CHAPTER 1
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INTRODUCTION

Before the arrival of the British people were stimulated occasionally for group action and motivated by various reasons such as clan, caste, trade, profession and sometimes religion. Neither Hindus nor Muslims formed a monolithic group at that time. Anil seal, while referring to the late nineteenth-century India, remarks: "In so shapeless, so jumbled a bundle of societies, there were not two nations, there was not one nation, there was no nation at all. What was India? — a graveyard of old nationalities and the mother of new nationalism struggling to be born." Though India had witnessed monarchical, republican, feudal and imperial rules, yet before the arrival of the British the structure of Indian society had been 'apolitical'.

With English rule and English education a new political and social awakening came to India. India is said to have become a political entity in 1857. At this stage India witnessed social, political, spiritual, cultural and religious regeneration, which coincided with the birth of Indian English literature. As M.K. Bhatnagar writes,

Art, thus, is an organic part of the total cultural-complex in which it takes its origin. The organic nature of art makes it draw nourishment from diverse sources including politics, taken in its wider, elemental sense, as embracing the multiplicity of the contemporary scene with its economic, social, cultural and governmental aspects.²

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Indian writings in English, especially the novel, received impetus from a strong reaction against the British rule. In a country of India's geographical dimensions and social and religious heterogeneity, national political consciousness seemed to have "one common consolidated enemy." The novels written during this period were imbued with the Gandhian euphoria. The protagonists of these novels eagerly awaited for freedom and sought a kind of Renaissance in it.

India won Independence in 1947 and with it came the horrid partition of the subcontinent into India and Pakistan. The tragedy of partition shook the very foundation of humanity. It brought with it the bloodiest upheaval of the Indian history. The hour of victory was coupled with the hour of defeat. And soon after Gandhiji was assassinated the Gandhian era came to an end. The authors of the post-independence era were more loud in their protest against the alien rule as now there was no foreign authority to restrict their freedom to express. Inqilab (K.A. Abbas), Waiting for the Mahatma (R.K. Narayan), Kanthapura (Raja Rao) and Mother Land (C.N. Zutshi) are some of the cases in point.

India's vivisection was one of the most tragic events of Indian history. It is surprising, however, to note that major Indian English writers have rarely written fiction on the theme of partition. Bhabani Bhattacharya writes:

The tragedies of partition have been beyond anything that a writer could 'invent'. But where is the creative expression of all these happenings? it would be somewhat odd to say that the writers

\[^3\] Ibid., p. 9.
have been too dazed by recent history to make it their material.\(^4\)

However, the partition theme has not been avoided altogether. Partition of India had created great blood bath and had highly stirred the mind of Indian creative writers, but the novels based on this tragedy came out very late. The trauma of partition had stirred the creative genius of some Indian English novelists who exploited partition thematically in their works. But "There is no doubt that the English novelists have noticed the genuine potential and dramatic import of this turbulent political phenomenon rather belatedly."\(^5\) Some Indian writers have nevertheless produced brilliant novels on the theme of partition. Writers like Manohar Malgonkar (A Bend in the Ganges, The Princes, and Distant Drum), Khushwant Singh (Train to Pakistan, and Delhi) and Chaman Nahal (Azadi) have dealt with the theme comprehensively. R.K. Narayan (Waiting for the Mahatma), Attia Hosain (Sunlight on a Broken Column), B. Rajan (The Dark Dancer), Raj Gill (The Rape), H.S. Gill (Ashes and Petals), K.S. Duggal (Twice Born Twice Dead, Nail and Flesh), Nina Sibal (Yatra), Salman Rushdie (Midnight's Children) and Amitav Ghosh (The Shadow Lines) have also used it in their works. Pakistani authors like Bapsi Sidhwa (Ice Candy Man, The Crow Eaters, and The Bride) and Mehr Nigar Masroor (Shadows of Time), too, have dealt with the theme. These novels brilliantly evoke the trauma of partition, but the


theme of partition does not constitute the core of these novels. These novelists have treated the theme as a side issue in their novels. It would be in order to consider here some of the authors who have dealt with the partition theme cursorily in their works. The works exclusively devoted to the theme of partition will be taken up for detailed analysis in the subsequent chapters.

R.K. Narayan's *Waiting for the Mahatma* concentrates more on the fight for freedom led by Gandhiji and on the Gandhian charisma. Gandhiji's experiments with truth were not confined to individuals but were experimented and experimented successfully in groups and societies. He used *Satyagraha* against the evils of imperialism and his Non-cooperation Movement, Civil Disobedience Movement and Quit India Movement had a great mass appeal. Through his thought and action Gandhiji demonstrated that not hatred but love, not anger but calm, not untruth but truth and not violence but non-violence are the moving forces of life. He pleaded to the masses:

. . . I want you really to make sure of a change in your hearts before you ever think of asking the British to leave the shores of India. It's all very well for you to take up the cry and create an uproar. But that's not enough. I want you to clear your hearts and minds and make certain that only love resides there, and there is no residue of bitterness for past history. Only then can you say to the British, 'please leave this country to be managed or mismanaged by us'. . . .

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In Narayan's novel, infatuated by Bharti, a devoted Gandhiiite, Sriram comes under the influence of Gandhiji. He religiously and faithfully follows Gandhian principles and dutifully does the works assigned to him. But "...Sriram, actually, has no comprehension of the fall-out of colonial exploitation, social injustice or economic deprivation against which the struggle was aimed. He simply adores Gandhi as 'Bapu' and accepts whatever he does as 'right', because Bharti also thinks likewise." Meenakshi Mukherjee writes in this connection: "Sriram's participation in the freedom movement can be seen ... as incidental, an activity whose meaning he himself does not fully understand." However, due to lack of proper guidance from Bharti he comes under the spell of terrorist nationalism. Jagdish tells him: "Britain will leave India with a Salam, if we crush the backbone of her administration ... and it lies in the courts and schools and railwaylines, from these she draws the strength for her survival." In the company of Jagdish he transmits and receives messages from terrorists, explodes bombs, and burns trains and stations. In jail, through a smuggled newspaper, the prisoners come to know about the proposed division of India. And when Sriram comes out of confinement he finds himself in an alien violent world. Jagdish tells him about the carnage taking place in East Bengal: "Are you aware of what has been going on in East Bengal? Hindus versus Muslims."
Sriram receives a letter from Bharti in which she informs him about the grim situation in Noakhali. Another letter from Bharti asks him to join her in Delhi. In the train he sees hooligans searching for Muslims. When he reaches Delhi he finds Bharti working for refugees whose condition was very pathetic, children having lost their parents, women their chastity and men their identity.

On the 15th of August when the country was celebrating India's Independence Gandhiji was working in Calcutta among riot victims. He walked through villages on his peace mission: "He walked with bowed head, all through those swamps of East Bengal...he spoke to those who had lost their homes, property, wives and children. He spoke kindly to those who had perpetrated crimes — he wept for them, and they swore never to do such things again.""11 Gandhiji believed that "God reveals himself to us in the shape of children." Therefore he felt that the name, indicating any religious affiliation, should not be given to children, who should be allowed to grow with love in their heart for all. But unfortunately some fanatics opposed to Gandhiji's lenient policies, assassinated him. Narayan has given a vivid picture of the upheaval that shook Bengal and Bihar and other unfortunate effects of the partition.

Sunlight on a Broken Column by Attia Hosain is a novel of partition which presents the Muslim perspective of the tragedy and raises the pertinent question: "To whom does one owe loyalty — nation, community or

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11 Ibid., p. 166.
family or just the self?"12 The story of the novel revolves round the fortune of a Muslim taluqdar family living in the United Provinces. This family, though away from the partitioned part of India, feels the tremors of communal violence that shatters the peace of the border regions of the country. Most of the novels on the theme of partition have been written either by Sikh or Hindu writers, but Sunlight on a Broken Column is the first novel written by a Muslim who "... expresses a feeling of guilt and sorrow because the original impulse of the partition came from the Muslim."13 Attia Hosain neither defends the Muslim League nor champions the cause of partition. She exhibits a striking insight into the problem created by partition when she states that partition would only broaden the breaches between the two communities and will intensify the feeling of alienation in them. Attia Hosain lashes out in a satirical strain against the so-called achievement of freedom in her novel. When the Muslim narrator-heroine, Laila, visits her home after the partition of the country, she is forced to realize that nationalism is only a garb worn for convenience and that "it is no longer the moving force and spirit that it was before independence."14

Laila grew up in a feudal family during the period when India's struggle for freedom was the only passion with Indian masses. Her family members were also deeply interested in the political unrest that was raging the country. It was a time of great political upheaval. Ethnic identities were

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forgotten for the sake of national integration and the bonds of fraternity were considered stronger than all other considerations.

The Gandhian era was characterised by Hindu-Muslim unity. The British realised that their hold on India would remain precarious so long as the Hindus and the Muslims, in spite of their differences, were not irreconcilably inimical. The communal consolidation had bewildered the British Government and in order to vilify the united struggle they played the game of 'Divide and rule'. They, ultimately succeeded in disintegrating the united struggle by instilling communalism. About this degeneration, Asad in Attia Hosain’s novel remarks: "'He has learned the lesson the English teach us'. . . . 'Hate each other — love us.'"15 Zahid also feels that communal antagonism has been used by the British authorities to justify the continuity of their rule in India. "'Something must be done to prove that the British are here to enforce law and order, and stop us killing each other.'"16

Laila can very well notice the change that has come after the intrusion of religion into politics. The traditional Lucknow courtesy is forgotten and the delicate and sophisticated talk replaced by heated arguments:

No one seemed to talk any more; everyone argued, and not in the graceful tradition of our city where conversation was treated as a fine art, words were loved as mediums of artistic expression, and verbal battles were loved as mediums of artistic expression, and verbal battles were enjoyed as much as any delicate, scintillating, sparkling display of pyrotechnic skill. It was as if someone had sneaked in live ammunition among the fireworks. In the thrust and parry there was a desire to inflict wounds.17

16 Ibid.
17 Ibid., p. 230.
The disgruntled Muslim leaders, who failed to make much profit out of the changed political situation, now fan communal passion in order to further their own political interests. They charge the Congress of being a Hindu organisation in which Muslims have no chance of holding its leading strings. The Muslim League alleges that only those Muslims are welcome within its ranks who prefer to remain as the henchmen of Hindu leaders and support their cunningly planned intrigues to keep Muslims out of real power. Nationalist Muslims are still in the Congress but the communal Muslims charge them of being traitors. The rift on the national political scene also affects the family ties. Hamid, the father and Saleem, the son, find each other in opposite camps. Hamid, opposed to communal approach to politics, is against mixing religion and politics. He believes that doing so is medieval in spirit and reactionary in nature. He regards communal parties such as the Muslim League as big hindrances in the struggle against the British rule.

Political and social reactionaries under the cover of a communal mask percolate to the masses. The Muslims come to believe that in free India the Hindu majority would rule the Muslims. Aunt Saira says: "... it would be better to have the British stay on than the Hindus ruling." Saleem also opines that the Hindus would take revenge upon the Muslims because the later once ruled the country: "The majority of Hindus have not forgotten or forgiven the Muslims for having ruled over them for hundreds of years. Now they can democratically take revenge. The British have ruled about two

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18 Ibid., p. 234.
hundred years, and see how much they are hated." But people like Saleem still believe that the Hindus and the Muslims have been living harmoniously and would again live in harmony once they realise the vices of religious conflict.

The storm of partition shatters the cozy 'Ashiana', the nest. Saleem decides to migrate to Pakistan, whereas Kemal opts to stay in India. When years after Laila comes to pay a visit to her old house the old servant Ram Singh laments the decay and change. Attia Hosain recreates the emotional and psychological trauma brought about by the partition. Meenakshi Mukherjee maintains that Sunlight on a Broken Column is "... a politico-psychological portrayal of uprooted individuals typifying the tragedy of the minority communities, especially the Muslims, in India living in nostalgia." After the Independence the constitutional abolition of the feudal system grievously irritates old people like Aunt Siara. She feels that their only refuge was Pakistan and that they have made a grave mistake by staying in India. Saleem and Nadira, who opt for Pakistan, on the contrary, lose their craze for an Islamic Renaissance. When Saleem comes to visit Hasanpur he enjoys 'recognised identity' which he misses in Pakistan. Making a comparison between Attia Hosain's Sunlight on a Broken Column and Bapsi Sidhwa's Ice Candy Man. Novy Kapadia Writes: "Both stress a similar vulnerability of human understanding and life, caused by the throes of Partition which relentlessly divided friends, families, lovers and

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19 Ibid.
20 Mukherjee, Twice Born Fiction, p. 52.
neighbours."²¹ But there are significant differences between the two novelists in this regard. Sidhwa has tried to establish her political identity by projecting on the atrocities committed on the Muslims by the Hindus and has presented the fairer side of Jinnah's personality. Another Pakistani writer Mehr Nigar Masoor also has attempted to present the Pakistani side of the tragic story of the partition in *Shadows of Time*.

The next important treatment of the partition may be found in *The Dark Dancer* by B. Rajan. The Natraj is the central icon in the novel which suggests the unity of opposites: "Creation, destruction. Two concepts but one dance, the trampling leg, the outthrust arms, asserting the law of invincibility... for something to be born, something must die."²² This metaphysical symbol suggests the mood of uncertainty that partitioned freedom generated:

In *The Dark Dancer*, Balchandra Rajan chooses that period in the Indian history which provides the background of the crumbling of an Empire and the birth of a nation, a painful process in which the individuals get crushed and paralysed. The characters delineate frustrations, lostness, uprootedness and helplessness in the face of the deconstructing of one power and the restructuring of the other... The major problem, therefore, faced by the Indians during this period was self-definition, defining their roles under a different political ideology.²³

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As Dr. Rajendra Prasad writes in *India Divided* the creation of a Hindu-Muslim tangle was part and parcel of a deliberate British policy in India. The communal question did not evolve as a problem between the Hindus and the Muslims only; there was also a third party, namely, the British. So it was a communal triangle with the Hindus and the Muslims constituting its two sides, and the British Government as the base. As this base grew in size and scope over the years, it simultaneously widened the angle of difference. Rajan maintains the same view. While depicting the ghastly events impartially and without taking side he holds both the Indians and the British guilty for the tragedy of partition. He feels very sorry that India, a symbol of peace and propagator of the theory of non-violence, suddenly turned into a battlefield and witnessed the eruption of the worst kind of ethnic violence.

The pride of being Indian, of having helped to bring to its unprecedented climax a generation of struggle in which the sword had not been lifted, was submerged in an emotion in which shame was a component less compelling than helpless bewilderment at the fever and its virulence. It could be escaped. It was in every line that one read and every face one looked at . . .

Vengeance and agony in the ferocious, endless cycle. How long would it last, how deeply would it wound the newly born reality?24

The dimension of the tragedy was so gigantic that it made the events look grotesque. Cynthia, Krishnan’s friend, remarks: “It’s terrible” . . . ‘I knew it was coming. I’ve even tried to prepare myself emotionally. But until it happened there was always the hope that it wouldn’t, and now that it has

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24 *The Dark Dancer*, pp. 158-59.
happened, nothing I imagined is remotely like the shock of it." 25 Krishnan bitterly blames the British for the deluge and says to Cynthia:

'It's your fault' . . . 'You made this awful thing grow. For a whole generation you British have stirred up the trouble. It's you that made the religious divisions take priority over our common political interests. Communal electorates, communal representation in the civil service. Communal this and communal that. Even the cricket matches were communally organised.' 26

But Kamala, Krishnan's wife, who believes in soul-searching, defends the British and holds Indians responsible for the tragedy:

'It isn't really in anything that your people did. You couldn't have brought it out if it wasn't in us. It's all in us, in the many, many years of occupation, submission to the State, obedience to the family, every inch of our lives completely calculated, every step, down to the relief of the grave. And if we wanted to protest, there was only the pitiless discipline of non-violence. Then all of a sudden the garden belongs to us, and we reach up into the blossoming tree to pluck the ashes.' 27

Rajan did not have the first-hand experience of the gruesome events that took place in riot-torn parts of India and gathered his information through print, yet his depiction is brilliant. He does not take side and is unaffected by communal obligations. He writes: "... the burden of responsibility was anonymous, with everyone standing in the common guilt." 28

The first chapter presents the return of Krishnan, the protagonist of the novel. His reactions to the Indian landscape is typical of an individual caught between the values of two different worlds. The second chapter

25 Ibid., p. 159.
26 Ibid., pp. 159-60.
27 Ibid., pp. 74-75.
28 Ibid., p. 259.
portrays the non-violent demonstrations by the followers of Gandhiji. The third chapter of the novel very comprehensively surveys the Indian political and social scene. Krishnan believes that partition was immaterial "... so long as we run our own lives."29 But Cynthia sees the things in a different way: "A plan isn't drawn on paper. It's drawn by the difference it makes to millions of people'."30

Through Pratap Singh, a Sikh officer, Rajan depicts the dilemma faced by the Sikh community. "The Hindus want independence. The Moslems want their theological state, we'll have to pay the price between the millstones'."31 The riots that had started from Noakhali and Calcutta spread fastly and shake the very essence of Indian civilisation. Cynthia finds India again on the verge of another Kurukshetra: "The battle of inheritance once again'."32 But Krishnan believes that the persistent use of non-violence against the mighty British Empire itself suggests India's discipline.

Krishnan elopes with Cynthia only to get disillusioned and to come back to Kamala. His journey to Shantipur, where Kamala is working to help the victims of the partition, has been described graphically. A Sikh passenger brutally murders his fellow Muslim passenger and justifies his act, saying that Indians too had sacrificed their lives for making India.

The eighth chapter entitled 'The Dark Dancer' brings out the fact that the responsibility for the violence was anonymous. Kamala, who had a genuine feeling for the Muslims, sacrifices her life in a valiant attempt to

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29 Ibid., p.72.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid., p. 89.
32 Ibid., p. 125.
save a Muslim girl. In the last chapter, 'Son of Kunti', Rajan surveys the whole scene. Krishnan, greatly moved by Kamala's death, realises: "Her death was noble, inspiring in itself, one learns from it without its accomplishing anything. She did her duty, and that's its own reward." Kamala's death gives meaning to Krishnan's life. In the midst of confusion and frustration the words of Krishna to Arjun, i.e. 'Son of Kunti', show him the right path. And "The existentialist consciousness of Krishnan matures into realistic perceptions of the situation, through instances of participation in a demonstration, and later, exposure to the facts of carnage in Hindu-Muslim riots during the partition."

Raj Gill's The Rape focuses mainly on the partition and its aftermath. "It is an anguished cry against dehumanisation and collapse of values. It seems to suggest that men killed each other just to live and survive. It communicates the novelist's vision of rebellion against fanaticism." Gill thinks that the politicians of the two communities were mainly responsible for the partition holocaust. He criticises Gandhiji, Nehru, Patel, Jinnah, Master Tara Singh and the British Government for the hurry with which partition was precipitated. Their collective moves proved to be a fiasco because of the individualistic approach taken by them to deal with the problem. Each one of them invented a new theory to view the problem from his angle. The Congress party's attitude jeopardised the long-term interests of the country. The canker of communalism was aggravated by imperialistic

33 Ibid., p. 289.
35 Sharma, Protest in Post-Independence Indian English Fiction, p. 7.
forces, not only resulting in weakening of the public life but also driving a wedge between people and injuring the cause of the freedom struggle. The tendency was to create new problems which would be difficult to solve in the future.

Dalipjit, the protagonist of the novel, notices that Rajaji and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad have approved of the idea of the partition of the country. He believes that only Nehru could play a significant role in shaping the policy of the Congress, for his popularity with the masses and the intellectuals and his perceptive mind place him in a unique position to appreciate and understand the fateful consequences of the partition. Although Nehru believes that the partition of the country would not be a perfect solution, yet when he finds no alternative, under the compelling circumstances he gives into the demand as a matter of political necessity. Dalipjit finds Gandhiji's attitude towards the whole situation inexplicable.

Gandhiji had declared: "'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.'"36 But at last even Gandhiji succumbs to the Viceroy's proposal. Dalipjit very much despises Gandhiji and subconsciously believes that he had shot Gandhiji. Therefore, when he hears about Gandhiji's assassination he is greatly agitated:

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

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claim who just craved the credit that he already held. He chuckled again and swam around gleefully in his ocean of warmth. 37

Josh, a communist by faith, thinks that Sardar Patel is worried about the interest of capitalists only. Nehru admits that the partition by its nature is wrong and a potent evil, but his experience with the conduct of the League in the Interim Government leaves him with no hopes of a joint action and a joint responsibility. The League had resorted to a deliberate campaign to malign and undermine the government by creating one bottleneck after another. Nehru is rather considerably influenced by Lord Mountbatten’s advice which appears sound and convincing. The transformation of Jinnah from a great nationalist to a rank communalist is deplored by Dalipjit.

The Sikhs are unhappy because their leaders are not in a position to fight their cause. They have no faith in Baldev Singh and the insistence of the Congress on non-violence causes a great dilemma for them. Their leaders talk of active resistance but remain passive. The only choice left for them is to prepare every individual for an armed fight:

The net result was that the Sikhs started preparing with guns and spears not to obtain what they were denied but to hold on to 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. 38

Under the circumstances Dalipjit cannot share joy and happiness on the advent of freedom. He feels that the 'red faced monkies' have been

37 Ibid., p. 288.
38 Ibid., p. 70.
substituted by 'the black-faced lemur' to continue the chains of slavery of the people. His mother is also very bitter:

'Ashes be on the head of such independence' . . . . 
'They burn your houses, they take your women and they kill your women and 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.'

People are confused, shattered and apprehensive, civil administration collapses; there is complete chaos, the trains are attacked and the offices are shut, the police and the military are employed to kill the offenders.

Creditably enough Raj Gill very objectively handles the theme of partition. He shows how both the communities were gripped with a feeling of mistrust and anarchy. "The Rape graphically depicts the sudden, steep decline in all human values and negation of life at the time of partition." One development leads to another as if there is no going back from the road to the final tragedy. A spirit of revenge is displayed by the authorities too. Dalipjit realises: "... killing was no more a vindication. It was not even a punishment. Killing was weeding. Killing was a sport of the cannibals. Killing was witches' sabbath. It was debased, perverted, sickening."

The sufferings make men wild beasts and they lose all moral values. Dalipjit is left bewildered when he finds that his beloved, Laila, is raped by his own father. Amro explains him the situation correctly: "Nobody in the

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39 Ibid., p. 65.
41 The Rape, p. 191.
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." But the novel ends in a note of optimism as the author shows a genuine understanding between Dalipjit and Laila.

H.S. Gill's *Ashes and Petals* is another brilliant novel on the partition theme. It "brilliantly evokes the trauma of those refugees who crossed the border between the two countries by train in the weeks immediately following Independence." Gill discusses different aspects of Hindu-Muslim relationship in the independent India. He scrutinises various strands of interaction between different characters of the novel. Santa-Ajit relationship, Santa-Salma relationship, Ajit-Salma relationship and Ajit-Aslam relationship help the novelist illustrate the Hindu-Muslim relationship dynamically.

The novel opens with an optimistic note in pre-partition days when the poisonous two-nation theory had not taken deep roots in the mental make-up of the Indians. The two communities lived amicably and peacefully but slowly the story drifts towards the bleak and pathetic background of the partition days.

Risaldar Santa Singh, along with his grandson Ajit and granddaughter Baljeeto, makes an attempt to flee to India from Lahore. The train on which he is travelling, suddenly comes to a halt at the outer signal of the station and is attacked by Muslim ruffians. The passengers of the

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42 Ibid., p. 269.
train are in a vulnerable and defenceless position. The Muslims yell their war cry and swoop upon the compartments outrageously. The fanatics mercilessly butcher the passengers and abduct young girls. The sight of abduction of young girls remind Santa Singh of his fourteen-year old granddaughter Baljeeto. Santa Singh draws his pistol and shoots her dead before the goondas could take her away and dishonour her. This act of Santa Singh is replicated several times in the train. The act induces 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."44

Santa Singh reaches to safety but not without a big loss. He can never forget the ominous incident of train ambush. The death of his innocent granddaughter makes him bitter towards the entire Muslim community. Therefore, when Ajit seeks his permission to marry his Muslim lady-love, Salma, it comes as a shock to him. Very bitterly he says: " '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?' "45 Ajit, a cavalry officer, who had worked harmoniously with other Muslim officers, fails to persuade his grandfather to accept Salma. He even tells his grandfather that he owes his life to Aslam, Salma's brother, who had lost his life in a valiant attempt to save him.

Expressing his firm determination to marry Salma, Ajit asks his grandfather to extend his blessings:

‘Her brother died saving me. I owe my life to him. And you say she is a Muselman. 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 any different, any 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....”

Being a military personnel, he cannot delimit his relations on the basis of communal loyalties. He had seen soldiers fighting wholeheartedly on the battle field unmindful of communal considerations. He tells his grandfather:

‘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 Muselman, 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.”

Santa Singh leaves the scene without acceding to Ajit's request. Ajit and Salma go for a civil marriage. But soon people start criticising their relationship. Even the Brigadier's wife, who is in favour of inter-caste marriages, maintains that there should be no marriages between the Sikhs and the Muslims. But at last Santa Singh accepts Salma as his grandson's

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46 Ibid., p. 180.
47 Ibid.
wife. Ajit is posthumously awarded the Mahavir Chakra for gallantly sacrificing his life for his country. At the grand ceremony the old man asks Salma to accept the award, saying, "'Ajit would never have liked it any other way.'"\[48\]

Kartar Singh Duggal's *Twice Born, Twice Dead* is set against the background of Dhamyal, a village near Rawalpindi. The eerie silence, lonely fields, deserted lanes, barking of Fazal chowkidar's dog, the secretive talk of Khudabaksh with a mauhri, the razor-sharp lance in the hand of Fattu, Sayden's courtyard full of spears, hatchets and lances and the League's flag fluttering over the tomb of the pir—all these ominous events and objects suggest an unfortunate outbreak of communal violence in the Punjab. The two-nation theory strengthens communal divide, and the slogan 'Pakistan Zindabad' proclaims in religious obscurantism and revivalism.

Through newspapers Sohne Shah comes to know that the Muslims blame the Hindus of obstructing the formation of Pakistan while the Hindus complain that the Muslims are creating hurdles in the way of India's freedom. The anti-secular, anti-reformist tendencies of the Muslims flow from their religious conviction. With religion having a high priority, their interest in politics is markedly coloured by a religious approach.

The news from Noakhali and Bihar is highly disturbing that the two communities are engaged in bloodbath. Dhamyal, however, has had a remarkable tradition of communal harmony. The anniversary of the martyrdom of Guru Arjun Dev and Id are celebrated by the whole village.

\[48\] Ibid., p. 193.
community. Sohne's dearest friend, Allahditta, is a Muslim. Their daughters — Rajkarni and Satbharai — are also good friends. Though the two girls belong to different religions yet they were dressed alike — even their dupattas are of the same colour and their appearances are identical. "Hide one show the other, you would get away with it." This establishes the cultural oneness of the two communities.

As a consequence of serious communal riots breaking out in different parts of the country, the situation at Dhamyal also becomes tense. People in the village hear that the rioters planned to loot and burn Hindu houses, dishonour Hindu women, defile the place of worship and slaughter the cows. The death of Dina, the son of Dost Mohammad, (who is killed by a British soldier while looting in the cantonment), further deteriorated the condition of the village. The Muslims declare him martyr and blame the Hindus for his death.

Slowly, the Hindu and the Sikh population of the village start pulling out. But before Sohne Shah leaves the village the goons attack Dhamyal. Allahditta is killed in a brave attempt to save Sohne but the hooligans succeed in abducting Rajkarni. Sohne Shah manages to escape with Satbharai.

The refugee camp where they came to stay is over crowded. Even the soldiers working in the refugee camps are quite strangers for the refugees, even their language is unintelligible. After some time Sohne Shah tries to rehabilitate himself in the village Lyallpur and buys an orchard of fruits.

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But communal contagion reaches there too and once again he is made a refugee. From there he migrates to Amritsar along with Satbharai. There another girl, Sita, joins their family, who was dishonoured in Pakistan and on her return her father refused to accept her. Sohne Shah comes forward to help her.

Kuldip is very well aware of the miseries of abducted women and is working tirelessly for their rehabilitation. To him his duty is over and above any other consideration. Therefore, against Sohne Shah's request he sends away Satbharai, to Pakistan, sacrificing his love for the sake of his duty.

Duggal was born and brought up in a predominantly Muslim region and had very well known the similarity and dissimilarity that existed between the two communities. The two communities lived together and yet the economic disparity tended to create some bitterness. Duggal has tried to re-create this amazing "love-hate drama. He has acted in it and continues to suffer from it." Duggal was married in a Muslim family. Therefore the partition of the Punjab and separation of the two communities were even more tragic for him. He has tried to present the whole convulsion honestly and without any communal bias. Saros Cowasjee notes:

... we are given a panoramic picture of human suffering... mostly narrated by the refugees who have suffered violence, are neatly juxtaposed with the kindness the two principal characters receive from Hindus and Muslims alike as they move from one camp to another. No blame is assigned to any group or individual, we are asked to look into ourselves for the malady.\(^{50}\)

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Kartar Singh Duggal’s another novel Nail and Flesh deals with the tragedy of partition and shows its disastrous effect on the peaceful pastoral life of the Punjab.

In Yatra Nina Sibal introduces diverse political events of pre-independence and post-independence India and combines them with the lives of Krishna, the heroine of the novel, and her ancestors. Writers have generally dealt with the reasons that precipitated the tragedy of partition and its aftermath in great detail, but Nina Sibal’s novel deals with an entirely new dimension of India’s partition.

Her narrative is often in present but with a lurch it is pushed decades or even a century back in the past. From the cataclysmic events like the partition, the bloody communal violence and the accession of states to the rather contemporary ones such as the Chipko Movement — all are skilfully interwoven in the texture of Yatra.51

Yatra begins with the celebration of India’s freedom on 15 August 1947. When the whole country is celebrating the momentous event Hyderabad is presented as "... quiet and as dead as a tomb."52 Against the wishes of the Indian leaders the Nizam of Hyderabad decides to declare his state independent after the departure of the British. He encourages a Muslim fanatic, Qasim Razvi, to form an army called Ittehadul-e-Mussalmeen, which has a shock brigade known as the Razakars, its sole duty being to threat the Hindu population of the state.

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Lord Mountbatten gives the Nizam two months' time to settle the problem of the merger of Hyderabad with the representatives of the Indian Government. The Indian Government also sends a delegation to Hyderabad to obtain the Nizam's approval for a draft Standstill Agreement. Though the representative of Ittehadul-e-Musalmeen votes against the proposal, the Council decides by six votes to three to advise the Nizam to accept the Agreement. The Nizam, on the contrary, plans a treacherous plan to threaten the members of the Indian delegation. The day the Agreement is to be signed a mob of thirty thousand surrounds the houses of the members of the delegation, and the Hyderabad police vanishes from the scene. When Dr. Hassanwalia, one of the victims of mob fury, complains against the atrocities and unrest perpetrated by Qasim Razvi, the Nizam says:

'It must be that nest of Indian devils up north in Delhi, with whom Monckton has been dealing' . . . . 'Who knows what lies they are feeding to Mountbatten? But he must remember with whom he is dealing. I am a faithful ally of the British Monarch, not one of those petty princes to whom that wily politician Patel has been feeding his castor oil.'

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Even after the Nizam signing the Agreement, his Razakars continue to break the clauses of the Agreement. They mistake the lenient attitude of the Indian Government for weakness and unwillingness to assert India's determination. The violence of the Razakars grows apace and leads to the reign of terror. The Nizam even refuses to implement the government's order to ban the Razakars. He rather initiates negotiations with Pakistan for

53 ibid., pp. 21-22.
international recognition of the independent status of Hyderabad. Ultimately, the determined leadership of Sardar Patel persuades the Union Cabinet to launch the police action. Under the command of Major General J.N. Chaudhri the Indian troops enter Hyderabad and on 17 September route the Razakar hordes and deliver the poor people of the state free from fear and thraldom of the communal fanatics.

Parallel to the story of the Nizam of Hyderabad runs the story of Kashmir's invasion. Dr. Hassanwalia is an eyewitness to the upsurge that takes place in Hyderabad, whereas Paramjit Chahal has the first-hand experience of Kashmir's invasion. With the partition of the country the states were asked to accede either to India or to Pakistan, but the Maharajah of Kashmir had not made up his mind and this state of indecision gave the Kubailis an opportunity to attack and capture Kashmir. Nina Sibal writes:

Loot and women had been the raiders' chief prizes. If they had not been preoccupied with these they might have overrun the whole of Kashmir before the Indian troops arrived. As it was, the raiders had been only a few kilometres from Srinagar. They had destroyed the electric powerhouse and had plunged the city into darkness, when Indian troops, with Captain Paramjit Chahal among them, had landed at Srinagar airstrip.\(^4\)

Through the story of Ranjit Dhawan we get a picture of the refugee problem that followed the partition of India. His father was the owner of a factory, at Sialkot, which manufactured cricket bats and hockey sticks. But with the advent of freedom "...there was panic in his factory. Men who had worked

\(^4\) Ibid., pp. 19-20.
there for so many years that he had forgotten their religion rose against him in the name of Pakistan and told him they were Muslims. They looted everything in his factory but spared his life. Clearly it was time to leave, to join the convoy setting off under the protection of army trucks.\(^55\) Although the refugees are treated very badly by the people of the other community, yet some of them are still very hopeful and believe that some day they would be called back by their Muslim friends. Ranjit's mother says: "We Hindus have lived with Muslims, I am sure they will call us back; they cannot do without us. It has happened before, and we can start from scratch once again."\(^56\) But their dream never comes true. Many years later Ranjit tells Krishna: "Yes, I was kicked out of Punjab with the Partition. Home was Sialkot which we left when it became Pakistan. Then I was pulled like a rotten tooth from the refugee camp in Jullundur. Flung to Bombay and across the sea to Kenya."\(^57\)

Sibal takes yet another aspect of India's partition to show its meaninglessness. Pakistan was carved out of India along communal lines. The East Pakistan and the West Pakistan were Muslim majority areas but soon the young Bengali guerrillas formed the Mukti Bahini to make East Pakistan an independent nation. Shalini Gupta writes about Nina Sibal's Yatra: "In Rushdiesque fashion, it [Yatra]...delineates a parallel between

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\(^{55}\) Ibid., p. 32.
\(^{56}\) Ibid., p. 33.
\(^{57}\) Ibid., p. 107.
Krishna's history and the history of a nation — with her darkening skin a metaphor for the politics of the Indian subcontinent."

Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children deals with India's independence, the partition and its aftermath. He records the experiences of three generations of the Sinai family. The title of the novel has been taken from Jawaharlal Nehru's famous speech beginning with 'At the stroke of midnight an independent nation held its tryst with destiny.' In the novel Rushdie synchronises the birth of a new nation with the birth of the narrator-hero of the novel, Salim Sinai. Salim, a historical witness to the emergence of a new era in the history of the country, has the semblance of a human being but is not human at all. Born grotesque and armed with omniscience, he works in a pickle factory and at night records his experiences. Rushdie has compared this chronicling of history to the pickling process. As Salim says "To pickle is to give immortality." By this pickling process he would like to save the chronicles of modern history for coming generations. He hopes : "...one day, perhaps, the world may taste the pickles of history. They may be too strong for some palates, their smell may be overpowering, tears may rise to the eyes; I hope nevertheless that it will be possible to say of them that they possess the authentic taste of truth." But the facts of history that Salim records are not the exact events as they happened. What he records is not the real truth but memory's truth. Rushdie himself has admitted : "What I was actually doing was a novel of memory

60 Ibid., p. 580.
and about a memory, so that my India was just that: 'my' India, a version of all the hundreds of millions of possible versions.\footnote{Salman Rushdie, The Indian Writer in England, p. 76.}

Rushdie believes that every human being has the right to fabricate his own version of history. But his attitude should not be misunderstood as "There has been a simmering discontent about the whole process of writing history in the west, especially about the view that there is something like a pre-existing fact which alone can become a basis of true history."\footnote{T.N. Dhar, "Darma as Palimpsest: The Fracture in Sibal's Yatra," in Indian Women Novelists, ed. R.K. Dhawan. Vols. 6, p. 110.} He takes an organic approach to interpret modern Indian history. Referring to *Midnight's Children* Asha Kaushik writes:

> It is in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* that the Indo-Anglian novel achieves an architectonic articulation of Indian politics, transcending both conventional aesthetic idiom and political perceptions. As a cultural quest for political relevance and *vice versa*, the novel is a valuable study in contradictions of the hegemonic process in India.\footnote{Kaushik, Politics Aesthetics and Culture: A Study of Indo-Anglian Political Novel, p. 106.}

To Rushdie, there exists a strange relationship between history and the individual and while writing *Midnight's Children* his "...aim was to relate private lives to public events and to explore the limits of individuality in a country as big, as populous and culturally variegated as India."\footnote{B.K. Joshi, "It May Be Long, but it's Not Overwritten," The Times of India, 1 November 1981, p. 8.}

Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* examines the development of the idea of modern citizenship and national identity. Meenakshi Mukherjee writes: "The construction of a nation is a two-way process, entailing on the one hand a broad homogenisation, despite seeming differences, of what lies..."
within the boundaries and a projection of alienness upon what is situated outside."65 But for Duttachoudharies nationality practically ceases to have any significance. For them crossing the national frontiers means nothing more than transition through customs and immigration at identical airports. Thus, Ghosh presents a ground for the presentation of "... diverse attitudes and relationships, fostered by the complete dissolution of barriers between different cultures and different nations."66 But the grandmother who had lived through the days of terrorist nationalism followed by Independence and terrible partition, still dearly holds the concept of nationhood. She believes that since so much blood was spilled in the name of geographical boundaries, it should be explicit and seen on the land.

The grandmother is so perplexed by the geographical division of the country that she holds her place of birth to be so messily at odds with her nationality and she is made a foreigner in her own birthplace by the forces of history. When she plans to go to Dhaka to rescue her old uncle she is dazed not to find "a word for a journey which was not a coming or a going at all; a journey that was a search for precisely that fixed point which permits the proper use of verbs of movements"67 the point which is unavailable to her because she has been dislodged.

The Shadow Lines show how the historical events impinge and control the destiny of not only the human race as a whole but that of individuals

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particularly. After the theft of the Mu-i-Mubarak Srinagar remains peaceful but in Khulna (Pakistan) the demonstration turns violent and soon the riots spread in other cities of Dhaka. The theft of a relic in Srinagar claims the life of Tridib in Dhaka. The Boy's belief "that distance separates"68 is shattered. He finds many foreign cities spatially much closer to Calcutta than many Indian cities. People believe that the geographical boundaries would make ". . .the two bits of land sail away from each other like the shifting tectonic plates of the prehistoric Gondwanaland."69

Ghosh believes that the national boundaries that are meant to create separation are actually illusions. This attitude establishes the fact that he treats history from the point of view of a post-colonialist. Though nations try to consolidate their identity through coercion and hostility yet " . . .cities that were to maintain their separate identities by the lines separating them are but mirror images of each other, sharing past and future, tied together by the umbilical cord of a common history and governed by the immutable laws of brotherhood."70

During those long dark days of foreign subjugation, the soul of India remained resolute and undaunted. Though politically we lost our identity and became slave, culturally we were never subjugated. The fulcrum of the culture was never shattered or even for that matter tarnished. But paradoxically, the dawn of freedom brought with it the bloodiest upheaval of

history. Although the greatest novel on the theme of the partition is yet to appear, novelists in the Indian subcontinent to re-capture in their work the frenzy of the violence and disruption of human values in the wake of the partition and its aftermath. A modest attempt has been made in the present work to consider in detail the treatment of this important chapter of Indian history by three prominent modern Indian English novelists, i.e. Manohar Malgonkar, Khushwant Singh and Chaman Nahal.