CHAPTER – V

Narrative Techniques

Basti, Sunlight on a Broken Column, A Village Divided and River of Fire
Chapter-5
Narrative Techniques

The oldest word for 'narrative' in Sanskrit is 'akhyana' meaning an act of making something well-known through oral transmission. The latter-day Sanskrit literary critics define two classes of narrative, one called akhyayika which is based on a plot well known from epics or historical records, and the other Katha which is based on a plot imagined by the writer.

Frankly speaking, most of us remember having listened to stories in one form or another right from early childhood. Many of us used to sit beside a priest, who would punctuate his verses with oft-repeated episodes from the Mahabharata or the Ramayana to illustrate the moral of his verses. Certainly, we would remember having eagerly awaited the arrival of the evening to listen to the grandmother's tales. As the time passes and we grow up, our interest in the forms of narrative persists. With the attainment of knowledge through schools, colleges and other institutions we wish to involve in a great variety of narratives. In his introductory article in a special number of New Literary History devoted to narratives and narratology, Roland Barthes captures not only the ubiquitousness but also the infinite variety of the narrative as crucial human activity. "There are countless forms of narrative in the world. First of all, there is a prodigious variety of genres, each of which branches out into a variety of media, as if all substances could be relied upon to accommodate man's stories. Among the vehicles of narrative are articulate language, and an ordered mixture of all these substances; narrative is present in myth, legend, fables, tales, short stories, epics history, tragedy, suspense drama, comedy, pantomime, paintings in Santa Ursula by Carpaccio, for instance, stained-glass windows, movies, local news, conversation. Moreover, in this infinite variety of forms, it is present at all times, in all places in all
societies; indeed narrative starts with the very history of mankind; there is not, there has never been anywhere, any people without narrative; all classes, all human groups have their stories, and very often these stories are enjoyed by men of different and even opposite cultural backgrounds: narrative remains largely unconnected with good or bad literature. Like life itself, it is there, international, transhistorical, transcultural” (Barthes 273)

Furthermore, narrative is a telling of some true or fictitious event or connected series of events, recounted by a narrator to a narratee. A narrative will consist of a set of events (the story) recounted in a process of narration (or discourse), in which the events are selected and arranged in a meticulous order (the plot). The category of narratives includes both the shortest accounts of events (e.g. the cat sat on mat, or a brief news item) and the longest historical or biographical works, diaries, travelogues etc., as well as novels, ballads, epics, short stories, and other fictional forms. Besides, Gerald Prince also defines narrative as, “The representation of one or more real or fictive events communicated by one, two or several narrator to one, two or several narratees” (Prince 58).

**Time and space in narrative**

Temporal and spatial relationships are quite essential to our understanding of narratives and go beyond the specification of a date and a location. Narratives unfold in time, and the past, present, and the future of a given event or action, while the characters who populate narrative texts move around, inhabit and experience different spaces and locations, allowing readers to construct complex words in their minds. Moreover, to read a narrative is to engage with an alternative world that has its own temporal and spatial structures (Ryne 175). Narratives can be divided into different temporal and spatial zones. There are chiefly two types of narratives - realist and non
realist. In a realist narrative, for example, a narrator appears to be looking back on his/her past life and cannot step back in time to intervene in events, any more than a protagonist can know what the author does outside the pages of the text. In case, access from one world to another is blocked by their separation in time and space (in the latter case, access may also be prevented by the fictional status of the protagonist). In non-realist texts, of course, the traversing of spatio-temporal barriers is possible, and is indeed a feature of postmodern narratives where the reader’s recognition of the transgression is part of the reading experience.

In fact, time and space are more than background elements in narrative; they are part of its fabric, affecting our basic understanding of a narrative text and of the protocols, of different narrative genres. They profoundly influence the way in which we build mental images of what we read. Time has always played an important role in theories of narrative, given that we tend to think of stories as sequences of events. "Space has often been set in opposition to time, associated with static description which slows up and intrudes into the narration of dynamic events. However, this opposition fails to recognize how far time and space are bound up with each other in narrative, as Bakhtin has shown" (Bakhtin 298).

In some narratives, events are told strictly in the order in which they occur. But they may also be told out of order, for example using flashback to fill in an important part of a character’s past. Variations in duration can be used to show which scenes are most important, a scene which is narrated more than once may show a narrator’s obsession or it may, in a detective story for example, reveal different views of some events by different characters.

Many narrative texts employ flashback as a matter of course, in order to fill in the past history of protagonists while avoiding a lengthy introduction or in order to
reveal new facts. Flashback can be more than textual housekeeping, though. More generally, the experience of reading calls for us to back and re-evaluate events in the light of current circumstances.

Besides, the idea of perspective, or point of view, in narratology includes indications in the text of both physical angles of view and the subjective attitudes and emotions of individuals; further, the former can often signal the latter. The physical and psychological points of view of different protagonists can be an important structuring device.

In other words, narrative technique, which is also referred to as literary technique, is the way a writer uses tools and techniques in his literary works to develop the story. Generally, it consists of plot, character, figure of speech and point of view collectively bringing forth a new shape to a literary work. Among the methods of narrating a story in a novel there are chiefly three ways which are most common, and most familiar to novel readers. One way is for the author himself to tell the story. The author, being omniscient, can narrate the story about his characters in a clearly intelligible manner. Some authors, who adopt this method, also offer their own observations and comments on the characters and events, thus intruding into the story. Another method is to make the chief character or the hero tell the story, using the first person 'I' while interpreting the whole story. The third method is for an author to introduce an observer who becomes the narrator of the story. Analyzing first person narrative, M.H. Abrams observes that "in a first-person narrative, the narrator speaks as 'I', and is to a great or lesser degree a participant in the story, or else is the protagonist of the story" (Abrams 233).

Besides, one can have modern methods through which story can be best narrated. These methods include stream of consciousness, use of diary, letter, and
memory and so on. All these contemporary methods of narrating story became vogue of the day. Consequently, most of the writers tried to adopt them as a form of narrative in their works. In the context of partition, the narratives of the partition literature offer insights into the nature of individual experience, and break the silence in the collective sphere. Trends in present Partition research represent a shift away from the parleys and betrayals in the domain of High Politics, towards an emphasis on the subalterns as both victims and perpetrators of violence, the instigation behind the widespread rioting, the resulting psychological trauma, and most importantly, the feminist concern with recovering lost stories of sexually violated and abducted women during the partition. Even Naunidhi Kaur endorsed that the early works on partition concentrate on high politics, with most of the writers emphasizing the roles and politics tactics of the state actors that is the British and the Congress and Muslim League leaderships. This approach changed in the 1990s, with emphasis being shifted to oral histories, letters, interviews, diaries of the survivors in understanding partition (Kaur 31). Thus this chapter aims at focusing on the technique used by the four Muslim writers in their respective works. It is an attempt to explore the ways they narrated the story and probe their measurement which provided to their works an artistic shape. The chapter also focuses on differences in the narrative strategies of the select writers while depicting theme of partition.

I

Intizar Husain in his Urdu novel Basti has tried to employ multiple techniques depicting the characters and situations in a vivid manner. First and foremost, he seems to apply stream of consciousness in delineating some of the aspects of the novel. Before going forward, it is necessary to know the proper explanation of this literary
term. Explicating stream of consciousness, Chris Baldick points out that the “stream of consciousness is the continuous flow of sense perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and memories in the human mind; or a literary method of representing such a blending of mental processes in fictional characters” (Baldick 318). This 20\textsuperscript{th} century modern technique has tried to transform the art of narrative almost in every respect. In the novel, Zakir, the protagonist constantly mediates and modifies his past in accordance with the significance and nature of his present. Zakir teaches history and is professionally dealing and actually grappling with the linearity of time flowing uninterruptedly. On the other hand, psychologically he confronts the discontinuities and ruptures juxtaposed with the images and experiences of the past flashing on the screen of his mind. His sense of personal history calls for a fundamental rethinking about historiography. Problematizing his experiences of history, he thinks,

How boring it is teaching history to boys. Other people’s history can be read comfortably, the way a novel can be read. But my own history? I am on the run from my own history and catching my breath in the present Escapist. But the merciless present pushes us back again toward our history. The mind keeps talking.

(qtd. in Arora, 224)

The stream of consciousness oscillates between the so-called past and his present, blurring all divisions of time.

The inevitable question then is how he is going to come out of the hypnotic nostalgia of the past which presents itself to him repeatedly in the form of Rupnagar, literally meaning, the city of beauty. The author could have after all accorded it the
actual name of a city in India. But then, he needed to emphasize the happy memory of the social and natural harmony of that pre-partition town through the name Rupnagar. Partition has disrupted this harmony and ironically, it is the memory of this disruption that brings him back to his now, connecting him with his present, twenty five years later. This use of memory became the right tool in delineating partition artistically. What is memory? How it functions should be clear before proceeding further. Memory is the power of retention. It is the storehouse of imagination collecting material during past and present in a leisurely moment. It includes events and remembrances observed with the fancy. As fancy is a mode of memory “emancipated from the order of time and space which received all its materials made from law of association” (Cudden 306). Therefore this use of memory became one of the most effective tools of the novelist to present the inner and the surface of the novel. Likewise, the title of the novel is Basti which justifies its existence. Generally speaking, Basti refers to the temporary residence which changes from time to time. Mega Dictionary observes that “Basti is an inhabited place; colony; a dwelling population” (Rizvi 568). Husain chose to call his famous novel Basti, a word that can refer to any place where groups of people live, from a neighborhood to a city. It is the author who had to spend his days in camps, a new place in Vyaspur and earlier in Rupnagar. All the events of partition take place in Zakir’s memory and imagination alone, as he moves among the times and places of his personal and cultural history.

Another form of narration in the novel is Diary which became the true source of events that occurred during 1971 war. The diary as a narrative device is very significant. It is the fact that peeping into someone else’s pain (in the form of diary) imparts the narrative with a sense of torturous immediacy. Diary indicates that the partition trauma not only survived but also was deliberately kept as a closely guarded
emotive testimony long after the event was over. Besides, Diary constitutes only an extra authorial point of view. This way he or she is able to distance him from its melodramatic outbursts, yet at the same time incorporates these in the narrative. In the novel, diary is applied as a technique to explore the events of the past in order to give a realistic shape or ring to the events. The diary form in Basti is used to convey two things: the horror of the war suffered by the people; and Zakir’s nature, his dreams, visions, and his remembrances of the epics, history, folktales. The roads, the vehicles, the railway platforms, the Shiraz—all portray shock and pain; Zakir wonders where people are going. He has his own thoughts of the jataka tales and Buddha’s subtle teachings. Zakir, the protagonist feels while witnessing the events of 1971 war:

The primary point of writing this diary is that during the long wartime nights it will help me discipline my distracted mind, which suffers from insomnia and wanders restlessly all over; it will help me put my mind on a single track and protect myself from confusion of thought. But now I see another advantage of it as well I shall be writing my wartime autobiography.... I ought to preserve the record of my lies and my cowardice.

(Basti 125)

Besides, like the diary the novelist also employs the letter as a technique to explain the emotions and happenings in the novel. It is Zakir who receives a letter from his friend Surender who lived in Rupnagar in India. It is interesting to note that the novelist makes the letter as a part of the novel by placing it among the pages of the novel to impart authenticity to the narrative. For instance, the letter appears in the novel in this manner:
Yar Zakir!
I first send you the usual
Salutation! I am fine, and
I hope everything is well with
you too....
Surender. (74)

Though the novel seems to cover a span of only a few months in the life of Zakir, in effect it brings into itself the cultural backdrop of centuries of Muslim history dating from 1857 and move on to 1947, and then to 1965 and finally to the 1971 disintegration of Pakistan. Gradually Rupnagar becomes a vague and distant reality with the new slogan “Crush India” coming in “like a whirlwind.” India emerged as the other, getting defined through hatred, going translation. While Rupnagar which also identifies with Zakir’s beloved, Sabirah, who did not come away to Pakistan, the political entity called ‘India’ became a distant and something to be reckoned with. But then, for Rupnagar, Zakir at least has a prayer: “If something happened to his city how could I bear it?” (167). All the happenings come to surface through flashback which is one of the modern techniques used by the 20th century novelists like Husain.

There is a great difference between the Hindus and Muslims in tradition, in history and in their attitude towards life political, social and economic. The Muslims derive their inspiration from the Quran and the Hindus from the Vedas. The Muslims have got their traditions from the Prophet, the Caliph and Imams, while the Hindus have inherited them from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata and the Gita. Similarly, the author tries to employ the stories of Hindus, Muslims and Budhas religions in delineating his story. He never hesitates to employ even Hindu stories in employing as
technique to tell the story of the novel. Husain observes that “my interest in exploring the relationship of Islam to India’s past led me to read the Mahabharata, the Ramayana, the Vedas, and the entire tradition of story telling in India. I read the Panchtantra, Katha Sarit Sagar, Raital Pachisse. I read these not only as a writer of fiction but as a person interested in the Hind-Islamic culture” (Husain 245). The novelist’s use of Arbian Nights and Katha-sarit-sagara as a technique makes him stand outside the crowd of twentieth century writers. Intizar Husain observes while conversing with Asif Farruki that in Basti “Then comes the other reference, to the Jataka tales of Mahatma Budha that are like a circular novel. He is telling stories, but he goes on telling stories- Mahatma Budha does not tell a long dastan, but he goes on telling stories, all in the exact same style. One story, another story, and in exactly the same manner they are all joined together to become a circular novel, in my opinion. It is a world that has its own magic” (qtd. in Bhalla 100) about the ill-effects of conflicts and disintegration. It is the writer’s attempt to make the novel readable. The novelist employed this technique in the novel to make it interesting. Owing to these multiple tales and fables he tried to convince the masses by making use of multiple textualties. Thus, Husain tried to create a new method of delineating the story of his novel.

Basti has been used as a metaphor bringing forth a state of mind of the novelist which wanders from one place to another. It was partition which broke the hearts of many, Husain was also among them. Since that time for Muslims there was no permanent home where they could live peacefully. In the novel Zakir is shown as a wanderer who geographically wanders from Rupnagar to Vyaspur and psychologically, from Karbala to Ayodhaya on the other hand.

In addition to all that in the novel, the novelist employed first person narrative to explain the happenings of the past. Zakir, who is the prime character, finds
expression through the first person ‘I’. Here, he seems to be an omniscient narrator keeping himself away from the action. In the very beginning of the novel, he is revealed as a story and as the story moves forwards he becomes the part of the story. The novelist gave Zakir many roles to accomplish his ability. Zakir plays all roles i.e. a narrator, a protagonist, a historian and a mouthpiece of the novelist in a very vivid manner. His main objective behind it was to divulge the real happenings of the partition which have been painful to the whole humanity, especially Muslims like him.

II

Sunlight on a Broken Column is one of the few partition novels which present a reasonable account of how this disastrous event divides blood relations and composite families, wrecks loving beings and tears asunder intimate relationships. The partition results in both physical and psychological suffering unsurpassed in the history of the subcontinent. The beautiful home, ‘Ashiana’, surveys the deserted nest, remembers her days spent there-feels the tremendous change, recall the scene which has ultimately caused the parting of ways of the members of the house, and meditates on its impact. Laila has been presented in such a way as to recall her previous days through the use of memory. Here the story is narrated through flashback. She begins to tell the story thus:

The day my aunt Abida moved from the Zenana into the guest-room off the corridor that led to the men’s wing of the house, within call of her father’s room, we knew Baba Jan had not much longer to live. (14)
The novel so poignantly and powerfully written, directs the readers too to meditate meaningfully on the impact of such irrational thought and action in the name of religion.

As partition novel *Sunlight on a Broken Column* is much closer to Bapsi Sidhwa’s *Ice-Candy-Man* than any other novels on partition, at least in terms of narrative technique. As far as the theme of the partition is concerned, as Novy Kapadia writes, “Both these sensitive women writers share similar perspectives on the calamities of partition. The denouement of both novels is quite similar. Both stress a similar vulnerability of human understanding and life, caused by the throes of partition which relentlessly divided friends, families, lovers and neighbours” (Kapadia 75). In its narrative technique of first person narration and chronicling the female development against the background of political upheaval, the novel reminds us of Lenny in *Ice-Candy-Man*.

Partition in Sidhwa’s novel is a central theme whereas in Hosain’s novel it is a peripheral theme. Like Sidhwa’s novel, *Sunlight on a Broken Column* too is a female bildungsroman in as much as it depicts the youth and maturity of a sensitive protagonist who is attempting to learn about the nature of the world, discover its meaning and pattern and in doing so acquires a philosophy of life. Furthermore, M.H. Abram observes that “bildungsroman is the development of the protagonist's mind and character, in the passage from childhood through varied experiences and often through a spiritual crisis - into maturity, which usually involves recognition of one’s identity and role in the world” (Abram 198). Similarly, the story of the *Sunlight on a Broken Column* is of course one that quite obviously conforms to the bildungsroman pattern. The story begins with the childhood of the narrator-protagonist and ends in
her attaining adulthood and maturity. When she revisits India as a mature woman, having known past life, she is prepared to face the world and the future.

The partition and other political happenings are viewed through its narrator’s consciousness. Both the narrators in these novels give an eyewitness account of the partition. In the words of Novy Kapadia, “The mature Laila rationalizes against communal tension whereas the young Lenny instinctively reacts against the horrors of communal violence” (Kapadia 128). One can have many other similarities between Lenny and Laila in many ways. Lenny in *Ice-Candy-Man* is a Parsee girl. Hence, she is an outsider to the crisis of partition. Laila herself is a Muslim, the community which played an important role in the partition and her sympathies are with Kemal and united India. Her nostalgic account of partition and she herself being an eyewitness make her an insider. But she does not involve herself in the crisis of the partition directly as Kemal, Saleem and Nadira are involved. She is least affected by the partition. Nor does she show an emotional indulgence in the crisis directly. Moreover, as a persona of the novel, Laila achieves a remarkable objectivity. Thus she is both an outsider and insider. This is reflected through these lines:

> I felt I lived in two worlds; an observer in an outside world, and solitary in my own. (SBC 124)

Through Laila, objectivity has been achieved by the author in a very realistic way. And the Muslim point of view is also depicted through Saleem and Kemal detachedly. Very importantly, the novel is successful in transforming the experience of the ordeal into a work of art. In the opinion of Mulk Raj Anand, *Sunlight on a Broken Column* “is one of the few deeply sensitive novels in Indian English writing of the last generation, poignant, tragic narrative full of poetry of remembrance with an
undercurrent of stoic calm” (qtd. in Arora, 402). It is the narrative of Attia Hosain which makes the work commendable in its depiction and portrayal of the character as an individual like Laila and as collectively for instance, Saleem, Asad, Kemal and so on.

Hosain, through her narrative, locates two possible identities for properly “Indian Muslims.” One, the liberal arm chair intellectualism of Laila, and two, the activist-nationalist fervour of Asad. And this properly Indian Muslim identity continues to be allocated in contemporary discourse in the first person defensive voice of Laila or in the third person perspective of Asad, using ‘them’ and ‘they’. The unease of the critic is with the framing of this identity: the armchair location helps voice doubts within a restrictive framework, with very little room for active relocation acts; the third person perspective places the burden of proving one's proper credentials on the ‘minority.’ Furthermore, this trajectory also locates the burden of proving that one belongs to oneself and to others - on the ‘minority.’ Commenting on the technique, K.R.S. Vyengar and Elina Kalinnikova find the reminiscence responding magnificently to express “the feeling of nostalgia for the motherland” (qtd. Khan 154). With regard to her prose, Anita Desai finds it as “rich and ornate as a piece of brocade.” Exploiting the treasures of Persian poetry, Attia lends her prose a grandeur that one notices in miniature school of painting” (154).

Animal imagery has been used in the novel to bring out the dehumanization of human beings and human relationships, particularly man-woman relationship. Choosing a boy for a girl is like choosing a new horse for the carriage, except that horses are chosen with more care than husbands these days. Laila from the beginning is different. She says to Zahra,
I won't be paired off like an animal. How could you sit there listening to them talking as if you were a bit of furniture to be sold to the highest bidder? (SBC 29-30)

Through the use of imagery the author has employed narrative technique with certain concrete and abstract elements to accomplish her work in a very vivid manner. Thus, the novelist has successfully made a comparison between a human being and an animal. This instance of animal imagery is indicative of the situation during the partition in which people were dehumanized and their plight was just like animals. Therefore, the writer tries to depict the plight of Indian Muslims who have been suffering from Muslim set rules in one hand and partition brought with it excruciating pain to them in other hand. Thus the novelist has depicted the situation by explicating the things with certain tools and techniques.

Structurally, Sunlight on a Broken Column is a blending of imagination and reality, inner and outer, and traditional and modern. Laila, the protagonist sees herself as inhabiting two worlds at once – the traditional and the modern, the inner and the outer, the world of imagination and the real world. One of the ways of looking at the structure of the novel can be in terms of how she gradually reconciles the two. In contrast to the ideal world of imagination, she counterposes a real world based on power relations and domination. She says,

I used to forget that the world was in reality very different....always I lived in two worlds, and I grew to resent the ‘real’ world. (128)

And in part 11 of the novel, says:

I felt I lived in two worlds, an observer in an outside world, and solitary in my own. (124)
But in the third part of the novel, she feels that she was drawn out, made to join in, and not stand aside as a spectator, she finally overcomes the utter confusion in her mind when in the end she makes the conscious decision of going with Asad. Earlier at the time of Baba Jan's impending death, Laila bemoans her uncertainty:

What was wrong with me inside? What was ‘wrong’ in itself, and what was right? Who was to tell me? (31)

Initially this ethical confusion troubles Laila a great deal and she exclaims,

Why did you send me among those other girls who are not torn apart? (38)

But by the end of the novel, she understands that confusion is a part of growing up, a spur to the discovery of the self. Thus it may be observed that the structure of the novel is a mixture of abstract and concrete followed by psychological upheaval.

The novel consists of many symbols justifying the writer’s technique to explore the hidden meaning of the situation during the Partition. It is ‘Ashiana’, the name of Laila’s house has been presented symbolically. ‘Ashiana’ means the ‘nest’, which also suggests that the Muslims had made India their home. Like many other Muslim’s houses, it was disintegrated owing to the impact of Partition. It was used as a metaphor for the way of life of the Muslims during this event. According to Jameela Begam:

Ashiana is not only representative of just a stone structure which houses the varied women characters but also a metaphor and synecdoche of a way of life.
Within its walls is captured in miniature the experiences of a whole nation fighting its personal and political battles. Caught within the purdah, the womenfolk are segregated to their own quarters and yet their lives must cross those of the men who are both inmates and visitors. So long as Baba Jan holds them together there is an uneasy calm that is fostered when characters of different temperaments are grouped under a common roof." (Begam 210)

The novel shows, in detail the traditional way of life among the Muslims in India. The people, described in it, were deeply rooted in the soil. Thus by projecting 'Ashiana' a microcosm of the whole India, the writer tried how to explicate the situation in a batter way.

III

*A Village Divided*, Rahi Masoom Reza's semi-autobiographical novel about his own village, Gangauli, in Eastern Utterpradesh is the most outstanding achievement of brilliance in terms of narrative technique. The novel is fraught with religious ceremonies followed by great faith of Indian Muslims in their religion. As discussed earlier, Gangauli has been dominated by Shia Muslims from the very beginning of this village. As Shias, the main characters of the novel are especially attached to the family of the Prophet. The story of the novel revolves around the village Gangauli and its people. Partition brought with it many problems which created upheaval among the people of this village. But these people could not be
influenced or affected by this goriest event to a large extent. It is time which witnessed each and everything during and after the partition of India. It proved to be a great experience to the eyewitness of this event. In order to map out the complexities of experience in Gangauli, Reza elaborates on three notions of time which simultaneously give a structure and ethicality to the words, thoughts and actions of the people who live in the village. The narrator says that the

Story is neither religious nor political, because time is neither religious nor political... and this story is actually about time. It is the story about the passing through Gangauli. Some old people die, some young men grow old, some children grow up and some are born. This is the story of the ruins where houses stood and of the houses built on those ruins. (A Village Divided 3)

Indeed, what gives the novel its intricate texture is the fact that it is woven out of the sacred days of the origin of Islam, the historically significant time of the national movement and the daily routine of labour and toil of the people of Gangauli. It is reflected from the above statements that time has been observed by the narrator in order to have objectivity. It is time which has been watching the happenings that happened to the village since time immemorial.

Tone and atmosphere of the novel seems to be quite justified. Joseph Conrad writes in his ‘familiar preface’: “Give me the right word and the right accent and I will move the world” (Kumar 145). The word and accent are inseparable, for beyond
conveying a literal meaning, the word must have an impact. Every phrase must contribute to the author’s pronouncement on the world he is creating and the pronouncement should not be merely a description of phenomena or a statement of ideas. It is something quite beyond these. It is a manifestation of his feeling for event and situations that is a matter of tone.

*A Village Divided* is a lament, but it refuses to think endlessly about the atrocities we committed. It is also a record of Reza's personal attempt to regain coherence. Its complex narrative movement spirals though in the future. Reza knows that he cannot offer consolation to those who suffered, but he does suggest that if we can imagine pluralistic societies with their tolerant worldliness, we may be able to find a minimum ethic that will enable us to live in kinder ways. The novel focuses on situation rather than character. It has a greater social awareness and commitment than the novel whose main focus is on the consciousness of an individual. With the analysis of *Adha Gaon*, it becomes clear that its author Rahi Masoom Reza has treated the theme of partition in an elaborate style. The technique adopted by Rahi is quite realistic, and he deals with the partition, on an expansive and wide scale. Instead of limiting himself to a particular class of the society, he makes a middle class man and his family as the subject of his novel.

The other major concern of the novel is with language. It is written quite deliberately in the Devnagari script so as to defeat any attempt to suggest that Urdu and Hindi are separate languages and are somehow implicated in the religious politics of the nation. The people speak a coarse and sensual mixture of Bhojpuri, Urdu and Hindi. The dialect, spoken by the Muslims and the Hindus enables Reza to argue that the claims of loyalty to the village, which have sustained generations of one's kinsmen
and neighbours are always greater than all the abstractions and bookish ideologies. Despite the loud hectoring of the Aligarh students, who insist that Urdu is the language of the Muslims, and the claims of the Hindu politicians that Hindi is the language of their tribe, the people of Ganguali stubbornly refuse to abolish the dialect they speak. They dismiss English contemptuously as gitirpitir (confusion) and deride the claims of the Muslim and the Hindu chauvinists alike as nikaundi (stupid). They know that to abandon their own language, which carries the secret lore of their life time, is to become defenceless; to erase the memories enshrined in their language is to live like Muhajirs. The following is the conversation that takes place when the women discover that the nauhas (a short lament, chanted to the accompaniment of breast-beating) to be sung during a majlis (a gathering in which Shia Muslims remember and mourn the death of Imam Hussain and the events at Karbala) are written in Hindi:

‘Nauoj! What is this nikaundi language, bhai?’ blurted out Umme Habiba, when she could not restrain herself any longer.

‘Hindi!’ replied Manno

‘Lord in heaven, have mercy!’ exclaimed Saiyd’s mother, gently slapping her checks in repentence, ‘Have they started writing the name of Allah and the Prophets in that wretched Hindi now?’

‘I have heard of Urdu, Arabic-Persian... but what’s this language that’s come up now?’ asked Rabban Ji....As a result, tears rose in no one’s eyes, and no one raised their voice in grief. (AVD 282)
On one level, the sequence is about the fact that the loss of a familiar language leads to moral and religious disorientation. On another level, it suggests that for the people of Gangauli, after the turmoil of the partition, Moharram acquires a new and entirely unexpected historical meaning. The women, who gather every year to sing nauhas, must now weep, not only for the sacrifice of Imam Hussain, but also for the ordinary men, women and children exiled and slaughtered during the partition. Karbala belongs to their religious traditions as well as to their own times.

In spite of such self-conscious focus on language, the novel seems to suggest that the language is not self-referential because it unequivocally refers to the wider stage of life. There is the suggestion of mysterious meaning in the text. In English novels such language is not extraordinary but some readers still remember A Village Divided for its abuses. For the people like Phunan Miyan, these abuses are natural and commonplace words and are one reason while simply translating them into English just does not seem to work.

The novel has the plot of an autobiographical form. Plot is the most general term to describe the design of a novel. It is composed of all elements which taken together, suggest the direction or tendency of the work. It is the way in which the author has arranged the material so that it can be seen as an analyzable form or meaning. In the words of J.A. Cuddon, “plot is the plan, design, scheme or pattern of events in a play, poem or work of fiction; and, further, the organization of incident and character in such a way as to induce curiosity and suspense in the spectator or reader” (Cudden 676). Similarly in the present novel, the arrangement of events has been accomplished in such a way as to have coherence among them. All the chapters have been co-related with one another so that the unity and coherence could not be broken. And this novel closely depicts the hierarchical domestic world of
Gangaulians, wherein each one is designated some fixed space and power. This well-defined power structure is also extended to the village level. The novel shows the ancestral rivalry between the Saiyid Zamindars of Utterpatti and Dakkin Patti, especially in putting up a great show of grief and mourning during the celebration of Moharram. For the Saiyid families of Gangauli, Moharram is a spiritual celebration. Besides, the depiction of Gangauli is unique as it comprises of mixed culture. It is neither a fictitious place, nor its inhabitants, unreal. Of course, Characterization of this novel is unique combination of some real characters and some fictional ones. However, the novelist clarifies that the real characters are his own family members, whereas, the fictional ones are developed on the basis of familiarity.

The novel presents a veritable portrait gallery of characters. All the characters portrayed in the narrative are not only introduced but are also made to participate in the main action in one way or the other. The characters are not mere shadows in the background but form an integral part of the scheme of the novel.

The narrative of the novel has been depicted through first person ‘I’ in most of the chapters. It is Masoom, one of the characters, who tells the story in a very vivid manner. In the second chapter of the novel entitled ‘My Village, My people’, one can meet a large number of characters, some of whom are the subjects of stories later in the novel. One can meet so many characters in this chapter because the Boy Masoom takes us to Ganguali, and we experience with him his return to his extended family. This is the most clearly autobiographical part of the novel. The novelist gains selfknowledge not through an act of meditation, but through participation in the eventful history during partition. It is seen that even when the novelist tells his story through the consciousness of one of his characters, the writer lies in the way he make events.

Besides, the author breaks the conventional mode of narration and places the introduction almost towards the end of the novel in order to express his everlasting
attachment and belongingness with the soil of Gangauli. It serves a dual purpose. First of all, it asserts Reza’s belief in the formative influences of language, culture and religion as far as subjectivity and identity are concerned. Secondly, it gives a fitting reply to both Hindu and Muslim fundamentalists. He becomes extremely furious when they taunted him about his village, home, nationality and heritage. His use of introduction in the novel is unique in its style and says that “this introduction was necessary to carry the story forward” (AVD 273). The novelist believes that the above ‘Introduction’ was essential as all new epochs, new eras are harbingers of new value system, new world order, new power equations, new hierarchies, new cultural dimensions, new sectarian loyalties, new political and religious affiliations and new social outlook. However, Gangauli and his outlook towards it remains the same. He clarifies that he is not going to be coerced by anyone to opt for Pakistan either by force or by fraud.

In addition to all that, symbolism pervades throughout the novel. Reza has developed Moharram as a religious, cultural, social, mythical and artistically integrative metaphor. The Shias of Gangauli believe that Imam Hussain comes back to Hindustan during Moharram, and after this goes back to Karbala. After Moharram, Gangauli seems desolate because with Imam Hussain’s departure the young people of Gangauli also go back to Calcutta, their Karbala. Thus, life in Gangauli witnesses the dramatic moments of separation-reconciliation-separation of a number of families after the partition.

The Partition symbolizes another Karbala for the people of Gangauli. For the people of Gangauli, after the turmoil of the partition, Moharram acquires an entirely new historical meaning or significance. The usual weeping during the singing of nauhas is now not only limited to the sacrifice of Imam Hussain, but achieves a
symbolic meaning. Now, it also becomes an occasion of mourning over the brutal genocide of thousands of the people during the partition violence. In this sense, the ritualistic ceremony of mourning during Moharram attains a universal significance. For Gangaulians, it has all about mourning over an endless series of loss - the complete loss of their power and landlordism, the disintegration of their families, the heterogeneousness of Gangauli, their sense of belongingness and identity, loss of self-respect, loss of 'that' time which has now become a distant past, and above all the loss of Bhojpuri Urdu as the language of their expression.

Moreover, Gangauli is less of a physical space for its inhabitants, as it is a mental one. It is an integral part of their existence, their mental make-up, and as they are torn apart, completely ravaged by the cyclonic winds of the partition, they try to devise new strategies of bare survival in the changing socio-political scenario. Thus, Gangauli emerges and functions as the microcosm reflecting all that was happening at the macro-level, that is to say, at the level of the nation. The human predicament is to remember. However, remembering or recollecting becomes important only when it is invested with meaning. Memory functions as a synthesizer for Rahi Masoom Reza in recollecting the cultural trauma that common people went through for the crime which they did not commit. Thus all the events of the novel found best expression through the omniscient narrator so called Masoom, with curiosity and flawlessly.

Above all, the title of the novel embodies a sense of a fractured, fragmented, disjointed, disintegrated, splintered identity, Gangauli like India, journeys from being a space of tolerant communities, organic unity, and assimilation to a space which is divided, exclusivist, alienating, and in turmoil. Earlier, the village was divided in terms of geographical boundaries into Utter Patti and Dakhin Patti. But after the Partition, one can also see the division of hearts, language and cultural traditions. The
semi-autobiographical form of this novel allows the author to reconstitute and recollect the cultural trauma of experiencing the division of a harmonized lived existence, and thereby lend it some sort of harmony in the world of aesthetics.

IV

In the *River of Fire*, Qurratulain Hyder has projected the tragedy of partition in the perspective of a cultural life of two thousand and five hundred years in a manner as if this event is not just the narrative of a particular country or class but a branch of human history. The structural innovation of *River of Fire* lay in the staging of four historical periods: the fourth century B.C. and the inception of the Mauryan empire by Chandragupta, the end of the Lodhi dynasty and the beginning of Mughal rule in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, the late eighteenth century beginnings of East India company rule up to its consolidation in the 1870s, the two decades ending in the 1950s that encompassed nationalist struggle, partition and independence.

Before we analyze at the *River of Fire*, it may be interesting to first glance at the metaphor of the river itself and how it has served Indian poets and writers down the ages. The mystically inclined Amir Khusara spoke of love as a river:

"Khusrau darya prem Ka, uli wa ki dhaar,
Jo utra so doob gaya, Jo dooba so pur" (qtd. in Jalil 177).

(Oh Khusrau, love is a river, it runs the other way
He who jumps in it drowns, and who drowns, gets across)

Invoking the river Ganges to bear witness to the arrival of those from other lands who set up home here, the revolutionary Urdu poet Iqbal asks:
"Ai aabrood-e-Ganga woh din hai yaad tujhko
Utara tere kinare jab caravan hamara." (177)

(O waters of the Ganga, do you remember that day
When our caravan had stopped beside your bank)

The river, for the poet, becomes both time and witness to time. By the time
Hyder decided to use it as the title of her epic, both the darya and aag ka darya had
become accepted metaphors in the Urdu lexicon. Even Jigar Moradabadi had already
written his famous ghazal which ended with these lines:

"Yeh ishq nahi aasan, has itna samajh lije
Ik aag ka dariya hai aur doob ke Jaana hai." (177)

(Love is not easy; however it is enough to understand
That it is like a river of fire and you must drown in it)

However, it was Hyder who crunched the metaphor from its philosophical-
mystical mooring and totaled it in an altogether different context. Hyder reinforces the
sense of continuity borne by her central motif - that of the river-in several other
ingenious ways all through the book. Everywhere in the River of Fire, the adage holds
truth – the more things change, the more they remain the same. Characters keep
reappearing in different guises but with the same name sin episodes spanning several
thousand years. We first encounter Gautam Nilambar, a final year student of the forest
University of Shravasti in a spot not far from the Buddhist Vihara at Jetvan. As he is
waiting to cross a swollen river, he sees Kumari Champak, the daughter of the Chief
Minister, and is inexorably drawn towards her. Soon he meets a motley set of
dramatis personae – the princess Nirmala, her brother Hari Shankar, and the low caste
milkmaid Sujata. The time is 150 years after the Buddha, the place is Shravasti in the

204
Bahrach region, and the river is the Saryu. Hyder uses her characters to make several sweeping statements about the time: about shudras converting to Buddhism and thus incurring the wrath of the powerful Brahmins; about the prejudice against the newly emergent Buddhism from orthodox Brahminism. Gautam, Champa, Nirmala, Hari Shankar, Sujata will reappear in many reincarnations as the novel hurtles across the countries. They will be accompanied by a motley cast of characters bearing the same name in each incarnation – Englishmen called Cyril Ashley, Coachman called Ganga Din, maids called Jamuna, and so on. Kumari Champak becomes Champavati, the Brahmin girl, then Champa Jan the courtesan in Oudh; she resurfaces as Champa Ahmed. Somewhere these are manifestations of a syncretism, the Ganga-Jamuna culture as it was called. These reincarnations are handled imaginatively and make for an interesting sense of continuity.

The novel is rich in poetic imagination probing our underlying assumptions of history, truth religion and nationalism. It has an episodic structure, for it deals with the tales of entire human race where the novelist has to record the myriad experience of the people. Explaining structure J.A. Cudon observes that it is “the sum of the relationships of the parts to each; thus the whole” (Cudden 872). And episodic structure is that form in which stories of different people are narrated in episodes. Basically River of Fire is an historical novel in the sense that its story runs parallel to Indian history. However, it has been fictionalized by the author in a very lucid way. The novel is episodic. It depicts selected historical periods of Indian history, jumping over centuries long “time slots”. For instance the first fifty pages of the novel take place in fourth century B.C. Then the narrative jumps to the fifteenth century, just prior to the rise of Mughal India. This episodic nature of the novel is important in terms of the novel’s questioning of historiography, i.e. of history as a narrative what
has occurred in the past. A history is often a large macro narrative. It tells the story of how things happened in a certain community or place. With its episodic nature, the novel intentionally ignores fundamental qualities of historiography and uses Indian history as one of the novels loci of meanings or referents. While traditional historiography attempts to create unity and coherence in the story it narrates, Hyder's novel depicts disconnectedness, fragmentation and discontinuity.

Furthermore, the implied connection between the episodes in the novel is more mythical than historical. For instance, the novel does not possess a single story that unfolds; it has four similar stories that take place on the subcontinent during different historical periods. In pre-Islamic India, it is the story of Gautam Nilambar's life with Hari Shankar, Champak, Nirmila, Sujata and others. During the Islamic era, Kamaluddin is the central character of the story, and Bano, a Muslim, and Champavati, a Hindu, are the women around him. During the colonial period, the story revolves around Cyril Ashley who is connected to Sujata Debi, Champa Jan and Maria Teresa. The colonial and postcolonial episode tells the story of Champa Ahmad, Gautam Nilambar, another Cyril Ashley, Kamaluddin, Nirmila and so on. These four stories are not linked together except for some marginal connection between the colonial and postcolonial episodes. The only apparent and merely implied connection between them is the repetition of the names of characters. Names such as Gautam Nilambar, Champa, Sujata, and Hari Shankar recur throughout the two millennia time frame of the novel. On account of the novel's multifaceted structure it requires strenuous efforts for the readers to understand its complex shape.

Besides an episodic plot construction, the novel presents a veritable portrait gallery of characters as we find in the novels of Tolstoy and Dickens. All the
characters portrayed in the narrative are not only introduced but are also made to participate in the main action in one way or the other. Those characters are not mere shadows in the background but form an integral part of the scheme of the novel. The novelist is the story teller of the people of the history. Her characters therefore live through an ordered sequence of time. They have motives and their conduct has consequence for the entire community which they represent. She gains self knowledge not through an act of meditation, but through participation in the eventful history of her race. Even when the novelist tells her story through the consciousness of one of her characters, the focus still remains on events. “This novel is indeed about Time” (Palakeel 300). But it is not about abstract Time, it’s about historical time. It is meditated time, discursively organized. The novel shows that human being on the Indian subcontinent increasingly historicize Time in both meanings of “History”. For instance, early in the novel, cultural or religious difference and macro politics are clearly separated from people’s everyday lives. Those differences do not penetrate into micro life, into the emotional relationships between members of society. But by the twentieth century, nationalism and communalism make these differences a part of people’s personal lives. Early in the novel i.e. early in time, religious and ethnic differences do not affect personal relationships as they do later in the novel during the post colonial era. For instance, in the second segment of the novel Kamaluddin asks his Hindu ‘lover’ Champavati to marry him? She says:

If I was married to you in my previous janams,

I’ll marry you now, too. (RF 78)

She also says,

If my Karma and Sanskaras are such, I’ll become a Muslim and be your spouse. (78)
Champavati’s thoughts regarding marring a Muslim are determined by mundane historicism. Her thing shows no particular concern for religion or ethnicity. It derives from a worldview that is larger than history, for Karma or Sanskara have nothing to do with mundane events. History is there, but people’s thing has not been shaped by it.

In the colonial segment Professor Banerjee says that “Hindu-Muslim riots were unknown before the arrival of the English” (253). This is still colonial India and one can easily see Indian life being historicized. The political culmination of this historicizing is, of course, the partition of India. Yet, its most tragic effects are seen elsewhere. For instance, Champa Ahmad losses her lover Amir, even though he of the same religion, because history has given him new interests in life:

A brand new country, promotions, greater
Opportunities and challenges. (266)

Besides, the young idealistic group of friends is partitioned by Partition. The Kamal of the twentieth century ridicules Champa Ahmad by saying,

Champa Baji, congratulations! Your Pakistan has come into Being, after all. (264).

The narrator explains the intensity of his word: “Intense bitterness, irony and heartbreak lent on edge to his voice” (264). Here the reader is invited to compare this Kamal with the Kamal of fifteenth century. Figuratively, Kamal has, over the course of time, positioned himself completely within the discourse of history. In the end Champa Ahmad lives alone in India. This novel is about time and the historicizing of time in the sense that it shows history’s gradual invasion of the mind and that partitioning within the mine is only a matter of Time.
The *River of Fire* is a thought provoking and compelling study that stresses the idea of establishing a “New world order” that would be free from divisions and disparities. The novel is distinct from other partition narratives since it treats the theme of partition at a macro level and is later with philosophical aspects relating to the partition of India, yet it has cultural and humanistic aspects too. Hyder’s method of narrativizing time in one way of traversing the hidden, wordless spaces between history and individual memory of giving speech to the silent sentinels that events become. Hyder shows history impinging itself on the personal life of characters. The shifting pattern of time conveys a strong sense of eternal intersecting with the transient. The attempt is to recover missing segments of history and relentless task of searching; finding the telling of incidents. Hyder tries to depict the culture of whole India, how it was during ancient time and later on the modern time. It is also observed how partition broke the composite culture of India which has been in its zenith over the years.

Like other novelists, Hyder has her own unique style in depicting the story of the novel. To be clear about the term ‘style’, John Middleton Murry explicates that “style is a quality of language which communicates precisely emotion or thoughts or a system of motion or thought, peculiar to the author” (Kumar 115). In the words of Cuddon style is “the characteristic manner of expression in prose or verse; how a particular writer says things. The analysis and assessment of style involves examination of writer’s choice of words, his figure of speech, the devices (rhetorical and otherwise), the devices, the shape of sentences, the shape of paragraphs - indeed, of every conceivable aspects of his language and the way in which he uses it” (Cudden 872). The novel reflects the language that is Urdu to justify the identity of the Muslims. Hyder has employed some of the quotations of many Urdu writers which became the part of her narrative.
Besides, symbolical meaning of the event and situation is apparent in the novel as perceived by the author. The impact of violence has been conveyed symbolically instead of direct presentation. She observes:

This year the rains have been the heaviest: the Monsoon of Blood. It pours from the skies. There is blood on flowers, blood on our hands. People have bloodshot eyes. (RF 273)

Thus without resorting to grisly accounts of rapes, killings, broken limbs and physical scars, the writer has been successful in delineating the impact of violence in a highly subtle manner.

Throughout the novel, Hyder uses lots of imagery of trees. He mentions about the Pomegranate tree, Pagoda tree and Necm tree so on. They are present to elicit the idea which the novelist puts forward and at times they express also their regret at the human condition. The imagery of birds has been repeatedly used in the novel. In the first chapter of the novel called ‘The Time of the Peacocks’ Hyder projects the imagery of birds to give a new shape to the novel in a different way. Besides, the novelist suggests nature’s attitude towards human conditions and plight in a very vivid way. The Rivers like Ram Ganga, Saryu, Saraswati stressing the life-giving qualities of the rivery water, water and fire, the archetypal symbol of destruction, cleansing and regeneration, are synthesized not only in the title but also in the narrative which follows.

Besides, Like Intizar Husain Hyder too employed the use of letter as “Letter from Karachi” among the pages of the novel. It was her great attempt to authenticate the situation felt or faced by the Muslims during the partition. Kamal writes this letter
to his friends who were left in India after the Partition telling them the true situation in Pakistan. The Letter appears as:

Karachi, capital of the fifth largest state in the world.
Beautiful Houses in posh localities, witness to the fact that never before had The Muslim middle classes acquired such prosperity….Yours Kamal. (374-76)

Although Hyder tried to employ multiple agencies i.e Myth, history, letter as technique, yet he succeeded in composing them in one form. In his Nation and Its Fragments, Partha Chatterjee provides a good illustration of how, at one time, “myth, history and contemporary – all became part of the same chronological sequence. One was not distinguished from another” (Chatterjee, 80).

Analyzing the narrative strategies of these Partition writers collectively, their narratives divulge the inconceivable melancholy caused by the tumultuous event and reveal how it ruined and altered personal lives of the common people. But one can have a glimpse of strategically difference in the narratives of these novelists. It has been discovered that the narrative structures and strategies adopted by these writers are not same as female narrative deviate from the structures of the male narratives. Women writers, besides portraying the Partition experience in general, also specifically trace the women’s experiences, thereby presenting a gendered perspective of Partition. They also highlight the reality of the relation between gender and socio-historical processes. Besides presenting the gendered aspect of the Partition violence, its ramifications, women novelists foreground the marginal by appropriating much
space for women characters in their narratives. They open up comparative positions from which the reader can experience the situation, as women perceive it. They achieve this by strategically structuring their narratives.

Besides, women writers not only portray the victimization of women but also their strength and resilience. Like Ayah of *Ice Candy Man*, Laila finds herself in diminished circumstances helpless but soon she rises up all these nasty circumstances and fight against social taboos. It is observed that women writers do not present women characters as stereotyped victims, drawing on the easy pathos of helpless suffering. They are presented as refusing to accept passively an annoyance of suffering as destiny. While in the male narratives it is men who embrace action, seeking to form circumstances to their will. In *Basti*, the writer projects Zakir as a controller controlling and managing the situation in accordance with his own will. Women characters like Sabirah, Tahnim and Anisah are presented listening to what Zakir say. In male narratives like Intizar Husain it is men who are endowed with strength, action and heroic persona.

Furthermore, in the male narratives on Partition, women are not really seen as women, as human subjects. The male writers tend to construct female characters as passive objects of a masculine gaze, which is frequently voyeuristic and almost invariably judgmental. The love relationships in their novels very well illustrate their point. Love stories are an essential element of the male narratives and reveal certain structured patterns and designs. The very structuring of emotions and gestures in these relationships project male hero as an overbearing love whereas the heroine is portrayed as passive and submissive beloved. Intizar Husain makes Sabirah a submissive character that bears pangs of pain firstly on account of Partition and later negligence of Zakir.
Besides, the women writers strategically, through structural device, use the female protagonists in their narratives to decentralize the hegemony of male worlds. It is the women protagonists who govern the plot and are presented as central and powerful figures. Besides being intellectual, political aware and actively involved, it is they who control the pedals. They are fully conscious of their feminity and its potentials. They hastily refuse to accept the narrow and constricting role assigned to them under vogue terms such as honour, shame, and modesty. Consequently, they establish an order through defiance and pay back the men in their own terms. Attia Hosain criticizes the notion of izzat (honour) and sharam (modesty) incurred upon women considering it a strict patriarchal construct. Similarly such protagonists are well projected as Laila in *Sunlight on a Broken Column* and Champa in *River of Fire*.

Besides, women writers do not portray their female protagonists within the traditional ideal concept of self-sacrificing womanhood. Likewise, Laila rejects the rigid patriarchal values and seeks identity in her love for Ameer who is lower than her in status and class. Her love for Ameer is her anchor that sustains her life and assumes the dimensions of social protest against the restrictions imposed on her. She defies her cultural milieu to emerge as a mature and composed woman.

Moreover, the narratives at the micro level mark a family or two within the pre-partition times and love stories form the most conspicuous aspect of the novels. There are predictable, rather cyclical subplots like the lovers either belong to same communities or different. Their love is symbolic of communal harmony and ultimately suffers because of Partition holocaust. In *Basit* the love relation has been a platonic love but presents an indispensable shape to the development of the plot construction. In *Sunlight on a Broken Column* Laila-Ameer love-story culminates in marriage but fails to achieve fulfillment. Laila and Ameer both are Muslims but
Ameer does not belong to the feudal class and his inferiority complex proves an impediment in the cementing of their relationship, resulting in disillusionment and indifference. In River of Fire Sujata is married to Kamaludin signifying inter-community marriage. Thus it is love stories which bring twist in the narratives in an interesting manner. The depiction of 'disorder' that is Partition holocaust also differs from the male narratives. The male writers graphically describe the violence that disrupted and distorted everyday life and relationships. While women writers focus on the gendered facet of Partition emphasizing the fact that women were the worst sufferers of Partition and that Partition had long term ramifications for them.

Precisely speaking, Partition for women writers is not just an event but a process that marked women for the whole life. While the male narratives appeal to transcend bitterness and the loss which the characters face is compensated either by hope in future or through other compensatory measures like the reunion/union of the loved ones. Besides, women writers do not present the historical event directly. It is noticed that Attia Hosain refrains from giving wearisome historical details and describes the communal unrest and events leading to Partition through the heated and polarized discussions among Laila’s relatives and friends and through their active involvement in the changing political scenario. While Hosain’s the protagonist Laila keeps distance from such communal activities. One can also observe that there is no conflict between the expressed/ideological as is clearly discerned in the male narratives because women writers portray their subjective version of the reality of Partition historiography. They highlight the religious differences and also show an awareness of cultural contradictions and tensions. Even the attitude of the women writers is neither negative nor reductive; rather they enhance the comprehensive
understanding of the social experience of the Partition holocaust. They explore the socio-cultural experiences of the victimized women and retrieve it as both compensatory and supplementary to master/male narratives on Partition.

However, after a detailed, critical exploration of Partition historiography, it has been observed that like male writers, women writers also take a pronounced anti-colonial stance and condemned the British policy of Divide and rule. But women writers do not release the masses and hold them responsible for becoming puppets in the hands of the British and the political leaders. Again, nowhere in the entire mass of Partition fiction is there a sparkle of endorsement for the price paid for the birth of the two nations. Rather, there is a nostalgic lament for lost humanity, shared past, values and traditions and an innate craving for reconciliation.

But whereas the male writers, in their eagerness to function as secular-humanists, way out to mechanical counterbalancing in order to distribute blame justly and gleam over the various complexities of the Partition process, women writers make a more comprehensive exploration of this complex phenomena. They conclusively design their narratives to betray their inclinations and tackle the realm politic of the much evaded communal angle. Through an involved and candid exploration of Partition historiography they face Partition in its stern reality and thus approximate a realistic mode which could be termed as honest fictionality, and through this cathartic endeavour they pave the way for an honest reconciliation.

Thus as is apparent from the above, women novelists keep their look centrally focused upon the women characters in their narratives. They make women the focus of inquiry, subject of their stories and agent of the narratives. They use narrative as a mode of implicit argumentation through which they retrieve women to the subject
position, in their aesthetic endeavour, women writers try to reinstitute women to their stature by appropriating a much wider space for them. They strategically place or rather what Helen Cixious calls ‘insinuate’ women in their narratives and focus on the gendered experiences. They articulate the inner experiences of women that are generally rendered invisible in the male narratives either because they escape their attention or because they regard them as trivial or due to the fear of fatwa, (a religious farman issued by the Muslim fundamentalists). There is a strong plea to see women as human beings, as individuals having an identity of their own and not merely as sex objects. Thus, women writers foreground the marginal by placing women at the centre rather than at the edge.

Moreover, the setting in their narratives is quite interesting. Traditionally the setting is viewed as the text-initial macro-unit, which provides the main characters, the location and other relevant background information needed for backgrounding the story. According to this view, once the story is set to a location and a particular interpretation is given to the text or a part of it, the reader maintains it until further notice. According to Amitav Ghosh “A novel must always be set somewhere: it must have its setting, and within the evolution of the narrative this setting must, classically, play a part almost as important as those of characters themselves” (Ghosh 294). In the present work, setting is the compositional frame which defines a situation and surroundings in a world depicted by the text in relation to encyclopedic knowledge and specify the preliminary key properties of this world. Furthermore, M.H Abrams observes that “the setting of a narrative or dramatic work is the general locale, historical time, and social circumstances in which its action occurs; the setting of a single episode or scene within the work is the particular physical location in which it takes place” (Abrams 281). These Muslim writers projected Lucknow as a setting for
their novels on account of their inclination towards this historical city which has been also a witness to the whole drama of Partition. And Lucknow has been center of Muslim culture and its grandeur. Hosain depicts the story of a decaying Muslim feudal family of Lucknow. Rahi Masoom’s Gangauli is located in Lucknow. It is also Lucknow in India where Hyder’s post-partition characters were born and raised. And Intizar Husain’s Rupnagar is too located in Lucknow. Thus the settings for these novels have been chosen by the writers in such a way as to give a realistic backdrop to the action of Partition stories. This realistic account of their narratives makes them differ from other writers who make use of fictitious locale in their works.

Captivatingly, Partition theme got narrated through many paradigms aiming at modern techniques and tools used by these reputed writers. Intizar Husain must have been influenced by the 20th century writers like James Joye and Virgina Woolf who stressed on memory and stream of consciousness. And his use of diary for narrating the traumatic experiences of the migrants like him lends an aura of historical authenticity to the incidents is unique. Rahi Masoom Reza adopted first person narration in his narrative. Attia Hosain also tried to delineate her novel through first person narration and flashback. But Qurratulain Hyder differs from the above writers in her narrative. Her depiction of characters is complex on account of birth and rebirth cycle of the same character. Her episodic structure of the novel is quite unique which makes her stand outside the crowd in the literary field. Her use of imagery, metaphor and plot is worth mentioning which made her popular overnight. Thus these writers explored the theme of partition by employing different techniques and tools artistically.
Works Cited


All subsequent references to the novel are to this edition and have been incorporated in the text.

Husain, Intizar. *Basti*. Trans. Frances W. Pritchett. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007. Print. All subsequent references to the novel are to this edition and have been incorporated in the text.


Hyder, Qurratulain. *River of Fire*. New Delhi: Women Unlimited, 1998. Print. All subsequent references to the novel are to this edition and have been incorporated in the text.


