Conclusion

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Chapter VI

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An attempt has been made in the foregoing chapters to examine comprehensively the Indian-English novels dealing with the partition. Communal considerations, the selfishness of the politicians, the British policy of divide and rule, Jinnah's insistence on his 'two-nation theory' and his influence on the Muslim League, and the inability and incompetence of the Congress to check and control the terrible tide paved the way for the partition of the country. The result was violence at its worst. Inevitably, it affected the Indian creative writers who stood bewildered at the ghastly scene. In an objective and secular spirit these writers have recorded their reactions to the whole tragedy of the partition.

However, different Indian-English novelists have reacted to the horrors of the partition in their own way. There are writers like R.K.Narayan, Attia Hosain and Balchandra Rajan who treat the theme of the partition only as a side issue in their novels. R.K.Narayan and Balchandra Rajan lived far away from the scene of tragedy and hence, as Pratap Singh in Rajan's The Dark Dancer points out, they could not appreciate the many-sided dimensions of the communal frenzy. Attia Hosain shows Lucknow to be the scene of activity, and this capital too, did not witness the horrors of communal violence. R.K.Narayan's Waiting for the Mahatma primarily concentrates on the Indian political scene before the dawn of freedom. It is only towards the close,
and it is true chronologically, that the writer refers to the partition of the country and the violence that broke out in its wake. The idea of naming children without disclosing their religion is commendable, for it can be an important measure to prevent the disintegration of the society on the communal basis. Along with the partition, the writer refers to brutal killings, and to atrocities inflicted on women and children. It is strange that *Waiting for Mahatma* shows the eruption of the communal violence in the eastern part of the country - - the Bengal and Bihar; it does not touch the Punjab where the naked drama of man's beastly deeds was enacted without any sense of shame of shame and guilt.

Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column* mainly studies the psychological crisis in a Muslim home caused by the partition. In an amazingly impartial way the writer surveys the scene of national struggle, and looks into the genesis of the creation of Pakistan, 'a neo-paradise' for the Muslims. In a very clear tone, she finds the Muslim fanaticism contributing tremendously to the demand of the partition. She accentuates that the division had its complex implications. It resulted in the division of 'Ashiana', a happy home at Lucknow. The members of the once integrated house stood split and divided. Saleem and Nadira went away to Pakistan and unfortunately, it became impossible for them to visit their 'home' in India. Kemal and Asad pledged their loyalty to India and stayed behind. 'Ashiana', the nest was deserted and the narrator was haunted by memories when she visited it. She focuses on the impact of partition and finds it to be an extremely tragic phenomenon. Her picture of the whole development is saturated with emotional and psychological tortures.
Balachandra Rajan’s *The Dark Dancer* shows the violence caused by the partition in a greater degree than *Waiting for the Mahatma* and *Sunlight on a Broken Column*. The writer makes an attempt to show that the distance was immaterial; a man sitting away in South India was as much concerned about the pains and pangs of the partition as his brothers in the Punjab. He maintains that the tragedy involved all of us, and shows the protagonist of the novel making a valiant search for identity. He highlights the noble soul who remained unprejudiced and free from all communal thoughts. Thus Kamala sacrificed her life in an attempt to save a Muslim girl from the evil hands of the Hindus. Such sacrifices, he suggests, are an attempt to expiate and give human beings a sense of dignity and nobility. The novelist looks beyond the tragedy of the partition, and does not fail to see hope and redemption for mankind.

In his two novels, *A Bend in the Ganges* and the *Distant Drum*, Manohar Malgaonkar concentrates upon the tragedy of the partition. *A Bend in the Ganges* throws light on the cruel and shameful acts in which people freely indulged during the days of communal frenzy. The acts of plunder, fire, abduction, mutilation and rape baffled the imagination of the people. Tek Chand had never imagined that “such happenings could be possible in the middle of the twentieth century, after more than a hundred years of sanity and orderliness of the British rule, and after thirty years or so of Mahatma’s non-violence.” ¹ The novelist, however, offers a very narrow view of the factors leading to the partition. Through Debi-Shafi rivalry for leadership even in their early days of close relationship, Malgaonkar foreshadowed the future enmity between
the Hindus and the Muslims that reached its bitterest point in the days immediately before and after the partition. Distant Drum shows the drama of communal frenzy that the nation witnessed on the eve of independence. It gives a detailed account of the riots in Delhi. It speaks of the divided loyalties and the changed values. It dawned upon Kiran that a soldier could no longer remain friendly with a man, who joined the enemy’s camp. The partition turned the friends, forcibly and necessarily, into enemies. The friendship needed to be reviewed in the light of new values.

Khushwant Singh’s Train to Pakistan depicts the brutal killings in the Bengal and Bihar and the retributory consequences in the Punjab, millions of people in flight, and the savage turn the events took in the name of religion. He however, reveals that those barbarous incidents had a redeeming and humanising effect on even depraved men like Juggat Singh and Hukum Chand who underwent a complete metamorphosis and were transformed from utter rakes into compassionate men. Jugga, the fearful dacoit, with his supreme sacrifice, turned out to be a tragic hero. In performing the heroic deed to save the train carrying his beloved Nooran, along with other passengers, he became a sacrificial figure like Rajan’s Kamala. His act redeemed the abuse of religion that led to inhuman acts of violence. His sacrifice exhibited a profound sense of nobility. The novel also abounds in naturalistic scenes and descriptions. However, the novelist closes the novel with the affirmation of joy, nobility and glory of life.

Chaman Nahal’s Azadi offers an epic and psychological treatment of the partition. It gives a vivid picture of the savage acts of plunder and rape, arson and
murder, and many other insane and inhuman acts. The magnitude of these horrible deeds completely embittered and dazzled the law-abiding and peace-loving citizens like Lala Kanshi Ram. The sudden, quick and hazardous movement of millions from one side of the border to the other with all their dear possessions left behind was a shocking experience; they were made to quit their hearths and homes in the most adverse circumstances, created by communal riots, and they reached their destination very often as paupers. Nevertheless, the novel portrays good men like Chaudhri Barkat Ali and Hakim Saheb of Narowal; they stood above narrow communal considerations and showed understanding and compassion. Hakim Sahib was filled with deep compunction, when he watched a procession of naked and shaven women. *Azadi* scrutinises, in detail, the causes of the partition and the subsequent tragedy. Above all, it makes a very fine study of the psychology of people who suffered immensely. With an impartial and humane attitude, the novelist finds the Hindus in India as much guilty as the Muslims on the other side of the border. With its detailed description of the causes of the malady, the storm and its aftermath, and the impact of the whole affair on the minds of the people, Nahal’s *Azadi* excels all other novels written on the theme of the partition so far.

Among the recent Sikh novelists on the partition, Raj Gill explores the genesis of the division of the country in *The Rape*. His novel is filled with newspaper reports and speeches of political leaders that are often reproduced verbatim. The novel vividly describes the horrors perpetrated by people during the brief period of nine months. The plight of the refugees leaving their homes, the mass-exodus and the terrible ordeals find
a powerful expression in it. The love affair between Jasmit, a Sikh village girl, and Dalipjit Singh is elevating. But it is really horrible to find a father raping a girl whom his son had rescued and who was living with him.

H.S.Gill’s *Ashes and Petals* evoke the trauma of the refugees who crossed the border by trains in the weeks immediately following the partition. The novel shows a trainload of Hindus and Sikhs on their way to a safe land. On the way the train, carrying the refugees, was stopped and attacked. Women were forcibly snatched away. Risalidar Santa Singh shot dead his fourteen-year-old granddaughter to save her from dishonour and disgrace. Many Sikhs emulated Santa Singh and enacted this ghoulish drama. The incident is a realistic one; it was one of the many incidents recorded in G.D. Khosla’s *Stern Reckoning: A Survey of the Events Leading up to and Following the Partition of India*. The events coloured Santa Singh’s attitude towards the Muslims. Naturally, he felt completely baffled when his grandson, Ajit Singh, a Cavalry Officer, sought his permission to marry a Muslim girl. The novel, however, suffers from the writer’s preoccupation with the military life and the details of war, specially the tank warfare.

K.S.Duggal’s *Twice Born Twice Dead*, like Raj Gill’s *The Rape*, covers a very brief period. It refers to the political personalities, and to the innumerable instances of inhuman acts in which people indulged during those terrible days. Originally written in Punjabi, it is a very powerful novel on the theme of the partition. Like *The Rape*, it abounds in historical material and hundreds of anecdotes of human suffering. Like
Bhishma Sahani's *Tamas* - - a novel in Hindi - - it depicts the violence spreading far and wide before the creation of a new state. Like Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, it refers to the violence in the eastern part of the country - - Noakhali and Bihar - - before it broke out in the Punjab in a retributory vein with unprecedented hatred and venom. The people of a village, Dhamyal, lived in peace and harmony like the people of Mano Majra. But fanaticism very soon changed the complexion of the village which was almost littered with corpses and blood of Sikhs. The impact of these horrors on the minds of the victims has been faithfully delineated in the novel. The book accentuates the dire necessity of human values like love and compassion to counter insanity of the worst kind.

It is interesting to observe that the majority of the novels on the theme of the partition are written by the Sikhs - - Khushwant Singh, Raj Gill, H.S.Gill and Kartar Singh Duggal - - are among the major writers on the subject. This interest of the Sikhs in the partition is understandable. The Punjab was their prosperous motherland, and they were usually far richer than the Muslims. It is an undeniable fact that the Sikhs were the worst sufferers and the holocaust of the partition may be described as the Muslim-Sikh war. The Sikhs lost their homes and valuable possessions. The hungry Muslims found in the partition of the country an opportunity to enrich themselves by looting the Sikhs. The class distinction showed itself. Hence, it is natural for the Sikhs to remember, and write about, this dire event.
A few patent, common features can be marked in the novels written by the Sikhs. First, all principal characters in them are Sikhs - - Juggat Singh and Bhai Meet Singh in *Train to Pakistan*, Dalipjit in *The Rape*, Ajit Singh and Risaldar Santa Singh in *Ashes and Petals*, and Sohne Shah and Kuldip in *Twice Born Twice Dead*. Secondly, all these novels paint, in detail, the horrors brought about by the partition, though they maintain an objective attitude and do not hold any particular community guilty of massacre and violence. Thirdly, these novels (and it is also true of the novels written by the non-Muslim Indian-English novelists) invariably depict a romance between a Sikh boy and a Muslim girl. In this regard, they are not free from racial and caste prejudices; they do not show the love affair of the opposite kind - -that is, a romance between a Hindu or a Sikh girl and a Muslim boy. Thus *Train to Pakistan* focusses on the romance between Jugga and Nooran, *The Rape* between Dalipjit and Laila, *Ashes and Petals* between Ajit and Salma, and *Twice Born Twice Dead* between Satbharai and Kuldip. Likewise, Nahal’s *Azadi* describes the love affair between Arun and Nur, and Manohar Malgaonkar’s *A Bend in the Ganges* shows Debi taking a peculiar revenge upon his old companion and leader, Shafi Usman, by snatching away his mistress Mumtaz. These Indian-English novelists are strikingly different from the Hindi writers on the partition in this respect. For instance, Yashpal - - a celebrated Hindi novelist - - in his *Jhoota Sach* does not seem to suffer from such a prejudice; he presents Tara’s attachment to Asad with as much vigour as he shows Juba’s love affair with a Hindu boy, Pradumn.
To conclude, the effect of the partition on Indian-English novelists varies form person to person; every one of them sees and treats it according to his own experience and understanding. But all of them analyse the reasons of this terrible tragedy and reveal considerable impartiality in their assessment of the situation. It is remarkable that all these writers, who have dealt with the partition in their works, point out the folly and wickedness of the horrible deeds. All the barbaric acts, they maintain, were unwarranted and meaningless. A little understanding and sympathy, restraint and rationalism could have averted this gruesome upheaval. They make it very clear that all communities that indulged freely in the cruel acts must hang their heads in shame. Every one of them exposes the vice of narrow communal considerations; and emphasises the necessity of having a wider and all embracing attitude of love and sympathy. The sacrificial figures like Kamala and Jugga atone for their failings and sins. The good and noble characters - - Sita, Kemal, Asad, Ranjit, Bharati, Chaudhri Barkat Ali, Hakim of Narawal and others - - need to be emulated. Patently, these writers sound an optimistic note even in the midst of terrible tragedy and reveal the bright side of future by their stress on the nobility of life and vulnerability of evil.