CHAPTER 2
THE COMMUNAL DIVIDE: SYCRETISM
VERSUS COMMUNALISM

An historical analysis of Partition reveals that the Partition of India was a result of the intransigence of politicians in the Congress and the Muslim League as well as the escalating communal differences that arose between the Hindus and Muslims. It is ironic that both Nehru and other nationalist leaders, who espoused secularism and shared a vision of a unified India, had to bow down to the forces of communalism that rent the country apart. In all this, what must be emphasized is that the Partition related violence was different from other communal riots in that it was more extensive and brutal than any previous violence and clearly linked with political developments.

Historians and commentators have noted that this end of empire communal violence was significantly different from the traditional colonial riots not only in its intensity, sadism and viciousness but also in its desire to ethnically cleanse minority populations. It became a contest for power and territory and spread from its traditional public arena of conflict to invade the private sphere, wherein the female body became a physical symbol of community identity and honour. The pogroms were certainly not indulged in by people only due to a temporary suspension of judgment where passions were aroused, as suggested by the official discourse, but were also a result of planning and organization by paramilitary groups in collusion with government officials, who were by no means unbiased. The cycle of violence, which began in August 1946 with the Great Calcutta Killings, spread to Noakhali and Bengal in October 1946; Garhmukhteshwar in November 1946; the Punjab: first to Rawalpindi in March 1947 and then the August-November 1947 violence; to return to East and West Bengal in February/March 1950.1

In the aftermath of the Partition a sense of betrayal laid heavily on everyone’s shoulders which makes it imperative to analyse why communalism made such deep inroads into a country known for its syncretism, where shared living was the norm and where people lived with the spirit of adjustment and accommodation.

Reflecting on the events of the time various analyses have been made to explain the rise of communalism. Some reiterate the view that the tragedy of Partition and the rise of
communalism was the result of British machinations and that it was the culmination of a separatist process initiated by a colonial government to foster its imperial interests. Others maintain that it was due to the centuries old Hindu-Muslim antagonism, which Britain exploited for her own purposes. In the discussion that follows neither of these extreme views will be supported. Instead, the argument will hinge on the fact that it was a combination of factors, which led to the fostering of the communal animus. To put it succinctly, they are the rise of religious nationalisms, which nourished and sustained each other as they fed and fostered each others’ fears; the failure of Indian nationalism; and, of course, the British policy of playing off one community against the other.2

Since communalism had such a pernicious effect on the country, it is essential to understand what it means. It is an ideology which treats the adherents of different religions as distinct social, political and economic units, emphasizes this distinctness, even breeds antagonism among them.3 It thus stands for a separatist tendency preaching the idea of exclusiveness of a community, purpose of existence, values and interests, which might lead communities to take antagonistic postures against each other: in this case hostility between the Hindus and Muslims. This idea of an exclusive religious community began with the fostering of community consciousness, which later deteriorated into communalism. Initially, the gulf between the two major communities was not unbridgeable but, as events unfolded, the fact remained that the Hindus and Muslims became polarized leading to the holocaust of the Partition. To understand the rise of communalism in India it is necessary to study the rise of Muslim and Hindu nationalisms, how the Indian nationalists tried to counter it and the British interventions, which aided and abetted in fanning the fires of communalism to foster their own selfish interests.

MUSLIM NATIONALISM:

In dealing with the rise of Muslim nationalism – a term synonymous with Muslim separatism – it is best to begin with the legacy of the past which begins with the advent of Islam in India in 712 A.D. when Mohammad-bin-Qasim conquered Sindh. Though the Western seaboard of India was known to sea-faring Arab traders long before 712 A.D, Islam struck roots when Mohammad established a Muslim not an Islamic state. When he did so political expediency won over orthodoxy.4 This was accomplished by giving the newly conquered territories the appearance of an Islamic state with the support of the existing administrative functionaries, who happened to be high caste Hindus, who, in turn
were considered infidels, overseen by Muslim governors. Simultaneously, the high ecclesiastical office of the Sadr-ul-Islam al Affal was created and the secular governors subordinated to it. It must be emphasized that it necessitated a compromise on the part of both antagonistic communities. The Hindus submitted to Muslim political power, without renouncing their faith or religious beliefs in agreeing to work for the alien rulers. Conversion to Islam was also carried out apparently without great success. Those Hindus and Buddhists who did not convert were grouped together as 
\textit{zimmis} or \textit{dhimmis}. This provided them protection against conversion. In any case, \textit{the early Arabs were not enthusiastic proselytisers}.^5

During the centuries following the establishment of a Muslim, but not an Islamic state, by Mohammad-bin-Qasim, the tension between religious orthodoxy and political expediency continued with political expediency winning the day even in the medieval period. What should be kept in mind is that the Muslim kings, mostly of foreign extraction, could not have lasted for a single generation without the help of the sons of the soil. Due to the expanding demands of administration, Hindu administrative skills, business acumen and military prowess had become essential for upholding the Muslim power. This resulted in syncretism, pluralism and tolerance with it reaching its acme of glory during Akbar’s reign. However, a dissenting note states that these were mere \textit{concessions to necessity as the relatively small numbers of Muslim invaders and the vastness of the areas to be controlled, inhibited the Muslim conquerors from seeking to fulfill their true intentions which were to Islamize the whole country, if necessary by force}.^6

Though the bending was mutual, the 1300 years of Islamic rule in India was not without strife and the two major communities faced many ups and downs in their relationship. This is mainly because Islam succeeded in inculcating among its adherents a strong sense of belonging to a community which was not merely religious but also political. Secondly, the long rule of the Turko-Afgans and Mughals over a considerable portion of India further strengthened the consciousness of power as well as that of community among the Muslim elite in this country. Muslim orthodoxy and political power were closely interrelated and every ruler was expected to keep it in mind. Though the two communities undoubtedly intermingled, the political and social distinctions between the Hindus and Muslims were maintained. While Hindus were appointed to the highest governmental positions, it was the Muslims who formed an overwhelming majority among those appointed to the highest offices. Moreover, the principle of religious toleration was generally disregarded while attacking Hindu rulers. Places of worship were destroyed and
forcible conversions took place. While the Turkish and Mughal rulers and nobles took Hindu wives, Hindu nobles could not take Muslim wives except on pain of death. Similarly, while conversion to Islam was the desired goal, a Muslim who changed his religion was put to death. The killing of cows, the use of Persian as the court language and the inferior status of a Hindu witness in courts of law fuelled resentment among the Hindus and made them think in terms of a distinct and separate community. These distinctions and resentments continued right up to the first half of the nineteenth century. Even when the Hindus and Muslims co-operated during the rebellion of 1857, they still maintained their separate identities.

After the failure of the so called Mutiny, Muslim rule in India was replaced by British supremacy. The Muslim elite became increasingly concerned with the loss of political power and the future of Islam in a land where non-Muslims constituted an overwhelming majority. Muslims were sidelined by the British for the rebellion was perceived as a Muslim conspiracy. As a result they suffered politically, economically and educationally. They woke up to the realisation that Hindus had out-stripped them in education and business and had replaced them in the administration because the British favoured them. What fuelled their sense of loss was the decennial census introduced by the British, which made them conscious of their minority status. Their communitarian identity was given further impetus by the introduction of separate electorates. This made the Muslim elite more community conscious than ever and predisposed them to examine every political development from the point of view of the supposed interests and rights of their own community, never for once forgetting that they were the descendents of those who had ruled over India for hundreds of years. The question that now loomed large was how the Muslims could uphold their Islamic way of life in a non-Muslim environment in the absence of political power.

After the disintegration of the Mughal Empire in the eighteenth century, orthodoxy acquired an even stronger hold over the mind of the Muslim elite in India over the future of Islam in the absence of political power especially in a situation where the original distinctive character of the Islamic civilisation had been blurred through contact with Hinduism in India. Leading Muslim theologians over the centuries like Shah Waliullah in the eighteenth century advocated Islamic revival and reformation making it mandatory to free it of all Hindu elements. In the first half of the nineteenth century Sayyed Ahmad Barelvi, a disciple of Waliullah’s son, led the Wahhabi rebellion. At the same time Haji Shariyatullah and his son Dudu Miyan led peasant movements in East and West Bengal.
Both the movements were inspired by the call of Islamic revival and reformation where Muslims were urged to fashion their lives strictly according to the tenets of Islam.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century the Islamic revivalism turned to education for the community’s redemption. It generated two responses: traditionalist and modernist. Whatever their orientations, the leaders attributed the decline of the political and social fortunes of the Muslims to the failure of the community to the live within the bounds of the sharia. The most distinguished of the traditionalist educational institutions was a seminary Dar-ul-Ulum founded by a group of ulama, led by Mohammed Qasim Nanotawi in 1867 at Deoband near Delhi. The modernist response was headed by Syed Ahmed Khan of Delhi who shaped and spear-headed the movement. He established the Scientific Society, a modern school for Muslims, in 1864 and the Anglo Mohammadan Oriental College at Aligarh, later known as the Aligarh Muslim University, in 1874. The institutions at Aligarh and Deoband both derived inspiration from the theological teachings of Wali-Ullah. While the college at Aligarh developed the element of religious speculation, the Dar-ul-Ulum stressed orthodoxy. In 1919 the ulama of Deoband allied themselves with the ulama of Farangi Mahal and Nadwat-ul-Ulama at Lucknow and established a political organization named the Jamiiyyat-ul-Ulama-i-Hind, the party of the ulama of India. It aligned itself with the Indian National Congress and supported the Khilafat Movement. Deoband, like many conservative Muslims in South Asia, followed the idea of pluralistic nationalism propagated by the nineteenth century thinker, reformer and anti-colonial figure Jamal-ud-din-al-Afgani. On the other hand, the modernist Aligarh Muslim University nurtured Muslim separatism. Its founder, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (1817-98), attached great importance to the spread of modern education among the Muslims and put Western rationalism, science, education and pedagogy on a higher plane than traditional Islamic knowledge though he did not reject it altogether. He believed that the future of Indian Muslims lay in close alliance with the British and, therefore, did not advice his fellow Muslims to join the Indian National Congress founded in 1885 nor did he sympathize with the Pan-Islamic movement that fired the imagination of the Muslims throughout India. The Khilafat Movement also added to the consciousness of Muslims being a community which was under dire threat. Though the movement died down due to various reasons, the bulk of the politically conscious Muslims again pitted themselves against Indian nationalism and its main arm, the Congress. Some prominent leaders of the Khilafat Movement like M.A. Ansari and Abul Kalam Azad, continued to work with the Congress, but others joined the
ranks of the resurgent Muslim nationalism. This was because Pan-Islamism sent out the message of Islamic revival and solidarity, and the brief association with Indian nationalism did not impact it significantly.

Though Syed Ahmed was in favour of Hindu-Muslim unity and co-operation, a political union between the Hindus and Muslims was not considered possible or desirable. The message of the Aligarh School was popularized among the educated sections of the Muslim community by his colleagues, notably Munshi Zaka Ullah, Maulvi Nazir Ahmad and the poet Altaf Husain Hali who lamented the lost glory of the Muslims. The idea of a Muslim community consciousness was also nourished and nurtured by writers like Syed Ameer Ali, Shibli Numani and Mohammad Iqbal. All of them glorified the Muslim heritage, but it was Iqbal who articulated the idea of a *Muslim India within India* in his presidential address at the annual session of the All India Muslim League held in December 1930 at Allahabad. While Iqbal stopped short of demanding a separate, sovereign state for Indian Muslims the idea had already been born and received an airing by various individuals since the second half of the nineteenth century. It was, however, left to Chaudhary Rahmat Ali in 1933 to demand the creation of such a State and named it Pakistan. He did so because he claimed Muslims in India had hardly anything in common with the Hindus.

Initially his idea was brushed aside as ‘chimerical’ but later caught on with zeal. It was left to the western educated, secular M.A. Jinnah, leader of the Muslim League, to carry out the idea of Pakistan to fruition. He was convinced that the future of the Muslims in an independent India with a Hindu majority would be one of oppression. With this in mind he insisted on constitutional safeguards in the form of separate electorates for minorities and, when that failed, for a separate state for Muslims which was proposed as late as 1940, when all other alternatives had failed. From his point of view, he saw that the Congress could not or would not secure the rights and safety of the Muslim minority in a Hindu majority state. Henceforth, he did all that was possible to bring the politically conscious Muslims in every part of India on one platform on the basis of a vehement anti-Congress and anti-Hindu rhetoric. After winning over the Punjab, the last bastion of resistance, Partition was a foregone conclusion.

All this is not to suggest that a strong community consciousness automatically translated into a religious community consciousness. Syed Ahmed Khan, Hali, Syed Ameer Ali, Shibli Numani, Mohammad Iqbal and M.A. Jinnah and others were no less secular that their Hindu counterparts, who wished for a plural society in India. At the same
time, they were deeply conscious of the need to uplift the Muslims. Initially, they were not communal in their outlook and it was not until the 1920s when religious antagonisms escalated, that the breach became final. Jinnah’s apocryphal declaration that Hindus and Muslims constituted two different nations and of the parting of ways in 1940 during the Lahore session of the Muslim League was in part due to a heightened Muslim community consciousness, which felt threatened and under siege by the rising Hindu community consciousness.

**HINDU NATIONALISM:**

Both Muslim nationalism and Hindu nationalism stoked and preyed on each other’s fears and had deep historical and psychological foundations. If the Muslim elite cherished proud memories of their forefathers coming from Arabia, Persia and Central Asia to conquer the country and rule over Indians for several centuries, the Hindu elite’s collective unconscious nurtured the historical memory of the sword of Islam vanquishing the original inhabitants, decimating populations, destroying temples, looting and plundering the country’s famed wealth, displacing rulers and, above all, forcibly converting the people. So much so, the stereotypical figure of the Muslim came to the endowed with a “national character”: fanatical, bigoted, warlike, dissolute, cruel. What got elided in the process was that conversions at a mass level in a fervent, zealous effort to propagate the faith by the state was rare. The limited success Islam achieved in India as a proselytizing force was not due to its kings and politicians but due to its Sufi saints, who lived among the people and talked to them in their own language. Even the term applied to Hindus, dhimmi or zimmi, had no pejorative meanings assigned to it for, it gave them protection from forcible conversion. And finally, the destruction of Hindu temples by Muslim rulers represents partial memory. In medieval and early modern times kings irrespective of their religion, destroyed each other’s temples as a corollary of conquest and victory. In addition, the Hindu elite were conscious of being ruled by a minority power that had displaced them. They considered themselves the original inhabitants or at least residing in it since earliest times. The situation, then, was ripe for Hindu revivalism and reformation, which led to a Hindu community consciousness, intolerant of the Muslim community largely owing to the historical memory of supposed misdeeds – real and imaginary. It is also worth noting that, with the sole exception of Shah Waliullah, there was no antipathy directed towards the Hindu community by the Muslims.
The impetus for Hindu reform and revival came from two sources. One was the attack by Christian missionaries on Hindu culture and religion in the nineteenth century. They considered the religion an abomination and felt that Hindus needed help. Conversion to Christianity was the desired and cherished goal. However, the critics overlooked the vitality and the inner dynamism of Hinduism. The emergence of movements of religious reform and revival in different parts of India during the nineteenth century from the 1820s onwards arose as a challenge to these forces. The second was the discovery of India’s ancient glory by the Orientalists, who posited a Golden Age of Indian culture with the translation of the Sanskrit classics into English beginning in the late eighteenth century. This newly aroused cultural pride resulted in the Bengal Renaissance led by Raja Rammohan Roy.

Raja Rammohan Roy, the pioneer among Hindu religious reformers, identified the Vedas and the Upanishadas as the true source of Hinduism and located the Golden Age of Hinduism in it. Concerned with the revitalization of the Hindu community he believed that though Muslim rule had some progressive features, it was generally marked by religious intolerance which caused severe damage to the Hindu religion and culture. However, antipathy towards Islam reached its acme in the writings of Swami Dayananda Saraswati. Another personality, Swami Vivekananda, was the most illustrious leader of the Hindu revival movement. Though his outlook was universalist and though he preached religious toleration and acceptance, his contemporary Hindu admirers looked upon him primarily as a person who had raised the position of Hindus in the eyes of the world and restored the pride of the Hindu ‘nation’ in its own religion and culture. When he spoke of India’s greatness, it was used synonymously with Hindu greatness. Though he had no antipathy towards Islam his teachings contributed to the strengthening of a community consciousness among educated Hindus.

In addition, this communitarian consciousness was given an impetus by social reformers, writers and historians. Mahadev Govind Ranade, an eminent social reformer, referred to Hindus and Muslims as two races; implied that Muslims were foreigners; affirmed that Hindus constituted the native races of India and was a nation; and, finally, eulogized the ancient Indian polity for its supposed liberal, democratic features in contrast to the despotism of the Muslim rulers. For writers like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, political regeneration and cultural and religious reconstruction were two sides of the same coin. He wrote of a national religion, the roots of which lay in the Vedas. National freedom and honour lay in Hindu cultural regeneration. In his novels and essays,
he referred to Hindus as natives and Muslims as foreigners who were tyrannical and oppressive rulers. This virulently anti-Muslim stance is depicted in his novel *Anandmath*, published in 1882. In it he expressed satisfaction at the tyrannical Muslim rule being replaced by British rule. Hindi, Gujarati and Marathi writers also took a similar stance. Ironically, with the exception of Bankim Chandra, all of them also stressed the need for Hindus and Muslims to work together for India’s progress. Historical writings also reflected the growing community consciousness – along with the Indian national consciousness – among Hindus. In these writings the risings of the Rajputs, Sikhs and Marathas were extolled, which added to the Muslim unease and fear.

The other two concerns that strained relations between the two communities and also aided their growing community consciousness was the increasing dominance of Hindi and the movement for cow protection. The former began in U.P. and the latter in the Punjab. Anthony MacDonnell, who assumed charge as U.P’s lieutenant-governor in 1894 placed the Devanagri script on an equal footing with Urdu, provided for its optional use in court documents and made the knowledge of both forms of writing necessary for ministerial appointments. These decisions engendered widespread disaffection amongst Muslims who felt threatened because, unlike Hindus, they did not learn the Devanagri script in their normal course of education. Consequently, they saw the grim prospect of losing their privileged position in public service and in the liberal professions. They argued in vain that it was the language of refinement and culture, also spoken by the Kyasths and Kashmiri Pandits, and that it was a symbol of Hindu-Muslim integration. On the other hand, the Hindus pressed for ending the domination of Urdu in the educational and administrative fields and its replacement by Hindi on the ground that the former was a foreign language, not understood by the majority of the people who lived in villages. They considered it a relic of the autocratic ways of the Muslim rulers who, unlike the British, did not ask their officers to learn the language of the people, but forced the latter to learn that of the rulers. In the process what got elided was that Urdu remained far truer to its pluralistic origins than Hindi as it was a fusion of Persian and Hindustani. The net result was that *Hindi and Urdu, two closely related languages derived from the common spoken language of north India, became increasingly divergent and identified with particular religious communities. Hindi was developed from the 1880s onwards as ‘the language of the Hindus’, and became intertwined with other projects of the Hindu organizations, such as the ‘cow protection’ movement, and the Shuddhi or purification movement of the Arya Samaj.*

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The Arya Samaj, founded by Dayananda Saraswati in 1875 at Bombay, was established in the Punjab with remarkable success in 1877. It organized cow-protection societies in important towns and simultaneously carried out a virulent anti-Islamic propaganda. This led to Hindu-Muslim riots in many places in the Punjab and U.P. One feature worth noting was the participation of the lower castes like the Koeris, Kurmirs and Ahirs, who teamed up with the upper castes like the Brahmans, Bhumirs and Rajputs in the agitation to end cow-sacrifices in the 1890s and 1910s. Thus, community consciousness among the Hindu elite was transformed into a feeling of communal antagonism which also engulfed the lower castes. But for all that, until the 1940s the divide and strife between the upper and lower castes and classes, remained the predominant feature of the rural political scene in eastern U.P. and Bihar, more marked than any perceptible rift between local Hindus and Muslims.

Simultaneously, the Arya Samaj pursued its programme of reconversion with a relentless zeal. This was done through **shuddhi** (ritual purification) and **sangathan** (organization) programmes. The Muslim response to it was the **tablig** and **tanzim** respectively. This inevitably intensified communal tensions and the Samaj, which spread beyond the Punjab although never in a big way, came to be associated with Hindu rather than nationalist secular political aspirations.

Another Hindu political party, distinct from the Hindu dominated Indian National Congress, the Hindu Mahasabha, was established in 1915. Many Congress men were also members of the Mahasabha. Lala Lajpat Rai and Madan Mohan Malaviya were the two prominent Congress men on its rolls. Both of them tried to mould it into a strong political force. During the post-Khilafat period (1924-34), when the country was swept by a communal backlash, it acquired considerable influence on the Hindu mind. This made it extremely difficult for the Congress to come to a reasonable settlement with the Muslim League on the communal issue. But what added to the fears of the Muslims was the publication of *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?* by a notable Mahasabha leader, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, written in an Andaman jail. In it he expounded the notion of a Hindu Rashtra, where Hindus are *forcibly grouped together as ‘We Hindus’, and exclusivist towards those stigmatized as the spiritually alienated ‘Others’.*\(^{11}\)

The founding of the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS) in 1925 indicated both the growing acceptance of such a view and the quite new aggressiveness of those who advocated it. Its founder, Dr. K. B. Hedgewar made it quite clear that *Hindutva was being defined antagonistically as an*
identity which was under severe pressure from Muslims who had been lately politically mobilized during the Khilafat Movement.\textsuperscript{12}

Thus, with the development of an aggressive Hindu stance, public issues were being perceived increasingly in Muslim-Hindu terms and it was these differences, which later became irreconcilable that Indian nationalism tried to resolve. However, it found itself caught in various contradictory and opposing pulls and had to bow down to the monster of communalism.

**INDIAN NATIONALISM:**

In opposition to Muslim and Hindu nationalism, Indian nationalism, as represented by the Indian National Congress, did not base its appeal to any particular community but sought to encompass within its ambit all the Indian people, regardless of their religious affiliations. However, the bulk of the Muslims refrained from joining the Congress as they considered it a Hindu dominated organization. In order to assure them of its national character it decided not to deal with issues of social reform, which varied from community to community. Early on the Congress also realized that a system of polity based on the principle of one man one vote might not lead to adequate representation for the members of the minority communities. It, therefore, adopted a resolution in 1888 stipulating that in any scheme of constitutional reform in the future seats in the legislatures should be reserved for Muslims and other minorities in accordance with their proportion in the total population of every Province. In so doing, they assumed that the Muslims were a monolithic community. Moreover, despite its best efforts, by the early years of the twentieth century, the idea of religious communities, as opposed to caste affiliations, gained acceptance and became popular due to contradictory pulls. This resulted in cracks and fissures in the national polity. The reasons are varied and need to be analyzed.

Due to the reform movements, religious debates, administrative demands and the pressure of census enumerators, elite groups among the Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and other communities felt the need to mobilize their own religious communities. Much of the same thing happened with the Indian national community and nationalistic politics for, along with the attempt to mobilize wider religious communities, the nationalists’ attempt was to create nationalist feelings and associations that was not circumscribed to the narrow confines and concerns of their religious community but went beyond it. However, this resulted in the co-existence in early Indian nationalism, during the later nineteenth century
and early twentieth century, of an influential secular strain along with strong community concerns. The interpretation that one draws is that Indian nationalism found it tactically necessary to wear two faces. One of these [was] a ‘modernist’ idiom deriving from the metropolitan culture of the colonizers, the other a ‘dharmic’ idiom which derived from the pre-colonial traditions of the colonized. ¹³

This implied that in building up a national community the nationalists wore two hats: one secular and national and the other emotional appealing to religious sentiments and historical achievements. More often than not, in forging an Indian national consciousness, the emotional appeal won over the rational even among staunch Congressmen. Nationalist leaders openly appealed to the masses and the youth in the name of the Hindu religion and constantly used its symbols with a view of broadening its base. The logic was that in a country with an overwhelming Hindu majority, one that constituted the support base of the Congress, using religious symbols for mobilizing the people was justified. By doing this, it widened the disparities among the various communities. This was in evidence in 1894 when Tilak started a new public celebration by Hindus alone of Ganesh Chaturti. He publicly mobilized the symbol of Ganesh for the political forging of a mass movement among Hindus that protested against the British rule. However, the fall out was that it alienated the Muslims for it was marshaled against the Muslim Muharram festival, which hardly any Hindu thereafter attended. This was an example of how exclusivist Hinduism was mobilized so as to create differences between religious communities and to make people conscious of their religious affiliations.

Tilak’s next invention of instituting the figure of Shivaji as the pre-eminent symbol of Hindu militancy, anti-colonial agitation, Maratha nationalism and, finally, as a symbol of Indian nationalism was simultaneously unleashing a communalized abstraction of India’s medieval period. What got elided in the process was that Shivaji had Muslim chief commanders in his military force and a Muslim foreign secretary. Similarly, the fact that he was captured and detained at Agra by Raja Jai Singh, a Hindu and an important general in Aurangzeb’s army, and his escape from Agra with the help of his Muslim associates was also elided. Needless to say this did not instill the Muslim community with much confidence in the Congress policies.

Yet the nation of India of the 1920s and 1930s was visualized as a composite body, consisting of several communities – an India where all religions would peacefully coexist. This pluralistic vision was shared by Madan Mohan Malaviya, Syed Ahmed Khan, Lala Lajpat Rai, Bhartendu, Dar, Tilak and a host of other leaders and writers who wanted and
desired Hindu-Muslim unity. This approach to nationalism was summed up in Lala Lajpat Rai’s words: *The Indian nation, such as it is or such as we intend to build [it], neither is nor will be exclusively Hindu, Muslim, Sikh or Christian. It will be each and all. That is my goal of nationhood.*\textsuperscript{14} These nationalist leaders’ vision of a plural India was also shared by the nationalist Muhammad Ali who called for a Federation of Faiths in India. Nevertheless, just as the Hindu leaders declared their Hindu rootedness in working towards a composite society, Muslim leaders also simultaneously declared they were Muslims as well as Indians. Thus Muhammad Ali declared:

\begin{quote}
*Any true patriot of India working for the evolution of Indian nationality will have to accept the communal individuality of the Muslims as the basis of his constructive effort. This is the irreducible factor of the situation…*\textsuperscript{15}
\end{quote}

Similarly, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad regarded this dual membership as his treasure. In 1940 he declared:

\begin{quote}
*I am a Muslim and profoundly conscious of the fact that I have inherited Islam’s glorious traditions of the last 1300 years. I am not prepared to lose even a small part of that legacy… I am equally proud of the fact that I am an Indian…*\textsuperscript{16}
\end{quote}

By this logic, the advance towards common nationhood and self-government was to educate, organize, and protect the long existing religious communities. For this Muslim and Hindu patriots worked towards the uplift of their communities. At the same time their secular credentials were impeccable. As a secular patriot, Tilak played a key role in securing a Congress-League understanding when the *Lucknow Pact* was signed in 1916 through his mobilization of Hindu religious symbols, wherein the Congress agreed to concede separate electorates for Muslims and gave weightages to Muslims in Muslim majority provinces. However, this *entente* faced many strains. The problem became insoluble when, constrained by the dynamics of electoral politics in a country with a Hindu majority and having to compete with the Hindu nationalists in order to retain its support, the Congress began to oppose both separate electorates and weightage for the Muslims and insisted on all Indians being treated on equal footing in future constitutional arrangements. For this reason the Motilal Nehru Committee Report in 1928 did not get Muslim support.

In another instance Gandhi, despite his avowal of the Hindu religion and his association with the cow protection movement secured the co-operation of many Muslim leaders. The *Khilafat* and the non-co-operation movements during 1920-22 revealed his political acumen when he got *both* Hindus and Muslims to support the Caliphate. Though
the solidarity was temporary it showed that if leaders recognized the political and cultural pluralities, co-operation with the Muslims was possible. However, the emerging unity among Hindu and Muslim nationalist politicians was severely strained by the rise of Hindu fundamentalist organizations: the Arya Samaj, the All India Hindu Mahasabha and the RSS: which declared the superiority of the Hindu religion and poured invective on the Muslim community. With the rise of these organizations there arose the idea of a Hindu Raj which would reflect the glories of the ancient Hindu civilization and keep Muslims in their place, to be matched in due course by the notion of a Muslim Raj which would protect the place of the Muslims.  

This, and a series of communal outbursts that engulfed the country made the Indian nationalists reassess their ideas about communitarian mobilization which was initially considered essential for building up Indian nationalism. Hindu and Muslim political mobilization now came to be regarded by nationalist observers as a distorted and distorting tendency, and was considered divisive, primitive and the product of a colonial policy of Divide and Rule. Communalism, since the 1920s, came to be seen as the politics of the religious communities.

Religion, then, became the chief flogging horse of the nationalists. Nevertheless, there were many including Gandhi, who retained their belief in the centrality of religion. In Gandhi’s view:

… religion does not mean sectarianism. It means a belief in ordered moral government of the universe … This religion transcends Hinduism, Islam, Christianity etc. It does not supersede them. It harmonizes them and gives them reality.

The above quotation reflects the distinction between Gandhi’s Hinduism and that of the Hindu nationalists within and outside the national movement. With one crucial exception on the issue of untouchability, every major campaign that Gandhilaunched in South Africa and India were directed at secular matters and not to any distinctly or exclusively Hindu concerns. This was in contrast to many of the campaigns and activities of Tilak, Lajpat Rai, Munshi, Ram, Malaviya, Savarkar and the Hindu Mahasabha.

But not everyone was a Gandhi and the politics of the religious communities, renamed communalism, encircled the nationalist dream like the coils of a snake. However, despite the series of communal riots that engulfed the country, Jawahar Lal Nehru and many in the Indian National Congress were of the view that communalism and ideas like Pakistan were doomed from the start. They vociferously stated that once the British left India the communal problem would disappear. The real fight was between
classes and not communities. Therefore, if political and economic Swaraj was ensured divisive tendencies on the basis of religion would be a thing of the past. It is ironic that though India gained freedom, the country was partitioned on the basis of religion.

In this connection, it is worth noting that India, in the early 1930s, despite its contradictions and fractious polity, could hardly be characterized as a communally polarized society. Communal and divisive forces were strong but not strong enough to rent the Indian social fabric. An attempt to find a common denominator for the two civilizations, which were circles of equal size but which are not concentric, in Muhammad Ali’s famous assertion, proved futile for the conciliatory trend was always weaker than the orthodox one. The Congress could not break the Mahasabha stranglehold and found itself trapped in the cross-fires between communalists of all shades. By the mid-1930s Muslim nationalism was much too strong to be wished away. The League, enamoured by the Pakistan idea found just the excuse of raising the war cry of ‘Islam in danger’ and pressed for a separate, sovereign Muslim State a few years later.

All this was possible because the British played off one community against the other. The existing divide between the Hindus and Muslims was fully utilized by the British to further their own purposes. The British nurtured the Muslim community to forestall the growing national awakening among the Hindus. With this in view, they whole-heartedly patronized the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh. Later, they introduced the principle of separate electorates and weightage for Muslims in the legislatures, which were incorporated in the Indian Councils Act of 1909. The Communal Award of 1932 was passed in an effort to meet the Muslim demand for a statutory majority in the legislatures of Bengal and the Punjab. The British did not encourage those Muslims who belonged to the Congress or worked in co-operation with it. When Jinnah pressed for Muslim separatism he became a valuable ally and was treated at par with Gandhi. What the British did was to treat the Muslims as one monolithic community, which in fact they were not. The Congress too made a similar mistake. Until the mid 1930s there was no worthwhile organization which could legitimately claim to represent the large Muslim constituency. The Muslim League, in political wilderness during the Khilafat Movement, was needlessly treated by the Congress as its political adversary.

This mix of religion and communal politics proved to be highly combustible and the rest was written in the annals of history. The vicious cycle of violence that it unleashed remained unparalleled. But what must not be forgotten is that all Indians were not sectarian or wished for the Partition which was the end result of communalism. All the
parties – Hindu, Muslim, the Congress and the British – were equally culpable. But what was the effect on the people? How did they view these growing fissures between communities and how did they respond to it? Kushwant Singh, Chaman Nahal, Bapsi Sidhwa and Shauna Singh Baldwin grapple with the issue of communalism and, at the same time, reveal their views and positions on communalism and how it affected syncretism in the Punjab.

AN INDICTMENT OF INDIAN NATIONALISM:

In Khushwant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan*, the contrast between pre-Partition concord and post-Partition disjunction is central\(^{22}\) wherein he criticizes the nationalist leaders’ inability to live up to their promises to have a country free of communal discord. This pre-partition concord and post-partition disjunction is explored through an imaginary village on the Indo-Pakistan border, Mano Majra, that remained one of those villages, which were the only remaining oases of peace ... lost in the remote reaches of the frontier.\(^{23}\) In this oasis of peace, Singh depicts a lost utopia in the Punjab which boasted of a plural culture before religious diversities were purged due to the rise of the Arya Samaj and, consequently, of fundamentalism. In *the summer of 1947*\(^{24}\) Mano Majra had not yet been affected by either the onslaught of Hindu and Muslim nationalism or by the communal carnage that had sundered the sub-continent into two.

In this tiny hamlet syncretism is the norm, so also is the shared composite culture of the people, who carry on with their everyday lives. Mano Majra is inhabited with a multiplicity of diversities, where a Hindu money lender, Sikh land-owners and Muslim tenants live in harmony:

*Mano Majra is a tiny place. It has only three brick buildings, one of which is the home of the moneylender, Lala Ram Lal. The other two are the Sikh temple and the mosque. The three brick buildings enclose a triangular common with a large peepul tree in the middle.*\(^{25}\)

The religious space, the triangle and the shade of the peepul tree shelter all without discrimination. It establishes the fact that all the communities lived in harmony. This syncretism is also evident in their veneration of the *deo*, the local deity which the Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims and pseudo-Christians pray to in time of need.
These distinct, yet, converging, patterns of communal harmony are again evident in the coming and goings of the trains, of which the people are very conscious. So much so, that when the mail train rushes through on its way to Lahore:

... The mullah at the mosque knows that it is time for the Morning Prayer. He has a quick wash, stands facing west towards Mecca and with his fingers in his ears cries in long sonorous notes, “Allah-ho-Akbar”. The priest at the Sikh temple lies in bed till the mullah has called. Then he too gets up, draws a bucket of water from the well in the temple courtyard, pours it over himself, and intones his prayer in monotonous singsong to the sound of splashing water.26

These everyday occurrences reveal that there was equal respect for all religions; that religious diversity was tolerated and that communities had evolved their own code of shared living and practices. It also reinforces the point that the communal riots for which all communities were responsible, and which spread from Calcutta to Noakhali in East Bengal, to Bihar and to the Punjab had, so far, left the Mano Majra countryside unscathed till that fateful summer of 1947.

However, this pastoral idyll is shattered by the arrival of ‘outsiders’ and the refugee trains, here referred to as ghost trains. The ‘outsiders’ are Malli and his gang, Hukum Chand, the new District Commissioner, the police sub inspector, Iqbal and the boy-soldier dressed as an American Cowboy. By introducing these people who are not Mano Majrans, Khushwant Singh too embraces the myth the newly formed Indian government maintained, that the genocidal violence unleashed by Partition was due to outside elements and not due to the locals who wanted nothing more than to continue living their daily lives in peace. What sets the ball rolling for the unfolding of the action is the murder of Lala Ram Lal. Malli and his gang of thugs have come to Mano Majra to commit a dacoity. They murder Lala Ram Lal and decamp with his money. While passing by Jugga, the village rogue’s, house they throw bangles into his courtyard and pass lewd comments about Nooran, the Muslim weaver’s daughter, who is in a liaison with Jugga, and implicate him in the murder. Later on in the story it is Malli and his gang who appropriate evacuee property, give vital information about the train that is to take the Mano Majra Muslims to Pakistan and lie in ambush for it.

Around the time Lala Ram Lal is murdered, Iqbal, a clean shaven, circumcised Sikh alights at Mano Majra. Though he does not instigate any trouble he has a definite role to play in the novel, which is to explore whether doing away with religion altogether coupled
with economic swaraj is the way to progress and a panacea for all communal problems. He has been sent by the People’s Party to spread the message of communism in the village. He stays at the gurudwara where the granthi, Bhai Meet Singh, unquestioningly accepts him as a Sikh. The cross-communal nature of his name in conjunction with the fact that he is a clean-shaven Sikh causes him a lot of grief. He could be a Muslim, Hindu or a Sikh and does not disabuse anyone about his true religion as he is a communist and does not profess to follow any religion. Though he does not follow any religion or believe in it, he understands the importance of religious affiliations and belonging to a religious community in the communally charged atmosphere of the days. Meet Singh reads him as a Sikh and addresses him as Iqbal Singhji on more than one occasion. He allows him to do so because he realizes that in a Sikh village, an Iqbal Singh would no doubt get a better deal, even if his hair was shorn and his beard shaved than an Iqbal Mohammed or an Iqbal Chand. Similarly, on his way to Mano Majra by train he lets the Muslim passengers think he is a Muslim for the same reason.

Though Iqbal hides behind the anonymity of his name, it is also a telling commentary on how religion defined a man in those communally surcharged days. In the hands of Hukum Chand, District Magistrate, and the police sub inspector he becomes Mohammed Iqbal, Muslim League worker, because he is circumcised. He is also falsely implicated and arrested for the murder of Lala Ram Lal. Later, to further Hukum Chand’s ends in preventing a train load of Muslim refugees on their way to Pakistan from being massacred and to save the female sex worker Haseena, for whom he had developed same feelings, he releases Iqbal as Iqbal Singh.

More importantly, Iqbal is the springboard from where Kushwant Singh launches out on a debate on whether or not communism and Nehruvian socialism is the answer to the communal problem, which would disappear after people’s economic needs were met, and whether religion is essential or a distorted and distorting tendency. The debate of communism versus religion is carried out between Iqbal and Bhai Meet Singh and other village heads. During the discussion Iqbal states:

“Morality, Meet Singhji, is a matter of money. Poor people cannot afford to have morals. So they have religion. Our first problem is to get people more food, clothing, comfort. That can only be done by stopping exploitation by the rich and abolishing landlords. And that can only be done by changing the governments.”
As he continues to spout his clichéd sayings, it is apparent that there is a wide chasm between the comrades in Delhi and the ground realities in Mano Majra for independence is meaningless to people like Meet Singh, Imam Baksh and the lambardar. Iqbal’s exhortation to unite and to transform political freedom into an economic one cuts no ice with the villagers for he sounds like other comrades who visited the village and who did not believe in God. Imam Baksh states his and the villagers’ position very clearly:

“If we have no faith in God then we are like animals... All the world respects a religious man. Look at Gandhi! I hear he reads the Koran Sharif and the Unjeel along with his Vedas and Shastras... even the English respect a man of religion.”

Here, Imam Baksh states his admiration for Gandhi and his faith in God. What he wants to convey is that Gandhi’s position on religion mentioned earlier does not mean sectarianism. It means a belief in ordered moral government of the universe. Imam Baksh, Meet Singh and the villagers in Mano Majra endorse this view even though they cannot verbalize it effectively. They simply say that without faith in God we are like animals. That there is a breakdown in moral values is felt and echoed by the lambardar when he remarks that as the winds of destruction blow across the country only criminals operate with impunity.

In a way, Iqbal’s failure to convince people to do away with religion and embrace communism also speaks of a moral void in him, which makes him most ineffective when he is asked to stop the train massacre of Mano Majra Muslims. For, as he rationalizes his inaction, it is this moral void in him which makes him cultivate an utter indifference to the breakdown of the moral order in Mano Majra. However, this has grave consequences for the villagers for as the communal mayhem encircles on Mano Majra, it takes its toll and forever destroys centuries of shared living. In this oasis of communal harmony the villagers struggle to maintain a moral world that depended on proper relationships with all communities. But as David Gilmartin convincingly argues, this desperate attempt to maintain the linking of place, ancestry, sanctity and moral order was cast against the backdrop of a fixed partition of territory that had symbolically torn these linkages asunder. It is these linkages, which are forever destroyed that Kushwant Singh explores throughout the novel, which is a result of the breakdown of the moral order, the machinations of ‘outsiders’ and the betrayal of the Indian nationalists to live up to their promises.
With the arrival of the ghost trains, containing dead Hindu and Sikh refugees and corpses flowing down the Sutlej, the atmosphere of the village changes. Due to Hukum Chand’s manipulations, people become suspicious of the Muslims. Fearful of a communal backlash, he engineers the peaceful evacuation of the Mano Majra Muslims. This, coupled with the stories of atrocities the refugees bring with them, divides Mano Majra into two halves as neatly as a knife cuts through a pat of butter. The Sikhs started taking on a diabolically menacing dimension for the Muslims and for the first time, they think of Pakistan as a haven of refuge from the Sikhs. The Sikhs, on the other hand, remember past atrocities committed by the Muslims: of butchery, of the assassination of their gurus, and the desecration of the holy Granth and their Gurudwaras: and Lala Ram Lal’s murder is attributed to Sultana and his gang now in Pakistan. Suddenly, centuries of shared culture, values, daily habits, friendship and love crumble. Nevertheless, rootedness to one’s land and the local village community is still stronger than religious belonging. Though hospitality to the refugees from Pakistan is a sacred duty in the village being true to one’s salt, to one’s friends and fellow villagers are placed higher up the scale than truth, honour, financial integrity. The rural moral and cultural priorities and hence the rural-world outlook is clearly defined when Meet Singh stands up to the boy-soldier when he comes to the gurudwara and uses anti-Muslim rhetoric in order to instigate them to derail the train carrying the Mano Majra Muslims who are being evacuated to Pakistan, and ensure that they do not cross the river alive. Motivated with the aim of revenge and retaliation he whips them into a righteous anger:

“... For each Hindu or Sikh they kill, kill two Mussulmans. For each woman they abduct or rape, abduct two. For each home they loot, loot two. For each trainload of dead they send over, send two across. For each road crossing that is attacked, attack two. That will stop the killing on the other side. It will teach them that we also play this game of killing and looting.”

Meet Singh wants to know why they have to go on a retaliatory spree for what the Muslims have done in Pakistan. He tries to give scriptural arguments for protecting his fellow Muslims who are part of the village community but loses in the verbal duel against the boy-soldier. Helpless in the face of the harangue and the overwhelming support the boy-soldier gets, Meet Singh and the lambardar do the only thing they can possibly do under the circumstance: they send word to Hukum Chand and the police sub inspector about the intended train massacre.
Bhai Meet Singh and Imam Baksh stand for that moral order which has been swept aside by the tide of communalism instigated by outsiders. Another group of outsiders who are equally communal in their thinking are the newly arrived District Commissioner, Hukum Chand, and the police sub inspector who represent the bureaucracy. They are sent to maintain the peace in the village. From the time he takes charge, Hukum Chand wants to know if there has been any communal trouble in the area. His main aim is to maintain peace in Mano Majra.

When they discuss the train loads of dead being sent across the frontiers of Pakistan and India massacred in retaliation, the sub inspector extols the virtues of the R.S.S. and talks in derogatory terms about the communal amity in Mano Majra. Later on he observes:

“Sometimes sir, one cannot restrain oneself. What do the Gandhi caps in Delhi know about the Punjab? What is happening on the other side in Pakistan does not matter to them. They have not lost their homes and belongings; they haven’t had their mothers, wives, sisters and daughters raped and murdered in the streets…”

To which Hukum Chand replies:

“We must maintain law and order,” he answered after a pause. “If possible, get the Muslims to go out peacefully … No, Inspector Sahib, whatever our views – and God alone knows what I would have done to these Pakistanis if I were not a government servant – we must not let there be any killing or destruction of property. Let them get out but be careful they do not take too much with them … There must be no killing. Just peaceful evacuation.”

This conversation reveals a much regretted but underplayed aspect of Partition violence: that despite the official condemnation of violence on the part of both the Indian and Pakistani states, the officials were not always neutral or secular. In fact, they often used their positions to engineer violence and displace people from the other community. That is why the sub inspector talks in glowing terms about the R.S.S. and is unhappy that the Sikhs in Mano Majra are not on a retaliatory spree. Similarly, Hukum Chand is no less communal in his outlook and would have done his bit to exterminate the Muslims had he not been a government official. This scene also makes visible the distance and dissonance between elite, secular nationalist politics, and the alienated, resentful actors in the state apparatus entrusted to translate the secular national vision into reality – actors voicing
popular communalist rhetoric and for whom local, ethnic class and caste affiliations were often more compelling than the imagined nation.  

Hukum Chand having made his communalist position clear goes about effecting a peaceful evacuation of the Muslims by releasing Malli and his gang in full view of the villagers and makes his constable ask the whereabouts of Sultana and his thugs and also by claiming that Iqbal was actually Mohammed Iqbal, member of the Muslim League. This signaled that Malli, a Sikh thug, was innocent; that Sultana, a Muslim might have committed the dacoity and murder and has now left for Pakistan; and that a clean shaven unknown stranger without turban or beard was loitering in Mano Majra. This coupled with the train loads of massacred Sikhs from Pakistan; with corpses floating in the Sutlej; and with the arrival of refugees bearing tales of carnage and atrocities a rift is created between the communities. Hukum Chand succeeds in his efforts and Imam Baksh and the Muslims agree to go the Chundunnugger camp temporarily little knowing that their exodus to Pakistan is imminent due to Chand’s machinations and manipulations.

In another instance, Hukum Chand’s relationship with the sixteen year old Muslim prostitute, Haseena, reveals this bureaucrat to be not only depraved and corrupt but also communalized. Though he has some qualms about her age he brushes it aside for she has been procured for him at his behest. However, he does not contend with the fact that he would become emotionally involved with her. When he gets to know that she too would be in the same train that the agent provocateur was planning to attack he becomes remorseful and is concerned about her fate. He releases Jugga and Iqbal in the hope that they would somehow stave off the impending massacre as well as save Haseena. He berates himself for being fool to have fallen in love with a girl, young enough to be his daughter and is introspective about his role in the whole affair as magistrates functioned with power behind them and did not oppose it. His soul searching shows that he is neither morally strong enough nor bold enough to stand by his convictions to prevent the massacre. He gets Jugga to do his dirty work for him. Moreover, he had been sent to Mano Majra to maintain law and order and preserve the communal accord. That he subtly subverts his charge, his duty, and goes about evacuating the Muslims shows that he, in principle, opposed the directive given to him. Now, he wants to set matters right but hides behind Jugga for he does not have the courage to stand up to the Sikh mob. Racked with doubt and anxiety he wonders if either Jugga or Iqbal would succeed. Eventually he slides off his chair and starts praying. His act of praying for forgiveness and for Haseena’s safety signals his moral transformation. His love for Haseena and concern for the Muslim refugees
redeems him partially as he is seen drifting away from his communalist sentiments. Here the novel also articulates the middle-classes’ ambivalence towards communalism – and consequent complicity with its ethnic violence – at this time.\textsuperscript{39}

It is left to Jugga, a common criminal, to transcend the communal breach. He is good-hearted, sincere and ethical because he does not commit crimes against his fellow villagers. In other words, he does not breach the village code of ethics. It is left to this ‘insider’ to save his fellow Muslim Mano Majrans and his love Nooran, and ensures their safety. In this respect, he becomes the novel’s secular hero because he sacrifices his life for his true love who is a Muslim. This is something Hukum Chand thinks him incapable of doing. It is the village budnash and not the government bureaucrat who ensures the safety of the villagers. Unknown to Jugga, Nooran is carrying his child. According to Daiya,\textsuperscript{40} Nooran’s pregnant body becomes symbolic of the birth of the Pakistani nation as well as the inability of the nascent Indian secular democracy to accept the product of a Sikh-Muslim love for this would make the Indian nation impure. This shows the failure of the nationalist government to live up to its promises of ensuring secularism in the country. At the same time, the birth of the Pakistani nation is inscribed as symbolically enabled through the violent sacrifice of Jugga’s potent and heroic body. As an embodiment of the real India, Jugga becomes a victim of nationalist politics and its failures.

\textit{Train to Pakistan} mourns the destruction of this iconic symbol of Sikh masculinity by the state-enabled Partition violence. Along with Jugga, Meet Singh, Imam Baksh, the lambardar and the Mano Majra Muslim and Sikhs have also been betrayed. This is clearly a failure on the part of the Indian nation-state to become a utopian site for granting freedom from communal violence and the failure of nationalist politics. In this regard Hukum Chand’s tirade against Nehru and other nationalist leaders stands out:

\ldots What were the people in Delhi doing? Making fine speeches in the assembly! Loud-speakers magnifying their egos; lovely-looking foreign women in the visitors’ galleries in breathless admiration, “He is a great man, this Mr. Nehru of yours. I do think he is the greatest man in the world today. And how handsome! Wasn’t that a wonderful thing to say? Long ago we made a tryst with destiny and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure but very substantially.”’ Yes, Mr. Prime Minister you made your tryst. So did many others.\textsuperscript{41}

He then recalls how his colleague, Prem Singh, who went back to Lahore to fetch his wife’s jewelry made his tryst at Faletti’s hotel; of Sundari who made her tryst with
destiny on the road to Gujranwala – she was gang raped and her husband castrated; of Sunder Singh who shot his wife and children in the refugee train because there was no food or water. Only his family made their tryst with destiny.

In short, Jugga and the Mano Majrans encapsulate the failure of Indian nationalism to live up to its promises. They were the victims of an abstract principle of the two-nation theory which they did not subscribe to; instead they were caught in the cross-fires of communalism. The formation of two new nations denied the fact that people could be good Hindus, Sikhs or Muslims yet live in a united India. In battling communalism Indian nationalists too were of the opinion that religion was inessential for it was a distorted and distorting tendency. However, this discussion has shown that the village community was formed on the basis of a moral world order that was replaced by an immoral one; where those sentiments of place ancestry and sanctity were totally disregarded. It must be noted that religion per se is not distorting – it is the use one makes of religion that distorts, and it is exactly what the communalists did. Moreover, in the present context, the economic factor becomes meaningless especially when the sense of rootedness to a community is forever destroyed.

Here it can be seen that it is not religious zealots alone who contribute to fundamentalism or fanaticism ... but also the secularists who deny the very legitimacy of religion in human life and society and provoke a reaction. This denial of religion which Nehruvian secularism and communism advocated, came at a very high price - a price which led to the monster of communalism raising its head. Khushwant Singh embraces Chand’s criticism of the nationalist politicians and the price that ordinary Indians paid for their so-called freedom and tryst with destiny. In short, the novel is a searing indictment of the failure of Indian nationalism.

THE SYNCRETIC WORLD VIEW SHATTERED:

Unlike Khushwant Singh, Chaman Nahal’s Azadi does not depict the pre-Partition reality in utopian or moral terms but posits a composite Punjabi identity which has been sundered due to the rise of a communal consciousness. This narrative, which covers a period of eight months, begins on 3 June, 1947 with Mountbatten’s announcement confirming the Partition of India and its acceptance by Nehru, Jinnah and Baldev Singh and ends with Mahatma Gandhi’s assassination in Delhi on 30 January, 1948. It depicts the rise
of this communal consciousness through the experiences of Lala Kanshi Ram, a grain merchant in Sialkot.

From the opening pages of his novel, Azadi, Nahal emphasizes the composite culture of the Punjab. He does this by tackling the language issue first and Lala Kanshi Ram’s opinion about it. Lala Kanshi Ram is a member of the Arya Samaj, which taught him in no uncertain terms that the true heritage of an Indian was the Vedic heritage, and the true language of an Indian, Sanskrit – the language of the Vedas. Since Hindi was the modern derivative of Sanskrit, when the census was taken Lala Kanshi Ram entered Hindi as his mother tongue as a matter of duty. But:

... he neither spoke Hindi nor ever wrote it on paper. When he opened his mouth he spoke Punjabi, the rich and virile language of the province to which he belonged. And when it came to writing... he wrote in Urdu. Who said it was the language of the Muslims? He had learnt it from his father and from the primary teacher in his village a few miles out of Sialkot and neither of the two was a Muslim.

Later, Lala Kanshi Ram dilates on the advantages of Punjabi over Hindi and Urdu clearly stating his preference for the Punjabi language:

...That was a subtlety of the Punjabi language he enjoyed immensely. Abuse could mean a thousand different things, depending on the way you said it... But the very same abuse could be used in praise too... could you think of any other language in the world where you might try that kind of poetic experiment? All right, all right, Hindi is my language, if you say so. But it is a senile drivel compared to Punjabi, if you ask me. Even Urdu comes nowhere near the vigour and plasticity of Punjabi. You are too damned concerned with nafasat, with gentility, to be able to say anything effective. But Hindi, my God, Hindi was a joke...

This makes absolutely clear that though Lala Kanshi Ram is a member of the Arya Samaj, he does not subscribe to their fundamentalist views, which promoted religiosity and orthodoxy as part of their efforts to revive Hinduism. This revivalism took up issues like cow-protection, the crusade for Hindi, and the sangathan of a caste-ridden society from which to launch its action. Here, through the language issue, Nahal shows the ground realities that existed in the Punjab. Because of the Arya Samaj crusade for the revival of Hindi, Kanshi Ram, dutifully enters Hindias his mother-tongue but prefers to read and write in Urdu, which, the Samaj was trying to displace. Moreover, he was taught this language
by non-Muslim teachers. What he preferred to speak in was Punjabi – the rich and virile language of the province. It also brings the point to the fore that elite demands for the preservation of the different literary languages was far removed from the concerns of the Hindu and Muslim masses from which leaders tried to construct different religious communities in the late nineteenth century and after.

Another way in which Nahal portrays the closeness between the two communities is through Lala Kanshi Ram’s and his friend Chaudhary Barkat Ali’s sons. Despite the fact that Arun goes to an Arya Samaj school and Munir to an Islamic school, they are friends, not enemies. This is contrary to what V. Pala Prasada Rao has to say on the subject. In his opinion the setting up of denominational schools fostered sectarianism and communalism because it was a fertile ground for indoctrinating young minds. However, Nahal maintains that:

Arun’s memories of Munir were of chasing him up and down the open drain that ran by the side of their schools. Arun went to Arya Samaj School and Munir to Islamia School. The names meant nothing to the boys. There was a Khalsa School in the city, and a Mission school, too. Maybe the English made those parochial distinctions, or may be the different communities wanted it that way. The children themselves did not think on ethnic lines…

The insidious effect of these parochial schools is not apparent here. On the contrary, it fosters camaraderie for during recess the boys from all the schools, including Arun and Munir, would converge on the moat as the backs of the schools opened on it. Here they would fight and play games, enter each others’ territories and build long lasting friendships. When they go to college, the two boys retain their friendship. Only now they played in the college gym or the college tennis courts. This cordiality between boys of different religions is also corroborated by Yogender Prakash Suri’s account (Appendix 1), who recalls that apart from Sikh teachers there was Maulvi Sahib and other Hindu teachers. The students were a mixed lot of Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims, who never thought in sectarian terms.

But the most forceful impression of the syncretism in the Punjab comes through the enduring friendship between Lala Kanshi Ram and his Muslim friend Chaudhry Barkat Ali. This speaks volumes of the close interaction between the two communities. Chaudhry Barkat Ali is a good Muslim because he believes in the unity of all religions for the Quran did not preach otherwise. The Hindu next door was as much his brother as an unknown Muslim as they too worshipped God in another form. He and Kanshi Ram were fired with
the spirit of nationalism ever since they heard Gandhi and wholeheartedly embraced the idea of *purna swaraj* – full independence, wore khadi and advocated Hindu-Muslim unity. Whenever Arun entered Barkat Ali’s room he was struck by the similarities between this and his father’s room, which revealed their common background and ideology.

What is this common ideology that unites these disparate individuals: one a Muslim and the other a Hindu with strong Arya Samaj sympathies? At first glance the friendship appears incongruous given their vastly different backgrounds. However, given the political and cultural ethos of the times it was wholly possible. Chaudhary Barkat Ali finds no contradiction in the fact that he is a good Muslim as well as an Indian fired with the spirit of nationalism that Gandhi and the Congress ignited in him. For him the nationalist goal of complete independence is the aim of all Indians – Hindu as well as Muslim. Similarly, Lala Kanshi Ram finds no contradiction in belonging to the Arya Samaj which furthered the interests of the Hindus and in being a member of the Indian National Congress that which worked towards secularism and *azadi*. In-fact, many Hindu Congressmen maintained this dual membership. Madan Mohan Malaviya and Lala Lajpat Rai were two prominent leaders who belonged to both groups. Moreover, Lala Kanshi Ram was not a staunch Arya Samaji. Like all Indians of their times both friends visualized India as a composite body, a collection of communities living in a free India. That both Lala Kanshi Ram and Chaudhry Barkat Ali, believed in pluralism is evident firstly through Kanshi Ram’s endorsement of the Punjabi language and his preference for Urdu, the language of the Muslims, to Hindi. Secondly, though their sons went to parochial schools, it did not in any way foster communal feelings. Instead, their friendship continues right through to college. Lastly, their friendship endures even after the communal mayhem Mountbatten’s historic announcement unleashes and Barkat Ali proves to be supportive right up to the time Kanshi Ram departs by foot convoy to India. When they bid each other an emotional farewell they are hopeful of being reunited for they feel that religion cannot separate them from each other.

Unfortunately, the common background and ideology that united the two friends and defined inter-communal relations in the Punjab is shattered and religion does separate people from each other. On hearing Nehru over the radio Kanshi Ram’s feeling of betrayal is complete:

> ...but what had happed to his akal, his mind? Have partition if there is no other way, have it that way – we’re willing to make sacrifices. But what nonsense was this of no panic, no violence, full protection from the
government, peace the main object! Had he gone mad? Didn’t he know his people? Didn’t he know the Muslims? And why the partition in the first place? What of your promises to us, you Pandit Nehru?²⁴⁸

Nahal’s slippage, Didn’t he know the Muslims, raises the question whether he was truly unbiased in his attitude or not. So far he has maintained complete neutrality in his approach to the communal problem. However, this does not expose him as a rank communalist for it must be remembered that he was writing about a Muslim majority area and naturally the fears of the Hindus are not only magnified but also justified. To counter-balance this effect Nahal also mentions the violence Hindus and Sikhs indulged in on the Indian side of the border later in the novel, though not in similar detail. In Sialkot, after the announcement, the Muslims take out a celebratory procession. As it passes through Trunk Bazaar the fear in the Hindus is palpable for the mob was in a transport of frenzy. As Lala Kanshi Ram and his Hindu neighbours from the mohalla watch in fear and anxiety from their rooftops the procession demands entry. However, the Muslims were only celebrating the acceptance of Pakistan and did not want to harm the Hindus as yet.

The processionists demand entry into the mohalla and summon the drummers who beat their drums frenziedly, as they are in a madness of the purest kind.⁴⁹ Amidst the din and cries of Allah-o-Akbar and Pakistan Zindabad, they decide to break open the gates which barred their entry. Shortly afterwards, a posse of policemen, headed by Inspector Inyat-Ullah Khan arrives on the scene. Instead of dissuading the mob from breaking open the gates he orders his men to do the same. The Sikh constables refuse to budge and at gun point he orders them to batter open the mohalla gate with a beam that had been procured for them. The situation is defused by the arrival of the Deputy Commissioner, Pran Nath Chaddha, and the Superintendent of Police, Asghar Ahmed Siddique. Both of them, one a Hindu and the other a Muslim, worked as a team, were trained in England and were above the politics of the day. Both of them wonder how a country could be cut up into two especially where at every level the communities were so deeply mixed.⁵⁰ They realize that if the logic behind the creation of Pakistan was accepted, it would not solve the problem of minorities. Even the army and the governmental machinery would have to be divided – a daunting task especially when there were Hindus and Muslims at every level. As a team both of them work together to quell riots but, noting their efficiency and neutrality they are separated and Pran Nath Chaddha is killed by a Muslim constable.

What this synoptic discussion of the procession scene highlights is that the involvement of the police during the violence was a constant feature, which flowed from a
depth of communal animosity in situations of endemic conflict. Indeed there were many reports of Muslim Punjabi policemen aiding and abetting the violence or of being inordinately slow in responding to appeals for assistance. Hindu policemen were equally culpable in East Punjab.\textsuperscript{51} A similar situation occurs in \textit{Train to Pakistan} where Hukum Chand and the police sub inspector misuse their positions to subvert the nationalist government’s vision of ensuring a secular India. It also shows that administrators discharging their duties efficiently and with neutrality were not tolerated, and if the official was a Hindu he would be disposed of in the newly created Pakistan. This supports the view that the Partition related violence was \textit{socially sanctioned}. It also highlights the tremendous problems, communal as well as administrative, Partition created.

One of the casualties of Partition was the sudden change in people’s attitude wherein human decency takes a beating. This is best exemplified by Abdul Ghani, the hookah maker. Previously in their business relationships, there used to be complete harmony between Lala Kanshi Ram, the Hindu shopkeepers and Abdul Ghani. The fact that Ghani was a Muslim and Kanshi Ram a high caste Hindu did not cause a rift between them for they considered themselves Punjabis as they \textit{spoke a common tongue, wore identical clothes and responded to the heat and the first rains in an identical manner}.\textsuperscript{52} All this changed with Mountbatten’s announcement and with the success of the Muslim League in indoctrinating the Muslim masses to press for Partition.\textsuperscript{53} Ghani is now insolent towards Lala Kanshi Ram, wants him to leave Sialkot because he is a Hindu, and addresses him as \textit{Kanshi Rama}.\textsuperscript{54} He eyes Kanshi Ram’s flourishing shop and suggests they go into partnership. Kanshi Ram now realizes that economic and political opportunism has changed him. Abdul Ghani’s moral disintegration is again evidenced when he passes by Lala Kanshi Ram’s house in the celebratory procession and shouts \textit{Pakistan Zindabad}, with great joy and gusto. However, it is complete when Arun comes to search for his sister, Madhu and her husband’s bodies at the station. Amidst the gruesome spectacle of heaps of burning flesh, Ghani tells Arun with undisguised venom that he personally put them in the blazing heap of bodies and now they were on their way to hell and hopes they rest there forever. Another character, Gangu Mal, Bibi Amar Vati’s husband is also motivated by economic opportunism. He becomes a Muslim in order to hold on to the family property, but this theme is not developed in the novel.

Nahal also touches upon the theme of conversion between Nur, Chaudhry Barkat Ali’s daughter, and Arun. Both of them are in love and want to marry each other but their plans become another casualty of Partition. Before Arun was willing to embrace Islam and
marry Nur but he now finds that the issue was not so simple. Though he knows that they are victims in a political game, he is now driven by a sense of irrationality. Despite his love for her, he refuses to convert for now it is no longer a question of personal love. He feels duty bound to go with his parents to India and help them resettle. Here, Arun’s sense of duty is overpowering but what is not overtly stated is that conversion was frowned upon.

Usrvashi Butalia’s\textsuperscript{55} analysis throws greater light on Arun’s reluctance to convert. She gives the example of her maternal uncle, Ranna Mama, who stayed on in Pakistan and, like Gangu Mal, converted to hold on to the family property. His conversion was looked upon as a betrayal, treated as a mercenary act, and he became a persona non-grata in the family. However, he was not at peace with his decision for:

\begin{quote}
... somehow a convert is never forgiven. Your past follows you, it hounds you. For me, it’s worse because I’ve continued to live in the same place. Even today, when I walk out to the market I often hear people whispering, “Hindu, Hindu”. No you don’t know what it is like. They never forgive you for being a convert.\textsuperscript{56}
\end{quote}

In a curious travesty his home became India which his children found bizarre.

Perhaps Arun has understood the implications and the enormity of conversion; perhaps he had not reasoned out the situation to this extent; perhaps he considered his duty to his parents paramount. Whatever the reasons, he gives duty to his parents as his reason for leaving Pakistan. Whatever it is, the fact remains that religion had divided not only countries but also lovers and Nahal’s cryptic summing up: the issue was no longer as simple as that:\textsuperscript{57} becomes even more significant.

The Partition has also affected Lala Kanshi Ram deeply. He faces many losses and is forced to leave his business, part with Chaudhry Barkat Ali forever and move with his family and friends to a refugee camp. There he learns of the deaths of his daughter, Madhu, and her husband. Broken in spirit he agrees to leave his beloved Sialkot and head in a \textit{kafila}, foot column, to Delhi. \textit{En-route} their column is attacked, many are killed and many women abducted. He witnesses atrocities on the Indian side of the border, is accorded a refugee status and tries to rebuild life anew.

In all this Lala Kanshi Ram, who shared an ambivalent relationship with the British, who admired them for their precision, who\textit{ enjoyed the safety of the British Raj and hugged it lovingly},\textsuperscript{58} but nevertheless, is not blind to the fact that they\textit{ would rather divide than leave behind a united India},\textsuperscript{59} is shorn of all illusions. When they are forced to go to the safety of a refugee camp due to the escalating violence against Hindus, he feels let down by
them and feels that they have fallen short in their obligation to ensure a smooth transfer of power without violence. When Brigadier General Rees fails in his job to ensure the safety of the people with his Punjab Boundary Protection Force his disillusionment is complete and he tells Bill Davidson that the English had the biggest hand in this butchery for they had the power to prevent it but did not use it.

He has every reason to be bitter. When he is forced to leave for the refugee camp he feels let down by the Congress and wonders if the Congress Muslims had become powerless to prevent the violence. Chaudhary Barkat Ali’s reply is most illuminating when he tells his friend that it is not only failure of the Congress Muslims in Pakistan, but also of the Congress Hindus in India. This reveals that Nahal is performing a balancing act by not blaming the Indian or the Pakistani Congressmen. Though Lala Kanshi Ram could play the blame game and point the finger of recrimination at those whom he feels let down by, he does not do so. Instead, he calls it a failure of man.

This is exactly what it is—a failure of the British to contain the divisive politics of Muslim and Hindu nationalism; of the failure of Indian nationalism to keep the country together; of men who were swayed by the communal rhetoric; of the people whose base instincts look over; of men who couldn’t rise above the madness. However, Lala Kanshi Ram rises above all this. When he witnesses the horror unleashed by the Hindus and Sikhs on the Muslims on the Indian side of the border he tells his wife, Prabha Rani, I have ceased to hate. He realizes that he cannot hate the Muslims anymore because they were all equally guilty of the carnage and the only way out of this morass was to make peace with oneself through forgiveness. In so doing, he demonstrates that only love, compassion and tolerance can make political freedom more meaningful. Lala Kanshi Ram recognizes that forgiveness is the only way out. Moreover, in building the new secular nation-state of India it is essential to ensure that it is free from communal hatred and rancour. This reiterates Nahal’s humanist and secular concerns.

What this discussion has demonstrated so far is that the composite culture of the Punjab has been destroyed due to the rise of a communal consciousness, making Jinnah’s two-nation theory a reality. Nahal’s protagonists, Kanshi Ram and Barkat Ali, who reposed their faith in the nationalistic politics of the Congress under the leadership of Gandhi, felt let down. Lala Kanshi Ram holds Gandhi responsible for abetting communal politics and giving into the demand for Pakistan by appeasing Jinnah which had negative repercussions eventually. But Nahal does not place the ultimate onus of Partition and the consequent violence on Gandhi. This happened because communalism had made deep
inroads into the composite culture of the Punjab. It was also due to the failure of Indian nationalism and the haste with which the British pushed for Independence. In addition, Nahal sees it as a result of the increasing marginalization of Gandhi from the Congress in his later years. Later, when news of Gandhi’s assassination spreads through the bazaars of Delhi:

What impressed Lala Kanshi Ram was the pride with which each man stood. He would be blind if he didn’t see that. He thought of the pre-independence days, before the nation was free. How self-conscious the people were then! An Indian leader dying and the crowd feeling openly for him? It was unthinkable … Lala Kanshi Ram raised his head with pride and stretched back his shoulders. He was unrestricted now, he was untrammeled.  

Like *Train to Pakistan*, the novel ends on a note of affirmation. However, this fractured independence has a price. Communalism has won the day, hence the Partition. But, now Lala Kanshi Ram and millions of others like him can look forward to the dawn of secularism in a free India, even though it is at the cost of great loss and personal and psychological suffering. Nahal’s secular and humanistic considerations come to the fore when he advocates forgiveness. In his truthful and factual depiction of the events that unfold themselves from the time of Mountbatten’s announcement to Gandhi’s assassination he shows how syncretism was a casualty of the Partition due to the failure of the nationalist leaders to live up to their promises.

**CREATING A PAKISTANI IDENTITY:**

If Kushwant Singh and Chaman Nahal deal with a community in crisis due to the failure of Indian nationalism, Bapsi Sidhwa, in *Ice-Candy-Man*, examines the crisis from a Parsi as well as a Pakistani viewpoint. Born out of a desire to offer the Pakistani viewpoint, and set right the grievous wrong done to Jinnah and her countrymen, Sidhwa tells the story of Partition through Lenny’s eyes, a Parsi girl coming of age during the freedom struggle. Like Lenny, Sidhwa was eight years when Partition occurred and witnessed the gory violence. Also, like Lenny she too is afflicted with polio and is a Parsi. Though there are autobiographical elements, it is inaccurate to read it as such. In an interview with Feroza Jussawalla, she states:

*The trouble with the first person child’s point of view is that it is very easy to mistake it for autobiography. The child, Lenny, in the book is very*
distinct from myself. The incidents in her life are often taken from my life, but Lenny is a much more astute child than I was. Even if it’s a child’s point of view, the narrator’s voice is sophisticated, and the reader knows there’s an informed adult behind it.

... So every incident taken from my life, or perhaps from the lives of people I knew intimately, has been embroidered to create the larger reality of fiction.\(^{64}\)

It is significant that the child-narrator, eight year old Lenny Sethi, is a Parsi like Sidhwa and much of her narrative highlights the unique position of the Parsi community in colonial India.\(^{65}\) As the narrative unfolds, it becomes apparent that the narrator is aware, even as a child, that the Parsi community is undergoing an identity crisis for in a post-colonial Pakistan the Parsis stand to lose their privileged position despite their minority status in British India.

In the same interview with Jussawalla,\(^{66}\) Sidhwa admits that she chose a Parsi narrator rather than a Hindu or a Muslim narrator in order to keep the situation objective but as Didur has demonstrated, Lenny’s narrative can be read against the grain in order to track the Parsi community’s sympathy with the colonial culture.\(^{67}\) Lenny’s naive impressions about her community’s reaction to the end of colonial rule brings to the fore the history of their opportunistic relationship with the British.\(^{68}\) Like the rest of the Indians they were subject to colonial rule but, at the same time, enjoyed a privileged relationship with the colonial administration and often expressed outright admiration for British colonial culture. Because they enjoyed a privileged relationship with the British, the Parsi psyche was imbued with a sense of racial and cultural superiority. This made them worthy allies of the British and gave them an edge over their Hindu and Muslim counterparts.

Early in the novel, the community’s sense of its racial superiority is seen in the doctor’s, Col. Bharucha’s, condescending attitude towards the Muslim couple who show him their sick child. The husband speaks on his wife’s behalf since she is veiled. Annoyed over the father’s ignorance concerning his child’s illness he berates him:

‘She didn’t tell you? Are you a father or a barber? And you all want Pakistan! How will you govern a country when you don’t know what goes on in your own house?’\(^{69}\)

He equates the father’s ignorance over the baby’s illness with effeminacy and a general lack of authority. On the contrary, Col. Bharucha shows an exaggerated manliness when he examines Lenny. He hollers at her mother when she coddles her, ‘Take her
He is patronizing, gruff, abrupt and impatient. These are the characteristics Parsi men considered desirable and cultivated since they belonged the dominant community.

However, given the national situation, the dominant position of the Parsis comes under attack when they realize that their privileged position with the coloniser would be in jeopardy post-Independence. This sense of insecurity is established when Col. Bharucha while examining Lenny’s leg roars, ‘If anyone’s to blame, blame the British! There was no polio in India till they brought it here!’ It is apparent that they feel marginalized and threatened by the imminent independence for, in the event of two or three new nations being formed, the Parsis would lose their unique identity and be overpowered by the predominant community. In order to save themselves from this ignominious fate by the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs and to protect themselves they, under Bharucha’s leadership, decide to ‘hunt with the hounds and run with the hare!’ This and the trivial statements the Parsis make about the independence movement, ‘Who does this Gandhi think he is … Is it his grandfather’s ocean?’ show that they do not question the ethics of their collaboration with the coloniser nor do they sympathise with the national movement.

In the end they decide to cast [their] lot with whoever rules Lahore [and to] abide by the rules of their land. This decision brings out another characteristic of the Parsis apart from their opportunism: the ability to assimilate and adapt to the country they are in. This is because the history of the Parsis in India and subsequently of Pakistan is the history of their efforts to preserve their identity. This becomes particularly important to them during the changing historical setting of the Partition. As Sidhwa candidly admitted in an interview:

Well, the Parsis, in a sense, made the best of things. If they were in India, they became patriotic Indians. Those that were left in Pakistan remained there and were loyal Pakistanis. Because of their tiny minority status, Parsis have learnt to adapt to whichever country they belong and to take on the colour of the predominant culture.

This ability of the Parsis to take on the colour of the predominant culture impacts Sidhwa as a writer. This point will be taken up later. However, in the immediate context, the Parsis decide to be neutral in the ongoing struggle and decide to shift from Parsi loyalty to the British, to neutrality. Having declared their ambivalence, the Parsis are assured of their safety in Lahore, Pakistan, and are witness to the turmoil of Partition. Lenny, because of her privileged minority position and because she is in the company of servants, Ayah, in
particular, witnesses firsthand the communalization of the coterie of servants surrounding, Shanta. She also witnesses how the Hindus and Sikhs are *Othered* by the Muslims.

Since Lenny is a child she can only intuit the socio-political situation around her, which she presents in fragments. As the action of the novel unfolds, Lenny senses an atmosphere of communal amity in Lahore with various communities mingling freely with each other. Ayah is the magnet around whom her admirers, belonging to different communities, flock. They are the Falleti’s Hotel Cook, the Government House Gardner, Masseur, Ice-candy-man, China-man, Sharbat Khan and others. This diverse multi-religious group meets in the Queen’s Garden and sits around Queen Victoria’s statue, where they discuss the political developments taking place in the country. As the communal tension escalates, Sharbat Khan warns Ayah of communal trouble in Calcutta and Delhi, which she brushes off lightly as she feels that Jinnah, Nehru and Patel are not fighting their fight in Lahore and cannot identify with them. Furthermore, it is amongst this group of servants than anywhere else, that Lenny perceives the changing attitudes and identities of the people, becomes aware of the fissures and cracks that are going to affect the lives of the people around her and how the Indian politicians and the British successfully manipulate religious and ethnic identities. As the political developments unfold, a growing animosity among Ayah’s suitors creeps in when they discuss the political situation:

‘Gandhi, Nehru, Patel... they have much influence even in London’, says the gardener mysteriously, as if acknowledging the arbitrary and mischievous nature of antic gods. ‘They didn’t like the Muslim League’s victory in the Punjab election’.

‘The bastards!’ says Masseur with histrionic fury that conceals a genuine bitterness. ‘So they sack Wavell Sahib who will favour the Hindus!’

‘With all due respect, malijee’, says Ice-candy-man, surveying the gardener through a blue mist of exhaled smoke, ‘but aren’t you Hindus expert at just this kind of thing? Twisting tails behind the scene... and getting someone else to slaughter your goats?’. This is the first instance when Lenny notices the discussion take on an ugly tone. It is characterized by aggressiveness, uneasiness and nervousness. However, Ayah manages to deflect the tension with her seductive charm, which is still more powerful than communal belonging:
'If you all talk of nothing but this Hindu-Muslim business, I'll stop coming to the park', she says pertly. 'It’s just a discussion among friends’, says Ice-candy-man, uncoiling his frame from the grass to sit up. ‘Such talk helps clear the air … but for your sake, we won’t bring it up again'.

Though Ayah manages to smooth over the differences, the unease continues and Lenny naively notes and wonders:

_There is much disturbing talk. India is going to be broken. Can one break a country? And what happens if they break it where our house is? Or crack it further up on Warris Road? How will I ever get to Godmother’s then?_

She suddenly becomes aware of religious differences and an increase in an outward show of religiosity:

_It is sudden. One day everybody is themselves – and the next day they are Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian. People shrink, dwindling into symbols. Ayah is no longer just my all encompassing Ayah – she is also a token. A Hindu. Carried away by a renewed devotional fervor she expends a small fortune in joss-sticks, flowers and sweets on the gods and goddesses in the temples._

_Imam Din and Yousaf, turning into religious Zealots, warn Mother they will take Friday afternoons off for the Jumha prayers..._

Putting together all the fragments that she has absorbed Lenny becomes aware of new identities. The outward marks of people’s faith become more and more evident in their physical appearance: something she had not paid attention to earlier like Hari’s dhoti, Ayah’s sari, Imam Din’s cap and Sher Singh’s turban. Hari-the-gardener, in particular, is singled out for discriminatory treatment. In the past, trying to pull Hari’s dhoti off was a sport done in jest but now the rules change. His bodhi singles him out as a Hindu and Lenny wonders, _why must he persist in growing it? and - flaunt his Hinduism? and invite ridicule?_ She too feels a cruel surge and flings herself on the human tangle and fights to remove that dhoti, which she feels is preposterous and obscene. All of a sudden it is off and:

_Like a withered tree frozen in a winter landscape Hari stands isolated in the bleak centre of our violence: prickly with goose-bumps, sooty genitals on display._
This sport started in jest, descends into cruelty because Hari flaunts his Hinduism – something which would have gone unnoticed in the past.

Apart from religious distinctions, Lenny also becomes aware of caste distinctions, which emerge under the influence of communal hostilities. She now realizes the low caste status of Hari and Moti-the-sweeper, his wife Mucko, and their daughter Papoo. Thus, through Lenny’s patchy but accurate vision of reality, Sidhwa represents a society where existing hierarchical levels are increasingly stressed; where caste and religion make the untouchables ever more so; the Brahmins loftier and loftier; where even distinctions between English Christians, Anglo-Indians and Indian-Christians arise who in turn look upon all non-Christians in a derogatory manner. Sadly, Lenny realizes that even Parsis are sucked into this discriminatory system where Godmother, Slavesister, Electric-aunt and my nuclear family are reduced to irrelevant nomenclatures – we are Parsee. In an attempt to find a logical explanation, she draws the conclusion that one man’s religion is another man’s poison.

The situation in the Queen’s Garden also changes. Lenny notices that people of different religions: the Sikhs, the Muslims and Brahmins: cluster around in their own groups. Only the group around Ayah remains unchanged. Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Parsee are, as always, unified around her. As the political situation heats up Ayah and her clutch of admirers gradually withdraw from the Queen’s Garden to the wrestler’s restaurant. Yet something has snapped. The jolly, boisterous, vulgar brawls among the servants in Lenny’s household turn sour when the discussion inevitably returns to the political situation. This time when Sher Singh voices his concern about the future of the Sikhs in a divided India, Masseur tells him the only way to keep their property is to arrive at a settlement with the Muslim League. The wrestler informs the group that the Sikhs were preparing to drive the Muslim’s out of East Punjab and viciously adds that the Sikhs always had a tradition of violence; that their portraits always depicted the gurus holding the dripping heads of butchered enemies. The atmosphere becomes tense with these shared memories of a bloody cultural past filled with suspicion, hatred and animosity. Through Masseur tries to smooth over the situation by maintaining that there were no differences among friends and would stand by each other, this expectation is soon belied. Ice-candy-man, who had helped Sher Singh get rid of his Muslim tenants with a group of Muslimhoodlums, now hounds him out of Lahore. He does this because after hearing about the Sikh atrocities he wants all the Sikhs to leave Lahore.
This brings the role of Ice-candy-man to the fore in the novel. He is entangled in the net of hate and revenge cast by others’ decisions. Used to slipping in and out various identities – from popsicle vendor to birdman and pretended holy man – he allows himself to be pervaded by evil, which is first noticed when he forces Sher Singh to flee Lahore. The Government House Gardner also decides to leave for Delhi due to the worsening communal situation and also because Ice-candy-man’s loyalty, who is a friend, cannot be counted on.

Lenny too notices the change wrought in him. He appears to have an air of consequence about him. When he informs them that the Falleti’s Hotelcook has runaway he appears bloated with triumph... and a horrid irrepressible gloating. Again, when Ayah and Lenny watch Shalmi, a Hindu locality, burn from Ice-candy-man’s rooftop they are sickened by the spectacle of charred limbs falling like logs from the sky, he is exultant. His descent into evil is given further impetus when a trainload of dead Muslims arrives from Gurdaspur along with two gunny-sacks filled with women’s breasts. This gives him the incentive to engineer Ayah’s abduction, Other her and also satisfy his desire for her. Lenny’s all encompassing Ayah is now reduced to a Hindu as men play out their violent dialogue on her body. Ice-candy-man is metamorphosed into a looter, a murderer, (he murders Masseur because Ayah preferred him), abductor, pimp. In a sense, Ice-candy-man symbolizes those icy and indifferent politicians, who created this immense suffering for the ordinary man in 1947.

As the situation deteriorates, people resort to conversion in order to stay on in the newly formed nation-state of Pakistan for the minorities feel insecure. Hari-the-gardener becomes Muslim and Moti-the-sweeper, his wife Mucch and daughter Papoo become Christians. There is much disturbing talk of breaking the country. Lenny feels threatened by the violence and bloodshed and the vision of a torn Punjab. She wonders:

Will the earth bleed? And what about the sundered rivers? Won’t their water drain into the jagged cracks? Not satisfied by breaking India, they now want to tear the Punjab.

As the Punjab tears violently, Lenny is sucked into the inexorable historical process that seals her identity as a Pakistani, with one stroke of the pen:

Playing British gods under the ceiling fans of the Falleti’s Hotel – behind Queen Victoria’s gardened skirt – the Radcliff Commission deals out Indian cities like a pack of cards. Lahore is dealt to Pakistan, Amritsar to India. Sialkot to Pakistan, Pathankot to India.
I am Pakistani. In a snap. Just like that.\(^{88}\)

At this point it becomes amply clear that Sidhwa in no way subscribes to the two-nation theory and that her’s, Lenny’s and the others’ citizenship in the newly formed Pakistan is casually dealt out to them like a pack of cards. Though she indicts the British for being so casual about partitioning the country; though she shows how religious differences were deliberately exploited on the eve of Partition; though she rises above petty nationalism there is an undercurrent of feeling that Sidhwa has taken on the colour of the predominant culture, as mentioned in her interview with Jussawalla earlier, and has subtly identified and aligned herself with Pakistan. This is done in two ways. One is through her treatment of the Sikhs, and the other is by reappraising the character of Jinnah and suggesting that the British were not fair to him or Pakistan.

In dealing with the Sikhs Sidhwa, on more occasion than one, depicts them as volatile, militant and prone to sudden outbursts of violence. At the Sethi’s dinner party Inspector-General Roger’s tactless denunciation of the Sikhs, ‘The Akalis are a bloody bunch of murdering fanatics!’\(^{89}\) leads to a skirmish between him and Mr. Singh. Similarly, Sidhwa’s fictional use of the well-known inflammatory and desperate speech by Master Tara Singh outside the steps of the Punjab assembly chambers confirms this stereotypical representation of Sikhs. To be fair to Sidhwa, she shows both Sikhs and Muslims go on a bloody, vicious rampage when Gowalmandi is set ablaze:

_Suddenly a posse of sweating English Tommies, wearing only Khakhi shorts, socks and boots, runs up in the lane directly below us. And on their heels a mob of Sikhs, their wild long hair and beards rampant, large fevered eyes glowing in fanatic faces, pours into the narrow lane roaring slogans, holding curved swords, shoving up a maniac wave of violence that sets Ayah to trembling as she holds me tight. A naked child, twitching on a spear struck between her shoulders, is waved like a flag: her screamless mouth agape she is staring straight up at me […] And then a slowly advancing mob of Muslim goondas: packed so tight that we can only see only the top of their heads. Roaring: ‘Allah-o-Akbar! Yaaaa Ali!’ and “Pakistan Zindabad!’ […] The processionist’s are milling about two jeeps pushed back to back… My eyes focus on an emaciated Banya wearing a white Gandhi cap. The man is knocked down… The men move back and in the small clearing I see his legs sticking out of his dhoti right up to the groin -- each thin, brown leg tied to a jeep. Ayah, holding her hands over my eyes,
collapses on the floor pulling me down with her. There is the roar of a hundred throats: ‘Allah-o-Akbar!’ and beneath it the growl of revving motors...

In showing a Sikh mob holding a naked child aloft on a spear and the Muslim mob ripping apart a Hindu baniya, Sidhwa tries to maintain an aesthetic distance. But, Ranna’s story woven into the main story rips aside this façade of neutrality. In this story Ranna witnesses the carnage carried out by a Sikh mob in his village, Pir Pindo, which in earlier times was a picture of communal amity. When news of the communal violence reaches Pir Pindo, the *granthi*, Jagjeet Singh, promises to protect his Muslim brothers. However, he is unable to do so and warns them to leave but they refuse. Shortly, afterwards a Sikh mob descends on the villagers. In the blood-bath that follows the whole village is decimated. Sikh men rape Muslim women in a mosque simultaneously defiling it. Ranna witnesses Dost Mohammad, his other uncles, his older brother and cousins beheaded:

*The Sikhs were among them like hairy vengeful demons, wielding bloodied swords. Dragging them out as a sprinkling of Hindus, darting about at the fringes, their faces vaguely familiar pointed out and identified the Mussalmans by name. He felt a blow cleave the back of his head and the warm flow of blood. Ranna fell just inside the door of a tangled pile of unrecognizable bodies. Someone fell on him, drenching him in blood.*

The description of Sikhs as *vengeful demons* and the vicious rampage they go on should be noted. Left for dead, Ranna faces many life and death situations till he is eventually reunited with his Noni chachi in a refugee camp in Lahore.

In an interview with Jussawala, Sidhwa maintains that she adopted this strategy to show the atrocities committed in East Punjab against the Muslims, and is meant to counter-balance the killings of the Hindus and Sikhs by the Muslims in Lahore. But while this section appears to give a different point of the view, it is apparent that ‘Ranna’s story’ becomes a means through which she expresses her sub-conscious anxieties about the Sikhs, which dramatizes their savagery and bestiality, and reinforces the Pakistani perception about their stereotypical communal ethnic image. Moreover, the Muslim atrocities pale in comparison with those of the Sikhs.

Informing her impression of Jinnah Lenny, as has been mentioned before, derives her views from the servants and, as she puts it, *Gandhi, Jinnah, Nehru, Iqbal, Tara Singh, Mountbatten are names I hear.* Some of these views gleaned from the margins display theirs, and Sidhwa’s utter disregard of these politicians. A smattering of these views will
make this point clear: ‘Gandhi and Nehru are forcing the League to push for Pakistan,’ or ‘Gandhi, Nehru, Patel ... didn’t like the Muslim League’s victory in the Punjab elections.’ Gandhi becomes ‘that non-violent violence monger [and is] a politician yaar... It’s his business to suit his tongue to the moment.’ In fact there are numerous derogatory references to Gandhi, Nehru and Mountbatten. Nehru becomes the sly one, and Nehru’s and Edwina’s friendship is referred to in a most uncomplimentary manner.

These subversive remarks coming from the masses shows their nationalist construct for the new nation. Their scathing attack is reserved only for the Indian leaders whereas Jinnah is assessed as a leader of high calibre. In Ice-Candy-Man, Sidhwa also suggests that Partition favoured India over Pakistan:

... the Hindus are being favoured over the Muslims by the remnants of the Raj. Now that its objective to divide India is achieved, the British favour Nehru over Jinnah...They grant Nehru Gurdaspur and Pathankot, without which Muslim Kashmir cannot be secured.

Though it is grossly inaccurate on Sidhwa’s part to say that Gurdaspur and Pathankot were granted to Nehru, it reflects her bias. She goes on to glorify Jinnah and launches out on a tirade against India and reinstates Jinnah:

...And today, forty years later, in films of Gandhi’s and Mountbatten’s lives, in books by British and Indian scholars, Jinnah, who for a decade was known as, ‘Ambassador of Hindu-Muslim Unity’, is caricatured, and portrayed as a monster.

This leaves one in no doubt that Sidhwa sees Partition from the western side of the Indo-Pak border. Lenny’s observation, I am Pakistani. In a snap. Just like that, takes on a greater significance in the light of the above observations. It reveals that it is not only Lenny who becomes a new citizen-subject in the new nation state of Paklistan but also that Sidhwa has shed her vaunted Parsi neutrality and ambivalence and has aligned herself with the new country. For all the soul searching the Parsis in Lahore goes through, their sympathies are now with Pakistan. Despite this, her compassion and clear vision allows her to see that violence affects everyone, even if it is the enemy’s, and portrays the meaninglessness of artificial divisions effectively.

ADVOCATING A SIKH FUDAMENTALIST IDENTITY:
Like Bapsi Sidhwa’s *Ice-Candy-Man*, Shauna Singh Baldwin’s *What the Body Remembers* has a strong identitarian emphasis. It covers the tumultuous period of the nationalist movement from 1928 to 1947, and is a novel written from the Sikh perspective. It deals with the changing communal relations between the Hindus and the Sikhs on the one hand, and, on the other, between the Muslims and the Sikhs, as well as the emergence of Sikh fundamentalism. Her aim in this novel is to highlight the plight of the Sikh minority community which was caught in between the Hindus and Muslims in the struggle for power.

When the novel opens in Rawalpindi in 1937, undivided India, Satya, Sardarji’s first wife of forty two years, is jealously examining Roop’s hair. Sixteen year old Roop is Sardarji’s second wife, got for the sole purpose of providing him with an heir. During her scrutiny:

... Satya lifts Roop’s plait around her shoulder and examines the tip - too few split ends; it has felt the scissors once at least, if not more. Roop is a new Sikh, then, an uncomprehending carrier of the orthodoxy resurging in them all. Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims, they are like the three strands of her hair, a strong rope against the British, but separate nevertheless.100

Satya’s observation takes up two issues. One is the resurgence of Sikh orthodoxy and fundamentalism coursing through the Sikh community, which makes them stand apart from the Hindus. The other is Baldwin’s emphasis, from the very beginning of the novel, of the separateness of the three religious groups, which are now temporarily united against the British.

The issue of why fundamentalism acquired such great salience amongst the Sikhs in the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century is articulated through Bachan Singh, Roop’s father. Early in the novel after a visit from Gujarkhan he storms into the house and forbids his family from going to the Hindu temple or cutting anyone’s hair. This is because he witnessed Arya Samaj followers take a Sikh boy who was going to join the army, hobble him like a goat and parade him through the bazaar in Gujarkhan. They then go to the temple and cut his hair to return him to *shuddhi* (ritual purification). He goes on to order Revati Bhua and the rest in the family:

‘None of your brass idols in this house, Revatiji, no Hindu ceremonies, no Aarti, no Sandhya, no offerings to the tulsi tree on the terrace. I don’t want to hear a single bell – understand? Gujri, no more Muslim meat is to enter this house, not even if Abu Ibrahim sends goat meat he slaughters for our
labourers at Sadqa; the Guru forbids killing animals slowly and painfully.¹⁰¹

Revati Bhua is stricken for she has adopted Hindu rituals and customs in her worship and loves them. Later, Bachan Singh has the Akhand Paath, the Guru’s word read for three days to purify the house. Revati Bhua puts away her idols in a suitcase but Papaji does not seem to notice that she constantly speaks to Lakshmi, something she cannot do with the Guru. Yet Papaji has done exactly that: asked Revati Bhua to leave her Lakshmi and talk to the Guru instead. This dramatic episode unfolds the concern for an exclusive Sikh socio-religious identity¹⁰² which was reinforced by the birth of revivalism and fundamentalism in Sikhism, Hinduism and Islam during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Prior to this the Sikhs and Hindus not only lived together but also shared common cultural cognitive and affective orientations¹⁰³ as witnessed in Revati Bhua’s worship of Lakshmi. Moreover, most Sikhs identified themselves variously in terms of village, cult, lineage or caste, depending upon the context and did not project a single Sikh identity. Early in the twentieth century, in 1909, Max Arthur Macauliffe, a British civil servant devoted to the cause of the Sikhs also noted the assimilation of the Sikhs into the Hindu fold:

*Truly wonderful are the strength and vitality of Hinduism. It is like the boa constrictor of the Indian forest... Hinduism has embraced Sikhism in its folds; the still comparatively young religion is making a vigorous struggle for life, but its ultimate destruction is, it is apprehended, inevitable without State support.*¹⁰⁴

What he did not mention was that the Sikhs always had British State support and the religion did not die because of the rise of the Singh Sabhas, which arose to counter the activities of the Arya Samaj and the active proselytization by the Christian missionaries. The Singh Sabhas also arose because the need for social reform was felt by the Sikhs. The first Singh Sabha, founded in 1873, had as its main objective to arouse the love of religion among the Sikhs and believed in inter-religious toleration. However, the emergence of the Hindu Arya Samaj with its programme of *shuddhi* alienated the Sikhs. They went a step further and started reconverting the Buddhists, Sikhs, Muslims and Christians to bring them back to the Hindu fold. In 1900 the Arya Samaj performed the purification ritual for a group of outcaste Rahtia Sikhs: their heads and beards were shaved to transform them into pure caste Hindus. The importance of unshorn hair for a Khalsa Sikh identity is paramount
and cutting it is an outrage. It is this real life incident which Baldwin has fictionalized, which emphasizes the loss of Sikh identity and outrage, which Bachan Singh rails against.

To counter this, a second Sikh Sabha was constituted in 1879 which emphasized the need for reform, simplification and purification of social customs and an assertion of Sikh separateness. In 1902 the Singh Sabhas were brought under the umbrella of a new body called the Chief Khalsa Diwan. This body was instrumental in having Hindu idols removed from the Golden Temple in 1905. In the present context, Bachan Singh’s directive to do away with Hindu rituals and ceremonies which had seeped into his household assumes added significance. What he has done in his home had already been accomplished in the public sphere. Moreover, by dismissing the winds of pluralism he has reverted to fundamentalism.

What he also seems to be denying is the heritage of a composite culture in the Punjab, which had long been in existence. He turns his back on tolerance, forgetting that his father promised to make him a Sikh if he were born a boy. His half-brother Shyam Chacha is a Hindu. Yet these two brothers – one a Sikh and the other a Hindu – go their separate ways pointing out to the fissures and cracks that had developed in the fabric of Indian society. Shyam Chacha is the only Hindu in the novel and is depicted as shallow, mercenary and craven. He is a staunch Arya Samaji and makes Papaji’s conversion to Hinduism a pre-condition for advancing him a loan and wants him to grow tobacco in his fields the next season. Of-course Bachan Singh does not forego his Sikhism, reinforcing the second Singh Sabha’s assertion, and by implication Baldwin’s too, Ham Hindu Nahin (we are not Hindus). This is a clear indication that the boundary between the Sikhs and Hindus is demarcated asserting the difference between the Khalsa Sikhs and the Hindus.

Baldwin also expresses the desire for a separate Sikh identity through her dissatisfaction with Gandhi and the nationalist movement. As the freedom struggle intensifies the desire for a separate Sikh identity receives a blow and Gandhi is blamed:

… The Mahatma raised the national flag of a free India and it did not have a strip of deep Sikh blue as he promised; across Punjab, Sikhs mutter the reason – the Mahatma doesn’t care for meat eaters. Not including the strip of blue is cause for discontentment among the Sikhs. Their disillusionment, and by default Baldwin’s disillusionment with Gandhi, is voiced in no uncertain terms when many Sikh families boycott the Ram Lila celebrations which Sardarji patronizes:
... because Mahatma Gandhi strongly condemned a Sikh who voyaged all the way to London to silence Sir Michael O’Dwyer, the former Governor of Punjab, with bullets, for proclaiming mass murderer General Dyer a hero from 1919 till now.108

All this indicates that the Sikhs were pressing for special recognition and a separate identity. This again reinforces the point that they were different from the Hindus. However, the rift between them is not dealt with in greater detail. What the novel does amplify and develop is the relationship between the Sikhs and the Muslims. In Pari Darvaza, Roop’s
d village in 1928, Baldwin depicts an apparent communal amity existing between the two communities. Early in the novel Bachan Singh and Abu Ibrahim, a pir, match their partridges against each other. Both are friends as are also their sons, Jeevan and Ibrahim. As the fight heats up Bachan Singh and Abu Ibrahim goad their partridges with:

‘Fight! Fight like Babar the Great!’
Bachan Singh goads his black fighter-bird, ‘Ay, listen to me, partridge!
Fight like a Sikh!’

‘Hein?’ Abu Ibrahim feigns indignation.

‘My partridges’, Bachan Singh jests to his side of the crowd, ‘avenge each Guru beheaded at the hands of the Mughals!’

Sikhs in the crowd agree cheerily, ‘Ah-ho!’

Abu Ibrahim returns, ‘Mine will make yours return every inch of marble your Maharaja Ranjit Singh stripped from the tombs of our emperors!’

Muslims standing behind the pir laugh uneasily.109

These references to the historic past and the perceived wrongs done by each community to the other, though said in jest, bring out the animosity lurking beneath the surface. These memories cannot be wiped away so easily and, combined with the Muslim League’s success in winning over the ‘pir-ridden’ villages110 of the Punjab; Abu Ibrahim too changes his stand. He wants his son Ibrahim to leave the army and campaign for the Muslim League, now that the formation of Pakistan is imminent. Moreover, he ought to do so as every Muslim village is a potential Pakistan. Even though he has been a friend for years with Bachan Singh he is powerless to help him when the Muslim mob comes to attack him. Bachan Singh realizes though he was the pir of Pari Darvaza, his Muslim followers were indoctrinated with the anti-Sikh rhetoric. Since conversion was an unacceptable alternative for Bachan Singh, he has to flee from his haveli in Pari Darvaza
with his grandsons after beheading his daughter-in-law, Kusum, to retain the family honour.

When Jeevan, who is now Major Jeevan, rushes back to Pari Darvaza in a requisitioned jeep with Ibrahim to ensure the safety of his family he finds an eerily empty haveli and, his wife Kusum’s dismembered body. He goes back to the jeep to get petrol to light her pyre but finds Ibrahim and two jerry cans missing. Immediately after this discovery he sees that his haveli is on fire and suspects Ibrahim of the deed when in actual fact it was his uncle, Shyam Chacha, who did it so that his brother Bachan Singh would have nowhere to go and would be in debt. Jeevan has no choice but to make good his escape. He regrets that he could not hug Ibrahim one last time or take any Sikhs with him from Pari Darvaza. Moreover, Abu Ibrahim and the other Muslims would mistakenly think he set fire to the village to take revenge. *And they would hate him for it as they rebuilt it and hate his sons, and his sons’ sons and their sons.*\(^{111}\) Thus, the cycle of hate and suspicion would grow and be handed down as a genetic memory. However, Jeevan who used to tell his father that they were all Punjabis and there was no difference between the communities tells Roop, *but now the only people I can feel trust for are other Sikhs.*\(^{112}\) And this line sums up Baldwin’s feelings about her community apart from making the communal divide final.

Another factor that drives a wedge between the two communities is the prevailing social discrimination. This stark reality has been depicted through Roop’s Muslim friend Huma. One day when she enters Bachan Singh’s kitchen to drink water Gujri shouts, ‘*You shameless girl! Don’t you ever come into my rasoi again!... chi! Dirty girl. Don’t you let your shadow come near it! Huh!*’\(^{113}\) Though Roop is shocked she recalls other instances where Abu Ibrahim only ate fruit or drank tea with Papaji in separate copper thals and tumblers; that even though Jeevan touched Ibrahim when they rode or played kabaddi the latter never ate in their house. On another occasion when Huma asked for water Gujri placed it before her on the ground and their hands never touched. It is this sense of perceived wrong that Bhatia mentions in his account (Appendix 7) which was in part responsible for the estrangement between the Muslims and the other two communities. Huma remembers these humiliations years later when she becomes Rai Alam Khan’s third wife and meets Roop, who is now Sardarji’s second wife. This humiliation colours her observations in the conversation between them:

*‘My abu says,’ Huma is reciting how, ‘wherever there is one Muslim village, there is Pakistan.’*
'And Pari Darvaza? It is not a Muslim village.'
'It is a Muslim village except for tum-log.'
'And where are hum-log – we people – to go?'
'You can go to Hindustan,' says Huma, as if it is all resolved. 'But you can’t stay in Pakistan. We don’t like Hindus here.'…
Aloud, Roop says, ‘Sikhs are not Hindus.’
Huma says, ‘Do you join us to celebrate Id or do you join Hindus to celebrate Diwali?’
‘But Huma’, says Roop, ‘neither your abu nor Pandit Dinanath, ever joined us in celebrating Gurpurb.’…
‘Sikhs only marry Sikhs or Hindus. My abu says Sikhs are just Hindus who can’t be disguised.’
But it is also Muslims who do not marry Hindus or Sikhs unless we, convert, Muslims who call us Kafirs.
‘You are Kafirs!’
A tense silence fills the room pulls them in directions they cannot resist.¹¹⁴

This conversation brings out the differing perceptions between the Muslims and the Sikhs, wherein even childhood friends are treated as the Other, where the breach between the communities is more or less irreparable; and where Muslims consider people from the other community as Kafirs, unbelievers. It also articulates Baldwin’s view that the Sikhs are separate from both the Muslims and the Hindus by emphasizing and reiterating the point that Sikhs are not Hindus.

But what of the suited set, the heaven born,¹¹⁵ the exclusive club to which Sardarji and Rai Alam Khan belong? Both are educated in England, are rich landlords and hold important government positions. Rai Alam Khan is Sardarji’s trusted friend and acts as negotiator between him and the Muslims working in his flour mills in Rawalpindi. Both attend the Tuesday Lunch Club which Rai Alam Khan instituted for qualified gentlemen to dine together for it was the fashion of the times, what people in those days called Khilafat, the harmony movement between Hindus and Muslims.¹¹⁶

However, by May 1944 both their positions are clearly defined when Rai Alam Khan, who is not a typical Muslim, finds no hesitation in espousing a Muslim nation and distances himself from even the Sikhs and voices similar views as his wife Huma. Sardarji now realizes:
If Rai Alam Khan a gentleman landlord like himself, well travelled and well schooled, wants Pakistan, it is not merely the malcontents and the poor that Jinnah and the Muslim pirs, maulvis and mullahs have stirred into protest.\textsuperscript{117}

Seeing the writing on the wall, Sardarji, on more than one occasion wonders if the Akali Party would get them a Sikhistan and how the minorities like the Sikhs would be protected in the future Pakistan. At this point it is pertinent to note that Sardarji voices the doubts Sikhs were beset with since March 1940 when the Muslim League passed a resolution demanding a sovereign Muslim state which would comprise of the predominantly Muslim areas of India including most of the Punjab. The Sikhs were deeply disturbed by this demand as the course of Sikh-Muslim relations over the centuries had created distrust of Muslim intentions in their minds. The only alternatives for the Sikhs were either to align themselves with the Indian National Congress and resist the Muslim demand for the Partition of India or to strive for a state of their own. As neither option worked out due to the Muslim demand of a separate nation being met, the Sikhs of western Punjab had to abandon their homes and migrate to India.\textsuperscript{118}

As the communal violence escalates century’s old distrust between the communities and between the friends arises due to Jinnah’s demand for Pakistan being met:

\textit{What Rai Alam Khan’s body remembers is a hundred years old, it comes from tales of domination by Sikhs. What his own body remembers comes from gory paintings of Gurus boiled and dismembered by order of Mughal emperors, the antique violence of Rai Alam Khan’s forebears. These events, which are indelible, shape their karmic memory.}\textsuperscript{119}

Sardarji realizes that he stands to lose his ancestral haveli, his villages, his apricot orchards, and his mill which will be situated in Pakistan. Moreover, since these events are indelible, he comes to the conclusion that \textit{his treasured ambivalence must be forsaken ... He must gather all the Sikh aspects of his being into one file, mark it top priority, then let it ride above the rest. He must view himself in one dimension, as just a Sikh, only a Sikh, with no affiliations past or present beyond Religion ...}\textsuperscript{120} It is at this point that Sardarji throws in his lot with the Akali Dal, which represented thefundamentalists’ views. This meant espousing the inseparability of religion and politics and spurning the secular policies of the Congress and Communist Parties which advocated the separation of religion and policies. He starts financing Sikh \textit{Jathas} – Sikh militias. As noted earlier, Major Jeevan too came to a similar conclusion. But events overtake the Sikhs and Sardarji and his family is
forced to migrate to Delhi. Partition and the loss of his property affect him deeply but he pulls himself out of his depression and starts rebuilding life anew as do the other Sikhs affected by the cataclysm.

Like Roop’s three strands of hair, Shauna Singh Baldwin continuously and repeatedly emphasizes that the three communities: Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs: are separate. Now, after Partition they are no longer entwined but separate, thus articulating a desire for a separate Sikh identity. Though Baldwin voices the Sikh concerns and the feeling of betrayal during the Partition, she stops short of demanding a separate Sikh nation in Independent India. Moreover, this emphasis on an exclusively Sikh memory of Partition has no place for nostalgia or acknowledging centuries of shared living in a composite, plural India. Here the Sikhs are presented as the real victims and leaves no scope for analyzing the violence they too perpetrated. This is because Baldwin is from the Diaspora where religion becomes a fundamental element for the expression of identity of South Asian immigrants. Since South Asians tend to construct their identity mainly on religious bases, Baldwin unabashedly espouses the Sikh cause which, stem from a heightened consciousness of one’s roots as a result of migration and an urge for the preservation of one’s cultural and religious heritage. As fundamentalism and communalism coalesce in the novel it creates a better understanding as to why the demand for Sikh fundamentalism and separatism were nurtured in Independent India.

THE VICTORY OF COMMUNALISM: PLURALISM DESTROYED:

As has been noted, the idea of exclusive religious communities was fostered due to the development of a heightened community consciousness, which in turn destroyed the syncretism in the country. For Kushwant Singh the village community is presented in utopian terms where all live amicably and respect each other’s religions. Life revolves round the arrival and departures of the trains, the call of the mullah, Imam Baksh, for prayers followed by Bhai Meet Singh’s intonations in a monotonous singsong. This harmony is shattered by outsiders and it is left to Juggut Singh, the village rouge, to redeem the situation through his heroic sacrifice. Though he saves the lives of Nooran and the Mano Majra Muslims and prevents a train massacre the linkages of place, ancestry, sanctity and moral order are forever torn asunder.

Chaman Nahal too mourns the passing away of the old world order. He shows how, despite people’s different religious and political orientations, friendships persist and a wall
of separation is not created. However, Lala Kanshi Ram and Chaudhry Barkat Ali have to bow down to the forces of communalism and the resultant madness. But all is not lost because for Nahal redemption lies in forgiveness which is a positive force amidst the bleakness and gloom.

Both Singh and Nahal lived through the communal holocaust, experienced Partition and were forced to leave their ancestral homes in Pakistan. In short, they became refugees. Because of this they are nostalgic about the past, bemoan the breakup of the old world moral order and do not blame any community for the subsequent violence. Both perform a balancing act in their depiction of violence though Nahal goes into greater detail about the violence perpetrated in Pakistan. Their humanistic and secular concerns are also apparent when both find redemption: love and sacrifice for Singh and forgiveness for Nahal. However, both indict Indian nationalism for their failure to curb communalism and the subsequent destruction of a plural society.

Bapsi Sidhwa too depicts the breakup of a plural community filtered through a Parsi sensibility. This means that in her depiction of the Sikhs and in her rehabilitation of Jinnah, she tilts the balance in favour of Pakistan, clearly stating her Pakistani bias and sheds her Parsi ambivalence. Nevertheless, she grapples with the disintegration of the community fairly through Ayah’s multi-religious group of admirers. Ice-candy-man’s transformation is symbolic of the transformation in society wherein people start thinking in terms of religious communities. Because of this he does not hesitate to abduct Ayah, who is Hindu, and Other her. These changes in society and the violence are shown through eight year old Lenny’s eyes which throw up various bits and pieces of reality. At the same time, Sidhwa maintains an aesthetic distance and does not deal with these changes emotionally or nostalgically, unlike Singh or Nahal. This has a lot to do with the fact that she was Parsi; hence she was not drawn into the freedom struggle or the violence though she witnessed it as a child. Like Nahal, Sidhwa depicts the scenes of violence graphically and realistically.

With Shauna Singh Baldwin the focus changes completely for her sole concern is to portray the fate of the Sikh minority community in the Punjab. In so doing, she does not deal with the composite culture existing in the Punjab nor does she long for those days. Though she does show the Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims living together amicably, she implies it is only a veneer for the undercurrents of hostility of lurk beneath the surface and keep cropping up in everyday conversations. She shows and hammers home the differences between the Sikhs and the Hindus and the Sikhs and the Muslims. On more occasion than one she asserts Sikhs are not Hindus nor can they live in a Muslim Pakistan.
She is the only writer who highlights the point that Saberwal makes: that Pakistan was created because there was no general social fusion. This lack of social fusion makes her advocate an exclusive Sikh fundamentalist identity. She goes on to show how the Sikh community was wronged and betrayed and suffered in the violence but does not acknowledge that Sikhs too were responsible and participated in the violence that Partition unleashed. In short, their culpability is elided. Like Sidhwa, the past is not filtered through an emotional lens. This may be because she neither witnessed nor experienced the Partition.

In the entire discussion the one thing that becomes apparent is that none of the writers advocated or subscribed to the two-nation theory. Life was rooted in the community highlighting the composite culture of the Punjab. However, the forces of communalism proved to be overpowering and put an end to centuries of shared living. This division of hearts and communities was due to the failure of the nationalist leaders to stem the tide of communalism. This sense of failure and betrayal suffuses all four novels whereas Singh and Nahal mourn the passing away of syncretism; Sidhwa and Baldwin portray it unemotionally. However, Baldwin does not focus as much on this aspect as much as the betrayal of her community.

REFERENCES:

1. Ian Talbot and Gurharpal Singh, (2009): The Partition of India, New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, pp 66-89. See these pages for a detailed account of the cycle of violence and its transition from the ‘consensual’ traditional communal riot to the ‘genocidal’ violence which was the hallmark of the later communal holocaust.


5. Ibid., p 111.


10. Ibid., p 61.


12. Ibid., p 221.


14. Ibid., p 213. The quotation appears on this page.

15. Ibid., pp 229-230. This is quoted by Muhammad Ali.


18. Ibid., p 235.


40. Ibid., pp 52-54. See these pages for a more detailed discussion of how Jugga becomes symbolic of the failure of Indian nationalism. This also deals with the inability of the secular Indian state to deal with inter-ethnic love.


44. Ibid., pp 13-14.

45. Ibid., pp 21-22.


48. Ibid., p 65.

49. Ibid., p 77.

50. Ibid., p 85.


56. Ibid., p 38.

83. Ibid., p 117.
84. Ibid., p 97.
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103. Ibid., p 81.
104. Ibid., p 76.
105. Ibid., p 79.
106. Ibid., p 80.

108. Ibid., p 298.

109. Ibid., p 46.


112. Ibid., p 515.

113. Ibid., p 78.

114. Ibid., pp 399-400.

115. Ibid., p 240.


117. Ibid., p 392.


120. Ibid., p 442.
