Other Novelists on 'The Partition'

Chapter 5

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‘The Partition’

Of late three Sikh writers - - Raj Gill, H.S.Gill and K.S.Duggal - - have dealt with the partition comprehensively in The Rape, Ashes and Petals and Twice Born Twice Dead respectively, though none of them emulates Nahal and Khushwant Singh in this regard and evinces any striking originality. Raj Gill’s The Rape explores the theme of partition quite competently. It reveals the selfishness of the political leaders, criticises the British for their policy of ‘divide and rule’, shows the religious fanaticism leading to mass violence and shameful acts, holds both the Hindus and the Muslims equally guilty for the ghastly events, and communicates the novelist’s vision of life at the time of the partition. The dehumanised society of those terrible times and the unforgettable scenes and sights of the tragic historic events have been fully delineated in it.

The novelist scrutinises the factors responsible for the partition of the country. He criticises the politicians of all kinds and communities, responsible for the division of the country and for the shameful events that followed it, he does not spare any leader and party - - Gandhi, Nehru, Patel, Jinnah, Master Tara Singh, the British Government, the Congress and the Muslim League - - all become the subject of criticism. Dharam Gopal, in a clear voice, accused the British of attempting to disrupt
the unity among the main communities in India. He accused Cripps of having ‘a glib tongue and a scheming brain’. The writer shows the selfishness of the political parties in hastily agreeing to the plan of the partition proposed by the Viceroy. Dalipjit, who ignored the ghastly details of riots in the newspapers, clearly perceived through the news columns and editorials that the division of the country was imminent:

Partition of the country had become an established fact. Lord Mountbatten had manoeuvred to bring around the Congress leadership to agree to the partition formula using the native astuteness of an Indian Civil Servant, V.P. Menon. The bait before the Congress was quicker than transfer of power to the natives. The Congress had bit at it avidly just as the Muslim majority had succumbed to the temptation. What they had to settle down to in the end was division of such provinces, namely Punjab and Bengal. *(The Rape, 57)*

Dalipjit was angry at the unholy game of political opportunism, and saw the victory of the Viceroy in the shrewd move. He marked the weakness in the Indian leaders, and feared that even the iron man, Sardar Patel, would succumb to the plan of the division of the country: “He could feel the implicit triumph of Lord Mountbatten in choosing V.P. Menon as his unofficial agent who in turn was to exploit Sardar Patel’s dream of absolute dominance of the Congress.” *(57)* Dalipjit clearly observed that the selfish interests of the politicians would greatly harm the national interest. In his assessment of the situation he found that Rajaji Rajagopalachari and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad had already conceded the partition of the country. The only hope to check
the unfortunate tide of this division was Nehru, who, he thought, “wanted
independence for an undivided India, at least an India which was not divided on
religious grounds.” (58) To Dalipjit, Gandhi remained unpredictable, and he could not
believe him. Many of the moves of this saint statesman were unintelligible and
inexplicable, and he could not make out what led to Gandhiji’s acceptance of the
partition. Gandhi’s outburst at a prayer meeting was baffling both to the Congress and
to the Viceroy: “‘Even if the whole of India burns, we shall not concede Pakistan, even
if the Muslim League demanded it at the point of the sword’.” (60) Dalipjit, the chief
central character in the novel made no secret of his dislike for Gandhi. He was sick of him and
dreamt of shooting him. It was this feeling that, at a later stage, caused a great agitation
in him when the news of Gandhi’s assassination reached him. He could not believe it:

How could Gandhi be shot dead? He was not living. He had shot Gandhi long
back, years ago. They could not shoot a dead Gandhi. It was nonsense. He
chuckled to himself in his unchallenged superiority over the men around him
who were gullible enough to believe in someone’s claim who just craved the
credit that he already held. He chuckled again and swam around gleefully in his
ocean of warmth. (288)

To his horror, the hero of the novel found that the selfish political leaders were
interested only in themselves; they had no sense of involvement in the people they were
representing. Dalipjit was upset to think of the fate of the people entrusted in the hand
of such irresponsible and unpredictable leaders. He thought that their betrayal would
grieve, irritate and annoy the people, and that no leader could be believed. Gandhi, Nehru, Azad, Tara Singh, Jinnah - none of them could be trusted. He meditated upon the selfish policies of Jinnah:

Jinnah had won the round. He had won it against the Congress, a party which he hated. He wanted to harm it as much as he could. He had succeeded sufficiently. He was not concerned with the people, the Muslim or the Sikh. He never was. He was not a leader. He had grabbed leadership and sported it as a tribal leader sports rare coloured feathers in his headgear. He did not have the welfare of the Muslims in his mind or he would not have ignored the eight crore remaining Muslims in India. That thin and withdrawn man was as remote from the Muslim masses as he was from the Hindu or the Sikh. (61)

Sham Singh also made no secret of his indignation against the leaders. He saw a foul game in the whole unfortunate development of the division of the country. He remembered Nehru's strong statement against the partition and lamented that even a political leader of his calibre, who thought that the split "was like cutting of the head to get rid of the headache" (67), had inexplicably grown silent. Udhe suspected the secret ambition of becoming the Prime Minister of India in Nehru's agreeing to the proposed partition. Josh, the only communist in the village, found Patel anxious to serve the cause of the capitalists. He said that Jinnah was "a devil in coat, pants and necktie" (67), who wanted "to live like the English and so he will as a Governor-General of Pakistan." (67) He labelled Nehru as Fabian and did not see in him the enthusiasm of a
socialist. Sham Singh railed at the communists and pointed out the corruption in their organisation. Gandhi was vehemently detested for playing a double game. It was greatly regretted that the Sikh leaders remained inactive in the pursuit of their proclaimed aims. The Sikh community was in a strange dilemma; their leaders talked of fight and violence but did nothing. Jinnah did not fear the threat of the Sikhs, and was composed and confident of his powers. Gill points out that Nehru never took Gandhi "as a political guide" (69) and accepted his leadership "as an expedience to an end." (69) The Sikhs had no faith in Baldev Singh's abilities, and reposed a general trust and confidence in Giani Kartar Singh and Master Tara Singh. The latter's historic drawing of sword in the Assembly House in Lahore and his call to strike against the Muslim League had endeared him to the Sikh masses. But the insistence of the Congress on non-violence and the Sikh leaders' lack of initiative to negotiate gave a rude shock and disappointment to their community. The only choice left for the Sikhs was to prepare themselves to face the danger that lurked in their eyes. Dangerous times were ahead. Disappointed by their leaders, they had decided to meet the enemy themselves:

The net result was that the Sikhs started preparing with guns and spears not to obtain what they were denied but to hold on what they had, to meet the onslaught by the Muslims which they vaguely knew would break upon them and which was to be fought back if they were to survive. (70)
The novel records the fierce communal riots, the inhuman atrocities, the burning down of villages and the massive killing of the people, the three month-long communal violence in Gurgaon, the pitched battles in the different parts of the Punjab, the firing of the troops, the massacre of the Sikhs and Hindus in Rawalpindi and Multan and the innumerable cruelties perpetrated by people out of sheer communal frenzy. It relates to the horrors of chopping off women’s breasts and the shameful scene of nude women leading the Muslim procession. Dalipjit did not find anything to celebrate on the day of the transfer of power; he only felt that ‘the red-faced monkeys’ have been substituted by ‘the black-faced lemur’ to continue the chair of slavery for the people. His mother expressed her hurt feelings at the turn the events had taken for worse. She, too, grew bitter at the word ‘independence’, and expressed her contempt for it in a piercing, hysterical voice:

"Ashes be on the head of such independence"... "They burn your houses, they take your women and they kill your women and they kill your children, and you call it independence. Making people homeless is independence! True, it is, in a way, you’re made free; no land, no house, no cattle, no work. All the time is yours and all the world is yours to wander about." (65)

The above outburst expressed the distressed feelings of the people who saw danger and disaster clearly; they knew that they had to suffer for the misdeeds of their leaders who rode in motor cars and appeared in clean, white clothes. The suffering
humanity in West Pakistan could not celebrate the Independence Day. Dalipjit
expressed the grievous sentiments of the victims of the partition in a severe tone:

“I say, Father, after all, how do they expect us the Sikhs and the Hindus in
Pakistan to celebrate: by setting fire to our homes; by pinning the heads of our
children on lances and sporting them in the streets: by cutting off the breasts of
your mothers and sisters?” (66)

Kartar Singh feared shameful and rough treatment at the hands of the Muslims.
In a very sarcastic tone he told Dipu that the Muslims would hurl all kinds of brutalities
at the Sikhs and Hindus. He praised Islam lavishly but expressed his utter distrust of the
Muslims. He alluded to history to point out that wickedness had always been a
convenient device for the Muslims; they could not remain loyal, good and dependable.
They professed themselves to be the followers of Islam, but their actions showed them
indulging in all kinds of nefarious activities against the spirit of their religion. He voiced
his hatred for the Muslims emphatically:

“... Even if I’m the army-trained man here, I won’t assure that I’ll kill a million
and a quarter Muslims. I won’t be able to do that with a tank mounted with four
machine guns, in four directions. And then, how do I know, son, that I won’t be
burnt alive in bed before I knew what was happening? Or that I won’t be stabbed
in the back while defecating out in the fields? I tell you, I’m afraid of my own
Muslim menials though they swear loyalty by the Prophet and cry at the
mention of their turning hostile. I don’t believe them. Muslims are always disloyal, undependable. Their history’s full of such instances. Did they not turn against their own Prophet and the sons of their Prophet? and the Mughals - - son dethroning the father, the brother. In fact these Muslims aren’t what their Prophet Mohammed wanted them to be. I tell you, brother, if you know what the Prophet Mohammed taught, you’d want to be a Muslim yourself. But these here are just pigs, deceivers and betrayers.” (66-67)

The future had more horrible sights in store for the Punjab than what had already been witnessed there so far. Nehru felt that the pre-partition violence showed ruin and destruction; he regretted the inhuman violence and criticised men’s beastly deeds:

... “I have seen ghastly sights and I have heard of behaviour by human beings which would degrade brutes. All that has happened in the Punjab is intimately connected with political affairs. If there is a grain of intelligence in any person he must realise that whatever political objective he may aim at, this is not the way to attain it. Any such attempt must bring, as it has in a measure brought, ruin and destruction.” (71)

Raj Gill points out the utter confusion of the people on the other side of the yet to be exactly demarcated border. Violence gripped the struggling people, and unprecedented scenes of bestial horror were in the offing. Terrible destruction was in sight: “Destruction it was to be, unforeseen, unpredicted, and on an unprecedented
scale; destruction that choked the tears in the eye and the cry in the throat, destruction that was to redden the pages of history for all time to come.” (71)

Raj Gill spotlights the brutality and violence the Sikhs suffered at the hands of the Muslims in the newly created Pakistan. Also, he shows the plight of the Sikhs and their flight in search of a safe home on the Indian soil. Unprecedented caravans of evacuees in Pakistan was seen - - it was sixty miles long, and there were fifteen thousand carts in it. The novel portrays the planned attacks of the Muslims on the people pulling out of Pakistan. The panic-stricken people of the village lived in great danger during those terrible days. The army and the police were employed to kill the Hindus and the Sikhs. General Singh told his audience that the Muslims called themselves aliens and wanted to carry with them a piece of land. But this was not enough for them: “They don’t stop at that. They want your blood and bones, your houses, your lands and even your women… These don’t belong to this country. They must be fought. They must be chastised. You have to do it…”(103-04) With very forceful and eager argument, the General pleaded to the people to fight against the aliens within the country. The apparently short, stiff-lipped General undertook a great task and went from village to village secretly asking people to rise against, and strike, the Muslim League government and its lusty followers. He called the Muslims traitors.

The novel delineates, in detail, the massive and unprecedented violence of those tragic days. The turn of events made anyone feel that civil war was a foregone conclusion. The option before the villagers was either to fight to victory or to flee to
safety. The partition award touched off brutal violence in the Punjab. Even before the announcement of the award, Lahore and Amritsar had seen the ghastly scenes of violence. The award brought the normal life to a stand still; people, filled with fear, decided to stay at the place of safety:

The civil administration started to collapse. The offices were opened only to be closed again. Business transactions came to a dead halt. It was common for the police to abscond since they were more concerned with rushing back home and saving whatever they could of their families and properties. Trains were running late and often did not run at all. Drivers could not be found for the trains running through hostile areas. (129-30)

There was complete chaos with no one willing to control and overcome the tide of violence. To quote the novelist:

Stations were being attacked and the army stood helpless, capable of taking control but handling the situation incapably, the British officer not depending upon the loyalty of a communal group to general command, the Indian officer not told to do anything, and the general ranks brooding sourly at the thoughtless bloodshed and at the incapability of the leaders to size up the dangers and move accordingly. (130)
The Sikhs let loose their cattle in the standing crop to destroy it with the intentions to prevent the Muslims from profiting from the Sikh's hard labour. The exodus started and the violence increased. The trains were attacked and the passengers were butchered. It became extremely hazardous to travel by train:

There was news of two trainloads of people murdered, one on the Indian side and the other on the Pakistan side. A trickle of exodus had already started from the western districts of Punjab. Exodus at the larger scale was afoot from the North West Frontier. It could gain momentum because of the paucity of the trains in the absence of the engine drivers. (131)

The anarchy prevailed and there was seen no discrimination between the innocent and the guilty, the friendly and the hostile. Harassed and tortured, people left their dear possessions behind and set out for shelter. Butchering followed and no leader could explain the cause of the aimless, irrational and beastly killings. The announcement of the boundary was greeted with a holocaust.

It is remarkable that Raj Gill, in spite of showing the scenes of brutal violence, maintains a commendable impartiality in his depiction of the incidents. He holds all the communities responsible for the dire events. He shows the loads of corpses on both sides of the border and paints vividly the plight of the Sikhs and Hindus in Pakistan. The rough and humiliating treatment meted out to the Muslims on the Indian soil also
does not escape his vigilant eyes. He objectively describes the holocaust that immediately followed the announcement of the partition thus:

The Sikhs and the Hindus set with vengeance to scorch out the Muslim population from East Punjab as a belated vindication of the Hindus and Sikhs who were massacred in Rawalpindi. The repercussions were equally dreadful in Pakistan. Army tanks were used in Sheikhpur to mow down the non-Muslim population sheltering in the cotton mills. Armed forces connived at the general shooting of the Sikh and Hindu refugees awaiting evacuation in the Lyallpur camp. Police constabulary was employed in the senseless killing of the departing Hindu population in Jhang and Multan. (158-59)

The novelist points to the riots preceding the exodus of Muslims from the Indian scene, and to the loot of the Muslim houses following the departure of the inhabitants for Pakistan: “The movable property from the Muslim houses was looted within an hour of their departure. The houses were denuded down to the mud-plaster of the walls and the floors. In some cases the doors and windows were also removed.” (190) The writer states that the religious fanaticism had become commonplace: “The communal killing was tantamount to scavenging - - a Sabbath bath of blood to the earth.” (191) The people, who indulged recklessly in the violence, had lost sight of human values. Dalipjit realised to his horror and grief that “killing was no more a vindication. It was not even a punishment. Killing was weeding. Killing was a sport of cannibals. Killing was witches’ Sabbath. It was debased, perverted, sickening.” (191) The Muslims
surprisingly organised an attack on Indian soil, and with the help of the Baluch army
carried away with them two Sikh girls. The incident made Dalipjit feel greatly
distressed. He felt that the Sikhs were not safe even on the Indian side of the border.
But, in the other hand, the plight of the Muslim women at the hands of refugees in
India was indescribable; they became an object of amusement to men, and were no
better than playthings:

She knew there were other Muslim women kept in the village. She would not
want to draw even a dying breath of the foul atmosphere in which they lived.
They were the playthings of men, their captives, women who proved lustful
indulgence. Women who you could use to satisfy your sexual perversion. (219-
20)

The writer, thus, impartially paints the ruthless, inhuman and irrational violence
taking place on both sides of the border during those terrible times. His unprejudiced
attitude is abundantly clear when he remarks:

That which happened this side of the boundary was in no way less ghastly,
inhuman, and disgusting than that which happened across the border. Value of
human life had fallen below that of the pariah dog. (191)

Raj Gill tries vigorously to find out the causes leading to the ghoulish events, and
graphically presents the untold agonies suffered by the people of the Punjab as an
inevitable consequence of the partition. One disaster followed another and each produced reaction elsewhere. The plight of the refugees in their mass exodus from the West Punjab was simply horrible. Pakistani army killed the Hindus and the Sikhs.

Dalipjit thought that a limited number of the Indian troops were inadequate to save the evacuees in West Pakistan. People on their way to a safe land experienced immense hardship. Essential commodities became difficult to get. Lakha Singh, who carried his eighty-year-old mother on his back, felt extremely tired and thought of ways to get rid of her. To escape the exhausting exercise of carrying her, he desired to put her into the canal to die silently; but the good sense in him saved her. The other day he buried her under the pretext that she was dead, but the plan failed and he was subject to humiliation. Happily the old mother died soon to the relief of his grief-stricken son. The incident showed how quickly the things changed for the worst and how the hard times made people self-centred. Hypocrisy of morals was evident everywhere; no one thought of the other’s good without having a personal interest. Things changed with lightning speed. The danger of the women being disgraced by the Muslims in the wake of their attack on the caravan had assigned Dalipjit the job to push the reluctant women and children into the well. The object was to save honour. The refugees felt that their only hope on that desperate march was the Indian military. The scene in the bungalow where the people stayed on their tiresome and hazardous journey reflected death rather than life. Dalipjit was filled with fear and remorse at the way his dear ones and neighbours had lost their lives on the way:
He would experience the tangible touch of the fear in his heart all over again. Jasmit's father dying of cholera; Amli delirious with fever; Kundan dying from a bullet; Sokhi dying because he drank from a poisoned well. (192-93)

In the Indian village Dalip heard that his relatives, friends and allies on this side of the border “killed as ruthlessly as the Muslims in Pakistan” (193)

The anarchic and disorganised way of the forced transfer of population baffled all political leaders, Nehru thought that if it was to take place, it should have been done in a methodical and organised way. The difficulties of these helpless people were many and intricately complex. Ironically, the free food, served to the crawling refugees on the Indian soil, claimed many lives. On the way the long march of the hungry people dried and failed their digestive juices, and so in the safe land of their desire they fell prey to a sudden, fatal colic attack. Their homeland raised in them the visions of starting a new life of love and plenty again. But, unfortunately, death overtook them suddenly. The reunion among the family members showed no sign of happiness or tragedy; it marked a complete resignation. However, bereft of all feelings to cry, laugh or weep, the refugees found new hopes in the Indian soil. They felt a kind of relief and the land bustled with activities. A great change overtook the people after coming over to India. The old spirit of fraternity and love vanished; suffering reduced them to brutes and made them lose their human attributes. In fact, they were completely changed:

Something was happening to them, something subtle, radical, changing their personalities, their outlook, their behaviour. The community feeling, the sense of
oneness and the well-known, generous, extrovert spirit of the people all disappeared, There were now the hurts, hungry brutes, who fought, destroyed, killed. (235)

Obviously, the natives did not receive the influx of the refugees generously, and took them to be aliens. The government thought them to be extra burden on the treasury. The refugees felt hurt and grieved at this deep feeling of resentment among their new neighbours. They ‘felt it, suffered it, and became all the more bitter and, hence, unreasonable.” (235) Thus the things went wrong with the refugees even after the riots were over. The natives did not like them, as they thought that the things left behind by the Muslims were theirs. The novelist portrays the frustrated psychology of the refugees, who, out of sheer bitterness, turned on themselves, and indulged in senseless destruction. The dejection and the feeling of having been betrayed made them feel lonely and miserable. Their fighting among themselves was only a expression of their inner feelings. The troubled times brought a tremendous change in values and the refugees could not remain normal human beings. Amro told Dalip of these changes in a matter-of-fact way:

“And don’t forget Dipu, these people aren’t normal people any more. If a man would impersonate his dead father and a man would present his own daughter as wife to receive a paltry grant of fifty rupees or a sewing machine or a bag of wheat he would do anything else.” (268)
Egged by the same motive force, Dalip’s father almost killed Laila, the Muslim beloved of Dalip. However, owing to a rare combination of moral and physical strength in her, she could stand up even after being raped by the father of the man she dearly and passionately loved.

Focussing on the crore of the tragedy of the partition, The Rape narrates the story of those dreadful days mainly through Dalipjit, a village Sikh boy. The tension-packed days are described in detail. The partition was considered almost a certainty and there were hectic preparations, especially among the young people, to fight out the Muslims. The atmosphere looked uncertain and uneasiness was evidently discernible. There was tremendous tension and women sought solace in exchanging despair. The times showed people’s lust for hatred and killing. The horrid, ghastly details of the riots have been furnished through the newspapers. Dalip became the leader of the group to fight the Muslims. The eighteen-year-old Sikh lad was obsessed with three equally strong emotions - loyalty for his family, obligation for his community and love for Jasmit, a girl who did not belong to his class and status. He thought that the changed attitude brought by the riots would enable him to marry Jasmit. He, in the company of his associates, showed the newly gained confidence, courage, planning and competence. However, he felt perturbed at the thought of killing Jalal, and realised that the essential nature of man and beast still survived in him.

The mass exodus started signalling the end of the era; people, overpowered by human bestiality, left their homes and started on a weary search for a new home. In the
process they suffered greatly. Suffering brought a great change in Dalip, his father and all others. Dalip saved Leila and brought her home after her father committed suicide. Leila loved him, for he saved her life. Dalip suffered psychologically and thought himself guilty of the death of Leila’s father. The suffering made him lose emotionally and he did not feel the impact of the grief. But when his father raped Leila, he realised that the world was terribly sick.

True, The Rape graphically depicts the sudden, steep decline in all human values and negation of life at the time of the partition. Dalipjit, the hero of the novel, found the refugees different kinds of people who had lost all values; they knew how to loot, fight, rape, kill and destroy. The partition was followed by the emergence of a heinous and detestable world on both sides of the border between India and Pakistan. People were not normal human beings in any sense of the term. Dalipjit, who was completely stunned to find on his return home that his beloved was raped by his own father, was unable to comprehend the tragic world all around him, marked by the betrayal of a girl by her lover, of a country by her people and of a son by his father. It was Amro who explained him the situation plausibly and correctly:

They aren’t the same people among whom we were born and brought up, to whom honour was more precious than all their lands and buildings, who drew blood to establish integrity of their character rather than to prove the cussedness of their victim or to humiliate their adversary... Nobody in the whole village is what they ought to have been - - respectable, upright, honourable working
people. They are a betrayed lot. No doubt they won't hesitate to betray. It's a game now. The betrayed must betray anybody, everybody, their own kith and kin, parents, brothers and sisters. There's no ethic involved in it. The rules of the games permit our pacing, out bidding, outsmarting the other; the game that was started way back by the primitives. (269)

For the refugees, everything, except devastation and violence, vanished; they were completely oblivious of the "fanaticism of Jinnah, the idealism of Nehru, the pragmatism of Patel, and the spiritualism of Gandhi." (128) The novelist fully succeeds in presenting the dehumanised society of those terrible times. Dalipjit was mad with indignation and he felt an uncontrollable urge to kill someone. But as his father was killed in the riots and he killed Gandhi, the Father of the Nation, in his imagination, his rage cooled down considerably. The novel ends on a note of tranquillity and a genuine understanding between the two young hearts, Dalipjit and Leila, showing both of them out of "death daze".

"... Don't hate me for what I did not do. I know I should have died rather than showed you my face. But I could not without meeting you once, without telling you. You would have had a guilty conscience perhaps you were the cause of my death. I did not want you to live down an unknown guilt... Now I will die in peace with a clear conscience and the knowledge, that I did not betray you, your trust and your affection. I never craved your love. I knew it was for Jassi. But I was never in doubt of your trust and affection"...
Yes I know it, Leila, he said to himself as he watched the enchanting confusion of a rueful smile on her lips and glistening tears in her eyes. (297-98)

Towards the close of the book also, the novelist, through the protagonist, offers us a positive interpretation of the all-pervasive human slaughter during the days of the partition. He thought that a man killed another just to live, though all this might look absurd. The Muslims killed the Hindus and the Hindus massacred the Muslims in a bid to live, and not to die. (296)

In fact, the novel is a brilliant exploration of the theme of the partition. It not only narrates a touching tale of the times of the partition, but also presents some unforgettable scenes and sights of the great historic events artistically. It communicates the novelist's vision of life, his unique interpretation of life through the depiction of the political and historic events. The novel is remarkably vivid in recording the scenes and happenings of those terrible days, and is very profound and positive in its delineation of the theme. Through Dalipjit the novelist has shown the ravaging consequences of the partition. The Hindu-Muslim hatred, loot, arson, killing, rape, abduction, mass exodus, the psychological system, the expression of frustration in the victims, and the fact that both sides killed and looted and were equally guilty - - all these find excellent expression in the novel. The novelist fervently pleads for forgiveness and appears to echo Shakespeare's message in The Tempest that virtue lies in forgiveness, and not in
vengeance. He accentuates that the cycle of revenge must be liquidated through love, sympathy, kindness, understanding, restraint and forgiveness.

H.S.Gill’s *Ashes and Petals* presents the brutal violence of the days immediately following the partition of the country, and evokes the trauma and turbulence of the tragic times. It spotlights the terrible plight of the refugees who crossed the border, the utter indifference of the officials in charge of receiving the mass exodus from the West Punjab, the frustration and loss of all values in the starving people standing in long queue for bread and pulse, the problem of their settlement, the fearful communal riots in Meerut years after the shock of 1947, the impact of the incident of a day of train disaster on the mind of the old Risaldar, the love and adventure of a Sikh Cavalry Officer and his Muslim girl, etc. In fact, the novel shows the variegated dimensions of the hate-love relationship between the main communities of the country.

Unlike Raj Gill’s *The Rape* that covers a brief period of less than a year of the dreadful days of the partition, *Ashes and Petals* spreads over a longer period of the post-independence days. It exposes the stupidity of lust for blood of those tragic times when human values sank very low and the good old days of harmony and love were completely lost. H.S.Gill points out that there was perfect harmony among the Hindus and the Muslims in the villages in the days preceding the division of the country. But the partition shattered the age-old relationship and made the Muslims flee from the Indian soil. The Hindus on the other side of the border were caught in the same dilemma. The novel states this change in attitude and the loss of goodwill emphatically:
In the pre-partition days when the boys played *guli-danda* on the village dung heaps, the sardars had rubbed shoulders with the Muslims. As co-tillers of the fields the Muslim and the Jat Sardar had toiled together and appreciated each other’s ways, even though so divergent. The Muslim and the Jat Sardar had toiled together and appreciated each other’s ways, though so divergent. The Muslim was the artisan, the cobbler and the potter. The Jat farmer needed all this help in his fields. The two grew up in the village, helping each other. In 1947, when partition came about, the Muslims moved away. The village ties between the Muslims, the Sikhs and the Hindus broke and such ties can’t be restored overnight. (*Ashes and Petals*, 128)

It was with this background that the novel opens significantly in a deathly stillness in the dark of night with a trainload of the Hindus and Sikhs on their way to a safe land. The train, halted at the outer signal of the station, wore a dreadful look. A crack train-driver of the Lahore loco-sheds, Anthony Peters, an Anglo-Indian of Jabalpore, felt extremely lonely when he jumped out of the train into the dark to inquire about the mystery of the red signal. All things looked deserted. He loved Lahore and wanted to stay in that beautiful city. But the recent violence there when the mobs went in for human blood dawned upon him the urgency of taking his family away to a safe place. Fire in Lahore made him leave the city in great haste, and this expressed the disturbed and explosive situation there: “Had it not been for last night when the entire Railway Colony was on fire they wouldn’t have packed up in such a hurry.” (2)
There was utter confusion in the train, and people feared violence and ambush. Guns gave them a sense of security, but they did not open their mouths out of fear. There prevailed deathly silence inside carriage. The partition came as a major traumatic event in the life of retired Risaldar, Santa Singh. The driver found to his horror that the Cabin man had run away to join the attackers. He heard the Assistant Station Master, Nezural, asking him to move the train swiftly to escape disaster. The warning was conveyed at a great personal risk. The sincere advice, however, proved abortive. The train came under heavy attack, and the fear of the people in flight came true:

The sleeping mass of humanity that was barely visible in the dark coaches had by now woken from its fitful slumber. The few open windows were quickly pulled down, and the women and the children huddled into the farthest corners, away from the windows and the danger. Some of the elderly people who were more cautious had already made a rush for the space below the seats and tucked themselves away from the prying eyes and direct firing rifle shots. Some of the braver ones drew out their Kirpans and inched towards the doors. The few lucky ones with rifles moved off to the two exits that had been kept in case the train was set on fire. (3)

The novelist describes the train-tragedy vividly and diligently. The travellers stood in utter confusion and embarrassment. The blood-thirsty and women-seeking Muslim yelled “Allah-o-Akbar”, and came pouncing upon the compartments:
On the train, all was utter confusion. The marauders came with spears, swords, bamboo *lathis*, rifles and muskets. When the first wave rushed onto the stricken train someone fired into the big engine loco light and after that there was no light anywhere. There were more than two hundred *goondas* on foot and horse-back, camels and cycles, letting off blood-curdling cries of “Allah-o-Akbar”, abusing their mothers and their fathers and sisters, laughing sinister laughs that rang far into the night. The sweat of fear trickled down the necks of the train. (6-7)

The train was ruthlessly attacked creating utter chaos. Shrieeks and screams became clearly audible. The marauders carried away a young girl. It reminded Santa Singh of his young fourteen-year-old granddaughter, Baljeeto. He preferred death to disgrace, and in a desperate attempt to save her from the clutches of the ruffians, he shot her dead. Ajit, the six-year-old grandson, saw the whole scene with dazed eyes. The ghoulish scene set the tone and it was repeated many times in the train. The acts induced tremendous strength in the survivors. They “crossed the last frontiers of fear and became giants... And now united in a common bond of revenge and retribution, the tidal mass swept the shores of sanity and sought the final confrontation.” (9-10)

The train-tragedy gave a glimpse of the dangerous days of the post-independence period. Sardar Santa Singh could never forget the incidents of that eventful day through all his life. He was filled with destructive communal hatred, and he could never reconcile with a Muslim. It was this attitude that prompted him spontaneously to say
that Salma, his grandson’s beloved, was “not one of us”, as she was a Muslim. He expressed surprise, bitterness and embarrassment when his tall, athletic, brave and gentle Ajit sought his permission to marry Salma: “… What have you come down to, my grandson? Have you forgotten Baljeeto, your sister? Your poor sister I had to shoot dead in the train? Have you forgotten the partition and the Musalmans?” (179-80) Ajit pleaded fervently in vain that his grandfather had given him the permission to find a girl of his choice. He said that basically there was no distinction between the communities, and hence lived together both in pre-independent and post-independent India. He gave vent to the feeling that but for the troubled days of the partition the Sikhs and the Muslims had lived together affectionately. He wanted his ‘Bapu’ not to harbour perpetual hatred on account of the ghastly train disaster. He tried to impress upon the mind of the aged Risaldar that all the persons, belonging to different communities, fought for the dear motherland, and Aslam lost his life in saving him. He expressed his firm determination to marry Salma, and arguing intelligently he asked his grandfather to extend his blessings:

“… Her brother died saving me. I owe my life to him. And you say she is a Musalman. Is that a crime? After ’47 aren’t we all here? All sitting and eating, living and dying together. Before partition weren’t we all the same? Have you forgotten Mida, Gama and Rauf, all your friends in the village in Pakistan? Are we different, any one of us? Bapu ‘just think. You think I have forgotten Baljeeto. Or even a single moment of that bloody train. But how long will we keep on simmering and poisoning each other’s minds? Out there, on the front, I
have seen all the blood mingle. But never did anyone say it was Hindu, Sikh, Parsi, Jat or Muslim blood…” (180)

Ajit said that everyone, unmindful of his community, fought whole-heartedly on the battlefield. He argued that Salma was not only one of them, but an integral part of their lives. Praising Aslam’s adventurous and noble sacrifice, he imploringly sought his Bapu’s blessings:

“… Out there we all have fought together and carried each other’s sorrow. Major Aslam could have sat still in his tank and come home safely to his sister today. But he saved me and gave himself away. And he was a Musalman, not a Sikh or a Hindu. Did he ask himself then, why he was dying for a Sikh? No. Because he was one of us. And that is how he saw himself. Bapu, Salma is not one of us. She is us. I have vowed before the great Guru Gobind Singh. I will marry her and her alone. Bapu, I beg of you. Please understand. Give her your blessings, and accept her as your own. Bapu, Please.” (180)

Santa Singh, for a moment, saw the saving figure of dead Aslam. He, then, remembered the bloody train. He feared his neighbours who, he thought, would hurl down all kinds of abuses at them, if he consented to Ajit’s marrying a Muslim girl. The thought made him strong, and he left the scene in tears without acceding to his grandson’s request. He maintained that Salma was an alien, and Ajit’s insistence made him feel very unhappy and castaway. Salma felt hurt at Santa Singh’s contempt for her
community. However, when Ajit regretted that his Bapu still lived in 1947, Salma showed understanding and good sense. She knew what hurt Santa. Ajit wanted Salma to stay as his wife and he accomplished his desire by going in for civil marriage. Ajit-Salma relationship very soon caught the attention of people, and looked absurd to them. Annie remarked that it was altogether a strange sight for her. The Brigadier’s wife did not forget the year of Independence, and so considered this kind of relationship undesirable. She showed her awareness of inter-caste marriages, but she pleaded that there should be no marriage between the Sikh and the Muslim. She made no secret of her unhappiness at Ajit’s affairs. Referring to inter-caste marriages of this kind, she said:

“... But how many such marriages are there? You read what you like to read. Sure, I have read of the golden wedding made specially in heaven for the Sindhi marrying the Goan girl. Or the modern Bihari marrying the foreign-returned Punjabi. But in all my life have I heard of a Muslim marrying a Sikh... You seem to forget ’47. Anyhow, I tell you, I am not very happy with all this. Best if the Sikhs marry Sikhs, and the Muslims, Muslims. These things just don’t work out in our country, know what you say.” (116-17)

Sardar Santa Singh’s final presence at the grand ceremony where Ajit Singh’s posthumously awarded The Mahavir Chakra for laying down his life gallantly for the motherland gave him great relief. He affectionately asked Salma to proceed to receive the award. He said that “Ajit would never have liked it any other way.” (193) His sense of relief and joy, emanating from the acceptance of Salma as his grandson’s wife,
became obvious after the victory procession in New Delhi. The novel asserts that the spirit of love is stronger than that of hate. Apparently, it excels Raj Gill’s *The Rape* which is mainly preoccupied with the analysis of the political leaders’ misdeeds.

H.S. Gill shows the difficulties and tortures faced by the refugees. The government officials showed their gross indifference to the suffering humanity. The completely shattered survivors of the ill-fated train reached the safeland. The uprooted people were camped out in unhygienic places. The refugees experienced tremendous difficulties in getting food. There were exceptionally long queues. The novelist portrays a very fearful and pathetic sight of the starving people. A hungry Jat, in his anxiety to get bread stabbed a social volunteer. Three men and an old woman collected breads and the bloodstained pulse to eat in peace. The sight was extremely horrible. It gave Santa Singh a feeling that Ajit could not be brought up in such an atmosphere. The novelist criticises the social workers who paid no attention to the suffering humanity. He exposes their hypocrisy and opportunism by depicting them as mere aspirants to collect degrees from the Punjab University.

The Meerut riots have been delineated in detail. A cow’s head, found in a Hindu locality, had caused the whole trouble. The politicians, to serve their narrow ends, exploited the explosive situation to their advantage. Kishori Lal, a man rejected by the electorate, appeared on the scene and fanned the communal violence. He stirred his audience to action, and wanted them to pounce upon their mischievous enemies. The crowd yelled for blood. Rumours were afloat. In the Lal Kurti Bazar, a predominantly
Muslim locality, the Hindus were pelted with stones, and the trouble started. A tall, lanky and dangerous-looking leader appeared on the scene and in a very ironical and biting language prepared his audience to take up arms and face the Hindu menace. The leaders were blamed. Wali Hussain criticised the liberal-minded Muslims and accused them of bringing disaster to their fellow regionalists. The old man, who shunned violence and stated that the two communists were to live together in love and friendship, was hooted out and threatened. The leader misled the innocent people, and told them that they were absolutely insecure. He asked them to take up arms, and thus the trouble flared up. The police was beaten back, and the army was called out. Major Sheikh was instantly accused of partnership. The leaders deserted the mob at the sight of danger. Kishori Lal, who had arranged many riots before, was, however, caught by the people while he was attempting to slip away. But he received a bullet on his right leg, and this made him go away to the military hospital. The iron gate, conveniently used by the Muslim, was thrown open intelligently. The CRPF took control of the situation and the army withdrew to their barracks.

The Meerut riots exposed the selfish game of the politicians, who made the people fight among themselves with a view to gaining popularity and fetching votes. It might be a pointer to the events, leading to the partition of the country and to the horrible blood bath. The bloody train tragedy, people's killing their own kith and kin, with a strong sense of keeping honour intact, the merciless abduction of women, and the die-hard communal attitude are highlighted in Ashes and Petals. The love affair between Ajit and Salma presented an anti-climax to the scene of violence, hatred, anger
and retribution; love melted away baser feelings and this, undoubtedly, seems to be the positive intention of the brilliant novelist in this fine novel.

Kartar Singh Duggal's novel, *Twice Born Twice Dead*, powerfully communicates the trauma caused by the partition. It portrays the whole panorama of convulsion that gripped the Punjab during those fateful days through the experiences of a peasant, Sohne Shah of Dhamyal, a village near Rawalpindi. Sohne Shah, a Sikh village headman stood for perfect religious harmony and had his best friend, Allahditta, a powerful and affluent Muslim. The Muslim friend suffered from no sectarian ill will. He lost his life in a valiant attempt to save the Hindus and Sikhs of his village. Sohne Shah lost his daughter, Raj Karni in communal violence; she was kidnapped. The brave Sikh villager escaped with Satbharai, the daughter of his dear Muslim friend, Allahbitta. With her he suffered great ordeals, wandered from one refugee camp to another, flew to India and suffered miserably, always longing to see her lost daughter. The experiences of these two characters of those traumatic days, the good work done by the Sikh youth, Kuldip who won the heart of Satbharai, the sight of suffering humanity observed by these people and the sad story of love between Sikh boy and a Muslim girl, Kuldip and Satbharai, form the core of the novel - - their experiences present a gruesome and grave tragedy of the partition.

Early in the novel, Sohne Shah was baffled to perceive the unusually and dreadful changes overtaking the village during the pre-partition days. This village headman, with his milk white beard, surveyed the quiet scene with wide-open eyes only
to feel confounded. He returned to the village in the evening and lamented in utter confusion that not a single soul could be seen outside. He was “struck by the unusual stillness all round. The fields where farmers came to plough and graze cattle, laugh and sing - - why were they deserted? A solitary myna sat on a bedraggled babul tree: the wind howled through the ruins of the ancient tomb.” (Twice Born Twice Dead, 3) Sohne Shah found no activities going on in the village. The stillness was coupled with inauspicious events. The spotted dog of Fazi Chowkidar barked at him for the first time. To his dismay, he found a new green flag with a crescent and star fluttering on a tall bamboo post on the tomb of Naogaze Pir. He saw Mauhri, a stranger in a green robe, whispering something in the ear of Khudabaksh, a Muslim of the village. Sohne Shah was surprised to see that the stranger remained grave and serious and spoke no word. Sohne Shah asked this man in green robe what was the serious matter; but to his disappointment and fear, the man got up silently and slipped away.

This unusual calm, the barking of the dog at the respected and rich Sikh of the village, the appearance of the new face in green robe, his silently whispering into the ear of a village Muslim, his utterly grave postures, the fluttering of the Muslim League flag over the tomb of a Pir, respected and revered by both the Hindus and the Muslims - - all these new and sudden developments point to a change from a harmonious world to a fearful one. It symbolises the restless atmosphere of the West Punjab before eruption of brutal violence during the days preceding the division of the country on religious ground. It gave one the realisation of the truth that it was a lull before the storm. Sohne Shah read the news of the disturbances in the East of India and felt perturbed at the
brutal communal killings. Through the newspaper reports he had come to know that the Muslims “had killed Hindus in Naokhali, retribution was now being exacted in Bihar.” These communal riots were completely confusing to Sohne Shah. He had seen the Hindus and the Muslims living in perfect harmony in his village. He could not understand how one could raise a hand against his neighbour. He instantly remembered the cheerful cordiality, perfect peace, excellent neighbourly relations that existed between the different communities in his village. Through the appearance of the strange faces in the village and their whispering and reading secret papers, the novelist explores the genesis of the well-planned and carefully executed policy of hatred and violence. The Muslim League was busy in vitiating the loving atmosphere. Sohne Shah entertained strange fears. He remembered the reports from Naokhali and Bihar. He thought how the two communities engaged in meaningless civil war and bloodshed. The novelist shows both the communities responsible for cruelties. He gives detailed account of the massacre in the eastern part of India.

Like Khushwant Singh, K.S. Duggal delineates the historical truth that the disturbances in the east led to more serious and unprecedentedly violent acts in the Punjab. He shows how the religious persons in green robes prepared the people for the great encounter and upsurge. He explains how the cries of ‘Pakistan Zindabad’, ‘Long Live Pakistan’ that were uttered in sheer amusement without having even an inkling of anything serious about it, soon assumed alarming meaning, threatening the unity of the country. Sohne Shah feared that the cries of ‘Long Live Pakistan’ might result in the creation of a new nation. He had his apprehensions that if tackled tactlessly, the
molehill one day, might turn into a mountain. He feared the eruption of violence, and regretted that the communal battle was to be fought thoughtlessly. Basically, there was no difference between the two communities. He noticed that both the girls, Rajkarni and Satbharai “‘were dressed alike’, even their *dupattas* were of the same colour. Their appearance too was identical. Hide one show the other, you could get away with it.”

(11) This observation of the Sikh headman emphasised the basic oneness of the two religiously distinct communities. The reports brought by the three Muslim and two Sikh youths from the village told Sohne Shah a lot of things. It dawned upon him that his fears were true. The Muslims were to go all out to loot and kill the Hindus and Sikhs. The Hindu and Sikh women were to be converted to Islam.

The novel gives, in detail, a horrible account of what was to follow the partition: how the Hindu women were to be disgraced, how their places of worship were to be defiled, and how the cows which they worshipped and respected were to be slaughtered. The rioters were to come from outside -- from other villages -- amidst the sounds of drums and *Shehnai*, and the ruffians were to surround the entire village. Every man looked anxiously thirsty of his neighbour’s blood. Everything was well-planned to its minutest details. Every Muslim was to take part in this *Jihad* -- the sacred battle: “Those who could not handle guns were to fight with lances and spears. Those who were not brave enough were to keep ready canisters of kerosene to set fire to houses as soon as they had been looted and cleared. Butchers were to keep cauldrons on the boil to fry children, to burn old men and to suspend women, who proved obdurate, upside down.”(13) The reports of the well-planned massacre were heart-
rendering. It was given that Islam was in great danger, and the Muslims of Pathaor decided to retaliate the misdeeds committed by the Hindus in Bihar. No obstruction in their design to kill ten for one was to be tolerated.

However, the Muslim landlords of Dhamyal remained kind and helping even in the midst of hatred and violence. They worked for the safe evacuation of the people of the village to the city with the help of the military. The Muslims of the village assured Sohne Shah of all protection. The news of evacuating the village created a turmoil. The young village girls had a peculiar dilemma. Their mothers were parting were obviously discernible in their sad looks. These unfortunate developments completely shattered the age-long harmony of the village. In fact, Dhamyal had a remarkable record of communal harmony and understanding. The Muslim had provided free sherbet to their Sikh neighbours in every lane and bylane on the anniversary of the martyrdom of Guru Arjun Dev. Id was a festival of jubility to all. The Hindus and Sikhs cleaned streets and sent sweets to their Muslim neighbours. But the recent unfortunate happenings paralysed the normal life, and the village came under the grip of fear and bewilderment. There was utter confusion, and the sense of impending horrors made mothers beat their breasts in despair. The road presented a deserted sight. A street dog dragged the carcass of a dead calf on to the middle of the road and it lay there presenting a horrible sight.

The plan was soon executed. The rioters in great triumph entered the village from outside. The government remained surprisingly inactive. The barracks of the Rawalpindi cantonment, to the confusion of the villagers, did not hum with activity at
the noisy and tempestuous arrival of the rioters. Master Tara Singh's warning to the villagers that in the absence of any drastic action they would be wiped off the face of the earth, looked to be true. Allahditta informed Sohne Shah that the Muslims had planned to wipe out the Hindus. This village chaudhri could not tolerate the Muslim designs. He assured his friend Sohne Shah of all help. He was an incarnation of human values like compassion, friendship, love and universal brotherhood. He wanted his friend Sohne Shah to go away to the city with his young daughter, Rajkarni. But it was too late; the goondas had surrounded the village and there was no escape possible. The entire region was behind. The village youths - - Panjoo and Basanta - - fell victims to killings. The goondas mercilessly cut Panjoo into two halves with his own sword. The Muslim youths, who had gone out of the village to find out the whereabouts of the two young factory workers of the village, indulged in looting and went round shouting 'God is Great'. The Subedar in the village declared that revenge would follow the death of the son of Dost Mohammed, who was declared to be a martyr. A hundred Sikhs were pledged to pay for his life. The cries of 'God is great' and 'Long Live Pakistan' resounded everywhere. The village harmony was completely ruptured. The Muslims, who had assured Sohne Shah of all protection, became enemies and looked for blood. Fire raged all round. Only Allahditta held that the son of Dost Mohammed was killed by the bullet of a British soldier, and that it was wicked to call him a martyr. The Sikhs were not to be blamed for this murder, as the dead youth, Dina, was a wicked character. Sohne Shah saw the futility of the communal killings and the fanaticism and madness of this upheaval.
The troubles at Rawalpindi, the murder of the two Sikh youths of Dhamyal, the loot in the cantonment, the killing of an unwanted Muslim youth, Dina, by a bullet while indulging in loot and his subsequent elevation to martyr, the quiet cremation of the Sikh youths - - all these events portrayed the explosive situation of the pre-partition days. The utter helplessness of the Sikhs stood exposed. Sohne Shah heard that the British were responsible for this trouble. The novelist analyses the causes of ten dire events. He, through Sohne Shah, expresses the folly of the entire drama of pain and horror. The writer fully shows how fanaticism caused terrible destruction to the people living in perfect harmony and peace in West Punjab.

The condition of the villages deteriorated immeasurably. The fires were seen almost regularly. The villages burnt and the helpless spectators of Dhamyal wailed, wept and burst into loud lamentations. Old Hindu-Muslim friendship met a disaster; it was completely discarded. The Muslims cried for revenge, and felt that the events in Bihar should be retaliated. The rioters were warmly welcomed by the Muslims of the villages with sweets. But Allahditta could not imagine a safe future for the Muslims in the absence of the Hindus. His sane thought found expression in his confusion at the sight of the well-planned attacks. But his attempts to dissuade the Muslims from violence proved futile and he could only make the Muslims his enemies. The novelist, like Bhishma Sahni in Tamas, paints elaborately the scenes of violence that swept the west Punjab before the proposed division of the country. It was the reign of anarchy, rioters came with spears and guns beating drums and playing Shehnai, and then followed the horrible deeds of murder, rape, abduction, loot and brutal violence. The
Pir wanted to save the Hindu women and children for conversion. These women, he shouted, were the property of Pakistan. He said loudly that the children adopted the religion of the home in which they were brought up. The Pir thought that conversion of women and children was the only way to propagate Islam. Horror was let loose; "Children were transfixed with spears, women cut up with axes, old men dragged by their beards and hair, and youths massacred with bullets." (37)

The Hindus and Sikhs of the village were destroyed one by one. The brave goldsmith Sundar and his wife put up a valiant fight against the rioters, whose number was overwhelming. Allahditta lost his life in an attempt to save the Hindus and Sikhs from the rioters. Kamal Khan, the man entrusted to dispose off the loot, was angry with Allahditta for his siding with the Hindus in the hour of crisis. He, too, had some Sikh friends. But, he thought, "when Islam was in danger, when Pakistan had to be won, when a divine message had come that not a single Hindu or Sikh was to be left alive, when the Pir of Juma Masjid himself had ordained that all Kafirs were to be destroyed, their properties looted, their houses burnt to ashes then what else was left." (40) For these brutal cruelties, the writer does not hold merely the Muslims completely responsible and guilty; the Hindus in Bihar had acted in the similar fashion. Kamal Khan justified the killing of all Hindus and Sikhs in West Punjab, and felt that the hatred leading to destruction sprang from the caste distinction. The rioters took away Rajkarni, while Sohne Shah and Satbharai lay unconscious in a distant ravine. On the third day they got out and were escorted by a military lorry to a refugee camp. On the way they saw their village in utter ruin. The police officers had their share of the loot.
People, in panic, ran away from one place to another. Satbharai felt the pangs of separation, and she witnessed great bloodshed helplessly. The events reminded her of the days of Nadir Shah.

In short, the first part of the novel shows the early and age-long cordiality among the neighbours belonging to different communities. It surveys the serious changes in atmosphere, and the hand of the religious priests in inciting violence. The Britishers and political leaders like Master Tara Singh, too, shared the blame. The Bihar and Naokhali incidents could not be forgotten. The riots leading to a complete chaos and the absolute failure of the government have been realistically delineated. But in the midst of communal fire stood Allahditta, Sohne Shah, Rajkarni and Satbharai, who were so noble and good that they were absolutely free from religious hatred and distinction; they were the voices of sanity in a world engulfed in the drama of fanaticism and violence. The brutal acts fully exposed the folly of the people and the novelist misses no opportunity to show these dire offences against humanity in their true colour.

The novelist describes, in detail, the refugee camps that came into existence as a result of partition. Sohne Shah reflected on Pakistan and thought that it was a strange nation founded on the blood of the innocent. The soldiers engaged in rescuing acts were strangers speaking different and unintelligible language. Ironically they saved people while their very close neighbours had turned against them. The horrid happenings of the pre-partition days made Sohne Shah a refugee. Lorries carrying the refugees to the camps were overcrowded. The plight of the haggard refugees from the neighbouring
villages was heartrending. They were in rags and had seen their men and women slaughtered mercilessly. Gurudwaras and temples were defiled lamentably. Temples were sacked, and Gurudwaras had witnessed the killing of unarmed people and the rape of women inside their premises. They were set on fire ruthlessly. In the refugee camps, the deities were installed and the holy Sikh scriptures were recited. Yet the terribly tortured people could not dare go to these places. They had the experience of the futility of their prayers. The camp showed different and strange people in tents. The horrid tortures weighed heavily on the mind of the victims and made them act strangely and unpredictably. The haunted psyche of the refugees betrayed itself in their actions and strange behaviour. It was irritatingly awkward for the political leaders to face the refugees; they encountered strange and baffling questions. The refugees narrated the harrowing tales of the atrocities inflicted on their fellow sufferers. Every one had a tale of woe to tell. The story of Harnam Das from the village Moghal Parhi was as tragic as any. The rioters had cut one of his arms and had plucked out one of his eyes. Besides, his “young daughter was stripped naked, made to dance, then taken out in procession through the village. Finally, ‘Long Live Pakistan’ was tattooed on her breasts and a crescent and a star on her forehead.” (56) Harnam Das had to watch all these cruelties with one remaining eye. He always fainted while narrating these events. He sighed helplessly and said: “When the seventh goonda was raping her, I fainted.” (56) In spite of their woeful tales, the people, however, felt that the separation of brother from brother could not exist permanently; they said that nail could not be separated from the flesh. Kuldip, a young and attractive Sikh youth served his distressed brethren in the camp. Pothoar, land of fairies, had been set on fire. It was commonly observed that the
Hindus and Sikhs had to live lovingly together. Sohne Shah, in a military lorry, made an abortive search for Rajkarni, but found no trace of her. Satbharai, the daughter of his lost friend, Allahditta, was now everything to him. Sohne Shah felt sorry for his Muslim friends. It was sad that the main gurudwara was converted into a tobacco depot. Muslims defended their action, and to justify their cruelties they gave out a lie saying that first their locality was on fire. A gurudwara had been turned into a mosque. This made Sohne Shah happy simply because the holy place would be devoted to the worship of God. Satbharai fell in love with Kuldip in the camp.

Part Two of the novel shows the merciless acts of killing, fire, rape, conversion, arson and loot. The rioters rampaged from village to village abducting, raping and killing the Hindu and Sikh women. The refugee camps went on increasing in number. The effect of the gruesome and terrible tragedy on its victims has been shown in detail. The tales of woe from the lips of the tortured people exposed the wickedness and shame of communal frenzy. The sinking of human values, reign of goondaism, anarchy let loose upon the people, horrible experience of the suffering humanity, the hypocrisy of the Muslim leaders and the ineffective and inadequate arrangements at the camp — all these are vividly portrayed in the second part of *Twice Born Twice Dead*. True, the novelist minutely describes the incidents of those terrible days. The cries of ‘Long Live Pakistan’ and ‘Down with Khizar Ministry’ were heard everywhere. The rival groups were formed in the train. The Muslims abused the Punjab Chief Minister, Khizar Hyat Khan, and the Hindus retaliated by abusing Khan Mamdat. The heated arguments led people to blows in the lower class compartments. The train was attacked near a Muslim
village. The Muslim newspaper of Lahore condemned and criticised the Sikhs for the violence in trains. They reported that the Sikhs slaughtered the Muslims with their swords. Another version of the incident appeared in the Hindu papers, which gave as much colour to the truth as they could. They incited the people and asked the Hindus and Sikhs of the Punjab to avenge the massacre of their brethren. The riots broke out. The atrocities that the Muslims inflicted on the Sikhs in the past were remembered, and the present cruelties were elaborated.

Killing and stabbing became a plaything. Satbharai watched the cruel killing of a Sikh postman by the playing children. Children killed the postman “just as one kills an ant.” The people of Lyallpur, where Sohne Shah had come to stay with Satbharai condemned the riots. The lonely girl remembered her village. At Lyallpur, the Hindu-Muslim harmony at a time when almost the whole Punjab was burning in communal flames, was a happy and unexpected experience for Sohne Shah and Satbharai. The life at Lyallpur was completely normal. The Muslims respected the religious sentiments of the other communities. Duggal describes this harmonious life, in detail, to give a glimpse of the basic Hindu-Muslim unity and to deride the communal and war-like preparations in the other towns and cities of the province. Kulwant suggested to Satbharai the need of social justice. He always reminded her of the tyrannies perpetrated in the name of religion. He lamented and laughed at the fact that India was divided into two parts on the basis of religion. The conflicting reports about the fate of Lyallpur swept the city. The provocative statements in the papers excited the people and made their blood boil. The news of riots in other parts of the Punjab held people in
terror. Riots had flared up throughout the Punjab. There were alarming news from Lahore and Amritsar. The reports created confusion and isolated people. The villagers ran to the city, and the rich flew away in planes. A Muslim leader visited Lyallpur and motivated his co-religionists privately to attack their Hindu and Sikh neighbours. The news from the East Punjab of the Massacre of the Muslims created tension. With immediate transfer of the strict Deputy Commissioner, riots broke out in the city. Sohne Shah could not even visit his newly purchased land and orchard. Violence was let loose. Duggal gives a long and sustained description of the riots and the cruelties heaped on the Hindus in Lyallpur that forced Sohne Shah and Satbharai to go to the overcrowded refugee camp to experience all kinds of hardships and tortures.

Part Three of the novel, thus, shows the violence at its worst. The peace-loving city of Lyallpur was sent reeling under blood and horror at the partition of the country. The mischievous elements held sway and took control of the situation. Violence was returned for violence. The terrors of the East Punjab found retaliation in the West of the province. The cycle of revenge was put into motion. Duggal shows the madness of the people and exposes their narrow communal attitude - - the basis of the partition of the country. The novel makes a strong appeal for harmonious and peaceful living. Also, it portrays the miserable flight of the refugees in great detail. They looked lost in vacant thoughts and grew completely unaware of the world around them. The rioters indulged in all kinds of barbarous activities. The old man, a white bearded Sikh, remained engaged in sharpening his Kirpan, and did not pay attention to the crying demands of his daughter and wife. Violence, corruption and black-marketing pervaded the place.
People in horror wanted to fly away to the safe land. There were disturbances at the refugee camp. A young Hindu girl was kidnapped by goondas. The refugees experienced tremendous difficulties on their way. Sohne Shah and Satbharai, however, escaped and ran away to Amritsar. The refugee camps were overcrowded, and they wandered from camp to camp to find shelter.

Duggal vividly describes the horrible sight of a caravan of the Muslim evacuees going to Pakistan. The Muslims were not allowed to draw water from the Hindu well. The Pothoar neighbour picked up a fourteen-year girl and took her to be his wife. He, alongwith others, attacked a train carrying the Muslim evacuees. These incidents, described in detail, show that the Hindus in India were as cruel and guilty as the Muslims in Pakistan. No refugee felt happy in a camp in India. The refugee women expressed anti-Muslim feeling unhesitatingly. The refugees in the camp planned a secret raid in a Sikh-Hindu refugee camp. The stories of the girls, restored from Pakistan, were horrible: they were very badly treated by the Muslims: "The Pathan would offer us for sale and demonstrate our charm by pulling our breasts" (154) The cruelties of the Muslims in Pakistan were matched by the Hindu and Sikhs in India. The Muslim girls, forcibly sent to Pakistan, were pregnant. It was baffling to conjecture how these girls were to face their kith and kin after living with strangers for so long. The tale of Sita made one shudder with fear; she was ill treated in Pakistan and her father refused to accept her. Kuldip knew the miseries of the abducted women. To him duty was more than love, and thus against the request of Sohne Shah he sent Satbharai - - the object of his love - - to Pakistan. The separation was too painful to be tolerated both by him and
by Sohne Shah, but love demanded sacrifice and Duggal celebrates the sacrifice in his novel.

In a word, *Twice Born Twice Dead* highlights the trauma, gloom and tragedy of the partition. It shows the perfect harmony existing between the two communities before the partition. It points out the role of the religious people and political leaders in creating trouble. The hand of the British rulers has also been suggested. The novel describes elaborately the violence and ruthless atrocities perpetrated in the name of religion on both sides of the border. He holds both the communities responsible for shameful deeds. The violence preceding and succeeding the partition finds heart-rending expression in the novel. Also, it powerfully depicts the plight of the refugees and evacuees, people abandoning their homes and living in refugee camps, and of the haunted psyche of the tortured men and women. Amidst the gloom of the unfortunate tragedy, the writer suggests that the violent bloodshed was the creation of a handful of mischievous elements. Duggal's suggestive stress on a peaceful co-existence is both relevant and commendable.