CHAPTER 4

THE EXODUS: MIGRATION, DISPLACEMENT AND RESETTLEMENT

The story of 1947 remains incomplete without reference to the ‘exchange of population’ wherein people exchanged their homes and their countries within the space of a few months in the Punjab. This human convulsion,¹ which resulted in the tide of forced migration, began in March 1947, after the Rawalpindi riots, when the Unionist Government fell following the Muslim League agitation. Subsequently it spread to Lahore, Amritsar, Jehlum, Attock and Multan and culminated in the August 1947 riots after the Partition of India became a certainty. A remarkable feature of the March violence, apart from unprecedented deaths, was the number of people who sought refuge in the camps, because they felt unsafe or because their houses had been burnt. The exact number of people, who died due to slaughter, malnutrition and contagious diseases, as the trickle of refugees, who started moving in spring, became a massive exodus by the summer of 1947, is as highly disputed as the number of people, who crossed the newly created borders of India and Pakistan. Estimates of the dead vary from 200,000 (the contemporary British figure) to two million (a later Indian estimate) but that somewhere around a million people died is now widely accepted.² Similarly, the number of migrants is equally contested. It is estimated that, in the space of a few months, about twelve million people moved between the new, truncated India and the two wings, East and West, of the newly created Pakistan.³

As a by-product of the religious nationalism that surfaced during the Indian national struggle for independence culminating in the division of the country, Partition not only proved to be a central cathartic event that shaped the collective national psyche in India and Pakistan but also resulted in the creation of migrants and refugees. Ravinder Kaur⁴ maintains that these two terms: migrant and refugees cannot be used interchangeably. The term migrant alludes to all those, who moved from one place to another during and after Partition. The term refugee alludes to a specific section within this broad group that sought state protection in camps meant for such people, and later in government constructed housing colonies.
According to her this is because Partition did not produce a single category of migration. Soon after the 5 March, Rawalpindi riots migration in significant numbers started taking place when British India was still undivided and no international borders had been created. Refugees in the legal sense of the term were created only after 15 August 1947 when the international borders between India and Pakistan were drawn and people found themselves to be refugees in their own backyards.

THE RATIONALE FOR THE TRANSFER OF POPULATION:

In Partition migration history, 3 June 1947 is as important a day as the Partition itself, for it was on this day that Lord Mountbatten announced the Partition Plan, wherein the British would hand over power in August 1947 instead of June 1948. The advanced date meant that the formalities of the transfer of power had to be accelerated, which included procedures like handing over authority, dividing assets, and working out the territorial division of the Punjab and Bengal provinces. This announcement, in combination with the 5 March Rawalpindi riots, gave the vital push to the migration exodus. The growing uncertainty and the future course of events, such as the drawing of boundary lines and the possible extent of communal violence forced people to move away to safer areas where their community was in the majority.

Remarkably, both India and Pakistan did not anticipate the massive scale of the exodus or the unprecedented communal violence that was unleashed during and after Mountbatten’s announcement. Two weeks before independence, amidst escalating levels of violence and displacement, the Pakistan Council, that included British administrators and members of the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League, passed an agreement to arrest further exodus and to encourage people to return to their homes. At this point, the two governments adhered to a policy of local containment, which assumed that conditions of communal normalcy would be re-established. However, both governments found it necessary to transfer populations in divided Punjab mainly because the law enforcement machinery in both the countries was ineffective or communally compromised in certain areas.
Prior to independence, the Congress and the League leaders were against a complete transfer of population as it would jeopardize the vulnerability of minorities residing in other provinces. Nevertheless, as early as November 1946, Jinnah had articulated the idea of a transfer of population in response to the forced exodus of non-Muslims in Bengal in the wake of the Muslim League’s *Direct Action Day*. Moreover, the Muslim League stalwart Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan saw it as a natural step towards the realisation of a ‘Muslim state.’ While the participation of the League cadre and lower-level operatives in the 1946 Bengal riots has been acknowledged, the League-as-nationalist-government maintained a formal posture of communal neutrality and bilateral cooperation throughout much of the early post-independence refugee crisis, due to the break-down of the law enforcement mechanisms on both sides of the Punjab. Both, Nehru and Jinnah, exhorted the minorities in the newly created countries to stay where they were and the official exchange of population was looked upon as a temporary phenomenon by both countries including the migrants.

Both governments of the newly formed nation-states equated the territorial Partition of the country with the colonial construction of communal violence. They maintained, it was due to the arousal of passions and was viewed as a spontaneous and reversible phenomenon. This appraisal was based on three assumptions: that native violence no longer indicated an intrinsic lack of reason but its temporary suspension; that after this lapse, the lawful game of citizenship would begin; and that the violence of Partition was a consequence of but bears little ideological relation to the political agency of nationalism. It was assumed that when the tension had abated the people would return to their original homes as was the case in the past whenever communal riots occurred. However, this time there were differences between the Partition conflicts and previous communal conflicts, in that this time it involved all three communities: the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs: who were forced to move simultaneously from their homes unlike in the past, when only one community moved away and came back. The magnitude of the migration was unprecedented and also involved large scale violence against women.

THE EVACUATION PROCESS AND MEANS OF TRANSPORT:

Amidst the escalating violence, which had elements of ethnic cleansing, where the physical annihilation of the minority was more or less a matter of policy with the majority communities, people started moving to safer places wherever their community was in the majority. With Mountbatten’s 3 June announcement the Hindus and Sikhs, who were residing in the areas that were to become a part of Pakistan now feared a repetition of the Rawalpindi massacres. Since the cleavages between the Muslims on the one hand, and the Hindus and Sikhs on the other had widened, the latter feared for their lives. Moreover, in cities like Lahore and Gurdaspur that were located in disputed border areas the people did not know which country they now belonged to and whether to stay or move. With the announcement of the Radcliffe Award a large population became minorities and their own backyards became hostile territory.

The largest ever mass migration in human history then began as it became the only alternative to certain death at the hands of organised mobs. Now Hindus and Sikhs had to leave for their nation, which was India and Muslims were to be forced to go to Pakistan. A perverse logic that guided these forced migrations was that room had to be made for the incoming refugees from the other side, and, in order to accommodate them, the people of the Other community had to be hounded out. Statistics of people who were killed and injured during the months from August to October proved that the migrations were not an unfounded panic reaction. As migration continued the class differences became clearly discernable. For the upper-middle class, who kept abreast of political events through radio and newspaper, migration began quite early. As a precautionary measure people with substantial properties and businesses left the trouble-prone areas and transferred their assets long before Partition took place. It was the lower-middle class, the poor and the Dalits who had to face the brunt of the violence during their perilous migration.

The migration continued despite the appeals of the political leaders to remain where they were. They appeared to be out of touch with reality, especially, since migration had started in the Punjab ever since the Rawalpindi violence. It was not until mid-October, when newspapers started reporting the refugee crisis that a Joint Evacuation Movement (JEM) Plan was formulated by the Military Evacuation Organisation (MEOs), of India and Pakistan. It set the target date of
evacuating approximately ten million refugees by December 1947. The sheer enormity of the population to be exchanged was overwhelming. There were 6.7 Muslims awaiting evacuation in East Punjab and about 5.4 non-Muslims from West Punjab, Sindh and the North West Frontier Province. The plan outlined the methods of evacuation, means of transport and identified the routes to be used by foot convoys. The whole evacuation operation was organised on three levels. The first was to establish transit camps for the refugees; the second was to transport them by foot, rail, and truck or by air; and the third was to settle them in refugee camps in their respective countries of destination.

As the refugees set out on their last journey by foot, rail, military trucks or air the class differences were again apparent. The affluent and those, who could afford it or with connections either departed much in advance or by air. As a result the dangers they faced were minimal. It was the hoards of refugees, who left by kafilas: foot columns: or by trains who faced the greatest dangers due to the highly militarised nature of the Punjab. Demobilised soldiers were conspicuous by their presence in the violence, and their participation meant that the violence took on the characteristics of a civil war.⁷ And, it is the iconic last journey by foot and train that has remained as an enduring Partition image.

For the poor, the rural masses and those who did not, or could not get access to train or road transport, the only way to leave was on foot, in massive human columns known as kafilas. These began to move roughly two weeks after Partition. There were four main road routes which were used for the movement of evacuees. The Balloki Route (Lyallpur to Ludhiana) was initially used for non-Muslims from Lyallpur and was later also used for the evacuation of Muslims from India to Pakistan while the Sulaimankelanti Route (Fazilka to Delhi) was reserved for non-Muslims from Pakistan to India. The Dera Baba Nanak Route (Sialkot to Gurdaspur), and the Amritsar Route (Sheikupura to Amritsar) was used by both sets of migrants with arrangements made to avoid potential clashes between Muslims and non-Muslims, though in reality this was not always possible.

A large part of the displaced population walked across the borders. These foot columns began to move roughly two weeks after Partition. Initially they consisted of 30,000 – 40,000 people [and] the largest consisted of 400,000 people,⁸ which took as many as eight days to cross a given spot. It is estimated that 1,036,000⁹ people,
roughly a third of the evacuated non-Muslim population, were evacuated from West Punjab by organised caravans. The foot columns consisted mostly of the rural masses as their cattle and farm equipment could not be carried on trains or trucks. These columns were vulnerable to attack and the military escort provided to them proved to be most inadequate. In such circumstances the fortunate ones, who reached their destinations safely gave vivid accounts of their travails, of the shortage of water, of pregnant women giving birth on the roadside or on trucks, of the sick and feeble-bodied being abandoned on the roadside, of the dead with none to mourn them or perform their last rites, of abduction, of rape and of massacres.

The other mode of travel deployed to ferry the urban populace were the railway, which, with their tightly packed trains, remain indelibly inscribed in the national imaginary. Over a million non-Muslims were evacuated during the peak period from 27 August till the end of November 1947, and over 1.3 million Muslims in the opposite direction. These refugee trains were known as *India Specials* or *Pakistan Specials* and due to their central role as a preferred means of urban evacuation, they became symbolic of the last journeys of the masses. Because these specials evacuated refugees *en masse* they became targets of planned attacks as one could indulge in wholesale slaughter for these trains carried members of a single community. Several methods of attack were used and often these trains would arrive at their destinations crammed with dead bodies. This, in turn, would unleash a retaliatory round of killings where an equal number of dead bodies were sent back on their return journey.

Even though these train journeys were fraught with danger they were the preferred means of travel for a quick departure from ‘risk zones’. It was not easy to get a place on these trains as railway employees would be the first ones to find place for themselves and their families for they had first hand information of the departure timings of the trains. In-fact, they had to be bribed to part with this vital information. These *Special Trains* were packed to capacity and refugees had to fight their way in to even get a foot hold.

The other form of popular transport – by military trucks – was used for short distances or for transporting passengers from isolated locations to railway stations. *Around 1200 military and civilian trucks were deployed by the MEO (India), with an
additional pool of 1000 trucks at the peak period. By the middle of November around 313,400 non-Muslims and 209,440 Muslims had been transported in this way.\textsuperscript{11}

It, therefore, becomes clear that the means of escape employed indicates the class differences and also the way in which the holocaust of Partition is remembered. In this genocidal violence, rapid movement was essential as the threat level increased with the increase in the total time of the journey. Since train journeys were quicker and more affordable than air travel, there was huge demand for them. On the flip side, they also became targets for concentrated killings. The most vulnerable on the scale of speed and safety was that of the foot columns as they were under threat from organised communal bands, highway robbers and petty thieves and were subject to sudden and brutal attacks at all hours along the entire route.

In all this, both the Muslims and the non-Muslims suffered greatly. However, in the official grand narrative of rebuilding a new Indian nation out of struggle, sacrifice and the indomitable spirit of the refugees, who succeeded in rebuilding their lives, it is the traumatic foot and rail journeys that are indelibly inscribed in the minds of the people as the loss and trauma could be witnessed through various media, which was not the case with air and truck evacuations.

**THE STATE’S RESPONSE TO REHABILITATION:**

As the refugees from Pakistan started pouring into India they were sent to various camps. According to the Indian Annual Report of the Ministry of Rehabilitation 1952-53, the places in India most populated with refugees were in the Punjab, West Bengal, Delhi, UP, PEPSU and Bombay. It is in these places the government concentrated on its rehabilitation efforts.\textsuperscript{12} It must also be noted that if in India the breakdown of law and order, and the state’s inability to stop the population movement and restore peace is seen as an instance of its absence,\textsuperscript{13} then the massive resettlement plan, the Indian state orchestrated, can be seen as a resumption of its authority, wherein the refugee was fully integrated into the new nation and became an ideal citizen. Whereas the state’s failure to control the violence becomes an illegitimate topic of debate its successful intervention in the rehabilitation of the refugees, who are lost and bewildered, beginning with the evacuation of the refugees
from the transit camps in various localities in Pakistan is seen as one of the success stories which finds pride of place in the official records.

Upon their arrival the refugees were given temporary shelter in camps, food, clothing and medical aid by the state. One such camp, the Kurukshetra camp, located outside Delhi was described as a success story that was hailed internationally. As permanent measures to enable the process of resettlement and rehabilitation the state helped the migrants get permanent housing, easy loans, free education and state jobs. Evacuee property was seized to either compensate the migrants for the property they had left behind in Pakistan or to house homeless refugees. The state also created new housing colonies for the ones without a roof over their heads. This state driven success story was possible because of two reasons. One was the lack of intervention by international relief agencies, and the other was because the state became the sole agency to control resources. All this was overseen by the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation set up in August 1947, which later became the Ministry of Rehabilitation. As the objective of securing the integration of the uprooted people in the social and economic life of the country was met a few decades later the Ministry of Rehabilitation shut down in 1965.

Another area in which the Ministry of Rehabilitation played an active role was in rehabilitating Muslim migrants and displaced Muslims. Given that the Partition of India was based on ethnic difference and that the mass migration and exchange of population entailed the migration of Muslims to Pakistan and Hindus and Sikhs to India, all refugees coming to India were assumed to be non-Muslims. However, with the Muslim population in India a piquant situation arose in that there were two categories of Muslim migrants. One was those who migrated to Pakistan in 1947 and then returned to India shortly after, and the other was the internally displaced Muslims who were unable to return to their original homes due to threat of violence. The Indian state, displaying its secular credentials, though belatedly, arranged for state assistance for them as displaced persons along with those who had crossed national borders as refugees. In so doing, India, unlike its Pakistani counterpart, committed to aid and protect its Muslim political minority though this was not on par with that given to Hindu and Sikh migrants. Yet, despite this, Muslims faced discrimination for as Daiya observes, Muslims in India were forced to vacate their houses often by or
with the support of state functionaries like the military and the police and go to refugee camps. From there they were made to go to Pakistan much against their wishes.\textsuperscript{14}

Though the official narrative scripts a success story in the rehabilitation of refugees, the narratives of the refugees are at a variance with that of the official account. The state driven projects of resettlement appear prominently in the official accounts but rarely appear in the discourse of resettlement widespread among the migrants. For them community or \textit{biradari} networks were a strong catalyst in the resettlement process and many deny having received any compensation from the state even though they lived in state sponsored refugee camps and received occupational support in terms of jobs and financial loans. Family ties, geographic links and business contacts determined where they migrated and who helped them in resettling. On their arrival in India, the nepotism and corruption of the bureaucracy only added to their disappointment, which are still alive in their memories. Money, power and influence were important factors in settling down and refugees frequently had to resort to bribes in order to get their cases for compensation heard. Here, again, class distinctions were apparent. The ordinary refugee was overawed by the insensitive bureaucrats, who were perceived to be from the upper middle-class. Even when they were given compensation, the migrants felt that they had not been given the full value of their property they had left behind in Pakistan. This fact has been attested to by Hari Mohan Puri who, because of his class status, did not find getting accommodation in Bombay a problem but was not happy with the evacuee property he got as compensation (Appendix 10).

For the migrants a belief that injustice was done to their community because of forced displacement recurs repeatedly in their narratives. The destruction of homes, village life, tradition, \textit{mohalla} and \textit{biradari} exchanges are recounted as a deep loss. Nevertheless, despite this injustice being meted out to them, their forward-looking attitude, their desire to work hard, their faith in their ability to carve out a niche for themselves without expecting charity or sympathy from the state is recalled with pride. In short, \textit{the state was deliberately written out of the community and personal familial history.}\textsuperscript{15} Instead, what the migrants remember was the sheer grit, determination and hard-work on their parts that was responsible for their success in rebuilding their lives.
Apart from rebuilding life anew, migrants were seen not only as victims but also as agents of violence as their experiences would inflame passions and lead to another round of violence. For this reason it was considered best to suppress their stories and their accounts. It has also been noted in Delhi that there was an underlying animosity between them and the local residents, who felt that the overpowering Punjabi influence had changed the entire culture of Delhi after 1947. Post-Partition Delhi came to be described as a place where TilakNagars and Nehru Roads proliferate, and hardly anyone knows the poetry of Mir and Zauq, the humour of Ghalib, and the quality of life that ChandaniChowk once symbolized. This also shows the subtle and invisible process that transformed the refugees into locals.

The closure of the Ministry of Rehabilitation in 1965 and the migrants’ simultaneous integration into the Indian nation state signalled that they had become emotionally and financially independent and that they no longer required state support. This meant that they had come to terms with the forced displacement and had grown roots in the new soil. Though the uprooting was considered temporary it turned out to be permanent as their former homes were now located in enemy territory and the continuing hostility with Pakistan colours how they view their former homes in the present. However, the most important factor that made a permanent return to their former homes impossible was that they were automatically conferred the citizenships of their new countries – India or Pakistan – as the case might be. These migrants faced relatively fewer legal obstacles to formal political inclusion than their historical or contemporary counterparts in Europe and the postcolonial world. In this connection Theodore Wright (1974) observes:

... the 15 million involved in the mammoth Hindu-Moslem exchange of population ... though they have suffered greatly ... [had] from their very beginning ... the security of citizenship, protection and encouragement of their respective co-national state in which they had found a haven ... a new life not on ‘sufferance [by the state] but as of right.'

If conferring citizenship to the migrants as well as the latter’s complete identification with the new nation state became one of the technologies that ensured their permanent integration with India, the case of the voluntary refugees the mohajirs, presents it’s opposite – the inability to integrate with the Pakistani nation-
state to date. The term *mohajir* is derived from the Islamic tradition when Prophet Mohammed fled from Mecca to Medina to escape religious persecution in 622 A.D., and conveys suggestions of persecution, escape and temporary shelter before the ideal Islamic society is achieved. The Urdu speaking Muslim migrants from UP and Delhi, labelled *mohajirs*, came to Pakistan feeling that they had sacrificed their homes and livelihoods to facilitate the making of a Muslim state, therefore they expected preferential treatment. Instead they were sent to Sindh and their migratory status is still contested as they are still alienated from the main-stream of Pakistani society. It is interesting to note that while *sharnarthi* was a term to describe Sindhi and Punjabi refugees the word disappeared from post Partition discourse whereas the word *mohajir* became descriptive of an ethnic identity and is still used to describe Urdu speaking Muslims in Pakistan thus throwing up the differences in the process of integration in both countries.

**THE WOMAN MIGRANT:**

In all this, it is the voice of the woman migrant that has been completely drowned. Feminist historiographers deployed a gender lens to bring into focus *the thin dividing lines between choice and coercion in the case of conflict driven migration.* Urvashi Butalia has effectively demonstrated that, in theory, everyone had a choice to migrate or stay but in practice, staying on was virtually impossible. While such choices were imposed on the people it was the men who decided whether women should migrate or stay, or be put to the sword by their own male family members. These killings were valorised and treated as a sacrifice. In the case of abducted women, it was again the paternalistic state that decided to forcibly recover them much against their will. As a result, they were abducted twice. Once, when they were abducted and the second, during the time of their recovery by the respective state authorities. In neither case could they exercise their free will. Since Recovery was about containing women’s sexuality, they were put in ashrams and a close watch kept on them for the rest of their lives if the families did not reclaim them. *Women’s experiences such as these problematise the understanding of conflict-induced*
migration and makes it difficult to label them into neat categories of being ‘migrants’ ‘refugees’ or simply ‘dislocated women.’

Keeping this in mind, it becomes clear that the woman refugee is the most marginalised and disenfranchised amongst the dislocated. Her identity and her individuality are erased as she is labelled a victim. She is perceived as devoid of agency, powerless and superfluous, incapable of representing herself. As such, refugee and displaced women are in double jeopardy owing to their gender, which heightens their vulnerability to the worst forms of human rights abuses. In the case of the Partition of India, the moment of rupture happened suddenly and the woman migrant who was relegated to the private spheres of their homes, the andarmahals was suddenly and literally thrust into the outside world without the protection she had been socially guaranteed. The men found it hard to come to terms with the fact that they failed to protect their women, and their impotence was manifested in the gruesome acts of revenge on the people of the Other community in the form of killing, abduction and rape.

As has already been discussed, raped and recovered women were put away in ashrams and were condemned to spend their lives in silence. However, Ravinder Kaur also highlights a little known fact about the rehabilitation of widows by the government in Delhi, who often had no families to support them. They were housed separately in a widow colony: vidhwa colony. The state authority took over and enforced the norms in the colony rather than the male members as widowhood suggested inauspicious womanhood and their sexuality had to be controlled. This, like that of the Recovery Operation, again points to the state performed restoration of social routines that had been disrupted during the violent upheaval of Partition.

So far, the discussion has shown that the woman had no agency in deciding her future course of action. However, research has thrown light on the fact that the woman migrant, who was suddenly thrown into the public sphere, responded in two ways. In the first instance, she stayed on in refugee camps reliving the past in her mind and nostalgically thinking of her watan or desh, refusing permanent rehabilitation outside the camps or homes, living on the doles that the state provided and, maybe losing her sanity. The second course of action was to seize every opportunity, make use of the education she was given, make use of the training and employment facilities the state give her and join the workforce just as their women
counterparts outside the camps. Force of circumstances, economic necessity and the urgency to rebuild homes and futures pushed women of many classes into earning and supplementing family incomes. This resulted in delayed or no marriage for them. All this was possible because of the blurring of the private and public spheres, and the breakdown of traditional constraints.\textsuperscript{21}

THE FICTIONAL RESPONSE TO MIGRATION:

But what were the emotional and the psychological state of the migrants? The official narrative dwells on the helplessness of the people and assigns a pro-active role to the state which took control of the situation and made a success of it. On the other hand, the migrants too collectively bargained with the state for concessions, provisions and privileges through the formation of various interest groups and obtained them. Nevertheless, as they were forced to leave their homes, their \textit{bastis}, their \textit{desh}, their \textit{watan}, they did it much against their will. Many, who crossed the newly-marked borders, did not want to leave their lands, businesses or homes. No one wanted to be uprooted. Many abandoned their homes because the composite society they had lived in now became communally charged. In short, they were poor players trapped in civil, political and religious nightmares, enacted to satisfy the egotism of some and the powerful ambitions of others. Their journey across the new borders had no moral glamour attached to it and no religious sanctity. On the contrary, they discovered that they had to wade through the morass of corruption, immorality and nepotism in order to build life anew. How the migrants negotiated the last fateful journey after leaving their homes forever, their feelings of loss and incomprehension, their bitter disappointment on arrival to the new nation state, their attempts at rehabilitation and resettlement form the staple of Partition fiction and Nahal, Singh, Baldwin and Sidhwatoo explore these themes in their novels.

AZADI: THE LAST DESOLATE JOURNEY:

Ravinder Kaur,\textsuperscript{22} in her incisive and comprehensive study of the Punjabi migrants of Delhi identifies three broad narrative themes that recurred repeatedly in
her interviews with the migrants. They were the everyday life before Partition, the last journey and how the migrants rebuilt life anew after Partition. Nahal’s Azadi tackles these three narrative themes of migration and dislocation comprehensively through the experiences of Lala Kanshi Ram and his family. What is also notable is that Nahal focuses on the iconic last journey through foot columns and gives a detailed overview of all the attendant disasters, dangers and privations the family experiences like the millions of migrants along with them.

Lala Kanshi Ram, a fifty year old grain merchant from Sialkot, leads a happy and contented life. As he awaits Mountbatten’s 3 June announcement, which was to take place that evening, Lala Kanshi Ram finds that the house he had been living in for over three decades was enveloped in silence and peace, so much so that on this particular day:

...the peace of the house came to him with something of pain. He had got so used to it he did not know how gracious it was. For about three decades had he been living there, and what he saw today had all been put together by him and Prabha Rani bit by bit through their own efforts. How loaded with goodness it was – everything!...

... And the house had proved otherwise good to him too. It was here he had received the best at the hands of fate.

This brief description shows that Lala Kanshi Ram leads a settled life, has achieved reasonable success, has a social standing, is content and revels in the peace of the house, which he has lived in for thirty years. His attachment to his house is emphasized repeatedly for this is what he is going to be forced to leave in the near future, though he does not know it as yet. In any case, the impending announcement leaves him with a vague, indefinable unease for whatever he has now today has taken more than twenty five years to build and everything would be ruined if the demand for Pakistan were to be conceded. His fears had been exacerbated since February when the British set a time limit for independence, which was to be no later than June 1948. They would also hand power to any duly constituted authority or authorities if the political parties did not agree to a solution by then. What disturbed Lala Kanshi Ram was the reference to freedom in the plural, which meant that the British were willing to concede Pakistan.
This uneasy premonition becomes a reality when Mountbatten’s apocryphal announcement shatters all hopes of a united India. With Partition now becoming a certainty the people huddled around the radio in BibiAmarvati’s house are stunned and shocked. LalaKanshi Ram voices the opinion of all in the room as well as in the Punjab when he tells them:

‘I supposed we’ll continue here. Why can’t Hindus and Sikhs live in Pakistan? Why should they wish us harm?’ he said, without much conviction.

‘Be realistic, father’, said Arun.

The middle-class businessman in LalaKanshi Ram wanted to cling to his hope.

‘Well, why can’t we live in Pakistan? They certainly would like to have us, have our business. Their whole economy will be ruined if they drive us out.’

When LalaKanshi Ram voices his desire to stay on under the new dispensation it shows his reluctance to leave. This fact has been noted in numerous oral accounts, wherein the people expressed their reluctance to leave their homes, their places of worship; their ways of life, their settled business for all of them assumed they could continue as before even if they were to stay on in a Muslim dominated Pakistan. Though Mountbatten’s announcement is considered a betrayal, LalaKanshi Ram and the others in the mohalla continue to stay where there are despite the escalating violence. With the 3 June announcement, the Punjab Legislative Assembly’s decision to opt for the partition of the province becomes a foregone conclusion. The Muslims now break loose and kill a number of Hindus though there is no intention to annihilate the Hindus en masse as yet. What proved to be more unnerving, frightening and demoralising were the fires that broke out every night lighting up the sky.

Demoralised and frightened, the people in the mohalla under LalaKanshi Ram’s leadership continue to stay on in their homes even when Muslim refugees bring news of the carnage and mayhem in East Punjab. As a retaliatory gesture MohallaDharowal, a Hindu locality, is looted and burnt. This marks the first massive episode of violence in Sialkot. Later, each night systematically a Hindu mohalla is burnt down and the sky is aflame with shouts of ‘Nara-e-Takbir, Allah-o-Akbar.’
This makes the reader aware of three facts. The first is that Nahal reinforces the point that migrations had began long before 15 August 1947, when no international border had been created. This means that these people were not refugees in the strict sense of the term. Ever since the March Rawalpindi riots an unprecedented number of people had sought refuge in camps and then from there proceeded to safer places. After the June cataclysmic announcement Sialkot proves to be no exception as Hindus from MohallaDharowal proceed in great numbers to the refugee camp.

The second point is that it corroborates KavitaDaiya’s observation when she states:

*In the early national period, from 1947 through the 1950s, journalistic accounts in both England and India represented Partition refugees not only as victims but also as agents of violence. Refugees' storytelling, their oral testimony of the violence they witnessed and experienced were seen to be acts of narration that “inflamed passions”, engendered ethnic violence, and so were best suppressed. Thus, unlike the celebratory turn to oral testimony in historical and anthropological writing over the last decade or so, popular public sphere accounts from the early national moment are marked by fear and anxiety over the potential threat of violence seen to be residing in the circulation of the “stories” and “tales” of these very refugees.*

The tales of the Muslim refugees unleashes a round of vicious bloodletting in Sialkot and Chaudhry Barkat Ali, LalaKanshi Ram’s Muslim friend also voices the same view when he tries to persuade his friend to leave for the refugee camp:

‘... Added to that is the fact that every day hundreds of refugees from India continue to arrive with tales of terror and disgust... When refugees with stories of personal misfortune land here, the politicians use them to their advantage to fan up further hatred.’

The third point that is made is that LalaKanshi Ram is extremely reluctant to leave the house he had become so attached to as were the millions who faced uprooting and displacement. When it is first suggested that he leave for a refugee camp he storms:
‘Refugee, refugee, indeed!... I was born around here, this is my home – how can I be a refugee in my own home?’

But the fact remains that the people were in the camps, as has been noted earlier because they feared for their safety or their houses had been burnt. Nevertheless, LalaKanshi Ram refuses to move and rails against the government for their incompetence in maintaining peace and order. Though he does not want to begin life anew at the age fifty in actuality he is reluctant to leave because he should have to give up this land, this earth, this air. That’s where the hurt lay! He is still confident, as were countless others, that this irrational violence, this madness incarnate would stop and people would come to their senses. But this does not happen. One day his shop is looted and, shortly afterwards, Chaudhry Barkat Ali urges him to leave immediately as his mohalla was going to be burnt and looted that very night. Reluctantly, he agrees to go to a refugee camp.

LalaKanshi Ram is confident they would return and views this move to a camp as temporary, just as many other migrants did. Like them, LalaKanshi Ram and other families in the mohalla are only given a few hours to pack their essentials and leave. Ignoring all the warnings, LalaKanshi Ram had not transferred any money to India and all he had with him was three thousand rupees in cash. Though he feels let down by the English he would forgive the English and the Muslims:

... if only he could return. Return and die here and he cremated by the side of the river Aik! He shivered at the luxury of the thought. To becarried shoulder high on a bier through the streets of Sialkot ...[and] at the last minute when the brain burst open and he was really gone,for his spirit to look at the Aik and the land of Sialkot from above from the sky, or to come down and roll in the dust of its fields – that would be the very pinnacle of his delight.

Once again, Nahal reiterates LalaKanshi Ram’s reluctance to leave and his desire to die in his hometown. But that is not to be, though he does not know it as yet. Nevertheless, when he and the others look at their houses for the last time with longing they find that it was already enveloped with a desolate spectral quality. The desolation of the houses echoes the desolation of the people gathered outside to catch a last glimpse of them. As desolation overcomes the people they hear the loud and
fiendish laughter of Mukunda’s mother from the roof of the building as though mocking their desire both to stay or their desire to return. Her demonic, defiant, uncanny laughter follows them a long way in the dusk of the evening. It seemed to be defying everyone – those who were leaving and those who were to come there that night. In a way her mocking laughter is prescient for it denotes the end of a way of living – of having to give up and leave behind homes, businesses, friendships, loves forever and begin life anew. Their move to the refugee camp denotes the first phase of the iconic last journey and the further disappointments and betrayals they will experience.

LalaKanshi Ram and the families from Fort Street shift into their cramped, tented accommodation while India celebrated her independence. Though the contrast between their miseries and the joys of celebration are implicit in the narrative Nahal does not indicted the Indian government. Instead, he chooses to focus on the achievement of independence when he states that most families in the camp sat together on that day and while they were aggrieved at their personal fate they also felt inexplicably proud. But this is only the beginning of their sorrows and difficulties for the communal mayhem have claimed two more victims. LalaKanshi Ram gets news of his daughter Madhu and her husband’s death while they were coming to Sialkot by train. He sends his son Arun to Chaudhry Barkat Ali’s house to ascertain the news. At the railway station there is no way of identifying the dead as they were being cremated. Nahal describes the mass cremation in vivid and graphic detail:

... As Arun climbed its rough steps, he felt a lump in his throat. From the bridge, he could clearly see four bonfires in the area beyond the goods yard. The fires stood out like hills ablaze.

... The stench was unbearable as they approached the area. The four heaps were piled high and the fires were roaring and hissing with great force, the flames climbing many feet into the air. What they saw there was only dismembered limbs, dozens of them – legs, and arms and hands, and thighs, and feet. The fire had consumed other parts of the bodies; it was the parts which had not fully burned that stood out.
And there were the skulls. Again dozens of them. Many lay facedown the others faced the sky, or looked sideways. Bare jaws, scooped out eye-sockets, gnashing teeth. Very often a skull cracked open with a popping noise, its bones disintegrating into the heap around. Since it was a quiet night, the sound came like the crack of a rifle; it was an unnerving sound.

... It so happened many of them had their arms around each other, or they were holding each other with their legs. And in the disintegration the fire brought to them, there was constant movement in the heaps. Arms were climbing up or they were sliding down. Legs were yielding their hold or they were burying themselves deeper. And the eyes of one skull seemed to look into the eyes of another and send unspoken messages. For the other skull would had, in a way saying it had quite understood.\(^{35}\)

These gruesome descriptions of skulls and limbs burning make the tragedy of Partition and dislocation clearer and shows the dangers the refugees had to constantly face. However, this is not the only cremation Nahal recounts in the novel. Another horrifying self-immolation takes place in the camp. When the move to India becomes imminent Niranjan Singh, a Sikh, immolates himself because he refuses to cut his hair or shave his beard to make himself less noticeable despite the urging of his pregnant wife Isher Kaur. Even in his agony and in his death throes Niranjan Singh staunchly sticks to his religious beliefs and shouts in agony from the pyre, ‘Life I’ll gladly lose, my Sikh dharma I won’t!’\(^{36}\) Though the killing fields of the Punjab plains were covered with blood; though stories of women jumping into wells, or jumping into fires or being beheaded to safeguard their honour abound, Niranjan Singh’s decision to immolate himself is one of those unheard, isolated instances where a man sacrifices himself and dies to uphold his faith during the Partition. His martyrdom is as tragic as the scene in the railway station where the mass cremation of corpses took place. Whereas the previous scene is described in all its gruesome details and leaves one emotionally drained, this awe-inspiring martyrdom is sanctified:

\[\text{In that silence, the noise and the crackling of the fire seemed out of place. No, it did not seem out of place, it belonged with the sanctity of the moment ... And then someone picked up the chant, 'Waheguru,} \]
Waheguru, Waheguru.' It was the voice of someone unconnected with the family, but it was a weeping trembling voice. The others joined in and it became a gentle, steady, roll. ‘Waheguru, Waheguru, Waheguru, Waheguru, Waheguru, Waheguru!’ And slowly they started going round the fire. With hands folded in obeisance, they made a circle, and bowed deep before the heap of bones and cinders. They also kept up the chant.37

In next to no time his ashes became a samadhi, a place of religious veneration, Niranjan Singh, in committing this martyrdom, has ensured that he passes on this heritage to his unborn child.

After narrating this martyrdom and Lala Kanshi Ram’s personal loss, which he bears with dignity and nobility, Nahal focuses on the last journey. The inability of the Boundary Force under General Rees to maintain peace in the Punjab dashes Kanshi Ram’s hopes of staying on in Sialkot. With the new countries engaged in a fratricidal division and the announcement of the Boundary Commission’s award on the seventeenth of August, everyone knew where he stood – on a part of Pakistan, or of India.38 While the communal carnage escalated, while the two governments squabbled over who would feed the refugees and how their assets were to be divided, Lala Kanshi Ram realises that it was time to proceed to India. And now begins the travails of the migrants as they undertake the iconic last journey by foot columns. The route his column would take would be from Sialkot to Dera Baba Nanak – one of the four routes mentioned earlier. The date for the foot journey to Dera Baba Nanak, headed by Major Jang Bahadur Singh is fixed and Nahal gives a detailed account of the number of people in the kafila, the route they would take, and the planning and logistics involved. There were over twenty thousand people in the convoy which meant a column of over ten miles in length, which was substantially lesser than the 400,000 strong column Butalia mentions. Dera Baba Nanak, the border town on the Indian side, was forty-seven miles from Sialkot and the people would walk six miles a day. They were to avoid all towns, camp in open fields and stop only for the night, except for Pasrur and Narowal where other refugees would join the convoy. It was estimated that they would reach India in fifteen days’ time.

Since it was to be a long difficult march, there were to be no vehicles except for the old and the infirm; they would have to sleep in the open; and would have to
carry their own rations or buy them locally. They had heard of other people dying of hunger, disease or exposure as well as by violence. Bullock carts were hired for transporting their luggage, some had bicycles and the rest carried their own luggage.

On the day of the departure the people are overcome by emotion as they turn round to have a last look at Sialkot. As the city fades away into the distance themigrants become aware of the various levels of betrayals and losses. A crowd had gathered to watch the departing convoy and jeer and shout insults at the men and women. Bibi Amar Vati feels betrayed by her opportunistic husband, Gangu Mal, who had converted in order to hold onto the property in Fort Street. LalaKanshi Ram, through his immense, unbearable grief and sorrow realises that the problems ahead were innumerable, complex and bewildering. And though he still had the will to live and not acknowledge defeat; he faltered temporarily thinking of the difficult future ahead. He faces personal, financial and business losses when he is wrenched away from his home. He also has to leave close friends like Chaudhry Barkat Ali behind, who accompanies him on the first leg to his journey. When they finally part, neither of them thinks the move or Partition would be permanent. As Chaudhry Barkat Ali puts it:

‘If not in our life – time, Insha-Allah in the life-time of our children this folly will surely be undone ... We are one people and religion cannot separate us from each other.’

Though they are optimistic about being reunited these friends do not know that this is an irrevocable journey with no chance of a return due to the introduction of a passport system which made travel between the two countries more difficult, exacerbated by three wars and continuing hostility between the two countries. Even the love between Arun and Nur dies a premature death.

The last leg of their journey is filled with dangers, which, Nahal describes in detail though he does not give any fresh insights about the psychological impact on the people. He merely chronicles all that they face. The convoy passes by dismembered human limbs and skeletons, and every village they pass they find that the Hindu population had been either driven out or decimated. En-route they are attacked more than once by an armed mob and the cover given by Major Jang Bahadur Singh proves to be inadequate. Needless to say they lose many people in the
convoy. At Narowal their camp is attacked. Many are killed and many women are abducted. Chandini, whom Arun hoped to marry, is also abducted and Sunanda, Bibi Amar Vati’s daughter-in-law, is raped. Arun also witnesses the unwholesome parade of naked women.

It is a band of dispirited refugees that finally reach the bank of the river Ravi and stand on the soil of free India. Arun sees:

...many kissing the Indian soil, and he saw many others bathing in the Ravi to mark their deliverance. He saw his own father yielding to similar sentiments. Throughout the journey he never tired of talking of Sialkot. Now Arun saw him bend law, pick up a little earth and rub it with his fingers. He saw tears in his eyes and found he was breathing heavily ... In an unusual gush of feelings, Lala Kanshi Ram raised his hand shouted ‘VandeMataram’ – salute to the motherland. Arun only looked at the passive flow of the river.40

Lala Kanshi Ram’s relief is apparent on setting foot on Indian soil. This feeling is similar to what Suchi and Rita Kothri41 noted about refugees when they reached their destination. The unfamiliar ceases to be intimidating once they realise they have reached the land of their co-religionists and signals the end of a journey. On the other hand leaving a familiar place where one has spent the greater part of their lifetime marks the beginning of a journey filled with fear and insecurity. Another point worth noting is that for Lala Kanshi Ram stepping on Indian soil meant deliverance whereas Arun was merely indifferent as he had not got over Chandini’s loss.

From Dera Baba Nanak, Lala Kanshi Ram and his family proceed to Amritsar where they find their relatives do not want them and their presence as refugees is resented by the local people. They then proceed to Delhi by train and witness atrocities being committed on Muslims by Hindus and Sikhs. He now comes to the conclusion that in order to build a new nation one’s hearts and minds must be free of hatred. He realises that not only must he forgive the Muslims but he and his co-religionists in turn need to be forgiven by the Muslims:

‘We have sinned as much. We need their forgiveness!’42
When they reach Delhi they find that there is no utopia awaiting them as promised by the proponents of the two-nation theory. Their journey across the new border had no moral glamour attached to it and no religious sanctity. Instead, on their arrival LalaKanshi Ram and the others have to contend with insensitive bureaucrats whose sympathies are not with the refugees as LalaKanshi Ram’s exchange with the Rehabilitation Officer shows:

‘Why have you come to Delhi?’

_LalaKanshi Ram looked up at him in surprise._

‘I am from Pakistan’, he said, feeling certain this was identity enough.

_The officer scoffed._

‘I know, I know. But why to Delhi?’

_LalaKanshi Ram was at a loss for reply. He had not thought for a moment he would have to justify his presence anywhere in India._

‘Why to Delhi?’ The officer was harsh and overbearing.

‘I hope to settle here’, he said.

‘Why not in East Punjab? Why do you Punjabis lift your faces and march on to Delhi?’...

‘It’s the capital of the country, do you realise? We can’t let you people swarm here and disfigure it.’

The hostility towards the refugees is voiced openly by the officer who is afraid of the culture of Delhi being forever changed by the influx of the Punjabi refugees. Though the official records state that every effort was made to rehabilitate the refugees it omits to give the refugees’ side of the story and their experiences with the bureaucrats when they reach India broken and shattered. On their arrival to India they had to struggle to build life anew, build new homes and overcome the loss. All this can only happen if they have a roof over their heads and LalaKanshi Ram asks the Rehabilitation Officer to sanction him a small flat and a shop from evacuee property. Instead, he is allotted a place in Kingsway Camp one of the four areas in Delhi allotted to refugees. Reluctant to go to a refugee camp he and Arun look for rented
accommodation or evacuee property to shift to. However, they find that the local people were unwilling to rent out their property to refugees and the Area Custodian of evacuee property expects a bribe. Besides highlighting the corruption that was rife amongst the officers, it also reveals the fact that these officers were from West Punjab but did not consider themselves refugees as they had social standing and the financial resources to rehabilitate themselves swiftly. It was their class status which separated them from migrants like LalaKanshi Ram, affirming Ravinder Kaur’s observation about the excruciating process of rehabilitation. Grief stricken and unmanned Kanshi Ram breaks down and cries. Arun is at a loss to see so much sorrow for a house! Such prostration! Such weariness of the spirit!45

What Nahal has fictionalised is the psychological impact on the people which history is unable to do. The point that is driven home to LalaKanshi Ram is that he is now a refugee who has been shorn of his dignity and pride because of the callous handling of insensitive bureaucrats, who have been placed there to help and aid refugees like him. LalaKanshi Ram, who always had everything, is now without a home and is forced to shift to Kingsway Camp with his as well as Bibi Amar Vati’s family. To his surprise, he finds that he was not given a tented accommodation. Instead he is allotted a brick hutment build for the sole purpose of housing refugees.

Rebuilding life after Partition, in a new city, in alien surroundings is not easy. This is what LalaKanshi Ram realises upon arrival in Delhi. If getting a roof over their heads was a difficult task, receiving compensation for the property he left in Sialkot calls for endless trips to the claims office. Earning a living is also not easy. Though he has left his flourishing grain business behind, he does not accept defeat. He sets up a small grocery shop in his veranda even though he faces stiff competition from the bazaar outside and other similar stores set up by other refugees inside the camp. Nevertheless:

It hurt LalaKanshi Ram no end. From the time he set up this little shop, he had stopped wearing a turban. A turban was a sign of respect, of dignity. He had no dignity left. He now wore a forage cap. Or he sat bare-headed advertising his humble position to the world.46

Torn from his moorings and having lost all, including his business and self respect, LalaKanshi Ram is no longer the proud grain merchant, who had a standing
in Sialkot. Even though he notices the pride and fearlessness the people stood with while mourning Gandhi’s death, he was not really unrestricted or untrammelled because his material, personal and psychological losses are immense which cannot be compensated adequately. The road ahead, the future for him, is bleak and he voices the popular opinion that Partition should not have been acceded to so easily. He is enveloped in a feeling of utter desolation and hopelessness. What must be remembered is that since Nahal deals with the Partition story only till January 1948 the story of the Punjabi community’s successful integration and restoration of loss cannot be depicted. Therefore, the story cannot move beyond the present bleakness. The psychological scars also remain and the biggest casualty of the Partition is the inability of Lala Kanshi Ram and the rest in the family to communicate with each other:

... *He couldn’t establish a contact either with his wife or with his son. The affection was there. The concern was there. Their respect for him was there too. Yet the contact was broken. Something had driven them apart. No, he couldn’t reach them. For a few moments he had succeeded in the train – with his wife. That wouldn’t come again.*

Arun too is scarred by his experiences. In the adjoining room he hears Sunanda’s sewing machine whirring at top speed and he finds that he had lost contact with her too. All of them retreat into their own shells. At this present moment they do not realise that Lala Kanshi Ram’s shop and Sunanda’s sewing will eventually help them rebuild life anew. Now, at the present moment they are weighed down heavily by the pangs and agonies of their experiences.

*Azadi*, as has been mentioned earlier, merely chronicles the trials and travails of the Partition migrants through the experiences of Lala Kanshi Ram and details roughly three broad narrative themes: of the peaceful life before Partition, the perilous last journey and the disappointments and difficulties on reaching Delhi. What this novel does not explore is how they finally re-establish themselves though it is hinted at through what Lala Kanshi Ram and Sunanda do. In all this, Nahal does not acknowledge the measures the Indian state had taken to give the refugees employment though he recounts how they finally find place in the cramped quarters of Kingsway Camp. This is a major step in their rehabilitation. What Nahal does amplify is the sheer grit, determination, hard work and the spirit of enterprise that the Punjabi
migrant had in overcoming their losses and becoming financially independent. Similarly, this novel does not go into great detail about the woman migrant though he touches upon their predicament through the parade of naked women, Sunanda’s rape and Chandini’s abduction. How the woman migrant establishes herself financially is again hinted at through Sunanda’s sewing machine.

**THE ICONIC TRAIN JOURNEY:**

If in *Azadi*Nahal focuses on the foot journey from Sialkot to Delhi the migrants undertook, Kushwant Singh in *Train to Pakistan* deals with the other iconic journey – the train journey with all its attendant perils. However, Singh does not chronicle every single detail of the journey as Nahal does for this novel is not exclusively about the last journey the migrants undertook. It is also about refugees being victims and agents of violence. The train load of dead refugees form a powerful backdrop against which to understand how refugees were constructed in the popular imaginary and, at the same time, shows how it disrupted the syncretism and the peaceful rhythms of everyday life.

Early in the novel Khushwant Singh underlines the importance of trains for the inhabitants of Mano Majra, a sleepy village on the border of Pakistan. Mano Majra has always been known for its railway station though not many trains stop there. People’s schedules revolve round the trains for its coming and goings signal when to get up, when to have the midday nap, when to give the call for prayer and when to settle down for the night. The daily rhythms of the village are tied to it and, as Singh is at pains to tell us, *it had always been so, until the summer of 1947,* when the schedule in Mano Majra started going awry:

> Early in September the time schedule in Mano Majra started going wrong. Trains became less punctual than ever before and many more started to run through at night. Some days it seemed as through the alarm clock had been set for the wrong hour. On others, it was as if no one had remembered to wind it. Imam Baksh waited for Meet Singh to make the first start. Meet Singh waited for the mullah’s call to prayer before getting up. People stayed in bed late without realizing that
times had changed and the mail train might not run through at all. Children did not know when to be hungry and clamoured for food all the time. In the evenings, everyone was indoors before sunset and in bed before the express came by – it if did come by. Goods trains had stopped running altogether, so there was no lullaby to lull them to sleep. Instead, ghost trains went past at odd hours between midnight and dawn, disturbing the dreams of Mano Majra.49

The disruptions in the train schedules disrupt the diurnal routine of the Mano Majrans who have, so far, not witnessed any communal violence. This disrupted train schedule is, in addition, indicative of the communal cataclysm that is engulfing the newly created nations of India and Pakistan. So far, these ghost trains with trainloads of dead refugees only pass by without disturbing the peace of the village. Nevertheless, the unease is there though it is not stated directly.

Around the time there is a change in the schedule of the trains and that of the people, a unit of Sikh soldiers encamp near the railway station and patrol it. Now at the station:

... All trains coming from Delhi stopped and changed their drivers and guards before moving on to Pakistan. Those coming from Pakistan ran through with their engines screaming with release and relief.50

These are ominous signs, which signal that the newly created borders have newly created troubles of great magnitude. The drivers had to be changed so that the refugees could be ensured a safe passage across the border. The engines scream with release and relief because the safety of the refugees coming to India has been ensured. However, the arrival of the ghost train changes the entire atmosphere of Mano Majra. With this, Singh introduces the reader to the dangers of migrating by the Refugee Specials in 1947. Aiyar51 gives a detailed analysis of these trains of death, which proved an easy way to carry on with the pogroms of ethnic cleansing, en mass as the members of each community were concentrated in these trains. Although the first of the numerous infamous train incidents occurred at the end of July, the first actual sabotage occurred on 9 August. Trains crammed with refugees, were attacked on either side of the Punjab border. Revenge and retaliation were the main reasons given for the attack. What is also notable is that the savagery and brutality of the
attacks reveal similar attitudes of the communities on either side of the border, which were intent on exterminating the Other.

The peace of the village is shattered with the arrival of a ghost train in broad daylight and the whole village congregates in the gurudwara to discuss the implications of a train load of dead refuges from Pakistan at their doorstep. Imam Baksh, the mullah, mentions that he has heard of many incidents with trains. The arrival of this particular train makes the meaning of the incidents very clear. It is no longer a euphemism for concentrated massacres and slaughter with the objective of ethnically cleaning particular communities. The villagers become aware of the communal carnage in all its stark reality which creates uneasiness in their minds. At the mass cremation:

*The northern horizon, which had turned a bluish gray, showed orange again. The orange turned into copper and then into a luminous russet. Red tongues of flames leaped into the black sky. A soft breeze began to blow towards the village. It brought the smell of burning kerosene, then of wood. And then – a faint acrid smell of searing flesh.*

*The village was stilled in a deathly silence. No one asked anyone else what the odour was. They all knew. They had known it all the time. The answer was implicit in the fact that the train had come from Pakistan.*

*That evening, for the first time in the memory of Mano Majra, Imam Baksh’s sonorous cry did not rise to the heavens to proclaim the glory of God.*

This scene is in sharp contrast to Nahal’s description of the mass cremation where he supplied the reader with all the gory details of dismembered limbs and skulls cracking open. In short, it provided a visual and aural spectacle. On the other hand, Singh equally and effectively manages to convey the terrible scene through the sense of smell: of the smell of kerosene, of burning wood and of searing flesh. The villagers have not actually seen the dead. The gory details of the massacre are described through Hukum Chand, newly appointed Deputy Commissioner’s detailed recollections of the scene:
... He lay down again with his hands over his eyes. Within the dark chambers of his closed eyes, scenes of the day started coming back in panoramic succession ... There was a man holding his intestines ... There were women and children huddled in a corner, their eyes dilated with horror, their mouths still open as if their shrieks had just then become voiceless. Some of them did not have a scratch on their bodies. There were bodies crammed against the far end wall of the compartment, looking in terror at the empty windows through which must have come shots, spears and spikes. There were lavatories jammed with corpses of young men who had muscled their way to comparative safety. And the nauseating smell of putrefying flesh, faeces and urine ... The most vivid picture was that of an old peasant with a long white beard; he did not look dead at all. He sat jammed between rolls of bedding on the upper rack meant for luggage, looking pensively at the scene below him. A thin crimson line of coagulated blood ran from his ear onto his beard.54

These recollections, suffused with realism, bring out the macabre and brutal quality of the massacre. It also reinforces Aiyar’s observation that the assailants were driven not only by the idea of revenge and retaliation but also with an unreasonably intense desire to exterminate the Other. The estimated number of deaths was more than a thousand on this train which did not take into account of the approximately five-hundred that must have fallen off the roofs, foot boards and in between buffers when they were waylaid. Though Hukum Chand had always taken death stoically and though he was a hardened bureaucrat, he was bewildered and frightened by the brutality and scale of the violence.

The arrival of the train load of dead in Mano Majra reinforces the perils of migration by train as well as drives home the point that refugees were seen not only as victims but also as agents of violence. Here dead refugees could also lead to carnage. From the time of taking charge, Hukum Chand does not want any incidents taking place in his district and views refugees and their story telling as potential threats to the peace in the village. This is apparent when he asks the police sub inspector when he first comes to Mano Majra:

“No communal trouble in this area?”
“We have escaped it so far, sir. Convoys of Sikhs and Hindu refugees from Pakistan have come through and some Muslims have gone out but we have had no incidents”.

“You haven’t had convoys of dead Sikhs this side of the frontier. They have been coming through at Amritsar. Not one living. There has been killing over there.”

What this exchange reveals is Hukum Chand’s communal stance and the trouble refugees could cause by inciting further violence. After the arrival of the ghost train the sub inspector reports that the Mano Majra Muslims had not left the village and that a few Sikh refugees had crossed the river and had taken shelter in the temple. Hukum Chand’s reaction is instantaneous:

“Why were they allowed to stop?” asked Hukum Chand sharply. “You know very well the orders are that all incoming refugees must proceed to the camp at Jullundur. This is serious. They may start the killing in Mano Majra.”

His anxiety is palpable as also his opinion that refugees are a source of trouble. In order to avoid any incidents he engineers the peaceful evacuation of the Mano Majra Muslims later in the novel.

Nevertheless, the arrival of the ghost train changes the atmosphere in the village in another way. The villagers have become polarised into new ethnic groups. They want to get rid of the Muslims because of their religious affiliation and not because they have harmed anyone in Mano Majra. Though the process of Othering has started many assembled in the gurdwara still are hesitant to denounce the Muslims. Yet, at the same time, they do not know how to deal with the incoming refugees and the new crisis their presence has thrown up. The lambardar’s concern about the refugees echoes Hukum Chand’s views:

“... These refugees who have turned up at the temple may do something which will bring a bad name on the village.”

They feel that the only way out of this dilemma is to ask the Muslims to go temporarily to the refugee camp near Chundunnugger. When the departure of the Muslims becomes imminent Imam Baksh breaks down and asks:
“What have we to do with Pakistan? We were born here. So were our ancestors. We have lived amongst you as brothers.”

His plaintive questioning shows that Pakistan is an alien, abstract concept for him and the other Muslim villagers. It also reveals that they are firmly rooted in the Mano Majra soil, and live happily and amicably side by side with the Sikhs. The lambardar again voices his apprehension about the refugees:

“... Chacha, we are so few and the strangers coming from Pakistan are coming in thousands. Who will be responsible for what they do?”

He then advises Imam Baksh:

“... I would advise you to go to the refugee camp while this trouble is on. You lock your houses with your belongings. We will look after your cattle till you come back.”

Having at last suggested what the rest of the village was hesitating to do, it is notable that, like Lala Kanshi Ram in Azadi, they think that the move to the refugee camp is temporary. Even Jugga’s mother voices a similar sentiment when Nooran, who is pregnant with Jugga’s child, begs her to keep her in Mano Majra and not to send her away to Pakistan. She tells her that he would get her, wherever she is when this trouble blows over.

Imam Baksh realises the inevitability of the move but is, at the same time, heavy hearted for being forcibly made to move and clear out of homes it has taken [their] fathers and grandfathers hundreds of years to make. They have to leave their homes and hearths and the people they have been living with all their lives. The trauma of separation is also briefly dealt with, when they pack their meagre belongings:

Not many people slept in Mano Majra that night. They went from house to house – talking, crying swearing love and friendship, assuring each other that this would soon be over. Life, they said, would be as it always had been.

But life can never be as it always had been because much to their shocked surprise they are told that they would be sent to the Chundunnugger refugee camp and
from there by train to Lahore. The lambardar refuses to take charge of the evacuee’s property and, as a result, Malli and his gang of thugs are made custodians of the evacuated Muslims’ property who immediately go on a looting spree.

Amidst all this turmoil another ghost train from Pakistan arrives in Mano Majra. This time the dead were given a mass burial. Another massacre of refugees in a foot column takes place upstream in a border village. Their corpses float down the Sutlej which is in spate through Mano Majra:

... The river had risen further. Its turbid water carried carts with the bloated carcasses of bulls still yoked to them. Horses rolled from side to side as if they were scratching their backs. There were also men and women with their clothes clinging to their bodies; little children sleeping on their bellies with their arms clutching the water and their tiny buttocks dipping in and out. The sky was soon full of kites and vultures. They flew down and landed on the floating carcasses. They pecked till the corpses themselves rolled over and shooed them off with hands which rose stiffly into the air and splashed back into the water.63

This grisly scene and the second ghost train not only depicts the dangers the refugees going by foot columns and trains faced but also reinforce the point that dead refugees would be trouble for Mano Majra as it would provoke a reaction. Trouble does come to Mano Majra in the form of the American cowboy and his group of agent provocateurs. Though a boy in his teens, he has an aggressive bossy manner and whips up passions against the Muslims. He does this by first attacking the manliness of the Sikhs huddled in the gurudwara, “What sort of Sikhs are you ... Potent or impotent?”64 After attacking their manhood he whips the people assembled into the gurudwara into righteous anger motivated only with the aim of revenge and retaliation that SwarnaAiyar noted:

“No you know how many trainloads of dead Sikhs and Hindus have come over? Do you know of the massacres in Rawalpindi and Multan, Gujranwala and Sheikhpura? What are you doing about it? You just eat and sleep and you call yourselves Sikhs – the brave Sikhs! The martial class!”65
He goes on to outline a plan to derail a train load of Muslim refugees going to Pakistan that night and brushes aside all arguments that it would carry Mano Majra Muslims. At this point it is pertinent to note that his plan corresponds exactly with Swarna Aiyar’s observation that these Refugee Specials became targets of attack as people of one community, who were concentrated in these trains, could easily be exterminated and would also satisfy their desire for extracting an eye for an eye. The attacks on trains showed a high degree of planning and organization, which was carried out in a systematic and methodical manner. The attacks would generally take place in the night in the open countryside as the fields would give them ideal cover into which they could vanish into the night. The cowboy soldier’s plan to sabotage the train too shows similar planning which would be carried out with military precision. In the dead of night the villagers would hide in the fields to ambush the train and massacre the Muslims.

When the police sub inspector reports the impending sabotage to Hukum Chand, his mind is preoccupied with two concerns. One is with Haseena, the child prostitute’s safely, for whom he has developed some feelings and the other is how to prevent violence and maintain peace in his district. Even Hukum Chand, hardened bureaucrat that he is, is hopeful that the Muslims and Haseena would return when the situation returned to normalcy and that the shift is not permanent. But the sub inspector’s reply puts paid to his hopes:

“*There is not much for them to come back to. Their homes have been burned or occupied. And if anyone did come back his or her life would not be worth the tiniest shell in the sea.*”

His reply also shows the dangers the Muslims would face if they now returned to an ethnically polarised Mano Majra. In order to save Haseena and the Muslims and also to avoid violence at all costs, Hukum Chand releases Iqbal and Jugga in the hope that they would avert the massacre. Though Iqbal does not meet his expectations it is Jugga, a common criminal, who sacrifices his life so that the Mano Majra Muslims and his beloved Nooran can go to Pakistan in safety.

The Mano Majra Muslim refugees are the lucky ones who reach their destination in safety, but there were countless others on both sides of the border, who arrived in ghost trains. These ghost trains form a powerful imagery against which
Singh discusses not only the fate of the migrants, when they undertook the last journey but also how refugees were viewed with suspicion, hostility and a threat to peace.

THE ELITIST SIKH EXPERIENCE OF MIGRATION AND DISPLACEMENT:

Baldwin’s *What the Body Remembers*, too deals with the travails of the refugees but from the Sikh angle. As such, the Sikh side of the story begins much before Partition with the Muslim League’s demand for Pakistan that threatened to convert the Punjab, a Muslim majority province, into an Islamic state if it were to be met. While dealing with the Sikh concerns, the novel also deals with the elites who had to migrate to India in the wake of the Partition. In depicting Sardarji’s and his family’s dislocation to Delhi, Baldwin makes a departure from *Azadi or Train to Pakistan*, where the effect of the migration was shown in all its realistic, horrifying details on the common man. Since Sardarji is a rich landlord, England educated and an engineer in the irrigation department his experiences were markedly different to that of LalaKanshi Ram and the Mano Majra Muslims corroborating Ravinder Kaur’s observation that the last journey showed up class differences.

Sardarji, like all Sikhs, finds the 1940s a period of great crisis wherein he views the Muslim demand for Pakistan with consternation. While discussing the political situation with his Muslim friend Rai Alam Khan in Simla in May 1944 he realises that even the educated Muslims want Pakistan to become a reality and that it is not merely the malcontents and the poor that Jinnah and the Muslim pirs, maulvis and mullahs have stirred into protest. What Sardarji gleans is that he, his household and the entire Sikh quom, which number only five million, would always have to be on their best behaviour as they would be guests at the mercy of their Muslim hosts if Pakistan is created in Punjab Province, who could at any moment be made to leave if Gandhi and Nehru agreed to the Partition. He does not want this for his entire *jagir* is in Rawalpindi, which he would be forced to leave if the Partition demand was conceded. However, at this stage, he is sceptical of Pakistan surviving for more than
a year or two, as the Muslim-majority provinces flank the Hindu and Sikh regions and
governing them would pose stupendous problems.

Even as late as March 1947 though Sardarji, like the rest of his community,
does not want to be ruled by the Muslims, he is worried about how the minorities like
the Sikhs would be protected if they are left in a hypothetical Pakistan. What
Sardarji’s musings reveals is that the Sikhs do not want to become a helpless minority
at the mercy of a Muslim tyranny, should Pakistan become a reality. At present the
creation of Pakistan is hypothetical and he, like the others, thinks that it is a
negotiating tactic for Jinnah. However, when the partition of the Punjab was
endorsed on 23 June 1947 with the East Punjab Assembly voting decisively for a
division of the province, Sardarji realises that the fate of the large tracts of canal
colony lands and many important holy shrines belonging to the Sikhs hang in the
balance.

As the political developments unfold, the communal situation worsens.
Sardarji is forced to go to Rawalpindi to resolve a strike in his flour mills. He now
knows that he cannot count on the loyalty of his workers anymore when he hears
them chant the demand for Pakistan and stone his car. His first impulse is to take all
his valuables collected for seven generations to Lahore. But when his brother-in-law,
Sardar Kushal Singh, manages to convince him not to do such a foolhardy thing for
people would think that the Sikhs were afraid, and if a Sikh jagirdar were to leave
with all his valuables panic would spread through every Sikh and Hindu haveli in
Rawalpindi. Sardarji cannot bear to be called a coward for he has to maintain the
picture Sikhs have made ever since the quom began ... the brave, the martial, the
fearless Sikhs, the one who often cannot tell where courage ends and foolhardiness
begins. He then stores all his valuables in his godowns but does not give the keys to
his faithful Manager Abdul Aziz for safekeeping. Instead, he keeps them himself.
This is a significant gesture for at this moment he is hopeful of returning after the
trouble blows over. Nevertheless, he now knows that his ancestral haveli sits in a
Muslim-majority area and in the chaos that will follow, a man will be identified on the
basis of his religion, not on his ability, achievement or contribution to society.

With civic order crumbling rapidly and Partition a reality, ever since that
fateful March day in Rawalpindi when his workers turned on him, Sardarji knows
what they want:
Muslim men want Sardarji’s land. They want Sardarji’s home, the haveli in Rawalpindi, his mill, his orchards and property, and every village his family has handed down seven generations. They want what he has, down to the books in his study, even if they cannot read them. 

It does not matter that he does not live in the ’Pindihaveli, that he stands at an office window far away across Punjab, in Lahore while his body remembers each room in that haveli; it is his. The ’Pindihaveli is where his father and mother lived and died; the memory of that haveli sustained him all the lonely days in England... He holds that haveli in trust for his sons for future generations of his clan.  

Sardarji’s attachment to his ancestral property is evident. Like all other Sikhs during those traumatic days, he is unwilling to let it go. In that period of uncertainty the Sikhs had sought to secure for themselves the best possible safeguards for their rights and interests as a religious-political minority community. But, as Sardarji realises, Master Tara Singh and all the elders demanded Sikhistan too late – six whole years after Jinnah demanded Pakistan. Frustrated by the failure of their leaders at the negotiating table and craving for revenge against the Muslims the Akali Dal began organising private armies – Sikh jathas – to protect their holy places, strengthened militias and stockpiled weapons. In order to face Partition on their own terms the Sikhs organized large scale violence directed at the Muslims in East Punjab while in West Punjab, Sikh saboteurs, mainly ex-soldiers were reportedly producing bombs to blow up trains and destroy canal headworks. The Punjab Boundary Force was helpless against the dispersed but co-ordinated attacks by Sikh jathas on Muslim villages and unescorted Muslim refugees fleeing across the frontier. While the jathas operated with impunity, on the political front the Akali Dal and other Sikh organisations channeled their energies into rousing the Sikhs to bring pressure on the Boundary Commission to include their holy places and land holdings in India – in other words make it a part of East Punjab. Many recommendations and emotional appeals were made to the Commission but proved to be of no avail and the Sikhs had to leave all that they had including their holiest shrine, the Punja Sahib Gurudwara, and migrate to Pakistan.

Sardarji, in order to safeguard his holdings and his ancestral property, also resorts to the two pronged action the Akali Dal launched out on. Ever since the
March madness in Rawalpindi Sardarji’s days are spent with government work and officials and his nights with leaders of the Sikh Akali Party. Sardarji now knows that he cannot rely on the police or his Muslim neighbours, so he buys more ammunition for his pistol and donates money to the Akali Party to arm the Sikhs and to feed the refugee Sikh and Hindus. In his view the Sikhs must organise or die – the choice is clear. He relies on the Akalis, who have turned to the sword, not only to defend the Sikhs but also to ensure the survival of the community. He donates money blindly to them because he feels let down by Gandhi and the Hindus, for he like other Sikhs, will have to leave his lands, orchards, mills and jagir in Pakistan. It is apparent that Sardarji and the rest of the community have a lot to lose and the only way out they feel is to organise themselves militarily.

The other course of action is to petition the departing British and suggest recommendations as they would decide where the boundary between east and west Punjab would lie. Sardarji is given the unenviable task of drafting a recommendation to the Punjab Boundary Commission, which has only seventy three days to partition the country and ten days to hear all arguments and recommend a border line to divide the Punjab between India and Pakistan. While going over the maps Sardarji realises that maps do not talk of people, sentiments, lands and the homes, people are so attached to and which will no longer be theirs. He is also overwhelmed by the sheer impossibility and magnitude of the task. Sardarji knows it is sham, nevertheless:

Sham or no sham, Sardarji has to think of every snaking ditch and hand-placed lump of dirt in Punjab, the work of hundreds of years to be cut in half somewhere, in an instant. His recommendation will go to an eminent Sikh lawyer who will explain Sikh history and the Sikh perspective to the Commission. And in the same moment, he must think of himself and his quom.

He feels no satisfaction in putting in his recommendation for he knows there will be disputes. And while he waits in his office to know where the Radcliffe Line will finally be drawn and to finally hand over charge to Rai Alam Khan on 14 August, he sends Roop and the children to Delhi as a precautionary measure for it would be unsafe for Hindus and Sikhs if Lahore fell to Pakistan. His brother-in-law Sardar Kushal Singh has already left in a DC-3. Sardarji, while he waits to surrender his office to Rai Alam Khan, who is the newly appointed chief accountant to the
Pakistan Service of Engineers, has transferred his money to Lloyds Bank in Connaught Place and has sent a lorry filled with government ledgers under army protection, to the Irrigation Department headquarters in Delhi. Though Sardarji does not give Manager Abdul Aziz his keys, he has signed a letter allowing him to live in his haveli rent-free and run his flour mills as caretaker till his return. All this confirms Ravinder Kaur’s observation that class differences permeated the migration process. Sardar Kushal Singh does not face any danger since his means of escape is by air. Since both of them are rich, well connected and have kept abreast with the developments, they have transferred their assets well in advance to India. Moreover, even now on the eve of his departure Sardarji is still hopeful of returning that is why he does not bequeath the Rawalpindi haveli to Manager Abdul Aziz.

When the time comes for Sardarji to leave the parting between the two friends, Sardarji and Rai Alam Khan, is shorn of all emotion and sentiment so unlike the parting between Lala Kanshi Ram and Chaudhry Barkat Ali in Azadi or between the villagers in Train to Pakistan:

Sardarji allows himself a brisk arm’s-length parting embrace. Quick, embarrassed.

‘Goodbye, brother. Sat Sri Akal’.

‘Khuda Hafiz’, Rai Alam Khan cannot permit himself any words of farewell but those of the Prophet particularly in the presence of the clerks.76

Though Sardarji leaves in an overcrowded train, the harrowing details of the train journey are not given. Nevertheless, Sardarji’s eyes cloud with unmanly tears and as the train pulls out of Lahore he wonders if India would be grateful for the sacrifice of the Sikhs. In Delhi, Sardarji is allotted a dilapidated, uncarpeted bungalow, its walls still blackened by the torches of looters. Again, the class differences in the resettlement and the rehabilitation process is apparent. Sardarji has got a bungalow, even if it has been ransacked, whereas, Lala Kanshi Ram and the other refugees were either provided tented accommodation or houses in cramped barracks. Because Sardarji is qualified, is a government official and has influence he is made the Chief Engineer of the Punjab, but with the western half of Punjab taken by Pakistan, he says it is a sorry title and does nothing for his loss.77 And his losses are great. When
Manager Abdul Aziz informs him of the safety of his haveli and valuables he only stroked his keys, sighed, said nothing. Something has shattered within Sardarji for he does not rejoice when Jawahar Lal Nehru authorised him to begin construction of the Bhakra Nangal Dam. Partition has dealt a blow to his pride and the once assured man now feels inadequate.

Thus, it is apparent that Sardarji, who refused to believe that Jinnah would get his Pakistan; who, when the Partition Plan is announced, realises that his ancestral land would be left in Pakistan; who resorts to financing the Akali Dal and makes a recommendation to the Boundary Commission to secure his and the Sikh community’s property; who finds it relatively easy to resettle in Delhi because of his class status is a shattered man. It is left to his wife, Roop, to shake him out of his stupor and who also had to make the last journey which, in many respects, was the same as Sardarji’s and in many other ways different.

Because Lahore would be unsafe if it were to fall to Pakistan, Sardarji sends Roop and the children in his Packard to Delhi accompanied by his faithful retainers, Narain Singh and Dehna Singh, as well as Jorimon, Roop’s Bengali Muslim maid-servant. What is surprising is that he has sent them without an army escort especially since Roop’s brother, Major Jeevan, is in the Army. Nevertheless, though Roop is alone and faces an uncomfortable moment, she also makes the last journey in comparative safety and comfort because of her class status.

As she travels to ‘India’ – word, name, label, all shorn of meaning, a country which is an abstraction to her, and at a time when the borderline has yet to be announced Roop, like others, thinks that the move will be temporary, plans a trip to Murree and to Hunza and the south to watch fishermen cast their delicate nets in the Indus. Along the way she notices in a detached manner that:

... the two lanes of the Grand Trunk Road have never felt the press of so many sorrowing men and women as this day. On bullock carts and rickety ekkas, pushing three-wheel redris, wheeling rusted bicycles, Sikhs and Hindus move east across Punjab, while Muslims from India pour north and west into the province, carrying their old, their sick, moving not in hope of freedom and independence, but from the fear their bodies remember from other ages.
And since they know not where the border will be, they know not where to stop.\textsuperscript{80}

She witnesses the agony of the people while on the move. An old Sikh peasant asks her how far Sikhistan is. She sees a woman whose breasts have been chopped off and her childhood friend, Huma, being abducted by a group of Sikh soldiers. But Roop does not help Huma because she was mindful of Sardarji’s injunction not to stop for anyone and because compassion would be construed as weakness and disloyalty to the Sikhs. Though the details of the peoples’ suffering is dispassionately conveyed, and Roop is depicted in an unheroic light she has her moment of heroism when she saves Jorimom from being abducted and raped by a group of Muslim soldiers. However, the horrors of the last journey have not been effectively conveyed and are only briefly touched upon. Roop reaches Delhi safely, in an otherwise uneventful journey. While Roop is in Delhi the Boundary Commission announces its award. Lahore goes to Pakistan and Baldwin comments:

\textit{And the Radcliffe line has done more than break railway connections between cities or tear headworks from canals – it has severed ties, severed all pretentions to culture, informed everyone of the savagery of which neighbours are capable.}\textsuperscript{81}

Baldwin does not elaborate what ties, personal and cultural, have been severed, nor, as has been noted, does she go into any of the details of the savagery taking place during those days.

Roop goes to the railway station daily and waits for Sardarji. Here too she witnesses a train load of dead refugees pull into the station and see how the Hindus wreck vengeance on the Muslim refugees. She hears tales of abducted women and Rooprealises that the only thing \textit{between her and women who have begun crowding refugee camps and ashrams since the March massacres in Pindi, is Sardarji, his power, his wealth}.\textsuperscript{82}In short, Baldwin too acknowledges that it was mainly women from the poorer sections of society, who suffered the trauma of Partition, making the Partition experience determined by class. However, since Baldwin has not experienced the Partition directly, she cannot convey its horrors as effectively as Khushwant Singh and Nahal have done. At the station Roop also comes across Zorawar, a young refugee boy, selling newspapers and umbrellas. His father was
killed in the Partition violence and his mother is in a refugee camp. Small as he is, he is determined to earn and look after his mother. Hope stirs in Roop:

   *My people, Punjabi Sikhs, will survive; this Zorawar’s spirit is in them. They will not beg, they will not die, they will work and build their lives again.*

   *I will survive, even if Sardarji is gone.*

   *I made two sons.*

Here Roop is proud of the enterprising spirit of the Sikhs who do not acknowledge defeat which, in turn, gives her the courage to contemplate life without Sardarji if he were not to make it alive across the border.

Roop is eventually reunited with Sardarji and, later, with her brother Major Jeevan, and her father Bachan Singh. Her father lives in a small room with no money and memories of how he had to behead his daughter-in-law, Kusum, in order to retain the family honour. SardarKushal Singh has lost his mind and Sardarji now knows that there is no going back to West Punjab. Roop comes into her own because she no longer lives in the shadow of Satya, Sardarji’s first wife, who died much before Partition. She organises AkhandPaath prayers in her bungalow and gurudwaras in Delhi for those who have lost their near and dear ones. But Sardarji’s frame of mind alarms Roop for she notices he gets nightmares and experiences a disconnection with him. Roop knows that the family, the refugees and the people disputing canal water in the Punjab need him as much as India does to begin the Bhakra Dam. To reinvigorate him, Roop confesses to him about her deaf ear which she had kept hidden from him all the years of her marriage. Sardarji now finds renewed purpose in life, for curing Roop of her deafness has become his business. He sets out in a tonga to look for a doctor *moving forward though still facing back.* Sardarji has decided to tackle and take on life as it unfolds in the future though he cannot forget the past.

What is apparent is that Baldwin, from her diasporic location, deals with Partition not through a nostalgic lens but as a historical fact while recounting Sardarji’s migration. This can only be understood by analysing the fears of the Sikh community who could not safeguard their rights and interests to the maximum and had to suffer the tragedy and ignominy of Partition like the Hindus. Moreover, his migration though elitist, still leaves its mark on him and it is left to Roop to renew his
faith in life again. Baldwin also conveys her faith and confidence in the Sikh community to rebuild their lives like Sardarji and Zorawar do with grit and determination. But what she omits to acknowledge is that Zorawars’s spirit was in all Punjabis – Hindus and Sikhs – that enabled them to rehabilitate themselves.

THE EXODUS: A PAKISTANI CHILD'S PERCEPTION:

Sidhwa’s *Ice-Candy-Man* does not go into details about the Partition refugees and, at the same time, deals with their problems in a very detached manner. Their travails are viewed through Lenny Sethi, a Parsi child’s eyes. This is because, the Parsis of Lahore stayed neutral in the conflict. They were not drawn into the vortex of the communal strife and were mere observers. Moreover, since their situation is filtered through a child’s eye no complex play of emotions takes place for it is only what she gets to know through her parents, the servants or what she observes that she reports.

Lenny first becomes aware of the flight of the Hindus and Sikhs through an absence. Before any trouble in Lahore begins she informs the reader that the back portion of her house is occupied by the Shankars who are newly married. Later in the novel the only inkling of their flight is conveyed through the fact that Ayah and her coterie of admirers *gather on the Shankars’ abandoned veranda.* But what Lenny has clearly understood is that the minorities in the newly created Pakistan feel insecure despite Jinnah’s exhortation in the Constituent Assembly session on 11 August:

*You are free. You are free to go to your temples. You are free to go to your mosques or any other place of worship in the State of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed that has nothing to do with the business of State...*  

As the communal violence escalates Rosy-Peter’s parents, Mr. Singh and his American wife, ask Lenny’s parents to store their furniture and other valuables, and would come back for them when the situation stabilised. He also tells them that the Mehtas, Malhotras and the Guptas had gone; that there were not many Hindu families left on Warris Road and only two Sikh families – the PritamSinghs and them – are left. Lenny notices that her parents and the Singh’s keep their emotions under tight
control and they do not break down. The only way Lenny understands something serious has happened is through Mr. Singh’s and her father’s eyes that glisten, the sob that escapes Mrs. Singh and her mother’s mouth that twitches. Lenny first becomes aware of the exodus of the Hindu and Sikh families and of houses being looted through Mr. Singh’s visit though she does not understand the implications of their departure.

Like most Partition novels, Ice-Candy-Man too has its ghost train, which comes from Gurdaspur filled with corpses and gunny sacks filled with women’s breasts. Again, the details of the dead are not given as is the case in Train to Pakistan. It is only reported by Ice-candy-man, and is instrumental in transforming him. When Sher Singh, the zoo attendant, hears of the train load of dead, his fear is palpable. Eventually, he is forced to leave because Ice-candy-man sets his goons on him and his family. Ice-candy-man justifies his action when he tells his group of friends:

‘After what one hears of Sikh atrocities its better they left sooner! The refugees are clamouring for revenge!’

Here it is clear that Ice-candy-man wants to avenge himself on the Sikhs for killing his relatives on the train and, this time, it is the refugees who demand retaliation even though they are lost and dispirited. This again vindicates Daiya’s stand that refugees were viewed as a source of potential trouble. Others like Kripa Ram, the money lender, flee ignominiously. The Government House Gardner, who notices the change in Ice-candy-man, decides to go because friends have turned into foes. Though Lenny becomes aware of the exodus of the Hindus and Sikhs she cannot give any details of their last tortuous journey as she is confined to Lahore. What she also notices are hoards of incoming Muslim refugees which is again unemotionally reported by her:

Instead, wave upon scruffy wave of Muslim refugees flood Lahore – and the Punjab west of Lahore. Within three months seven million Muslims and five million Hindus and Sikhs are uprooted in the largest and most terrible exchange of population known to history. The Punjab has been divided by the icy card-sharks dealing out the land
village by village, city by city, wheeling and dealing and doling out favours.\textsuperscript{88}

The other absences that Lenny becomes aware of are on Beadon Road and the Queen’s Garden. Beadon Road is:

... bereft of the colourful turbans, hairy bodies, yellow shorts, light pyjamas, and glittering religious arsenal of the Sikhs, looks like any other populous street. Lahore is suddenly emptied of yet another hoary dimension: there are no Brahmins with caste-marks – or Hindus in dhoties with bodhis. Only hordes of Muslim refugees.\textsuperscript{89}

Even the composition of the people in the Queen’s garden has changed. The Queen’s statue has been removed and the Hindus and Sikhs have gone. Now the garden scene has depressingly altered ... [and] the austerity of the black burkas and white chuddars that shroud the women\textsuperscript{90} deprive the garden of its colour and its multi-religious mix of people. This observation brilliantly conveys that the population has become homogenous following the exchange of population.

What Lenny also observes is how the abandoned houses and shops have been looted and stripped of all its possessions. She notices the unkempt garden in Rosy-Peter’s abandoned compound and also surreptitious signs of occupation in the Hindu doctor’s house. Though Lenny does not know it, refugees have occupied evacuee property and she can only intuit their fear:

**Months pass before we see our new neighbours. Frightened, dispossessed, they are coping with grief over dead kin and kidnapped womenfolk. Grateful for the roof over their heads, and the shelter of walls, our neighbours dwell in shadowed interiors, quietly going about the business of surviving, terrified of being again evicted.**

**Rosy-Peter’s house and the house and the house opposite still remain unoccupied. These are to be allotted to refugees who can prove they have left equally valuable properties behind.**\textsuperscript{91}

She can understand that they are frightened and dispossessed, who have to go about their business of surviving. But how they manage to survive, what strategies or coping mechanisms they adopt is not discussed at all.
Evacuee property has also been requisitioned to house abducted women. The Hindu doctors’ house has been taken over for this purpose. These developments are mysterious for Lenny. What arouses her curiosity is that it is guarded by a tall, burly Sikh and that and the gate is secured by a massive padlock. Obviously, these abducted women are considered impure and contaminated and they have to be kept securely locked, so that they do not spread their contamination to the rest of the society around. Lenny is struck by the desolate face of one of the inmates and the wailing that she hears every night. In her innocence she thinks they are criminals and when one of them is brought to replace Ayah, who has been abducted she wants to keep her criminal past a secret. This novel gives space to the abducted woman and deals with the issues of their abduction and rehabilitation.

So far Lenny has reported the change in the demographic composition in the cosmopolitan city of Lahore and the change in people like Ice-candy-man. But what is the situation in villages? This can be gleaned through the two trips Lenny makes to Ranna’s village: PirPindo. On her first visit to PirPindo with Imam Din, Lenny notices the close bonds of brotherhood and friendship existing between the Muslims and the Sikhs, who swear to protect each other. Because they feel that the communal trouble would not affect them, the Muslims decide to stay on in PirPindo and do not migrate to safer places. When she goes to PirPindo for the second time during the Baisakhi Fair, she notices a chill in the air due to the presence of strangers and also the fact that Sikhs do not warmly acknowledge Ranna’s presence. In this strained atmosphere Dost Mohammed has also noticed the presence of Akalis who he knows plan to drive the Muslims out of East Punjab if Pakistan becomes a reality.

A few days later, they hear of attacks on Muslim villages near Amritsar and Jullundur. Imam Din feels it is Akali propaganda and questions the logic of transferring millions of Muslims to Pakistan. He also knows that the villagers would have to abandon their lands to which they are attached to and all ties of kinship will forever be severed if the villagers were coerced into migrating. He also articulates the fact that, even if Partition were to take place, all the Muslims cannot be accommodated in Pakistan. As events turned out, this is exactly what happened. Many Muslims remained in India and India is the only non-Muslim country with a sizeable Muslim population. However, Imam Din’s sanguinity is belied. A fortnight after the Baisakhi Fair an army truck deposits a family of PirPindo villagers outside.
the Sethi’s house. Their dislocation, like many others in the Punjab, has begun much before 14/15 August. They were forcibly evacuated leaving their unharvested land, cattle and houses, and reluctantly leave what they value, the beauty of the sun rising and setting and the familiarity of their surroundings. Yet they are forced to leave without any notice and seek shelter with their relative Imam Din, who is working for the Sethis. How they face life after their dislocation and how they rebuild it is not dealt with in the novel.

Sidhwa also explores the fate of the Partition children through Ranna’s Story – a separate section in the book. After the Muslims of PirPindo are massacred by the Sikhs Ranna, despite being severely injured, miraculously survives. He wanders from village to village in search of his Noni Chachi and reaches Amritsar. Here, like all abandoned children, he scavenges for food in houses strewn with corpses and eats whatever he gets. He makes his way to a refugee camp and is sent to Lahore from there. Coincidentally, he is reunited with his Noni Chachi and Iqbal Chacha. Lenny’s godmother finds a convent which will take him on as a border and educates him. If this experience has scarred Ranna emotionally, or if it has left its mark on him, or if he is riddled with nightmares is not dealt with at all. Instead, Lenny remarks:

> It surprises me how easily Ranna has accepted his loss; and adjusted to his new environment. So ... one gets used to anything ... If one must.92

However, Ranna and Lenny drift apart because of their different social worlds and Ranna’s rehabilitation is not alluded to any more.

With Ranna’s story Sidhwa has attempted to make the story of Partition children visible. This is particularly important for so much of Partition history is woven around children that their invisibility now in it is tragic. Butalia93 estimates that around 50,000 children were born to abducted women. The Indian state debated extensively about whether they were legitimate or illegitimate; Hindu / Sikh or Muslim; and whether to send them back to Pakistan or keep them in India. While the fledgling nation bickered over these children, there were numerous other children who were either abandoned or who got left behind, or were deliberately put to death like the women as they would impede the escape of the men folk or be converted if picked up by the Muslims. Those, who survived lived a life of destitution like Ranna did.
Tragically, there is no record of such children. Many children grew up in orphanages or homes for the destitute; others grew up on the streets while a few were adopted. These children could not express or vocalise their fears and experiences and developed severe psychological problems. It was a time marked by a sense of bewilderment and incomprehension for them. Some adults found it difficult to talk about their childhood experiences of the Partition, while others deliberately silenced them maybe because they were too bitter or the memories too difficult to remember; therefore, they were best forgotten. The Indian State mounted a massive and widespread relief operation after Partition and the children, like the abducted and widowed women, were taken on by the State as permanent liabilities. Partition children were also given an education, put into orphanages or put up for adoption. Ranna too is in a similar situation and faces similar experiences but, as has already been mentioned, his emotional and psychological problems have not been dealt with.

That the Hindus and Sikhs are not going to return to Lahore is apparent when the Sethis let out the Shankar’s rooms to Dr. Selzer, a German doctor. The only people who stay on in Lahore are the Sethis, who are Parsi, and the Phailbus,’ who are Indian Christian. They opt to stay on in Lahore as their religion protects them from persecution in an Islamised Pakistan. This reiterates the point that the Shankar’s absence is replaced by a new presence, Dr. Selzer, who poses no threat to the newly formed nation of Pakistan like the Parsis and the Christians. However, the refugee crisis in Pakistan has not been dealt with in detail though it brings about a major change in the ethnic and religious composition of Lahore.

**THE COERCED POPULATION MOVEMENT:**

From a literary analysis of the coerced population movement during Partition in the previous sections it is evident that Nahal, Singh, Baldwin and Sidhwa approach the travails of the Partition migrant from different angles. ChamanNahal chronicles every detail of the last journey LalaKanshi Ram undertook from Sialkot to Delhi. It deals with the pre-Partition life he led; his attachment to his house and friends and his reluctance to leave Sialkot; his life in a refugee camp and his experiences while moving in a foot column to India. Upon arrival in Delhi, he gets a rude shock because
of the insensitive handling of bureaucrats. He eventually compromises with fate and circumstance when he shifts into a cramped barracks and becomes a petty vendor. Nahal also touches upon the psychological effect on him and his family.

If Nahal focuses on the iconic foot journey Khushwant Singh draws the reader’s attention to the iconic train journey, which forms a powerful backdrop against which he discusses all the attendant dangers migrants faced and also how they were perceived as a source of potential trouble. It shows how these ghost trains became instrumental in polarising people on religious and ethnic lines and the role of saboteurs in derailing trains for the sole purpose of extracting vengeance. However, it does not deal with the resettlement and the rehabilitation of the refugees like *Azadi* does.

While *Azadi* and *Train to Pakistan*, deal with the effect of Partition on the common man, Baldwin’s *What the Body Remembers*, deals with the migration on two fronts. Firstly, it deals with the Sikh response to Partition, migration in particular and secondly, the impact of the migration on the elite. Because of Sardarji’s class position the everyday struggle to re-establish his life is easier, so unlike what Nahal and Singh portray.

In *Ice-Candy-Man*, eight year old Lenny Sethi can only intuit what is happening either through absences and presences or through what she gleans from the people around her. She becomes aware of the change in the ethnic and religious composition of Lahore, though no in depth analysis about the refugees’ frame of mind or their rehabilitation is attempted. However, she deals with the fate of the abducted woman sensitively. She also examines and makes visible the plight of the Partition children which none of the other writers have done, though, again, it is treated very superficially.

The woman migrant is given space in *Azadi* and *Ice-Candy-Man*. However, Nahal only talks of the abduction and rape of the woman refugee but does not attempt an in-depth psychological analysis. This is in sharp contrast to Sidhwa, who narrates abduction in all its pathos.

As far as the last journey is concerned, Nahal and Khushwant Singh deal with the iconic Partition journey by foot columns and trains and convey the horrors associated with these journeys effectively. Baldwin makes Roop go by car from
Lahore to Delhi. However, Roop is comparatively safe and, except for one incident where she saves Jorimon, her Muslim maid-servant, from being raped she has a rather uneventful journey. As for Sardarji, his predicament and experiences on the train from Lahore to Delhi is not dealt with at all. The only inkling one has of the possible horrors he witnessed, are indicated by the nightmares he gets. Sidhwa does not attempt to portray the last journey at all; instead, she makes a passing reference to the waves of dispirited, scruffy refugees entering Lahore.

But whatever be the differences these writers have in their approach to the migration entailed by Partition all of them, in their own unique ways, talk of the dislocation and the uprooting; of their attachment to their friends, their houses, their land, their cities, their jagirs; and the trauma of resettling. All the characters depicted in the novels feel alienated and are grief-stricken as the sense of belonging and attachment to the new places of re-location is missing though the nostalgia for their old homes is not depicted in any great detail. Partition created a spiritual and social desert and as AlokBhalla expresses it:

... they are merely poor players trapped in civil, political and religious nightmares enacted to satisfy the egotism of some and the powerful ambitions of others ... And, as if to darken the irony of their migration, they discover that those who had urged them to leave their homes have no vision of a future to offer them – no programme of social and economic change which will enable them to lead better lives; no politics which will give voice to their anxieties; no theories of law, freedom, or modernity; and no tales of exemplary religious deeds which will serve them as a guide through their mortal days.\(^4\)

In other words, both the new nation-states of India and Pakistan have betrayed their citizens as they find no redemption on arrival to their new countries.

REFERENCES:


10. *Ibid.*, p 75. These figures have been taken from here.


46. Ibid., p 366.

47. Ibid., p 369-370.


49. Ibid., p 77.

50. Ibid., p 77.

51. Swarna Aiyar, (1998): ‘August Anarchy’ in Freedom, Trauma, Continuities: Northern India and Independence, D.A. Low and Howard Brasted (eds.), New Delhi: Sage Publications, pp 18-24. See these pages for a detailed discussion about Refugee Specials which became targets of violence and attack which were carried out with military precision in order to carry on with the programme of genocide and ethnic cleansing.


53. Ibid., p 84.

54. Ibid., p 85.

55. Ibid., p 19.

56. Ibid., p 97.

57. Ibid., p 123.

58. Ibid., p 126.

59. Ibid., p 126.

60. Ibid., p 126-127.

61. Ibid., p 127.
62. Ibid., p 132.

63. Ibid., p 143.

64. Ibid., p 148.

65. Ibid., p 148.

66. Swarna Aiyar, (1998): ‘August Anarchy’ in Freedom, Trauma, Continuities: Northern India and Independence, D.A. Low and Howard Brasted (eds.), New Delhi: Sage Publications, pp 18-24. See these pages again to see how attacks on trains were planned, and why it was mostly done in the open fields at night.


69. Ibid., p 393.

70. Ibid., p 418.

71. Ibid., p 427.

72. Ibid., pp 434-435.


75. Ibid., p 439.

76. Ibid., p 459.

77. Ibid., p 503.

78. Ibid., p 532.

79. Ibid., p 446.
80. Ibid., p 447.

81. Ibid., p 491.

82. Ibid., p 496.

83. Ibid., p 500.

84. Ibid., p 536.


86. Ibid., p 144.

87. Ibid., p 156.

88. Ibid., p 159.

89. Ibid., p 175.

90. Ibid., p 236.

91. Ibid., p 176.

92. Ibid., p 211.
