The dog, in a panic, tries to run back but is now shot by the Pakistani Soldiers. This goes on like a game, the dog runs helplessly and frantically to and fro. It is finally shot dead by Jamadar Harnam Singh. Subedar Himmat Khan expresses regret, ‘tch, tch…… the poor thing became a martyr!’

Jamadar Harnam Singh takes the warm barrel of the gun in his hand and comments, “He died a dog’s death.” The dog’s body lies in no man’s land in between the two camps. The comment at the end of the story is full of black humour that Manto was known for. ‘Dog’s death’ plays on literal and metaphoric level, it also stands for a ‘Martyr’s death’. Thus the dividing line between purposeful and purposeless dying and killing, shifts and teases the reader with its overwhelming impact.

The dog becomes a metaphoric representation of millions of people who were tossed as pawns in the violence of partition. They were evicted from both countries, had no shelter and were brutally massacred. If the massacre was not physical for some, their security and location of life was massacred. Nothing made sense anymore – to die a dog’s death or martyr’s death – it boiled down to the same brutality of death and violence. martyr’s death was subverted to a dog’s death.

The location of soldiers in the camp symbolizes a location in transit but strangely they feel secure with a sense of belonging in their own camps. This can be paralleled to the refugee camps where, again stability and flux are strange partners and are juxtaposed with each other at unexpected locations.

Thus as the editors have put in succinctly, “at one level, it (the dog of Tetwal) describes the tragic end of its protagonist, a stray dog caught in the crossfire between
Indian and Pakistani troops. At another, allegorical level it is a poignant statement about the fatal dangers of human indecisiveness and ambivalence in the warlike situation that the partition had created when national boundaries become sacrosanct and crossing them involved serious risks.”

The tag around the dog’s neck portrays the pathetic attempts by nation states to fix identity in terms of citizenship, origin, nationality and belonging. The sorry condition of the dog running between the two posts symbolizes the plight of migrants, refugees and even travelers caught in the frustrating maze of visas, permits, passports; this situation is all the more aggregated if the nations do not enjoy cordial relations. The tragedy of the dog contains the dilemma of people who had confronted closure of choices (in terms of location, identity, citizenship) due to the partition.

“Toba Tek Singh” is perhaps the most well-known of Manto’s creations. It starts with a fantastic fact – stranger than fantasy, that is, the divisions of lunatics after the Indian partition. The confusion faced by the inmates is not so different from the dilemmas faced by the common man during the Indian partition.

“However they did not know a thing about its actual location and its boundaries. That is why all the inmates of the asylum who weren’t completely insane were thoroughly confused about whether they were in Hindustan or Pakistan. If they were in Hindustan, then where was Pakistan? And if they were in Pakistan, then how was it possible that only a short while ago they had been in Hindustan, when they had not moved from the place at all?”

Bishen Singh is a lunatic who is given to uttering gibberish; he had not slept nor cared to lie down. When the talks of Partition began, all the lunatics started reacting and Bishen Singh was no exception. He continuously asked where Toba Tek Singh, the place he came from, was. But nobody could give him a satisfactory answer. As days went by, Bishen Singh, now known as Toba Tek Singh, grew more and more restless and more and more insistent to know about the location of Toba Tek Singh.

Finally, the day of exchange arrives; Toba Tek Singh refuses to go to either side. After a long time, he dies in no man’s land between the barbed wires denoting the boundaries of India and Pakistan.

“Toba Tek Singh” tries to crack the question of division, migration, relocation/dislocation with subversion as it is located within the perspective of a lunatic. The boundaries of sanity and insanity are teased; madness appears to be more logical than sanity, and the ‘method in madness’ starts emerging. The strong,
unmoving loyalty of Bishen Singh to his location and his roots is unflinching. He
represents the mental trauma of thousands of refugees. The gibberish of the lunatics,
especially Bishen Singh, is symbolic of the utter illogical chaos that lay around in the
event of drawing artificial, arbitrary and mindless boundaries between India and
Pakistan. Manto, through the fact that Toba Tek Singh is a lunatic, points to the
inability of common place language to contain the violence and trauma. These
feelings of angst of existentialist nature can only be contained in the gibberish of
insanity; language of sanity does not have the capacity to hold it. It can be contained
only in the boundary less, limitless semantic space. One cannot but think of the strong
parallel in some of Pinter’s plays where the angst and the despair along with the threat
of violence to one’s own identity is expressed when one of the characters suffers a
mental breakdown. It is only through his silence, gibberish or strange, nonverbal
sounds that the real questions of existential despair find a space for expression. One
feels that language is very weak and flimsy, even incompetent to contain the real
issues; there is a strong distrust of linguistics to hold the real meaning.

“Toba Tek Singh” also refers to the futility of division by ridiculing it. This was a
fact- even the typewriters belonging to the State were divided, the limit was stretched
to ridicule. Tragedy becomes harsh and dark comedy. Whether it is “Toba Tek Singh”
or “The Dog of Tetwal”, Manto wants to question the sanity of what was happening
around partition. Mad persons or dogs are used as strong, harsh metaphors revealing
the absurdity of the situation. Refugees and migrants died like the dog of Tetwal
while crossing borders, or like Toba Tek Singh in no man’s land. The fact is the
dignity of being a human being was denied in life and death during the partition.

Kamleshwar’s “How many Pakistanas” was written in the late sixties and was
forgotten. It was unearthed in 1990 and reprinted. The trauma of experiencing a
terrible sense of dislocation is reflected in poignant narrative. Here the protagonist
suffers the division of the nation on different levels- separation with his lover and
continuous moving to many cities. It is as if the up rootedness and division has seeped
into the psyche of the individual and the nation. The protagonist, Mangal loves
Saleema alias Banno. Their budding love is engulfed in the communal frenzy of the
partition. Mangal is sent away, he meets Banno after many years and then again
finally after a gap of some more years. Each visitation brings fresh bleeding wounds
to Mangal. The first person narrative of Mangal is addressed to Banno. The story has
an ethereal quality like a poem. The language is poetic.
“Saleema! I never did anything to hurt you…. then why did you do this to yourself? You laugh… but I know, this laugh of yours conceals arrows dipped in poison. These are not mehandi flowers, Saleema, which release their fragrance only when the wind blows.

The wind! Makes me laugh to think of it. Remember how you said there was something in the air…. that it had gone to my head?” 106

A haunting atmosphere is created in the first part with nostalgia seeping through the landscape of Chunar.

“Leave Chunar! But, I left it behind. The nights in Chunar…..the water of the Ganga, the boats going towards Kashi, the deserted walls of Bharathari’s ruined fort, the one-roomed toll office at the riverside, the roof on which I would sit and look out for Banno. The dry, cracked drains through which Banno always tried to wend her way to the riverside, but never managed. Waiting…..waiting….” 107

The second part of the narrative shifts to Kurla, where Mangal is sent and then he keeps drifting to Poona and other towns. “the train ran on, and I silently became a dervish, a wanderer. After that, I never even felt the desire to return home.” 108

At this point one comes across one of the most poignant portrayals, “to tell you the truth – from that very day a Pakistan had pierced my heart like a sword. People’s names seemed changed, incomplete. The wind seemed to have stopped blowing in the basti. Banno seemed surrounded, trapped. Shame, fear, anger, tears, blood, exhaustion, madness, love – were boiling, seething inside me. After all this, it didn’t really matter, whether or not I got Banno. What had to happen had already happened.” 109

It echoes a sense of permanent loss; lives have changed for the worse, forever.

The next meeting between Mangal and Banno after many years reveals to him the fact of the death of her newborn child and when they meet for the last time, she is a prostitute, forced into prostitution by her husband.

What makes this story haunting is the use of ‘Pakistan’ as a metaphor for pain and division.

“God knows how many Pakistans were made! With the making of one Pakistan, somehow, somewhere, everything got tangled up. Nothing could ever be resolved.” 110

This finality of permanent loss is striking and heartening.
Pakistan stands for disintegration:
“Whenever a Pakistan is formed, it leaves man sundered in two. Crops are destroyed, the roads shrink, and the sky is shredded into pieces. Clouds dry up and the winds are still, imprisoned.”

It also stands for hatred and anger.
“So many painful thoughts inside me- what if all this buried anger erupted some day? What if the pulsating Pakistan within me erupted?”

It stands for the human fragmentation.
“Understanding, or trying to understand, not the whole man, but only an incidental part of him is what Pakistan is what Pakistan is, Banno.”

It also stands for the guilt of redemption.
“Another Pakistan is howling within you too. Aren’t all of us writhing under the burdens of our own individual Pakistans? Partial, incomplete, cut into pieces.”

And finally it represents a point of no return, where there is no escape, no relief.
“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 can I 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.”

It brings home the point that personal relationships are killed under the violent socio-historical changes. Individual lives are sacrificed at the cost of nation formation. The invisible question that maybe the personal relationships have become redundant is frightening.

“Pali” by Bhisham Sahni is a very well-known story. The image of Pali, a little innocent boy, first shorn of his foreskin, then of his hair, is infinitely moving. This story is a respite from the partition literature dealing with overloaded images of rape, violence and destruction. There is no physical violence in the story but the mental, psychological hurt is overwhelming. It is the story of a child lost during migration. He is found by Shakur, a vendor. His wife, Zenab, is overjoyed to see Pali, as they are childless. The couple is pressurized by their clan to circumcise Pali, and to convert
him to Islam, naming him Altaf. In the meanwhile, Pali’s father searches for him frantically. Years pass on and finally Pali’s father locates him. Pali does not recognize his father and his foster parents are full of antagonism. Finally, his father wins after a long ordeal. Now the wheels turn the other way, his father is forced to convert him to Hinduism by tonsuring him. In the entire process, Pali is confused, lost and one wonders if this is really a relocation for Pali, whose psyche and sense of identity is permanently fractured.

This story is a sharp critique of religion and communalism and reveals how human identities are available, channelized and conditioned only through the components of religion and community. ‘Pali’ is moving in its psychological appeal. At times, one also comes across passages that powerfully portray the ‘feeling’ power of literature.

“There are some wounds which heal with the passage of time, leaving a mark on the mind. But there are certain griefs which slowly eat into the heart like termites, completely ravaging the body.”

How many history texts would be able to capture or create such primacy of thought?

“Dream Images” by Surendra Prakash explores the spaces of exile, belonging, migration and homeland through an intermittent fleeting dream images. It plays upon the criss- crossing of dream and reality, facts and imagination, experience and hallucination. The core of this story is the location, dislocation, belonging and permanent loss of one’s homeland. Surendra Prakash was born in 1930 at Lyallpur and the memory of his formative years is firmly rooted in the shared community life between the Hindus and the Muslims. “Dream Images” is necessarily a contextual and biographical piece of literature and it needs to be interpreted on the personal canvas of the author’s life pitted against the public canvas of the Indian Partition, and the large scale migration resulting from that. This story explores the spaces occupied by ‘exile’ and ‘home’; especially the space occupied by home in the geographical, concrete, material sense and in the emotional, abstract and ethereal sense.

Another motif explored by “Dream Images” is the entire discourse of the fundamental questions about religion and politics; and their bearing on the identity of the individual and the community. The mesh of issues revolving around identity, language, culture and religion is examined critically. The identity of Muslims and Hindus is pitched against a single criterion-that of birth. The narrator questions, “Why were we Hindus or Muslims?”, and the answer is as straight as it can be, “The answer lay in our birth- because we were born of parents who were either Hindu or
Muslim. We were Hindu. So we could not retain even two yards of land in Pakistan. Those of us, who survived, came to India. The only things that remained there were memories and shadows.”

“Dream Images” looks at the futility of division in terms of the geographical territory and moveable property. How can one think of dividing shared history, past, heart and memory of communities and families? This story reveals a ‘ghost homeland’, a phantom of memories and locales; there is a pervading sense of permanent exile. There is no respite in the narrator’s new land nor in his old homeland, which is no longer his own, that he visits in his dreams. His heart yearns for ‘elsewhere’ which he could call his own, share a sense of belonging with – but it is a mirage, there is no such place left as one’s own homeland.

The setting of “Dream Images” flits across the levels of the surreal, real and the fantasy of the dream world. The chanting by devotees of expressions such as “Ali da mast qalandar” in the Sufi shrine and the Kulfi vendor’s sing-song cry illuminate aspects of the shared socio-cultural life and tenor of that life at a particular historical moment. This tenor of life at a particular historical moment can be understood with reference to the supra historians’ (Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard) insistence on a ‘momentary presence’, as an attempt to integrate everything into ‘history’ is resisted. The key concept is that the momentary presents can only be assessed from within the living experience of the individual subject, any attempt to situate the meaning of history ‘out there’ as an objective fact is necessarily an error. This is what the slices of life presented through the memory and dream images attempt.

“Phoenix Fled” by Attia Hosain is a brief narrative with a very old woman as the central figure. She lives in her past and has no place in the present. She holds her doll’s house as the only concrete image from her past, and it is very dear to her. She lives with her little grandchildren happily, as they demand stories from her and it is a smooth gateway for her into the past.

“Her mind telescoped life to make it possible her weak old age to be sustained by the strength of her childhood. She was happy with the children, because she lived in their time.”

The village is shattered by partition, families start moving, even her own. But she refuses to budge. She reasons with her children and grandchildren,
“I am old. I am feeble. I shall slow your flight. It is the children you must save. Besides, “she added, drawing conviction from her years, “You will return. In the Mutiny we returned and our fears were more cruel than reality. Take care of yourselves; give my blessings to everyone in casbah. It is long since I went there, not since the wedding of….””

She stays on and it is just a matter of time before the house is surrounded by rioters who want to burn it down. She tried to sit up and warned them, “Mind,” she scolded, pointing her bony finger, “Mind you do not step on the doll’s house.”

The refusal to leave the house by Mukanda’s mother in Azadi is a parallel to that of the old woman in “The Phoenix Fled’ by Attia Hossain. Mukanda’s mother refuses to move out because she wants to be around when her son is released from jail while the old woman’s refusal is due to her refusal to accept change, migration and ‘moving out and moving on.’ Mukanda’s mother is a single dimensional figure, that of a mother, her identity is defined not by her name or her status in any sphere. But both these figures share the commonality of refusal to accept change and to cling to one’s own location signified through their homes.

The common thread binding “Phoneix Fled” and “Toba Tek Singh” is the stoic loyalty to one’s location, refusal to move, not heeding to logic. And this immense strength comes from two unexpected quarters: a lunatic and a very old woman staying in her past, with no place in the present.

Joginder Paul’s “Thirst of Rivers” also probes the question of leaving one’s home. Here, home becomes, almost compulsorily, a permanent abode where you not only spend your entire lifetime, but also dwell, after your death, with your ancestors. Bebe’s connection with her haveli is such that even though she has left it with her son during partition, her psyche remains frozen in time and space- with her dead husband in the haveli. She just cannot travel to the present. ‘Letting go’ becomes impossible for her. The house or haveli assumes a powerful existence of its own, escaping from it is impossible. The physical location and the home assume a lot of importance in many stories based on Partition.

In Unbordered Memories it is observed that Sindhi Partition stories are relatively free of Partition violence as compared to other stories about the Partition. Violence is not a large looming presence. The significant reasons for this could be:
The migration experience was different for Sindhis. They were mostly ‘Vanya’ (‘Bania’ or Vaishya community) and relatively a prosperous community. This made their migration more planned, structured and safe.

The migration for Sindhis was relatively free of violence due to modes of transport chosen. As Karachi, the centre hold of Sindhi community, was a prominent harbor, most of the Sindhis migrated by ships to Mumbai and various parts of Gujarat. Even if train journey was undertaken, it was from interior Sindh to Rajasthan, again a belt relatively free of communal violence during Partition. And there were a few cases of Sindhis migrating on camel back through the Thar Desert to the Gujarat border, again an area free of Partition violence.

The threat to physical safety was relatively less in Sindh, the lives and property were endangered only when Muslim immigrants from Bihar and United Provinces entered Sindh.

There was a comparatively less exodus of Hindus and Sikhs from Sindh; as they were less affected by fanaticism. Acharya Kriplani had observed during his visit to Sindh, “to whatever faith the Sindhis belonged, they were powerfully influenced by Sufi and Vedantic thoughts, this made for tolerance”.  

The Hindus and Muslims of Sindh shared a strong linguistic and territorial identity, which brought them closer to each other than their co-religionists in India and Pakistan.

As a result violence is not a predominant presence in Sindhi Partition literature. Rita Kothari points out the essential difference between Sindhi and other Partition literatures in the context of trauma and violence.

“The psychosis of fear, the separation from language and home, the shedding of tangible and non-tangible possessions constituted trauma for the Sindhis, but perhaps not in the way trauma becomes akin to physical violence in Partition studies….there was strong resentment directed at Sindhis as immigrants”.  

The study of the short stories included in Unbordered Memories brings out the following observations.

Most of the stories contain memories of the ‘rich’ life left behind: The descriptions of property left behind, the flourishing businesses and most importantly the composite mix of sight, smell, taste merging into rich memories. In “Lost Nations” by Gulzar Ahmed, when the speaker goes to Hong Kong he comes across the Sindhi migrants who pour out their images from the past to him. One of the old men talks about home
town Shikarpur, “It’s a beautiful city. It’s our motherland. You would never forget the sweets and Kulfi of that place, once you have tasted them. When you get off the station, the buggy man will bring you to the tower of Lakhidar. Then you will see how spectacular the city is.”

The dilemma of migrating is the theme of many stories like “6 January 1948”, “When I Experienced the Simultaneity of Life and Death”, “Hunger, Love and Literature”, “Muhammad the coach driver”, “Obligation” and “The Death of Fear”. As stated earlier, the threat of physical violence was less urgent in Sindh as compared to other parts of Pakistan. As a consequence, the Sindhi Hindus were faced with the choice of ‘if’ and ‘when’ to migrate. Faced with the difficult decision of leaving everything and the homeland behind, the natural response was to keep on delaying the decision. In “The Death of Fear”, the issue of intra-city migration is dealt with. Kamil is reluctant to leave his huge haveli and shift to a smaller house in Sindhi neighbourhood. Finally forced by his wife Zainab, Kamil finds a house on rent. It is a losing proposition but he agrees. Next day when he goes to meet the landlord to hand over the advance, the landlady demands more rent. Kamil is aghast but this seals the decision on his reluctant attempts at migration. He comes home to his wife and declares with an air of finality, “No. We are not going anywhere. We shall live here, in our own house. The house in which my ancestors, my mother and father took their last breath. Why should we be afraid of dying in such a house? Get rid of that fear from now on.’

The humiliating experiences of refugee find its way into many stories. Popti Hiranandani in “When I Experienced the Simultaneity of Life and Death…” recalls the hardships when she migrated in a group of fifty- all women and children to Jodhpur.

“We reached the bungalow safely, but what were we to eat and wear? Two women from the group left to seek help from neighbours. A Rajasthani neighbour said that she would feed only the children. An hour later, she and her daughter-in-law brought food. The children were made to sit in a row and served food on scraps of paper. The same women also brought dinner for the children. The adults fasted that day. We did not have mattresses, beds or pillows to sleep on. We covered ourselves with our saris and tried to sleep, but how do you sleep on an empty stomach?”

More than this physical discomfort is the humiliation in which the refugees are denied the bare dignity of human existence. The last part of “In Exile” by Mohan Kalpana shows how the bureaucracy denies any kind of respect to the refugees.
‘You are a refugee, you can spend a night under a tree, or near a railway track, or in a park. When you ran away from Sindh, did you ask Jinnah where should you go?’

The poison of being uprooted welled up in Mohan’s eyes, he banged his fist upon the table, ‘Am I in India or Pakistan right now?’ ‘Right now, you are neither in India nor Pakistan. You are a refugee. A refugee! You do not have a home either here or there, you people are like washer man’s dogs – neither free nor pets………………

‘It was not only Jinnah who divided this nation, it is also people like you, who have no value for human dignity. Your prejudices and selfishness have divided humanity.’

Mohan’s voice choked, ‘You people will not let us live here, but we will not let ourselves die.’

This humiliation is no different from what happens to Lala Kanshi Ram in Azadi. In the end, the endless visits to Re compensation Office and the humility of opening a small stall in front of his small dwelling in refugee barracks changes the entire persona of Lala Kanshi Ram. He, who was once the leading grain merchant of Sialkot has stopped wearing his turban, stands in hot Sun for hours to get a bus back from the re-compensation office and has become old, broken in spirit and isolated.

The moment of leaving everything behind is shown to be painful and the moment of arrival and resettlement is shown to be disappointing and traumatic, even humiliating in contrast to the ‘glory of the past’. ‘6 January, 1948’, “When I Experienced the Simultaneity of Life and Death…”, “Khaanwahan”, “My Amma”, “The Uprooted”, and “In Exile” deal with this. Each situation evokes a different response from the sufferer. The narrative of “6 January, 1948” shows a peculiar discord in the trauma and the gravity of events narrated, and the tone used in narrating. The tone is impersonal and detached, almost like a third person objective narrator. One interprets it either as an effect of distancing, or at the other end, the numbness of trauma and suffering that refuses to thaw with time. “When I Experienced the Simultaneity of Life and Death…” by Popati Hiranandani records the plight and the flight to a safer place. It shows the perils of being young women during the turbulent time of the partition, “Young women in every house were being warned. The moment a Muslim enters your house, you must shove your fingers in the nearest electric socket, turn the switch on and bring an end to your life. Small packets of poison were also being given to them.” Further in the narrative, the pain of separation from one’s own dwelling and homeland is poignantly pictured, “Once we came home, Amma also began to get ready. When she packed her petticoats and covers in a small suitcase, every fibre of
her body was moist with tears. All of us began to sob. We neither ate nor slept that night. We spent that night going from room to room, looking wistfully at every object. I stood upon the terrace of the house and said goodbye, not only to the house, but the small piece of sky above me. The walls of the mohalla, and sparrows in the little alcoves, the cool breezes that blew over hillocks, the white bitch that lived in the galli, the trough for the horses, the little bird-feeding station for the pigeons- we were losing everything. September 17. It was my birthday, but it felt like the day of my death… Once we left the lane, we kept turning our heads to look back. Only Allah could tell when we would get to rest our eyes on all this again…”

“My Amma” brings up a sense of nostalgia and loss. The narrator goes into his memories about his mother and himself who wanted to go back to her homeland and the promise he makes to her.

“‘I shall bring back your happiness. I wish to go back to my country. I don’t wish to see myself and the next generations in exile.’

‘Will we go back to our motherland? Will we be able to see our house? You think I’ll be able to see the remnants of your father’s life?’

‘Yes, Amma, we’ll certainly go back.’

……………………………

‘When will we go, putta?’

‘When our countrymen will put an end to the roguish rule there.’

‘God knows whether I’d be alive then. I have come close to death.’

‘If such is the case, sweet Amma, it is my solemn promise to you that I will take your ashes to our watan, submerge them in the sacred and sweet earth of our motherland and sing songs of joy.’

“The Uprooted” shows the extreme reaction of refusal to migrate by jumping in the sea in a desperate attempt to swim back to Sindh while “In Exile” brings out the most powerful reaction in the form of anger at denial and strong rhetorical arguments. The ambiguity of citizenship is dealt at various levels in these stories. In “The Claim” by Narayan Bharti, the elderly Joharmal, bewildered by the enormous loss and his changed status of refugee uses the re compensation Office as a last, desperate means to reclaim all that he has lost. He announces to the typist,

“Joharmal, son of Vasaimal, nukka Nagdev, has left the whole of Sindh in Pakistan. Now he files a claim for Sindh in Pakistan. Now he files a claim for Sindh. It should
be returned to him. The proof is the fact that Joharmal is a Sindhi; his language is Sindhi and his civilization is Sindhi.”

‘Kaka, how can this be written? You must mention what belongs to you.’

‘Belongs to me? I have left Sindhri. If Sindhri is not own, then it is somebody’s else’s? We Sindhis left all luxuries behind and got thrown into the midst of Marathas. And yet, you are asking me what have I left behind? You think I do not remember Sindh, that I have forgotten it? No, yaar, no. Never think that. Sindh is the fibre of our existence. I am a Sindhi and Sindhri is mine. I have a right to claim it. We are told that Punjabis got the Punjab, and they also have homes to stay in. What crimes have we committed against the sarkar that we can’t have even Sindh?’  

The last part of the above outburst is crucial and marks a major difference in migration of Sindhis and Punjabis. The Sindhi migrants were totally de-territorialized and fragmented. Their moment of arrival into India was far more traumatic than the moment of leaving Sindh because they had no corresponding territory to come to (like Punjab) and nor was the violence pitted against them was intense enough to generate pity.

The ambiguity of citizenship was more complicated for the Sindhis than the Punjabis. Unlike the Punjabis and Bengalis, the Sindhis were not coming to an ‘Indian’ part of Sindh because Sindh was not divided into east and west Sindh. It went in its entirety to Pakistan. Rita Kothari relates a symbolically significant episode. In 2005, a petition was filed in The Supreme Court to remove the word ‘Sindh’ from Indian National Anthem and the argument provided was that the region of Sindh is no more in India. The petition was dismissed and the matter was forgotten, but not by Sindhi activists and intellectuals. They were outraged by the fact that the petition to remove Sindh from the Indian national anthem was making even the memory of a lost homeland inaccessible. It was also an attempt to erase the historical roots of the Sindhis. This pain was also felt by the mother in Ali Baba’s “Dharti Dhikaana” and the alienation of the Sindhi Hindu is captured sensitively. In this story, the son, born in post-partition India teases his mother, who is nostalgic about Sindh by saying, “ ‘Amma, you always call the sea of Karachi, Sindhu Sagar, but there is no such sea in history or geography. The sea of Karachi is called the Arabian Sea……..Sindh is under Muslim domination even now. They consider themselves descendants of the Arabs. There is only one unit in Pakistan these days. The world atlas shows no
country by the name of Sindh. You keep giving yourself false assurances, Sindh does not exist anywhere.’

His mother was suddenly stung, as if by a scorpion. She looked at him wounded, and stricken, ‘Ram, I don’t understand what you people are taught in universities and colleges. Your knowledge is so limited. Listen, even now, I have a vivid memory of how when I was a child, and a student studying Sindhi in class four, your late grandfather had taken me to the Lakhidhar pilgrimage fair. I had written my name with a nail on a slab of Bhago Thodo- Savitri Hingorani, Standard Four, Sindhi. It’s been so many years since then. I can say with certainty that the cruel flow of time must have wiped my name off the mountain. But how does that matter?’”

And the son realizes his mistake in teasing his mother, “Amma, forgive me, I didn’t know that it would hurt you so much. How do I know what a nation is? I am untouched by that experience.” Thus Sindh has become inaccessible in both memory and reality.

The nostalgia of lost homeland comes out most strongly in “Lost Nations” by Gulzar Ahmed. The narrator stumbles upon a group of Sindhi migrants in Hong Kong. These migrants are prosperous businessmen on one hand but see themselves as paupers as they have lost the wealth of their homeland for ever. Their outpour reflects the extent of the loss felt by them. This nostalgic loss is layered with sense of dislocation and permanent loss. This dislocation is not only physical but inner, in the psyche. The distances have grown in the mind. “Familiar Strangers” by Gordhan Bharti shows the dislocation when the narrator feels like an outsider in his own village after a gap of two years. He feels familiar and unfamiliar in turns and is soothed by the loyalty of his old Puppy and gradually feels a sense of belonging returning to him. But at the end puppy refuses to follow him beyond the boundary of the village and he feels a sense of fragmentation within him.

“As the partition had psychological, national and political aspects, it cannot be denied that it also had a material and economic aspect on the basis of which politics was played and people were exploited. In “The Death of Fear”, it is seen that the Muslim dominated localities saw a rapid decline in the property prices as the Hindus were
trying to sell off their property. On the other hand, the prices were rising exorbitantly in Hindu localities as Hindus were trying to buy houses there. Whether it was Hindus or Muslims, in Pakistan or India – it was the poor who got a raw deal, who were misused and exploited. These economies of displacement also gave rise to an outrage of betrayal as in the case of Jaman, the poor weaver. This character which appears in “Boycott” by Gordhan Bharti, is ordered to turn into a ‘halwai’ to throw the Hindus out of business and thus force them to migrate by boycotting their shops. In the bargain it is poor Jaman who is robbed of his savings, and comes on the streets as his ‘new clients’ refuse to pay him. His outburst shows the open, raw wound of betrayal by one’s own community. His outcry at the end is a scathing comment on this exploitation.

“‘How did we benefit from Pakistan? Business went down, and we lost all our savings. We were the ones who participated in those processions, shouted slogans, come rain, come shine, thirsty and hungry…. Pakistan has been formed for heavy – turbaned people like you, not for us poor.’” 134

This same political thinking also runs through the narratives of other partition novels studied. In The Train to Pakistan, the animated debates of the villagers of Mano Majra with Iqbal reflect that the villagers are aware of this politics. Similarly, this politics is revealed in Ice Candy Man through the conversations of Ayah and her admirers. This fact also comes out in the meetings of the Parsee community especially through the forceful interventions of Bharucha. In Sunlight on a Broken Column, Laila’s introspective thoughts show an awareness of this politics.

The shifting and evolving identities of individual, religion, community and nationhood are tackled in some stories. The most prominent in the context of religious identity is “Kaafir: The Infidel” by Naseem Kharal. Sheetal Oadh and his wife convert to Islam willfully and become zealous followers. At a critical juncture the blinds from Sheetal’s eyes are ripped open and he realizes that he will always remain an outsider with his new found location in Islam. With this he reconverts to Hindu religion. Thus religious identities are put on and discarded with the feeling of belonging alternated with feeling of betrayal. Another illustration is a change of identity of an individual in “My Amma”. The narrator meets his refugee mother after a gap of some eyes. He finds her changed strong as ever with age, and in an ironical manner, aged with the change (of migration). The old rituals are gone, chillum is replaced by a beedi but the longing for one’s Sindh is as strong as ever.
One of the most powerful features of Sindhi partition stories is the reconstruction of the ‘Other’. These writings are from both sides of the border as if creating an unbordered space for all Sindhis – Hindus and Muslims. These stories seem to question the assumption that every Hindu migrant speaks of Hindu experience and Muslim migrant that of Muslim experience. In most of the partition fiction, the ‘Other’ occurs as a ‘good’ Muslim in a narrative by Hindu and the ‘other’ Hindu is an ideal one in a Muslim narrative. But the Sindhi narratives are trans-border and not confined by religious and national boundaries. Of course, here too are examples of narratives trying to break the stereotypical image of Muslim other or Hindu other. Shaikh Ayaz’s voice, full of guilt, narrating how his relatives stole things from the homes of Hindus is an unbordered memory, in “Life, a Mere Dream.” Then Atta Allah in “Muhammad, the Coach-driver” by Ram Punjwani present the image of Muslims who are good to Hindus and go out of their way to help them. In this particular category, Kalu the barber is the most realistic figure. Kalu is the main character in “The Neighbour” by Shaikh Ayaz. Kalu is in a dilemma of what to do if the violence erupts, should he be the savior or the destroyer to his Hindu neighbours. The dilemma is solved and his decision is made when his neighbour tells him that she might take refuge in his house. Kalu retorts half mockingly as to how she could be so sure, she replies, “What nonsense, brother; you can be as Muslim League as you want, you are still our very own Khanu brother. How would you kill us? Don’t you say that neighbourhood is the first family? You feed us with Phirni on Eid and visit us on Thadri to eat Lolas. Surely, that would make you think twice? And yet, if I had to die, I won’t mind my death as long as you are the one killing me.”

The narrative of “Bhoori” by Sundari Uttamchandani is unique as it explores the gains from the loss. Partition also empowered women to a great extent, they were forced to come out of their confines and make a living for themselves. This argument has been made by Butalia, Menon and Bhasin, Ravinder Kaur and Jasbir Jain in their respective studies. It also comes through characters like Sunanda in Azadi. Ravinder Kaur points out that for many women, migration and the journey was the first contact with public sphere. In “Bhoori” this argument is made on two levels: on a symbolic level, Bhoori is symptomatic of Sindh whose beauty is faded but not her valour by migration or by the onslaught of Partition. On a literal level, Bhoori is representative of many women for whom national freedom also decoded into a more liberating existence, a freedom at personal level. This metamorphosis is definitely a gain of the partition.
“A proud and hardworking Bhoori has replaced the carefree Bhoori of pre-partition days.....She does not consider herself inferior to anybody..... She does not owe allegiance to anybody .... Although she has no grievance against him... how fearlessly Bhoori walks through the city all alone. Her self-respect guards her wherever she goes. She has emerged a strong person, free of superfluous concerns and one who relies on hard work, not destiny.”

In conclusion the study of Unbordered Memories is significant in more ways than one. In these stories, the idyllic life of Sindhis in pre-partition era is sketched in sharp contrast with their status of stateless migrants in India. The dilemma and pain of leaving one’s home and homeland is coupled with nostalgia later on. This is all the more accentuated by the humiliating experiences of refugees shown through the moment of arrival and resettlement which was disappointing, traumatic and humiliating in contrast to the ‘glory of the past.’ The ambiguity of belonging is different and in a way more tragic than Punjabi migrants because as discussed the Sindhis did not have a corresponding land to come to in India, as there was no Sindh in India. Thus the Sindhi migrants appear to be doubly migrants-as refugees, and as more isolated and homeless than Punjabi migrants. In spite of this, there is a strong determination to rise above the shifting identities of individual, religion, community and nationhood. As seen from this study some of these stories also reveal the economies, the politics and the exploitation involved in displacement. There are certain stories concerned with the stereotypical images of the ‘other’, sometimes challenging or contesting them and at times confirming them. Finally, the silver lining appears in some narratives when the ‘gains’ from the losses are considered. It is acknowledged that in some cases the lives changed for the better, and so the partition was a blessing in disguise. This is particularly pertinent in case of women, in term of empowerment.
Conclusion:

When placed in juxtaposition, our study of fiction in the genres of novels and short stories throw open the following significant points for consideration. In the discussion which follows, the novels are considered together, followed by a comparative discussion on the texts of short stories.

These novels on the partition attempt to envisage the socio-cultural milieu of communities in a specifically located temporal frame. Whether it is the locale of *Tamas* or socio-demographic profile of Mano Majra (*Train to Pakistan*) or the ‘mohalla’ of Lala Kanshi Ram (*Azadi*) or the curious world that Lenny inhabits (*Ice Candy Man*)- all create a culturally embedded community on the backdrop of partition. Most of the novels begin with a definite focus in end- culmination of a journey (*Azadi, Partitions*), things apparently turning to normalcy, even though for a brief interlude(*Tamas*), successful execution of an all important task at the cost of one’s life (*Train to Pakistan*) and things changing forever (*Ice Candy Man* and *Sunlight on a Broken Column*). The novels end differently- hope, despair, change for the better or worse, hopelessness, silence; even indeterminacy. All these novels create a strong relatedness between Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs in the pre-partition era. There are disturbances depicted but they are scarce, and while and when they occur, there is present a meta- narrative of unity or togetherness or tolerance of differences binding them. For instance, in *Train to Pakistan*, in spite of the different religions, the village deity in the form of a stone slab at the outskirts of Mano Majra, the ‘*gram devta*’ is worshipped by one and all. Thus there is a marked unified community/village/town identity superseding the religious one. There is a sense of communally shared history. No doubt, this identity is constantly under threat and scrutiny against the backdrop of the partition. This identity also has its own hierarchies but they are ruled by occupation and class, caste- one’s own ‘*biradari*’- and not religion.

John Buchan rightly points out that civilisation is a thin veneer, with a very narrow line between the warm room and the savage out of doors. In the narratives studied, the transformation of ordinary men into violent beasts is seen. Violence has a strong presence in all the novels. In novels like *Train to Pakistan*, violence is present even before partition. So there is internal violence like the murder of Ramlal or violent lovemaking of Jugga which is nothing short of a rape, although not protested by Nooran. A marked feature of the Partition violence is that
the trouble makers are outsiders- the marauders, the ‘Turks’ or Sikhs from other riot affected villages who are migrating refugees. They are passing through Mano Majra during their hurried journey. Similar is the case in Tamas. Thus the make shift camps of refugees also became a site of instigating violence during the partition.

In Train to Pakistan, the threat to Muslims of Mano Majra is from the Sikh refugees coming from across the borders. In Tamas, they are the Turks from other places. So the threat is externally located and when taken care of, would lead to normalcy. Or alternatively, it would plague the minds of the natives, turning them against each other. These novels show the locals being instigated by the ‘othering’ community refugees coming from across the borders.

Violence is not only physical but also psychological, emotional and material. Often with the physical rape, the identity, dignity and the material possessions are raped. House and women are often the main reasons for violence. Of the novels studied, the tenor of description of violence, rape and sexual atrocities differ in the case of male and female authors. The male narratives are vivid, descriptive and detailed, for instance in Partitions. It appears that the narrator views women as objects of violence. Whereas in women narratives, the readers are spared the gory details, the physical horror is toned down. It is as if the narrator unconsciously relates herself to the victim, she is in the role of the victimized. Thus the trauma of partition violence is gendered; the experiences and the narratives are gender specific. The women writers – Attia Hosain and Sidhwa have women protagonists and they focus more on the violence of the psyche than the body. Their novels trace the trajectory of the inner world as compared to the external, especially the narrative of Sunlight on a Broken Column, which has a more retrospective tenor.

Along with violence, another major presence in the novel is the loss. This loss is established at numerous levels- loss of nation (geographical), loss of property (physical), familial loss, psychological loss, emotional loss and the loss of one’s identity in transformation from a citizen to a refugee. The material loss was more acutely felt immediately, the identity loss was felt much later. Salman Akthar’s notions of loss can be applied in this context to understand the psychological dynamics of loss. According to renowned psychoanalyst Salman Akhtar, desperate suffering caused by separation from one’s material possessions speaks volumes about our reliance upon the silent continuity of our environment. The loss causes a rupture, as if there had been an ongoing dialogue that came to an abrupt halt and pain results.
from this. Akthar explains the cause of pain. He says that familiar objects help us feel safe. They are containers of our memory and anchors of our identity. We depend upon them to conduct our daily lives in their usual way. The psychological impact of loss of property can be astounding. According to Akthar, “History paints the picture with sweeping broad strokes with statistics. What tends to get lost here is the personal anguish of specific people facing separation from specific things.”

Loss of location is painful and traumatic and this too has a psychological reason. Our sense of safety is threatened when the environment around us changes in a dramatic manner. The scaffold constituted by our material possessions is suddenly shaken up and we feel cold and naked fear. Immigrants and exiles are forever ready to acknowledge the significance of lost objects but the anguish of those who have had to leave their lands abruptly, and not entirely of their choice, is far greater. Akthar acknowledges that loss of land, home, nationality and above all, human dignity among immigrants and exiles is great. He puts the anguish in a poetic manner, “The sad eyes and sealed lips tell the stories that cannot otherwise be reported. And it sometime takes a long time for the silence to be broken.”

Identity loss is sharply delineated in the case of Lala Kanshiram and Sunanda in Azadi, Dr. Ibrahim Masud in Partitions, Ayah in Ice Candy Man and numerous other characters who suffer from fractured identities. This loss is also looked from a philosophical perspective on a more universal level. In other words did the common man gain or lose from freedom and partition? Many novels conclude with a strong sense of disappointment and disillusion (Ice Candy Man, Azadi and Sunlight on Broken Column).

Memory is a key aspect in the novels considered for study. The loss is revoked through memory. Dipesh Chakravorty says that memory is a complex phenomenon that reaches out far beyond what normally constitutes an historian’s archive.

Laila remembers her past life in her parental home with a tinge of nostalgia. Sunanda and Lala Kanshi Ram remember their lost homeland. Lenny yearns for things as they were earlier. Even in a novel like Train to Pakistan where the narrative is posited in present, the train memory is revealed through the immediate memory of Hukum Chand.

Krishna Sobti also acknowledges the far reaching implications of memory when she says that you cannot help clinging to the past. Memory is a nostalgic ghost. It lingers in human for too long. Memory itself assumes myriad dimensions—painful and happy,
public and private, immediate and long past, of individual and of nation, real and imagined etc. Filtered and pure memory becomes very crucial. Just because one cannot afford to bear pure memory, it is filtered and selected in the context of the present. As Krishna Sobti has put it perfectly, “It is difficult to forget but dangerous to remember.”

As important is memory, so equally important is forgetting. Forgetting is seen as an important stage in coming to terms with the loss, and forgetting seems to have come very easily for us as put succinctly by Salman Rushdie in *Midnight’s Children*, “We are a nation of forgetters.”

The location of the author, the persona of the author and location of the narrator are three important interconnected parameters in the structure of novels taken for study. Alok Bhalla is right in pointing out that most novelists who have written about the partition either draw upon their personal memories of those harrowing days or use stories told to them by others about their experiences. Novels about the partition, therefore, tend to be autobiographical.

Khushwant Singh belonged to an affluent family of contractors from Hadali. He is also well read, educated and widely travelled. Thus he has access to the upper strata of society. His makings of a journalist, a historian of Sikh history and a diplomat- all this has gone into the makings of *Train to Pakistan*. Similarly, Attia Hosain’s *Sunlight on a Broken Column* also has autobiographical overtones. Sahni’s experiences during the partition were crystallized into memories that were revoked during Bhivandi riots and manifested in form of *Tamas*. Lenny’s character in *Ice Candy Man* carries the persona of the author. Thus with the exception of Amit Majmudar, who authored *Partitions*, all the authors have had direct or indirect experience of trauma of partition, they were in midst of the upheaval, the violence and migration. Their experiences have definitely found space through partition fiction. In this sense, one of the central arguments of this study-‘Historical Fiction has a strong affinity with validity and factual truth, it can definitely occupy a space parallel to History texts’ is justified to a great extent. **This study shows that Historicism of Literature and literariness of History are closely interlinked.**

The novels studied show that in the narrative fiction based on partition, the monolithic communal images of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, even British are challenged and contradicted. The friendship of Arun, Munir and Sergeant Davidson in *Azadi*, the relationship of villagers of Mano Manjra with each other in *Train to Pakistan* and the
main characters of *Partitions* drive home this point. This can be seen as an attempt to break the monolithic images or communal stereotypes. At the same time, it should be recorded that the counter-strategy is also adapted. Thus in some narratives the existing stereotypes are reinforced. For instance, *Ice Candy Man* reinforces the psyche of Parsee community during the partition owing to its curious location with reference to Hindus-Muslims-Sikhs on one side and the British on the other. The vulnerability of the Parsees, their feeling of being ‘outsiders’ in comparison to Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs was coupled with their proximity to the British that gave them a sense of empowerment during the colonial rule. This obviously led to a lot of apprehension with respect to their location in terms of power structures, post partition. This uneasiness just before the independence is deftly captured in *Ice Candy Man*.

The chipped veneer of ideal nationalism revealing the grimy interiors of corruption, politics and commercialization of changing scenario during the partition is also revealed through the novels studied. In *Tamas*, the estate agents cashing on the dislocation and hurried migration to escalate the property prices is one such instance.

In the same novel we also find the corrupted side of the ‘ideal’ followers of Gandhi and Nehru. The gap between such pseudo-nationalists and the common man is also seen. In *Train to Pakistan* the politics emerging through the strategy planning of Hukumchand and the police inspector, and later through the evacuating officer also point towards this. The conversation between Iqbal and the villagers immediately after his arrival in Mano Majra too reveals this. *Ice Candy Man* reveals the selfish political calculations through the debates between various characters (especially the friends of Ayah), the Parsee Doctor, Lenny’s parents and their friends. The ordeals of Lala Kanshiram through his numerous futile visits to Re compensation Office show the politics of resettlement. Dreams and hopes of stability and empowered citizenship bathed in the idealism of new found nationhood status turn into illusions and shatter upon the harsh reality of refugee status and permanent migrant, dislocated identity amounting to that of a secondary citizenship. This sense of dislocation and permanent loss has a strong presence, especially in *Sunlight on a Broken Column* and *Azadi*, through the protagonists Laila and Lala Kanshiram respectively.

The most centrally located factor in all the novels chosen for study is- Change. Changed times bringing permanent changes on individual, communal and national level persist in these narratives. They are strongly felt, again through the narratives of Laila and Lala Kanshi Ram in *Sunlight on a Broken Column* and *Azadi* respectively.
The change is perceived tinged with nostalgia, mixed with memories of lost homeland and past life. There is also a pathetic attempt to hang on to shreds and shrouds of lost dignity and some semblance from the shadows of the past. Most of the novels have this, with the exception of *Partitions* which concludes with promises of new beginnings.

In the literary perspective on partition through the selected novels, two parameters can be used for analysis:

i) Temporal – spatial frame    ii) Gendered narratives.

i) Temporal-spatial frame: With the exception of *Partitions* and *Tamas*, the other novels were written immediately after partition. Even *Tamas* is not really an exception- the reason being in its genesis- the partition memories were evoked by witnessing the Bhiwandi riots. Secondly, Bhishm Sahani completed it in seventies which is nearer to Partition than today on a temporal scale. Therefore *Partitions* is the only selected work that is far removed from the partition in the sense that it is contemporary. Significantly this is reflected in the narrative. It is strikingly different from the other narratives selected for study. Although the theme is the same the treatment is definitely different. The setting although temporally located in the time of the partition is more contemporary as compared to the other works studied. The tenor of the novel has subtle suggestions of looking back at an event far removed in time and space. The location of Amit Majmudar (discussed in the critique of *Partitions*) confirms this fact. Weaving a partition narrative in 1950s in Amritsar, Delhi or Lucknow is very different from writing it in Ohio in 2011. Thus another important central argument of this study is reaffirmed – ‘**Looking back at the past especially at a historically significant point from different temporal and spatial location would yield different insights as the perspectives would differ**’. The urgency would vary with time and the changing spatial location would reinterpret the vision. In other words, looking at the past is formed by the present and also provides important markers for the future. Thus as discussed earlier, looking at the past becomes a responsible activity firmly anchored in the present and future. History becomes contemporary and reinvents itself in the form of temporally and spatially changing narratives like the changing patterns of a kaleidoscope.
ii) Gendered Narratives: The narratives authored by women authors that were taken for study were *Ice Candy Man* by Bapsi Sidhwa and *Sunlight on a Broken Column* by Attia Hosain. As discussed earlier, the presence of violence is different in those narratives as compared to the other ones. It is less of the physical and more of the psychological kind.

For instance although the abduction, rape and recovery of Shanta (Ayah) and Hamida are important events in the narrative of *Ice Candy Man*, there is a considerable restraint on the descriptive accounts of sexual violence. There is no actual account of what happened after Ayah’s forceful removal from the house till she resurfaces as Mumtaz, the mistress of Ice Candy Man. Considering the vivid descriptions of sexuality of Ayah and her friends, moral censor or constraint would be hardly the reason for this.

The Partition narratives that are authored by women focus on victimization which goes beyond partition. For instance the life of Saira’s aunt, Abida or the atmosphere in the ‘taluqdari’ family of Syed Mohammed Hasan (Baba Jaan) speak a lot about the stifling existence of women. Each character is victimized in a unique manner. Zahra is trapped in the image of a happy marriage and devoted wife. The only independent characters – Laila, Sita and Nita either face a long, difficult struggle or are outcast for their rebellious mode or die an early, untimely death.

Similarly in *Ice Candy Man* there are minor characters in the narrative that suffer and face life as an ordeal, irrespective of partition. Lenny’s childhood friend and the gardener’s daughter- Papoo, who is a spirited girl, is married off to a much married, middle aged pockmarked midget, Totaram, when she is barely twelve years old. Her parents fearing rebellion from her give her opium due to which she sleeps throughout her marriage.

Thus the narratives imply that the ordeal faced by women was difficult, violence during partition intensified it. It did not victimize women as they were already victims of familial and social constraints, it just brought fresh chains and wounds on them. This is a special feature of women partition narratives.

Another distinguishing feature of women partition narratives is that they have more autobiographical overtones as compared to other novels. The other novels thrive on the experiences of respective authors during and around partition but *Ice Candy Man* and *Sunlight on a Broken Column* are more autobiographical. Laila and Lenny become the persona of Attia Hosain and Bapsi Sidhwa respectively. Such is not the
case with Sahni, Nahal, Majmudar or Khushwant Singh. Hosain and Sidhwa have made the narrator their own selves and have seen and experienced partition through them. This definitely makes a difference as the first person participant narrator bring the narrative closest to the realm of realism. The private and personal worlds of Laila and Lenny mirror the worlds of Hosain and Sidhwa, respectively. It becomes easier to shift the persona of the author to the protagonists in these two cases as the autobiographical overtones blend smoothly with the structural adaptation of first person participant narrator technique.

Thus the women writers are distinctly different in their narratives. It can be confirmed and stated that the narratives of violence, victimization and traumatic experiences are gendered narratives. The narration has a different tenor that is distinct from the narratives authored by male authors.

Some of the major issues emerging through the short stories taken up for study are:

Many short stories, especially those penned by Manto, focus on the betrayal of faith with no light of redemption: it is a dark terrifying universe with no ethical shelter. This realization of the spiritual violence is more chilling and horrific than the physical violence. This is also linked with the ethical dilemma, where either the man wins or the beast. For instance, in “The Neighbour” by Sheikh Ayaz, the man wins over the beast when Khanu, contemplating killing his neighbour, Pesu’s mother, in the frenzy of communal violence comes back from the brink of violence. Most of the stories are based directly or indirectly on the lived experiences of the writers. This is particularly true of *Unbordered Memories* where quite a few stories like “6 January 1948”, “When I Experienced the Simultaneity of Death” or “My Amma” read almost like memoirs. A significant factor tackled by these writers is the changing dimensions of relationships on the backdrop of partition. Almost all the stories have touched upon the frenzy and insanity of violence, which was quite obvious, keeping in mind the backdrop of the partition but what is significant is, as in case of Manto’s creations, there a definite attempt to go beyond tragedy and violence by tackling it with irony and satire. This transcending of violence and tragedy is a brave attempt to contain it, and still exist. Apart from all these abstract concerns, there is the more material or physical concern like the economies and politics of displacement and resettlement or the refugee experience. The disillusionment after the resettlement further accentuating the pain and loss of displacement is also displayed. The confusion of shifting identities is also captured, as in “Pali” by Bhisham Sahni. Similarly, stereotypes are
challenged and contested, for instance in “A Tale of 1947” by Manto. On the other hand, they are also reinforced as through various sketches of “Siyah Hashye”.

It is clear that most of the issues expressed in the short stories overlap with those of the novels. In spite of this the short stories have their own place in partition literature. By its very form the short story in its short span, can focus more effectively on the emotive side or response. They can bring out the immediacy of the trauma or moving experience in an accentuated manner. On the other hand, the long span of the novel and its narrative spread over a longer period of time gives it a greater temporal and spatial expanse. Hence it provides scope of retrospective assessment and a certain type of objectivity in the narration. In this manner, it is more akin to history text.

The short stories studied illuminate aspects of individual and collective existence against the traumatic backdrop of Partition. They offer multiple versions of truth, rejecting the monolithic objectivity of (traditional) historical discourse. In effect they lead to a richer understanding of the troubled times of partition.
NOTES.


5. Bapsi Sidhwa, *Ice Candy Man* 16

6. Ibid.16.

7. Ibid.36.

8. Ibid. 36.

9. Ibid. 36-37.

10. Ibid. 37.

11. Ibid. 12.

12. Ibid. 60.

13. Ibid. 91.

15. The wit of Sidhwa sparkles when ‘Hari’ the gardener, frightened of violence converts to Islam and renames himself as Himmatali-the courageous one!


17. Ibid. 16.


19. Ibid.


23 Ibid. 252.


27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
40 Ibid. 386.
41 Ibid. 314.
42 Ibid 437-38.
Bhagvadgīta also gives a short hypothetical analysis of occurrence of Tamas as follows—

‘Once a man having sattva as his main habitual behaviour, feels that it is not easy to live in this world by the means of Sattva and starts being Rajas. As per Rajas, the man starts thinking habitually of what he wants to do. It becomes hard for him to think whether his Karmic actions are good (satkarmi) or bad (akarmi). Then, he feels good in harming or harbouring bad feeling toward others people. This behaviour is under control of a power called Mohamaya and brings about Asakti (selfishness) in human.’

57 Ibid. 353.


59 Ibid. 11.

60 Ibid. 30.

61 Ibid. 100.


63 Chaman Nahal, Azadi 151.

64 Khushwant Singh, Train to Pakistan (New Delhi: Penguin, 1956) 118.

65 Ibid. 21.

66 Ibid. 129.

67 Ibid. 142.

68 Ibid. 48.

69 Ibid. 49.

70 Ibid. 21.

71 Ibid. 163.

72 Ibid. 167.


82 Ibid. xxii.


85 Ibid.22.


87 Some stories are based on impressions gathered by Manto in his childhood. “It happened in 1919” is based on Jalianwala Baug massacre; Manto was seven years old and was in Amritsar when it happened. The narrative does not describe the massacre
which took place on the 12th April, 1919; it is merely mentioned. In this story, Manto
ridicules the state’s sham attempts at preserving the memory of the real martyrs in
institutionalized histories.

88 Khalid, Hasan, ed. and trans., Bitter Fruit: The Very Best of Saadat Hasan Manto
174.

89 Ibid. 177.

90 Ibid. 188.

91 Ibid. 188

92 Ibid. 216.

93 Ibid. 220-21.

94 Ibid. 240.

95 Ibid. 223.

96 Ibid. 227.

97 Ibid. 228-29.

98 Ibid. 120.

99 Ibid. 185.

100 Ibid. 410

101 Mushirul Hasan, ed. Inventing Boundaries: Gender, Politics and the Partition of
India 288.
102 Ibid.


105 Ibid. 65.

106 Ibid. 12.

107 Ibid. 13.

108 Ibid. 17.

109 Ibid. 12.

110 Ibid. 18.

111 Ibid. 18.

112 Ibid. 23.

113 Ibid. 26.

114 Ibid. 28.

115 Ibid. 28.

116 Ibid. 40.

117 Ibid. 54.
118 Ibid. 76.
119 Ibid. 77.
120 Ibid. 77.
122 Ibid. xvi.
123 Ibid. 60.
124 Ibid. 156.
125 Ibid. 10-11
126 Ibid. 165-66.
127 Ibid. 5-6.
128 Ibid. 9.
129 Ibid. 78.
130 Ibid. 109-110.
131 Ibid. xix.
132 Ibid. xx.
133 Ibid. 106.
134 Ibid. 30.
This fact also emerges in Azadi, as well as the studies done by Ravinder Kaur, Butalia, Bhasin and Menon.