CHAPTER – I

Literary Response to Partition

Literature is a social product and, as such, it inevitably reflects the life of the era out of which it has evolved. Since “in the literature of an age its conflicts, tendencies, obsessions are uncovered and made manifest”, therefore, “it is in the literature of a nation that we find the history of its life and the motives of its deeds.” Hence, “Everything that for good or evil has entered into the making of our nation’s life has also entered into the texture of its literature.” “Literature is the nearest thing to life,” says George Eliot. A significant number of writers have dexterously captured the social milieu of their respective times through their works. Since “every writer grows up as a member of a particular society and the structure of his personality, his views of life and his emotional conflicts and communication are conditioned by social function”, therefore, “in revealing himself the writer also reflects his society.”
Every great writer is “the creator as well as the creature of his time,” observes W. H. Hudson. So, “behind the literature of any period lie the combined forces personal and impersonal — which made the life of that period, as a whole, what it was.” The literature, thus, reflects the spirit of the age and helps in “extending our contact with our fellowmen beyond bounds of our personal lot.” The greatest pleasure and satisfaction to be found in literature occurs where it brings us back to realities of human situations, problems, feelings and relationships,” avers H. L. B. Moody. So, while reading a work of literature “we are brought into large, close and fresh relations with life.” Stressing upon
the significance of social realism in literature Robert Lynd writes, “Literature is not only an escape from life, but an escape into life, and the first escape is of importance only if it leads to the second.”

Thus, “the truth remains that the value of literature is in the measure of its authenticity.”

The present research work is to study some selected novels from recent Indian fiction that have established a coherent relationship with the spirit of the age and have realistically captured the human predicament amidst the trauma of country’s partition. The partition of 1947 was one such event in recent history that had caught the attention and interest of many writers and had inspired them to write upon it. During this morbid phase there was an outbreak of exacerbated communal violence in the course of which thousands of innocent people lost their lives and about a million people lost their homes and ancestral holdings. So deep and drastic was the impact of this cataclysm that, advertently or inadvertently, men of letters felt constrained to contemplate over it. About its instant impact upon literature of this period R. K. Narayan writes, “Under this urgent pressure the mood of comedy, the sensitivity to atmosphere, the probing of psychological factors, the crisis in the individual soul and its resolution and above all the detached observations were forced in to the background.”

The partition theme dominated the psyche of most of the writers during this torrid phase and writing under its spell they directed the focus of their works to the presentation of the dark social ambience of that age. The potent impact of the holocaust made the writers to step out of their ivory-
towers into the realistic world that was fraught with pain, plight and pandemonium. As a result of the growing influence of social realism upon writers volumes and volumes were added to the partition literature. Working according to their individual sensibilities they rendered myriad shades to the theme in the course of its treatment. The meaning and the definition of the word ‘Partition’ has been invented and reinvented many times since 1947. Owing to its distinct treatment, at the hands of different writers, the partition theme has emerged as one of the most prolific and potent subjects in Indian literature. “Almost all the Indo-Anglian novels have one or more of the following nuclear ideas, predominant in them: the Evil of Partition; the Cult of ‘Quit India’ and the Gandhian Myth ....”¹⁴ says Rrisha Rao. It testifies the very fact that neither has the theme of partition outlived its life nor has it become outdated with the passage of time. On the contrary, it could well be said that the theme of partition is continuously feeding and enriching the genre of Indian fiction even today.

To get a clear and comprehensive purview of the changing trends in partition literature it would be apt to analyse the theme in a phased manner. The three phases of partition literature enlisted below would not only throw light upon the thematic concerns of various writers, but would also record the transformation that had taken place in the course of its treatment over the years.
The partition of India was not an abrupt and sudden development, but an outcome of a well conceived plan. It came into effect when, either due to the clever manipulations of the Indian political leaders or on account of the communal-card played by the British, the magnitude of hostility between the Muslims and non-Muslims reached all time high. Since the socio-cultural differences had been simmering amidst the distinct communities, living together in undivided India over a long period of time, therefore, owing to the provocations of the Indian leaders, religious die-hards and the British administrators the communal feelings sparked readily. Much prior to the divide of 1947 these provocations “poisoned people’s minds so much that they started looking at each other with hatred and ill-will.” As a result of it the communal harmony and social ambience of the country was polluted and “even those kind souls who could never think of doing harm to their neighbours were misguided and swayed by the virulent slogans and speeches against each other.” The things began to worsen further with the outbreak of sporadic incidents of violence and vandalism in different parts of the country. These acts of communal outrage, well in advance, indicated that, slowly but steadily, the country was heading towards the ill-fated day of its partition. So, the pre-Partition period was as phase during which the communal turbulence began to
gain momentum, the political outfits became hyper-active and religious sentiments were roused to invoke violence and enmity instead of peace and harmony.

The Initial Phase

Since the seeds for the partition of the country were sown much earlier than 1947, therefore, lines of rift had appeared between the Muslims and the non-Muslims a long time before the realisation of the divide. In concurrence with it literature reflecting the disharmonious atmosphere of pre-Partition days too made its presence felt in Indian fiction. The first phase of the study focuses upon a few such works of Indian fiction that have not only captured the picture of pre-Partition India, but have also revealed that how the two separate communities began to think and talk about separate nationalities owing to their growing mistrust and hostility towards each other. Though most of these works were published after the division of the country, yet they have been classified and analysed in the first phase of the study on account of their correlation with the days of pre-Partition. Despite the fact that most of these works are centred around the depiction of country’s freedom struggle, the authors have not failed in tracing the development of communal rift through these narratives. These works tend to depict the wrath of the Indian nationalists on one hand and strive to study the growing hostility between the Muslims and the non-Muslims on the other. So, the works selected and analysed in this phase may not directly fall within the ambit of partition literature, but they could very well be ranked
as the forerunners of partition literature. Since partition of the country was an outcome of an unbridled communal trouble, therefore, by portraying a realistic picture of a communally turbulent India of pre-Partition days these works have established a cogent relationship with the partition literature in one sense or the other. Though several works of fiction appeared during this phase, yet a few have been selected for analysis. From the vast anthology of short stories a few chosen ones are- Shaikh Ayyaz’s “Neighbours”, Ismat Chugtai’s “Roots” and Khawaja Ahmad Abbas’s “The Death of Sheikh Burhanuddin.”

Through the story “Neighbours” Shaikh Ayyaz has made an attempt to reveal the state of mind of a Muslim barber, Khannu, who feels perturbed and stirred by the slogans raised by his co-religionists and begins to look upon his Hindu neighbours with suspicion. The communally charged atmosphere brings “a sudden change in his mentality” and “a thin veil of hatred against the Hindus is cast on his good and kind heart”[^17]. The graph of his abhorrence shows a further rise when, through a certain newspaper, he comes to know that the people of his community are being mercilessly slaughtered by the Hindus in several parts of Bengal and Bihar. Obsessed with the feelings of mistrust and intolerance he begins to contemplate, “Are we going to avenge the killings of Bihari Muslims? Should I, for example, cut the throat of this Seth with my razor?”[^18] The story, thus, projects a realistic picture of the pre-Partition days during which a rapid transformation took place in the inter-communal relations.
The impact of this hostility was so lethal that even the people who had lived as neighbours for generations together became thirsty for each other’s blood.

Ismat Chughtai’s “Roots” captures the changing communal scenario from the pre-Partition days to the day when Partition became a stark reality. The tale centres around the family of Roop Chand, a Hindu doctor, which shares a cordial relationship with another Muslim family living in their neighbourhood. Despite religious differences both the families had lived together in perfect harmony with each other. In fact, both of them had been closely related to each other for “three generations.”19 However, owing to the growing communal strife in the country the relationship between the two families began to stretch and strain. Their visits to each other’s houses virtually came to an end. “The distance between the two houses seems to crawl with venomous snakes.”20 With the formal declaration of partition a deep chasm appeared between the two families and in anticipation of country’s division they too found themselves divided on physical as well as emotional planes.

K. A. Abbas’s “The Death of Sheikh Burhanuddin” is a story of a Muslim whose mind is obsessed with antipathy and hostility against the Sikh community. Burhanuddin harbours a strong dislike against the Sikhs right from his childhood days simply because the elderly people in his family had always contaminated his mind against them. This feeling of “dislike developed into hatred”21 and soon he began to view the non-Muslims as his arch-rivals. The
impetus of his hostility intensified further when the country underwent a spate of communal violence. In the course of these communal riots when a Sikh man approached Burhanuddin with an assurance of safety he considered it to be a mere sham and, in a sort of soliloquy, said to himself, “How much fraud is hidden behind this man’s beard! He is obviously pleased that the Muslims are being massacred, but expresses sympathy to win my confidence, or is he trying to taunt me?” So, even during the pre-Partition days the people of distinct communities had started developing prejudice against each other. This prejudice subsequently sparked communal conflicts and laid down the foundation for the fragmentation of the country.

So far as the novels of this phase are concerned, a whole lot of them appeared and established their recognition in Indian literature on account of their faithful portrayal of the pre-Partition days. Though most of these narratives have kept their thematic focus around the freedom struggle and are imbued with the spirit of nationalism, yet the atmosphere of communal disharmony too has been reflected in these works. A few selected novels revealing the volatile communal ambience of pre-Partition days are— D. F. Karaka’s *We Never Die*, Aamir Ali’s *Conflict*, K. A. Abbas’s *Inqilab*, Arthur (Anand) S. Lall’s *The House at Adampur* and Khushwant Singh’s *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale*.
D. F. Karaka's *We Never Die*[^2] is a magnificent novel that takes into account the days of pre-Partition and reflects the changing communal scenario of the country. Set against the slothful village life, the narrative unfolds the picture of India's freedom struggle on one hand and unravels the graph pointing towards the growing communal disturbance in the country on the other. The story is centred around a Muslim girl, Ayesha, the daughter of a rich farmer Mahmud Khan. The family lives in a small village that is completely under the grip of the Congress ideology. The people of the village—be it the Hindus or the Muslims, follow the dictates of the Indian National Congress and in accordance with its principles fight together for the liberation of the country. One day Mahmud's wife Saleema gets killed in police firing while holding a protest march against the British government. The death of Saleema comes as a shock to Mahmud Khan and it embitters his entire outlook of life. He feels further depressed when he witnesses the communal conflicts going on in the country. He observes that the two communities, that had collectively been fighting the war of freedom, were now gradually parting their ways. It annoyed Mahmud Khan to such an extent that he eventually gave up the freedom struggle. He was not only disappointed by the heinous acts of his own community, but was equally disturbed by the conduct and deeds of the Hindus. Thus, D. F. Karaka's novel includes India's freedom struggle on one hand and its changing communal trends on the other.
Aamir Ali's *Conflict* is yet another significant novel that centres around the ‘Quit India Movement’ of 1942 in particular and captures the picture of a volatile and inflammable India of pre-Partition days in general. The story deals with the reaction of Shankar, a young village boy of Karegaon, to the vulnerable political conditions existing in the country. Shankar goes to Bombay to achieve higher education, but on reaching there he finds that the ambience of the city is charged with the spirit of nationalism. It makes the boy spellbound and he too decides to participate in the freedom drive of the nation. In the course of this struggle he observes that communal differences begin to surface between the Muslim and non-Muslims giving way to conflict and clashes between the two communities. Thus, through the character of Shankar, Amir Ali has exquisitely traced the development of communal disharmony in the novel.

K. A. Abbas’s *Inqilab* is a historical novel laden with political overtones. The novel begins with the picture of pre-Partition days and runs all the way to the point of country’s liberation in 1947. In the course of the narrative Abbas has captured almost all the important events, from Jallian-Wallah Bagh to the No-Tax Campaign, from Dandi March to the Civil Disobedience Movement, from genesis of the Muslim League to the creation of Pakistan. The novel deals with the transformation of thought and reveals that how the people of different communities, involved in the freedom struggle of the nation, suddenly, began to think and talk about their communal interests.
The novel is centred around Anwar, a Muslim who belongs to the upper middle 
class family of Delhi. His father, Akbar Ali, being a nationalist actively 
participates in the freedom drive. Regular meetings are held at his house to 
discuss the nation’s political developments. However, with the passage of time 
the agenda of these meetings begins to change. Now, instead of discussing the 
course of freedom movement their focus shifts to the rights of minorities. 
Through the narrative the author throws an ample light upon the dilemmas of 
the Muslim community and reveals how, owing to their apprehensions of 
status and security in post-independence India, this minority community came 
in direct confrontation with the Hindus. Gradually, this feeling of 
communalism became so powerful that the one who even talked of harmony 
and brotherhood was looked upon with contempt. Anwar too faces a similar 
retaliation in the novel. As soon as he urges his community to be at peace with 
the Hindu brethren his co-religionists declare him a ‘Kafir’. He bears the brunt 
of communalism, but still sticks to his ideology of peace saying, “There must 
be no killings.” However, with nationalism transforming into communalism 
and faith giving way to fanaticism, the country could not maintain its calm for 
long and soon came on the verge of split. Thus, Inqilab not only presents a 
living picture of pre-Partition days, but also captures the state of mind of 
millions of people caught amidst the fury of communal frenzy. Commenting 
upon the veracity of this novel K. A. Abbas, in an interview, held, “The actual 

novel is made with documents, related from life, or heightened; just as history 
is made with written documents.”
Arthur (Anand) Lall’s *The House at Adampur* is a gripping novel set against the background of country’s freedom struggle. The narrative is placed in Delhi and focuses upon the upper-middle class life of the city through its protagonist, Diwan Ram Nath. Diwan Ram Nath, a wealthy and prominent figure of the city, hosts several parties at his house to discuss the political and communal issues rocking the country. In the course of these discussions it becomes evident that the country was going through rapid socio-political changes. The impetuous currents of communalism and fanaticism were threatening the solidarity of the nation. Arthur Lall has, thus, presented a grim picture of pre-Partition phase through several such discussions in the narrative.

Khushwant Singh’s *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* is another absorbing novel woven around the perturbed pre-Partition days. The narrative goes around a well-to-do Sikh family of Punjab. Buta Singh, a senior magistrate in the British government, is shocked to find that his son, Sher Singh, is involved in the anti-British campaign. He condemns his unlawful activities and cautions him against the dire consequences of raising a voice against the British government. However, Sher Singh turns a deaf ear towards the pleas of his father and sticks to the task of liberating his motherland. It creates a conflict in the family. However, besides dealing with the story of this Sikh family, in particular, the novel throws ample light upon the “dimness and murkiness of the general atmosphere” of partition days and testifies its affinity to “time, place and the social milieu.”
The Middle Phase

The middle phase of partition literature takes an analytical account of those works of Indian fiction that specifically focused their attention upon the horrific divide of 1947 and its aftermath. Not only did they capture the instant impact of partition depicting the miserable state of innocent masses, but also took into consideration the plight of partition victims living in a sordid state even decades after the division. Some of the selective narratives written in between the period of partition and the years that followed it, covering a time span of about five decades (1947-95), are being analysed.

As soon as the partition of the country came into effect a bulk of literature followed with it. The theme of partition was taken up and treated by different writers from different thematic dimensions. Some of them focused their attention upon the violent encounters and communal carnage, while the others dealt with the problem of uprooting; some gave a vivid description of the painful mass migration, while the others kept their focus upon the plight of the refugees; Some showed a sympathetic concern for women and children, while some of them were found interested in capturing the plight of the oldfolk. So far as the short stories are concerned they have further been classified into three distinct categories in this phase.

1. The Riot-Ridden Fiction.

2. Fiction relating to Reconciliation and Rehabilitation
When in 1947 the country was fragmented into two independent domains it shocked the psyche of the people. The emotions of the creative writers too were stirred by this nasty development and it made them to lose the imperturbability of their minds. They could not withstand the shock of this tragic moment and, thus, took refuge in literature to express their most sordid thoughts. Their literature became a repository of localised truths and through it they profoundly expressed their anxiety, anger and negation over the fragmentation of the country. It was a time when “people seemed to have lost their humanity. Women were being mutilated and raped, children were being dispatched to the valley of death, brothers were playing holi with the blood of their brothers,” observes Shaikh Ayyaz. Thus, in 1947 the country was thoroughly gripped in a vicious cycle of communal frenzy and religious fanaticism. It witnessed repeated spells of violence, riots and massacres of the most barbaric nature. It would not be wrong to state here that the communally charged atmosphere of the pre-Partition days reached its climax in 1947. It was a period when communal clashes of the preceding years gave way to large scale rioting, sporadic events of violence made way for mass massacres and petty cases of loot and intimidation transformed into the incidents of arson and slaughter. A few selected short stories that depict the consequences of this calamity, for example, “the large scale gruesome massacres turning land into cities of sorrows with thousands of corpses, fear psychosis and loss of faith,
betrayals and utter loss not only of one’s dear ones but also of one’s home and hearth,”33 are Yash Pal’s “A Holy War”, Ghulam Abbas’s “Avtar: A Hindu Myth”, S. H. Vatsayan’s “Post Box”, K. S. Duggal’s “Kulsum” and Ram Lal’s “A Visitor from Pakistan.”

Yash Pal’s “A Holy War” is a heartrending tale portraying a realistic picture of Lahore that was “paralysed by fear and mutual hatred amongst all the communities”34 during the days of the divide. Owing to communal hostility the people indulged in ruthless acts of killing, kidnapping, rape, molestation and arson. It constrained the non-Muslims to leave the city in large numbers and soon the areas inhabited by them became desolately barren. Yash Pal gives a vivid description of one such Hindu-dominated area, Gangu-Ki-Gali, in the story and writes, “there was no sign of life in any house ... only fear haunted the abandoned and ruined houses....”35 Thus, the story not only captures a dreadful picture of partition days in Lahore, but also gives an account of atrocities committed upon the people, of different faith and communities, in the name of holy war.

Ghulam Abbas’s “Avtar: A Hindu Myth” “captures the communally charged atmosphere of Sambhal town in Muradabad District. Like Yash Pal’s “Holy War” the story centres around the mass massacres and portrays how the “armed gangs of Hindus attacked Muslim localities, burnt down their houses, butchered countless men, women and children.”36 Though the focus of these
two narratives may be upon different geographical areas and upon the maltreatment of different communities, yet both of them have brilliantly explored the human predicament as well as the horrid world of partition phase with precision and clarity.

S. H. Vatsayan’s “Post Box” is a pathetic tale of a small child, Roshan, who undergoes an acute agony during the split of the nation. The boy mutely watches the macabre dance of death at a tender age of five, as his mother is brutally murdered by the rioters before his eyes. He recollects the horrific incident when one of the rioters had pushed “her away from him, had thrown her down on the ground, and then smashed her face in with the blunt end of his axe ... her eyes, nose, jaws had been reduced to a bloody pulp.” The dreadful happening left a permanent scar on the psyche of the innocent child. In the course of this holocaust one day he got separated from his father too and thereafter life became an ordeal for him.

K. S. Duggal’s “Kulsum” reflects the plight of an innocent girl who manages to save herself from the rioters through the assistance of an old man. She considers her saviour as an embodiment of goodness and deposes faith in him. However, the old man proves to be a wolf in sheep’s guise, as he sells Kulsum to a schoolmaster to mint some money. The story reflects that the human values were on the verge of their extinction in those days and no one could possibly be relied upon. This aspect of betrayal and loss of faith has also
been dealt in Mohan Rakesh’s “The Owner of Rubble” and S.H.Vatsayan’s “The Refugee” wherein the people bound by the trust of years, suddenly, deceived their neighbours and friends to gain access to their wealth and property.

Ram Lal’s “A Visitor from Pakistan” adds another dimension to the partition theme and encapsulates the agonies of a woman from a different perspective. Though several stories, such as— Saadat Hasan Manto’s “Cold Meat”, “Open It”, Jamila Hashmi’s “Exile”, Rajender Singh Bedi’s “Lajwanti” etc., have been written upon the victimisation of women describing them as the soft-targets of rabid fanatics, yet “A Visitor from Pakistan” has a distinct shade of its own. It is the story of a woman, Saraswati, who remarries Sunderdas after the news about the death of her first husband, Baldev, is confirmed to her. However, one day Baldev comes back from Pakistan. The very sight of Baldev makes Saraswati to lose her emotional balance. “She is unable to decide whom to choose—Baldev or Sunderdas.” So, reeling under an immense psychological pressure the woman feels that “death is the only solution left” for her to break this fix.

The second level of the short stories centres around those pathetic tales of human agony that indicate the miserable life of partition victims. After going through a long and lethal spell of communal violence a few fortunate survivors of this holocaust came face to face with a whole lot of challenges. These
unfortunate beings, which had lost almost everything during the division, were utterly disappointed to find that their miseries had multiplied manifold after reaching the land they had desired for. Their own community felt reluctant to accept them and branded them as ‘refugees’ or ‘mohajirs’ as soon as they entered into the land of their dreams. So, as the social conditions changed the literature too reflected upon it and the thematic focus of the writers shifted from the depiction of communal violence to the presentation of the plight of partition victims. A whole lot of short stories dealing with the theme of ‘reconciliation and rehabilitation’ of refugees came into vogue. A few chosen stories that focus upon the dominant thematic aspects of the second level are—Ibrahim Jalees’s “A Grave Turned Inside Out”, Umm-e-Ummara’s “More Sinned Against than Sinning”, Intizar Husain’s “An Unwritten Epic” and Mulk Raj Anand’s “A Parrot in the Cage”.

Ibrahim Jalees’s “A Grave Turned Inside Out” describes the fate of some Bihari Muslims who migrated over to East Pakistan with a hope of finding a world of Islamic brotherhood and economic equality—the world that was promised to them by Qaid-e-Azam. However, all their hopes are soon reduced to ashes when they encounter a similar oppression at the hands of Bengali Muslims residing there. Umm-e-Ummara’s “More Sinned Against than Sinning” is another tale with a similar theme. It is about the devastation of hopes of the migrants from Bihar and East Pakistan. It is only after their uprooting that these migrants realise the bitter truth that religious and linguistic
definitions succeed only in establishing shifting grounds for the inclusion of some and making all others expendable. The partition, they knew, had forced them to leave behind a human world and had given them in return only an empty allegory of a religious community. Intizar Husain’s “An Unwritten Epic” is a touching tale of Pichwa, a Muslim boy, who is overjoyed with the creation of a separate Muslim homeland. However, as soon as he migrates to Pakistan all his illusions come to an end. He is treated as a ‘mohajir’ (an outsider) there and his own community lashes out at him saying, “Everyone just marches into Pakistan expecting to get something, as if his father had buried a treasure here.” Finally, a heartbroken Pichwa returns from Pakistan, but being an outsider he continues to endure a similar antipathy and oppression in India too. So, most of the refugees confronted the problem of identity crisis during partition and became akin to rolling stones moving from place to place in search of stability and survival.

Mulk Raj Anand’s “A Parrot in the Cage” brings forth the plight of a refugee woman, Rukmani, who having lost everything works as a maid-servant to make both ends meet. Since these menial jobs don’t fetch her enough for survival, therefore, one day she decides to meet the Deputy Collector of the region to get some compensation. However, on reaching there she finds a long queue of refugees waiting to settle their claims. Rukmani too rows herself in the queue and becomes a part of that unending line. Unfortunately, this long and tedious wait procures her nothing, as at the end of the day “a posse of
policemen charged the refugees with lathis and angry shouts which drowned the chorus of voices of which Rukmani’s sighs and her parrot’s cries had been a part.”

So, not only did the refugees suffer on account of inter-communal hostility or intra-communal antipathy, but the indifferent attitude of the public authorities too multiplied their agonies manifold.

After the period of ‘re-conciliation and rehabilitation’ was over, the third level, i.e., of ‘retrieval of memories,’ made its presence in partition literature. The narratives of the third level primarily capture the psychological state of partition victims and reveal how these people, even after their rehabilitation, continued to suffer from an acute mental pain on account of their past memories. The state of mind of these victimised beings could very well be described through the following lines of T. S. Eliot, “When we try to recall visually some period in the past, we find in our memory just the few meagre arbitrarily chosen set of snapshots that we do find there, the faded poor souvenirs of passionate moments.” Thus, the victims of this holocaust were tormented not only when the partition was affected, or while they were struggling in repairing their ravaged lives, but their sufferings continued for a long-long time even after the divide. Since the images of the past pre-occupied their thoughts, living under a constant spell of their bygone days, thousands and thousands of partition victims, on both ends of the LoC, suffered from an acute agony in the post-Partition period too. A few selected short stories running
along with this stream of thought are—Mohan Rakesh’s “The Claim”, “The Owner of Rubble” and Syed Mohammed Ashraf’s “Separated from the Flock.”

Mohan Rakesh’s “The Claim” is a well-knitted story woven around the woes of a refugee Sadhu Singh. After losing almost everything Sadhu Singh lands in India and runs from pillar to post to get his claims settled. In the course of entire struggle the memories of his homeland, which was now in Pakistan, continue to torment him miserably. He dreams about the mango tree “eating whose green fruit he had been spoiling his teeth—the years of the future to be spent in the shade of the tree.” A similar tone of affinity for roots dominates in Syed Mohammed Ashraf’s “Separated from the Flock.” It is a story of two friends, Gulam Ali and Nawab, who migrated over to Pakistan leaving their home and hearth in India. Gulam Ali’s wife Jameela feels a strong urge for her roots and expresses the desire to visit India time and again. However, Gulam Ali never takes his wife seriously and considers her plea to visit India as a mere “whim.” This indifferent attitude of her husband hurts Jameela and she is, thus, constrained to live in the “mirror house” of her memories. Recording the state of mind of millions of such refugees who continued to survive with the memories of their past on both ends of the LoC, but could never ever reach back their roots the author writes:

We are the birds with broken wings and we can never
fly back to those fields of desire—we are more
helpless and defenceless than those birds because
once their wings are broken they are ritually
slaughtered—but people like us—our torment never ends,
we die slowly, we are tortured at every moment of our lives,
we are hunted without mercy and we can only beat our wings
in the throes of death but we cannot die ....

Mohan Rakesh’s “The Owner of Rubble” is another significant
narrative that captures the state of mind of a displaced partition victim Gani
Miyan. Hailing from Amritsar, Gani Miyan crossed the LoC in 1947 and
landed in Pakistan. However, even after reaching the Muslim homeland he
couldn’t find any solace. The memories of his hometown haunt him
continuously. So, one fine day he moves back to India with a hope to get a
glimpse of the little house in which he had spent a large span of his life.
However, all his hopes are vanquished when he sees that his ancestral house
has been reduced to a state of rubble in the wake of country’s partition.

So, in the third level of short stories the authors have primarily focused
upon the mental strife of partition victims keeping their physical sufferings at
bay. It has not only enabled the writers to establish a cogent relationship with
the inner-life of partition victims, but has also extended the thematic scope of
their works making it abundantly rich by way of psychological overtones.
While the short stories of the middle phase have been categorised into three distinct levels, no such classification of levels has been done in case of the novels. Here it would be worth mentioning that the classification of a short story, with respect to its theme, poses no such complexity because a short story is like a "slice of life" presented suggestively. Since a short story centres around a single idea, character or situation its classification could easily be made. However, in the case of novels no such classification could possibly be done. Since a novel presents the life on a broader canvas, thereby, reflecting multiple ideas, situations and characters on its unlimited frame its categorisation in a particular thematic level is neither just nor appropriate. So, the novels of this phase have been kept free from the confines of the three thematic levels drawn for the purpose of the perusal and analysis of short stories.

A voluminous number of novels appeared during the second phase of partition literature. These novels were laden with multiple thematic aspects—be it the uprooting of people or their mass migration across the borders; be it the plight of the refugees or the deplorable conditions existing in the rehabilitation camps; be it the laws regulating the evacuee property or the issues pertaining to the settlement of claims; be it the sense of longing of the uprooted victims for their native lands or the memories of their past. So, almost every shade of partition theme gets reflected in the novels of this phase. A few
chosen works of this phase are— Khushwant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan*, Attia Hosain’s *Sunlight on a Broken Column*, Bhisham Sahni’s *Tamas*, Chaman Nahal’s *Azadi*, Kartar Singh Duggal’s *Twice Born, Twice Dead* and Bapsi Sidhwa’s *Ice-Candy-Man*.

Khushwant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan* projects the picture of bestial horrors enacted on the Indo-Pak border during the terror-haunted days of mid-1947. Set in a small border village, Mano Majra, the novel not only captures the picture of the deteriorating communal ambience of those days, but also shows how the Muslims and non-Muslims came at loggerheads owing to the communally charged atmosphere of the country. A young Sikh boy spreads the venom of communalism in Mano Majra and urges his community to avenge the killings of the non-Muslims in Pakistan. Invoking the communal sentiments of the peace-loving inhabitants of the village he says, “For each Hindu or Sikh they kill, kill two Mussulmans. For each woman they abducted or rape, abduct two... for each trainload of dead they send over, send two across....”52 Such provocations soon led to large scale massacres in the country and “by the summer of 1947 ... ten million people—Muslims and Hindus and Sikhs were in flight. By the time monsoon broke, almost a million of them were dead ....”53 Thus, by using Mano Majra as a representative village the author has tried to catch the turbulent conditions prevailing in the country. On quite similar lines, by symbolising the trains as the messengers of hatred and intolerance, the author has also made an attempt to unravel the feeling of
retaliation that had transformed the people from beings to beasts in those dark days. On account of its realistic portrayal of the partition days the novel, *Train to Pakistan*, could very well be ranked in the forefront of partition literature.

Attia Hosain’s *Sunlight on a Broken Column* is another partition novel which revolves around the personal life of its heroine, Laila, against the political background of pre and post-Partition period. Through this novel the author has, particularly, made an attempt to highlight the Muslim perspective on partition by keeping his attention focused around the three generations of a Muslim family. Specifically speaking, the novel deals with the apprehensions and doubts of the Muslim community that found itself in a state of indecisiveness as soon as the Islamic Republic of Pakistan came into being. After the division most of the Muslim families living in India could not make out whether they should stay back in India or should migrate over to the newly evolved Muslim state of Pakistan. So, reeling under a state of ambiguity, many of them crossed over to Pakistan, while the rest remained stuck to their roots in India. The family members of Baba Jan’s household confronted a similar dilemma and several queries ran through their turbulent minds with respect to the future course of their lives. Some felt the need to migrate over to Pakistan owing to the ruthless slaughter of Muslims in India, while the others remained reluctant in relinquishing the land of their fathers and forefathers. Their contrary viewpoints shattered the family into bits and pieces. So, the Muslims in India underwent a lot of brainstorming with the creation of Pakistan and felt
that “We must think not in terms of India now, but India and Pakistan.”54 Thus, by dissecting the perplexed minds of the Muslim characters in the novel, the author has not only highlighted the dilemmas of the Muslim community, but has also widened the thematic spectrum of the narrative through the depiction of their psychological inhibitions.

Bhisham Sahni’s Tamas is a graphic presentation of the days of partition and its horrific consequences. The novel traces the development of communal turmoil in the northern parts of the country with the emergence of strife between the two leading political outfits of the nation. As the country headed towards the day of its liberation the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League too indulged in active warfare. This political rivalry soon became associated with religious and communal sentiments of the masses, thus, paving the way for an unprecedented communal violence. A lay man was caught in the whirl of this communal frenzy and lost almost everything in the course of it. The author has depicted the woes of the common man in the novel through several gripping tales centred around Nathu and his wife; Harnam Singh and Banto; and Iqbal Singh and Jasbir Kaur. All these characters were adversely affected by the holocaust of partition in one way or the other. Nathu became mentally disturbed on account of his sinful act of killing a pig, that he felt had resulted in the outbreak of wide spread communal violence in the town. Harnam Singh and Banto were forced to leave their native village, Dhok-Ilahibaksh, on account of their Sikh identity. Commenting upon the uprooting
of this Sikh couple Bhisham Sahni writes, “One living moment had wrought this change. It had transformed everything. They had been living in this village for twenty years and had now become aliens in a single shattering moment.” While Iqbal Singh embraced Islam to save his life from the rabid fanatics, his wife Jasbir jumped into the well to protect her honour. So, through these heartrending tales Bhisham Sahni has not only made an endeavour to encapsulate the spirit of those turbulent times, but has also appealed to the ailing humanity to learn a lesson from their past misdeeds so that ‘tamas’ could be dispelled from their lives forever.

Chaman Nahal’s _Azadi_ begins with the depiction of pre-Partition days and reveals how the relations between the Muslims and the non-Muslims were embittered as soon as the partition of the country was declared. The story is built around the families of three businessmen of Sialkot—Lala Kanshi Ram, Sardar Jodha Singh and Chaudhri Barkat Ali. All the three families lived together in perfect harmony with each other till the partition plan had not been unveiled. However, with the formal announcement of country’s division Sialkot experienced a spate of communal violence. The same communal fire created havoc in the peaceful and placid life of Lala Kanshi Ram. He lost his beloved daughter during the communal strife. Soon after the tragic incident he decided to leave Sialkot along with his family. The other non-Muslim family, of Sardar Jodha Singh, too made a similar decision and, thus, in the spate of communal violence both the families relinquished their roots forever.
Presenting the agonies of millions of such displaced people Nahal writes, “They stood there spellbound. The houses did not have to wait for the evening to be taken over by other forces, a force had already come and dominated them.”\(^56\) Besides depicting the uprooting of innumerable non-Muslims families from the West Pakistan, the novel also shows how, ultimately, these refugees rehabilitated themselves in India. Lauding Nahal, for his ability to re-create the past in *Azadi*, Bhabani Bhattacharya writes, “No one before Nahal has dramatised this terrible episode in our recent history with such sweeping power and authenticity.”\(^57\)

Kartar Singh Duggal’s *Twice Born, Twice Dead* is another heartrending narrative upon country’s partition. The novel begins with the description of small village, Dhamyal, where the Sikhs and Muslims had coexisted for generations. The tranquility and harmony of the village is eclipsed when a Maulvi from Rawalpindi visits the village and makes the Muslims of Dhamyal aware about the atrocities committed upon their community in different parts of the country. Owing to his provocative speeches the relationship between the two communities gets strained and the riots begin in Dhamyal. Being a Muslim-dominated village the Sikh families residing therein become terribly frightened and, thus, decide to quit the place for the sake of survival. However, Allahditta assures the Sikh brethren of the village about their safety and says, “No one could lay a finger on Dhamyal as long as there was breath in his body....”\(^58\) Soon, the village faces the wrath of the rioters and in the course of it
Allahditta is killed by his own people. Sohne Shah’s daughter Rajkarni is abducted, while many other Sikh families flee from the village. After witnessing a macabre dance of death Sohne Shah too leaves the village along with the daughter of his bosom friend Allahditta. The novel also gives a vivid account of the fretful journey taken up by Sohne Shah and Satbhari. In the course of their long and languishing journey to India they take refuge in several camps and finally manage to cross the border. In the novel K. S. Duggal has brilliantly explored the deplorable conditions prevailing in the refugee camps on one hand, while with an equal elegance, he has dealt with the ill-effects of rehabilitation laws on the other.

Bapsi Sidhwa’s *Ice-Candy-Man* appears to be a little distinct from other partition narratives since it treats the theme of partition from the viewpoint of the Parsi community. Lenny, the narrator of the novel, hails from an upper middle class Parsi family of Lahore and witnesses the trouble grow between the Hindus and Muslims of the region. In the wake of country’s partition things begin to worsen further, thereby, making the Parsi community apprehensive and ambiguous about the future course of their lives. From the ongoing political manipulations and communal disputes they gather that “Hindus, Muslims and even the Sikhs are going to jockey for power” once the country gained freedom. So, “who’s going to rule once we get swaraj” was the prime issue that perturbed the psyche of the Parsi community. Caught in the hour of turmoil and turbulence they couldn’t decide, as to whom they should stand by
and whom should they split from. “If we’re stuck with the Hindus they’ll swipe our businesses from under our noses ... 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!”

So, after making a thorough contemplation the Parsi community, finally, comes to the conclusion, “Let whoever wishes rule! Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian! We will abide by the rules of their land!” Besides dealing with the Parsi perspective the novel also captures a true picture of human brutality. Dilnawaz, an ice-candy-man, transforms into a rabid fanatic as soon as he watches the butchered bodies of his Muslim brethren in a train that had just arrived from Gurdaspur. The feeling of vengeance overpowers him to such an extent that he abducts his Hindu beloved and sells her at a brothel. The novel, thus, realistically captures the rabid phase of fury and fanaticism that had given birth to a bestial world—a world that was strewn with human corpses and smeared with human blood.

The Contemporary Phase

This phase of the study provides a glimpse of the changing trends evident in the thematic stance of contemporary writers with respect to the partition. From perusal of the earlier phases of partition literature it becomes quite clear that the thematic focus of the writers has kept on changing, constantly, over the years. These gradual changes have not only led to the enrichment of partition literature, but have also made a considerable contribution in making the partition theme a potent and popular subject
amongst the contemporary writers. Several writers have shown an incredible inclination towards the partition theme in the past one and a half decade. Owing to the graphic presentation of the partition days as well as on account of the humanitarian concerns their narratives have made a place of their own in the annals of partition literature. For the contemporary writers ‘Partition’ is not only a historic event, governed and guided by socio-political factors, but a metaphor signifying the fragmentation of human race. These writers have, thus, made an attempt to look beyond the horrific bloody encounters of the partition days and have tried to analyse the theme of partition in the light of contemporary social conditions too. The contemporary writers have also made an endeavour to unite the past with the present through their narratives and have, thereby, cautioned the modern man against the evils of partition. By keeping the tragic divide of 1947 at the centre of their narratives they have shown immense concern for the establishment of peace and harmony in the current scenario. They have not only tried to rouse the emotions of their readers by drawing a grim picture of those horrendous days, but have also made an attempt to stir their intellectual abilities making them realise about the necessity of peaceful coexistence. Though these writers have added a new radiance to the theme of partition literature, yet some rays from the literature of the past too continue to get reflected in their works.

Besides a significant number of short stories written in the contemporary phase of partition literature Kamleshwar’s “How Many Pakistan?” is one
such narrative that convincingly captures the thematic concerns of contemporary writers on partition. Set in the backdrop of country's division it is a tale woven around the love affair of a Hindu boy Mangal and his Muslim beloved Bano. Besides presenting the murky atmosphere of those days the story deals with the changing psyche of the people. Through the narrative Kamleshwar shows how the age old relations, abruptly, came under an eclipse and how it led to the division of hearts all along with the division of the subcontinent. The writer decries the polarisation of the people on account of this holocaust, "You don't know how many Pakistanis were created along with the creation of that one Pakistan. In how many hearts, in how many places!" The story, thus, treats the theme of partition at a metaphorical level. Besides stressing upon the physical division of the country it also highlights the division of multiple hearts on account of the changing psyche of the people. This metaphorical treatment has not only added a new shade to the partition theme, but has also enabled the author to look beyond the physical impact of the divide and analyse the holocaust from the psychological viewpoint of millions of its victims. Furthermore, by using the philosophical overtones, the author has delivered a message of peaceful coexistence in the narrative and has strongly resented the futile practice of partitions thus, "The creation of that one Pakistan solved nothing. It merely confused everything." So, the theme of partition gets a wider, metaphorical and philosophical treatment in "How Many Pakistanis?" making it distinct from the partition stories of the earlier phases.
The four texts, selected for study in the present research work, too fall within the purview of contemporary partition literature and a noticeable degree of variation in their thematic stance becomes perceptible through their perusal. Shiv K. Kumar’s *A River with Three Banks*, Shauna Singh Baldwin’s *What the Body Remembers*, Kamleshwar’s *Partitions (Kitne Pakistan)* and M. J. Akbar’s *Blood Brothers* are the four significant texts, chosen from the treasury of contemporary partition literature, that comprehensively trace the evolution evident in the thematic stance of recent writers on partition.

In *A River with Three Banks* Shiv K. Kumar explores the dark and dreadful world of partition days by keeping the theme of love at the focal point of his narrative. The novel, specifically, captures the communally charged ambience and turbulent conditions prevailing in the northern parts of the country so as to analyse the drastic impact of partition on the common man. Despite the depiction of myriad shades of partition violence and the miserable state of its victims the author concludes the novel on a positive note by deposing faith in the power of love and hopes to restore peace and brotherhood amongst the different communities once again.

Shauna Singh Baldwin’s *What the Body Remembers* captures the partition of India from the viewpoint of the Sikh community. The novel is laden with political overtones and shows how, owing to the growing mistrust and hatred amongst the different communities, a threefold communal
dimension was created in the Punjab province during the days of partition. The news of division created unrest in the province and the Sikhs, in particular, felt apprehensive about their safety and survival. It led to the outbreak of unprecedented communal violence in the course of which thousands of families were dislocated from their native lands and were constrained to cross the frontiers. The Sikhs, being the least populated ones in the province, were the worst-hit during the division. Besides dealing with the dilemmas of the Sikh community the novel also throws light upon the pathetic state of women in those days. Though the narrative is packed with a sequence of painful incidents, yet the author believes that despite partition this land of the revered Gurus would once again be blessed with peace and harmony of the bygone days.

In *Partitions* Kamleshwar has treated the theme of partition at a wider plane. By keeping the split of 1947 at the centre of his study the novelist has focused upon similar other partitions that have wrecked the global harmony at one point of time or the other. The author has extended the theme of partition further by using the word ‘Pakistan’ as a metaphor for signifying the fragmentation of human race on several flimsy grounds. The author also takes into consideration many other imperative issues, such as—the malpractice of imperialism, the upsurge of terrorism, the growth of fundamentalism, the manipulative role played by the international organisations and even the nexus between politics and religion for accomplishing vested interests, and reckons
them to be a threat for the unity and harmony of human race at large. Though the narrative is fraught with painful illustrations of a wrecking world order, yet the author is hopeful. His vision of peace rests upon culture and through its miraculous power he intends to unite the people the world over irrespective of their caste, creed, community, race, religion, etc.

M.J.Akbar's *Blood Brothers* records the transformation of relations between the Hindus and the Muslims from the pre-Partition to the post-Partition phase. The novel, specifically, centres around the three generations of a Muslim family of Bihar and reveals how, owing to the creation of Pakistan, mutual trust and amity were lost between the two communities. The creation of a separate homeland multiplied the dilemmas of the Muslim community manifold and they felt, almost, alienated in a land that had been their nourishing ground for generations. The novelist has widened the thematic spectrum of the narrative further by focussing upon the plight of the Indian Muslims in the contemporary scenario. The author feels pained to observe that even sixty years after the partition the attitude of the Hindus towards the Muslims is that of prejudice and indifference. However, despite disagreeable and stretched relations of the two communities the author is hopeful. The vision of India's resplendent past, a time when both the communities used to live together in harmony and comparative peace, raises a ray of hope in the troubled mind of the author. He feels that a similar time would return making the two communities to live like blood brothers once again.
The subsequent chapters of this research work comprehensively deal with the analysis of the aforementioned four texts from contemporary partition literature. The perusal of these chapters will provide an insight into the recent fiction on partition and reveal how the partition theme has evolved and enriched itself over the years.
Notes


8Quoted in Hudson, *An Introduction to the Study of Literature*, 18.


11Quoted in Mundra and Sahani, *Advanced Literary Essays*, 120.


14Quoted in Mehta, 97.

16. Chopra, 175.

17. Chopra, 176.


23. As discussed in Mehta, Indo-Anglian Fiction, 132-34.

24. As discussed in Mehta, 137-38.


30. Iyengar, 504.

31. Iyengar, 504.

33 Chopra, Partition Stories, 49.


35 Pal, 193.


39 Chopra, Partition Stories, 156.


Ashraf, 14.

Ashraf, 22.


Singh, 1-2.


57 Quoted in Nahal, 2.


60 Sidhwa, 36.

61 Sidhwa, 37.

62 Sidhwa, 39.


64 Kamleshwar, 173.