Chapter V

Memory of the Soul: Lamentation and Consolation

Why are all these long-lost matters returning to me, like an old pain
Suddenly come back to life? (Altaf Fatima 188).

Millions of people had lost their lives and quite a good number of them
survived the holocaust of Partition. Many rebuilt their lives. Historians have now
come out with some statistics regarding mass migration, large-scale rioting, looting
and killing. It is true that there are some write-ups about the abduction and rape of
women; the hopelessness of thousands and millions of families in the makeshift
refugee camps, the squalor and poverty prevailed there. But the social scientists, very
strangely, as has been observed by Karuna Chanana, “have hardly focussed on this
phenomenon, in general, and on the impact on the families and on women, in
particular” (25).

Experiences of people during the Partition that impacted an adjustment varied
from one family to another. There were several people who lost their family members
and several who did not. Many witnessed gruesome murder, horrible rape and many
suffered abduction. There were those who were spared of these atrocities. Thousands
of women committed suicide to escape abduction and forcible conversion.
Immerable number had to live in refugee camps. Several thousands lost their
property and all their hardearned savings. A good number of clever ones having
smelt of what was coming along had sold their belongings and left to some safer
places. All these experiences have been in the minds of those who narrowly survived
the holocaust. Though they consciously try to erase the past, it keeps on coming to
them, as “life’s caravan moves along” (Hashimi 91). Literary works, especially some
of the narratives I have chosen for research in to the trauma of Partition highlight some of these dimensions truthfully. In this painful task of facing memories with a heavy heart, as Shama Futehally observes, “literature is like a tactful therapist” (101).

Jamila Hashimi’s “Banished” is such a story, where the nameless heroine, forcefully brought by Gurpal as his bride into his house, is unable to forget her past. As the abducted Sita at Ashok Van had just one prayer “to meet her Ramachandraji again” (An Epic 88), the young mother of Munni suffered the ordeal of separation. Time in and time again, she suffered “the gruelling banishment all over again” (An Epic 87). She never forgot the words of Gurpal when he dumped her in to his courtyard and cried to his mother, “Look, Ma, I’ve brought you a bahu. A real beauty! The best of the lot!” (An Epic 88). Munni’s mother collapsed at her feet. Since that day, she had been “like Sita, enduring her exile, incarcerated in Sangraon” (An Epic 89). All that she could do was philosophising her lot: “One destined to be lost will be lost, even in a house full of people” (An Epic 90). Evenings made her long for her homeland, and her people— her Baba, Bhai, Bhaiyya and Amma. She was a solitary star that throbs forlornly in the sky, and "like the flickering flame of an earthen lamp” (An Epic 91). She never thought that she could ever see her Bhai’s face again. She had loved her Bhaiyya so much, but now she had no hopes of seeing him again, for she felt “so much black ink has been spilled over my fate...” (An Epic 94).

In the good old days whenever she set up her dollhouse, she would think that she and her Amma, Baba, Bhaiyya, Bhabhi and Aapa would live there forever. When Bhaiyya got married, she felt so happy, for her house was a perfect abode. But now her dreams of “paradise were shattered” (An Epic 94), and her path now “run through a cremation ground. It’s desolate” (An Epic 94). She felt awfully lonely, and “the pain of loneliness is hard to bear” (An Epic 94-95). She had now her Munni to care for.
She wouldn’t go anywhere, with her “wounded heart” (An Epic 95), and “darkened fate” (An Epic 95).

Love finds new crutches, though slowly. Though every year a father or a brother came to Sangraon to take back one woman or other, nobody till date came for her. As Sita had accepted a life with Ravan, she had compromised herself to live this darkness. But it was very painful for her heart. It keeps remembering the past” (An Epic 105).

Syed Mohammad Ashraf’s “Separated from the Flock”, tells the story of a Pakistani officer and his Punjabi Jeep driver. The officer went to Shahganj, a lake in Pakistan for duck shooting. On the way the Sahib and the driver nostalgically exchanged tales about their childhood in a village in Uttar Pradesh. They fondly recalled severally their old friendships, dreams, fields, lanes and songs. Though the officer tried his best to keep back his childhood memories from Gulam Ali, the driver, he could not. With his mind full of thoughts of childhood and youth hood memories, he told Gulam Ali, “I don’t understand everything.... The hard, deep lines of Partition have erased the signs of all other feelings—feelings which belong intimately to that place where a human being first opens his eyes and ears and catches a glimpse of the sky” (SAP I 02-03).

The government servant had left India when he was barely eighteen along with a good many villagers. He had no relatives back in India. He sadly tells the driver, “They were all cowards. They came and settled here. I too was a coward, but a ‘minor’ coward” (SAP I 03). From their heart-to heart conversation, the officer understood that the driver’s wife too was from the officer’s native place in Hardoi District. Gulam Ali then told the officer that his wife had been pestering him for quite some time to get an entry permit with the help of the officer. She had been dreaming
of visiting her people and place. According to Gulam Ali, it was her whim "the visit to India. To satisfy that whim, I'll have to waste four to five hundred rupees" (SAP I 04). He then informed the officer how his friend Vaziruddin destroyed his wife's permit to visit India and thereby blasted her hope of visiting his relatives and friends in India. The thoughtful officer hated Gulam Ali intensely at that moment. Then he said to himself:

You won't understand how strongly attached a man is to the place, where he has spent his childhood surrounded by daily acts of kindness and joy; you can never feel, Gulam Ali, how precious those moments of innocence are, how one nurtures them with one's blood, how they are a part of everything that one has become. You will never understand. Stick to the steering wheel of the jeep for your brains are muddled. (SAP I 04-05)

Having said this to himself, he realised the folly of hating another individual. For whomsoever reminded him of the past, the past that he longed to recover, he hated. Gulam Ali was just another individual, "who adds another small brick to the mausoleum of lost desires" (SAP I 05).

On their way to the lake, the Sahib, who was a Superintendent of Police, had been wrestling with old memories of his native place in U.P. Gulam Ali scratched open old wounds. When the driver stopped the jeep on the way, the Police officer met one of his old friends and both embraced tightly. They belonged to the same small village in U.P. They were meeting after 30 years. When they shared their past sweet memories, an uncontrollable emotion swept through them. They recalled their old adventures and misadventures and as the officer recalled later, "memories raged within me like uncontrollable, wild fires" (SAP I 11). Both longed to go back to India.
There were many like them in Pakistan and India whose lives were shaped by their desires. Several of their friends had either been lost or disappeared in the dust

but we can not do the... (SAJ 22)

without mercy and we can only bear our wounds in the throes of death. Slowly, we are tortured at every moment of our lives, we are humbled, shamed—our soul and life are broken they are finally broken because once their wings are broken they are never those folds of desire—we are more helpless and defenseless than those

NEWBORN: We are birds with broken wings and we can never fly back to

shortly after Partition, the officer thinks about,

made a drunkard and a carnivore. His friend Chakra Newborn deleted their loved ones. But when happened was terrible. Before the officer's disappearance, they had built castles of sand on the beach of the river. Living in the middle of the gardens, leafed over an unknown country. As young men roaming about the banks of the Ganges, had a sad end. The man had to make terrible sacrifices by leaving behind their native land. The officer and his friend then realized their responsibility. They were

the officer never see his land where he grew his consciousness.

dreams would never be fulfilled. She was like a duck whose wings were broken. She officer knew it was not possible. She shed her last tears for her home in India. Her officer to help her feel a parent. Categorically what was not possible to pay for her, the

Ah Categorically, humanity is what made a desperate plea to the Police

"Please... make a move..." (SAJ 17)

circumstances over which they had no influence. Both of them were

but they knew that it was not possible. Both felt they were happily trapped by
of time. The officer looked up and found some birds that were flying above his head. Without raising his gun, he whispered, "Your wings are not broken. As you fly over India, grieve for those who had migrated from there and had to find another home in a strange land..." (SAP I 23).

Altat Fatima's story, "Do You Suppose It's the East Wind?" deals with the nostalgic feelings of a Muslim woman who felt sad that the good old days when the Hindus and the Muslims had lived together was gone forever. Going back to her girlhood days, she remembered how a boy, helped her by name, Robby Dutt, "a Brahmin of the most elevated rank" (An Epic 185-186) was chummy with her. The boy's parents lived in the quarters outside the compound. If any one ever asked him whether he was a Hindu or a Muslim, he would reply with great equanimity, "Me? My clan and caste is the same as Begam Sahib's. Why, I'm Begam Sahib's son" (An Epic 185). According to the boy, the difference between a Hindu and a Muslim is "...you eat 'gos-roti' and I eat 'dal-roti'" (An Epic 185). It's as simple as that.

When the teachership and the discipleship ended, another bond developed between them. It was that of brother and sister. He asked her one-day, "What kind of a sister are you? You don't even tie a 'rakhi' on my wrist!" (An Epic 184). When the girl tied not one, but three separate 'rakhis' on his wrist, he became overjoyed, and sprinted off. He appeared in the evening, dressed in a white dhoti, and a Gandhi cap on his head, holding a brass tray, with rice, 'andarsas', bananas, and coins. He gave it to her saying, "This is your 'dacchana' " (An Epic 185). Such a fine past was past now with the Partition. With tears in her eyes, the girl says, "the past is calling me" (An Epic 180). The very question—"Want to have me tie a rakhi?" (An Epic 188)—which Altaf Fatima raised here, just about sums up the dilemma which haunted many of the 17 million separated by the Partition for a long time.
Life moved on. All those happy, harmonious days were past now. As their
fates were different, both drifted in two different directions, one to the west and the
other to the East. Feeling helpless, she could only philosophise that, “On life’s ocean
one ship sails east, another west” (An Epic 188). It made her heart sink. Now those
long-lost matters of those joyful days kept on returning to her. She asked, “And…
why does this desire suddenly overwhelm me?” (An Epic 188). An uncontrollable
feeling suddenly overwhelmed her to fly off quietly to the East where her brother
Robb Dutt had gone. In consonance with her desire, there was a cool breeze from the
East and settled there.

In Ismat Chughtai’s “Roots”, even though all the children and grandchildren of
Amma were planning to leave for Rawalpindi because of the “deep chasm, many
miles long” (An Epic 195) had been formed between the two communities, Amma
chose to stay back all alone in Marwar. She was unable to pull her out from her house
and her neighbours, like Roopchandji. Though every effort was made to placate
Amma from there, “she did not budge from her place, she was like the roots of a giant
oak that remain standing in the face of a fierce storm” (An Epic 198). Her restless
gaze was riveted to the darkened sky; her children thought, “Amma is senile” (An
Epic 197). On the contrary, she was very alert, and she knew what she was doing. To
er, this game of destroying and founding a new country was not at all appealing. She
asked, “Is it a country or a pair of shoes, which if they are a little tight are discarded in
favour of another pair?” (An Epic 198). When the luggage was packed in to the
lorries, and all her sons, daughter, and daughters-in-law, son-in-law and grand-
children began boarding the lorries under police protection, “her heart broke into a
million pieces” (An Epic 198). In that house where she entered in the loving lap of her
bridegroom years ago, not one but “ten souls had taken their first breath of life… ten
images of flesh-and-blood, ten human beings had been brought forth from the sacred womb which they had all abandoned today—"as if it were an old snakeskin" (An Epic 199). The house now "echoed with the sound of desolation" (An Epic 199).

The psychological impact of Partition, due its preceding and accompanying violence had been felt by all and sundry in the North, West, North West and East. All over these provinces, people had turned to violence to ensure 'ethnic cleansing'. As Talbot rightly puts it, "the ferocity and cold-bloodedness of the violence" (40), had a severe, deep traumatic effect on the survivors. There had been mistrust and prejudice in places, which had not experienced any communal disharmony in the past. Even in places where the major community offered protection to the minority community, the people of the minority community were shivering in their shoes day in and day out. Reports of communal tension shook them to their morrow. They had to experience death in life as people in Eliot's The Waste Land say with despair,

He who was living is now dead
We who were living are now dying (328-329).

Quite strangely, historians are dumb about the most primeval vandalisms of the hate-driven senseless masses. They preferred discretion and silence to speak out giving details. They simply point out what happened and stop with it. B.N.Pandey, for example, writing about the 'Great Calcutta Killings' in his book, The Break-up of British India reports it in the following manner and stops with it:

When the day came (16 August 1946), the Muslims in Calcutta attacked the Hindu shopkeepers, kicked or stabbed them, then smashed or looted their shops. The Hindus retaliated, and in forty-eight hours nearly 5000 people were killed. The 'great Calcutta killing', as it is called, was the beginning of the fierce communal riots of the civil war
that spread from Calcutta to Noakhali in East Bengal, to Bihar and the Punjab and lasted until after the partition of the country, taking a toll of approximately half a million Hindu, Muslim and Sikh lives. (184)

Having been in a place for a score of years, spreading deep roots in that place, one could imagine how sad it would be for people to leave that place either on their own or due to forcible evacuation. Historians, even popular historians like B.N.Pandey, has nothing to write about it. Terror-stricken by the miasma of terror and violence and horrors brought about by the massacres of 1946-47, and the ‘Great Calcutta Killings’ of 16 August 1946, one prominent Muslim family—Kalim Bhai’s sister’s family is planning to leave the Hindu-dominated area of the narrator. Ilyas Ahmad Gaddi, in his “A Land Without Sky”, pens the story. The narrator Kalim Bhai’s sister Raffu is a middle class woman with a couple of children. Going by the reports everyday, she and the others in the family thought that death could not be such a bad thing compared to the life they had to live. Kalim Bhai’s sister thought, “Why then die a little each day? Why not just spit at the world, at this life and be done with?” (An Epic 317).

Kalim Bhai’s house was in a non-Muslim locality. Hers was one of the just two houses surrounded on all sides by thousands of non-Muslim houses. Yet never even once they had felt that they were alone or in any kind of danger. They mixed freely with the others and were so finely assimilated with their non-Muslim families. They celebrated festivals like Holi and Diwali. Likewise, Baqar Eid, looked like a veritable bhoj. There would be plenty of guests, from both the Hindus and Muslims. In fact, Kalim Bhai’s closest friend was Parkash Shrivastav, a newspaperman. It was a common sight to see them both sitting together and discussing national and international politics. But for the last few days all was not well in their locality. The
members of Kalim Bhai’s family were very much disturbed because the “atmosphere in the city suddenly took a turn for the worse” (An Epic 330).

Kalim Bhai too looked very much worried now. His “fear stemmed from the feeling of insecurity” (An Epic 331). Parkash Babu could also do nothing for him. Very soon, the strife and the unrest were getting out of hand. Though such Hindu friends were doing their best to boost up the morale of their Muslim friends, they had an inner fear that anything might happen anytime.

The women in Raffu’s house were the most apprehensive. Every minute they feared that “a stampede, killing and carnage would begin” (An Epic 332). Rumours were rife that “women were also raped during riots” (An Epic 332). Ammi, the mother of Ruffu thought that Ruffu was going to be a principal victim. They even thought of taking Ruffu to some other locality where their relatives were living. But they dropped it because “how could he (Abbu) shoo a young girl away to somebody else’s house” (An Epic 332). They were in a delusion. If rioters barged into their house, they did not even have a single weapon to defend themselves with.

Raffu’s neighbours were Mukul Babu and Sudhir Ghosh for more than twenty years. From their childhood onwards, Raffu and the other children had “socialised with them and grown up together, and felt as close to them…” (An Epic 335). Their ties with their Hindu friends were so strong that “they didn’t waver at all during this…storm” (An Epic 335). When they were worried, Ghosh Babu would try to dispel their worries with his endearing Bengali speech, “Sala Babu! Why do you keep worrying so much? Nobody’s going to come and kill a simple, decent man like you. And if ever you suspect such a thing, come straight over to my place, and let me see who this tiger is who’s coming after you” (An Epic 335). In spite of such assurances,
their insecurity grew day by day. They began to think “staying further in the area amounted to absolute insanity” (An Epic 335-336).

Then one day, a veritable stampede broke out. Everyone was fleeing. There was a deathly silence in the houses of the Muslims. Abbu’s face turned dark. Ammi stood dazed with anger. In the Chowk area, a few goondas, dead drunk, were sallying forth past ten o’clock in the evening mouthing obscenities. Cries went up suddenly one night in the dead of night. Hundreds of men were shouting slogans in unison “as if gearing for an attack” (An Epic 342) and an eerie hush fell over the neighbourhood” (An Epic 342). They had to live like this “in a state of extreme tension and anxiety” (An Epic 343).

Unable to pull on for long, they were hobnobbing the idea of leaving. But Abbu said, “We have been living here for generations.... Where will we go now in our ripe old age?” (An Epic 344). A terrible dark cloud of fear hung over the entire city. People’s faces turned pale with some unknown fear. They looked at each other as if for the last time.

On the day of their leaving, Ammu was crying. She glanced at the house, the courtyard, and the kitchen and broke into tears. She had laughed and cried here. She brought up here three of her children into the world. She had joked with Ghose Babu and Mukul Babu. She must have splashed coloured water during Holi. Abbu was running about like a crazy man. Kalim Bhai was utterly lost in the world of his thoughts. Obviously he was suffering from an inconsolable pain. With anguish and with a terrible feeling of loneliness, he said, “An old bond’s broken today” (An Epic 347).

Soon after the Partition, as there were sporadic reports that thousands of helpless women were forcibly abducted and even converted, reached the rival
governments—India and Pakistan—the Governments set up agencies to recover such women and restore them to their natural families. Kamala Ben and Rajeshwari Nehru were two of the popular women entrusted with this job of tracing and restoring them to their original families on the Indian side. Kamala Ben confesses in an interview with Urvashi Butalia, "Women were exchanged for women, politically they were recovered and exchanged between both the countries" (20).

Abducted women had been full of thoughts of their homes and loved ones. Even if their men folks had treated them cruelly, the moment there was some opening for them to return, they came forward to return to their families. Though some families did not take them back because they were abducted and raped by Muslims during the Partition, many like Sunder Lal in Rajinder Singh Bedi’s story "Lajwanti", looked forward to take them back. Even though they were defiled, and their bodies were violated, raped and their men folks killed, they looked forward as Butalia points out, "to rebuild a future from the ashes" (An Epic 13) with their men folks, and family.

In Bedi’s “Lajwanti”, both the wife Lajwanti and her husband Sunder Lal were tormented by old memories. Sunder Lal as a husband was not at all docile. He sometimes would beat her. The only reaction she would ever express was, "If you beat me ever again, I'll never speak to you!" (An Epic 16). But after the abduction of Lajwanti, his archives of memory opened and he recalled the tattoos that Lajwanti had. Like the touch-me-not plant, she would curl up from modesty the instant anyone pointed at her tattoos. He kept on saying, “I’d rehabilitate Laju in my heart. I’d show the people that these poorer women are hardly to blame for their abduction, their victimisation by lecherous rioters” (An Epic 16). Miss. Mardula Sarabai, a prominent social worker, secured a batch of abducted women from India and Pakistan. People in
the Mulla Shakur neighbourhood went to Chauki Kalan and willingly took their women back. However, their relatives faced them in awkward silence. Bedi observes, "Then with their heads bent low they returned to pick up the pieces of their lives and rebuild their homes" (An Epic 18). They were waiting to unite with their husbands as Sita had been waiting for so many years to join her husband.

When Sunder Lal heard that at the Wagah border, sixteen abducted women were going to be handed over to their relatives, and that Lajwanti was one of them, his joy knew no bounds. His concern and gentle regard for her whom the others might not acknowledge, was not at all hypocritical. Laju stood straight in front of him, shaking with fear and doubt. She was returning after living with another man for quite some time. She had draped herself in a black dupatta, in the typical Muslim fashion. He was wondering, "Why had she chosen to return...?" (An Epic 26). Anyhow, the queen of his heart had returned. He adored her so much that he even called her ‘Devi’. He told her, “Let’s just forget the past. You were hardly to blame for what happened. Society is at fault for its lack of respect for goddess like you” (An Epic 28). He had started treating her with exceeding gentleness, for she was a lajwanti, “the glass object too fragile to withstand the barest touch” (An Epic 29).

Memory, which offered a vision of a past, unfailingly, became the source of dignity in the present. The history of meaningless violence was not forgotten, but neither was the memory of a life of connectedness. Lajwanti, however, as has been observed by Alok Bhalta, “longs to cease lamenting for the past, to be treated as a human being with flesh and blood who has endured a lot but will not wither when touched, and above all to be embraced as a woman who is physically alive and longs for the generosity of love” (xxv-xxvi).
Intizar Husain’s “A Letter from India” is a painful recollection of a Muslim man by name Kurban Ali, after some three decades of Partition how his once illustrious family had been fragmented and sullied and had no hopes of coming together again. His forefathers were the renowned and holy Sayyids. In the story as Sanjay Iyer observes, “The family’s dispersal and imminent demise is movingly evoked” (06). Kurban Ali vividly remembers the year, when “trains were being attacked and looted” (SAP I 86). An important member of the family, Pyare Miyan, decided to go to Bombay, as he was addicted to theatre. All in the family urged him to stay back. But he left without listening to their advice. He got into the train, but he never reached Bombay. Nobody knew what had happened to him. He was Kurban Ali’s “first offering in the riots of forty-seven” (SAP I 86). Kurban Ali has made a list of all the names and collected the pictures of his family members who had died since the Partition blank spaces left would never be filled up.

He sadly remembers the fate of his “ill-fated family” (88). As leaves that scattered can never be gathered again, the members of his family strayed of the path either voluntarily or compulsorily, could never be united again. In his letter to his brother’s son, Miyan, he wrote, “I am now convinced that our family’s lineage has been lost forever” (SAP I 89). Sarcastically he adds:

I wonder if all the families in Pakistan have lost their family heritage.

It must be a strange and peculiar country! We had spent generations in the land of Hind. We saw here good days and evil days. By the grace of God, we ruled over it and were also slaves in it, but we never forgot the proud and honourable lineage of our family. But in Pakistan people seem to have lost all sense of self-respect and forgotten the entire
According to their earlier experiences, and their position in a particular place, communities behaved violently or otherwise. Though it is difficult to pinpoint that one particular community alone is responsible for the violent activities, in the month after the announcement of the plan for the transfer of power, as H.V. Hodson states in his book, *The Great Divide*, "the main instigators were certainly the Sikhs. They had suffered terribly in Rawalpindi and were thirsty for revenge" (338). Saadat Hasan Manto’s story, “Cold Meat” describes such a violent action indulged in by a Sikh known as Ishwar Singh, and how he was weighed down by the memory of it, and how he even became sexually sterile.

Ishwar Singh, the heavily built Sikh had a voluptuous ladylove, Kulwant Kaur. He and she looked as though they were made for each other. He had left her one-day abruptly. He returned after a few days and looked “as if he had been unwell for a few days” (SAP I 92). He looked at her and said, “I am going mad” (SAP I 92). Kulwant Kaur was very much perplexed. He didn’t answer her straight where he had been all those eight days. Obviously he was suffering from a great guilt and an enormous trauma. As Ishwar could not satisfy Kulwant Kaur sexually, the latter asked him, “Ishwar Singh, tell me the name of that bitch who has sucked you dry?” (SAP I 94).

He broke into a cold sweat. With his voice full of grief, he said that he had killed six men with his dagger. A shiver ran through his body. He continued, that he broke into an enemy house and found seven people in it. He killed six of them. The seventh one was a beautiful woman and he took her with him. He wanted to ‘taste’ her as he did Kulwant Kaur. He carried that woman over his shoulder and laid her down behind
some bushes. As he put his body weight upon her, he found her dead, "... a lifeless corpse...a cold, lifeless corpse...." (SAP I 96).

In Manto’s “Cold Meat”, it is the cruel murder of six men before the very eyes of a lovely young woman and the abduction of her by the murderer to rape her, burned the soul of a young man. Conversely, Umm-e-Ummara’s story, “More Sinned Against Than Sinning” the guilt in the soul of a father who took his family from Bihar to East Pakistan, their ‘promised land’ of freedom weighed him down day in and day out. The story shows how their hopes were devastated. The father was working in Dakha at the time of the Partition and his family was in Bihar. The mother in the family managed all the affairs wonderfully well. She was loved by all, and the children “worshipped the very ground she walked on...” (SAP I 101). When the father decided to take the family to Pakistan, the mother felt very sad. She shed a lot of tears and asked, “What about our fields, our haveli, our village, ...(SAP I 102). Her voice faltered. The children were too little to understand why their father thought, “that his own home was a place of exile” (SAP I 1103).

The children were at a loss to understand why there was a sudden change. The world, which was so familiar, had suddenly become a world of strangers. Their mother couldn’t reconcile herself to leave that place because in the words of her daughter Munni,

Amma was very proud of that haveli, with its open courtyard, which was so long that one got tired as one walked from one end of it to the other, its tall and strong neem and peepal trees under whose shade we used to play marbles, its broad gates which were very impressive. Often, Amma used to say, ‘It was through those gates that I came into this house as a newly wedded bride. If God so wills, it will be through
those gates that my coffin will be carried out. That, after all, must be the wish of every woman who has been happily married. (SAP I 103)

On reaching Dakha, they found everything fine. They felt happy to live among their own community people. Though they were living in a much better looking house, and had many other accomplishments like learning to speak Bangla and joined the Dakha University for some programme or other, they had no joy in them. They were not able to cut off from their past. They failed to trust the rich 'inwardness' of their lives in Bihar where they had lived for generations. They, however, recalled it with nostalgia later in Dhaka. It should be remembered that there is no hint in the story that they left Bihar because of the communal violence there. As Alok Bhalia points out,

Entrapped by the logic of exclusive nationalism, they learn too late that neither the community of religion nor the shared idioms of language can offer a sufficiently secure guarantee of a just society and so become the basis of a firm identity. Religious and linguistic definitions, they realise with horror, succeed only in establishing shifting grounds for the inclusion of some and making all others expendable. There is an essential whimsicality in these definitions, which can be manipulated for the purposes of political power by the unscrupulous. (xxiii)

When Munni’s Bade Bhaiya took his wife Pakhi, for a visit to Patna, and showed his past haunts, and introduced her to the entire family, she returned completely changed. She started talking, “our house in Patna”, “my-in-laws”, etc. Though they were living in a bungalow in Dakha now, surprisingly, they felt a kind of suffocation. Munni says that she was trying “to find a corner for myself to hide in” (SAP I 109). She felt a kind of oppressiveness in the large house.
Only very late, cultural alienation combined with nostalgia struck the father. He understood the foolishness of his decision. He wondered whether it made sense to live in Dacca amidst people with whom he had not much in common and whose manners, customs, language, culture, diet and dress were totally different from his. Moreover, the worrying fact was that the Bengalis started treating the non-Bengalis as intruders. He told his son, “...My experience has taught me that even if we take root in this soil, we will always be regarded as transplants. A grafted tree can never be regarded as anything else” (SAP I 111). The younger brother of Munni blurted out to his father: “We had pleaded with you not to bring us here. It was your decision.... You uprooted a flourishing tree and tried to replace it here. Why do you now feel so alienated from this place? (SAP I 111). The family slowly realised that freedom, which was only in name, was not much. In their repressive country it was not even possible to speak freely.

The mother started hating the bungalow. She heard voices arising from every nook and corner. She died soon. The boys adopted the Bengali culture and spoke Bangla. Munni, however, had not forgotten any incident in the past, which had been a part of her conscious being through her life. She had loved her Panna house very much. Once when a marriage party occupied temporarily in the compound, they dug up the courtyard to make latrines for the guests. Some tall plants withered immediately. Munni said, “I had wept loudly” (SAP I 115). They had left their old house behind, their past world had vanished from their sight, everything had changed utterly. At the end, they could do nothing but watch as the earthly kingdom, which they had hoped to pass on to their children as their real inheritance, was reduced to ash. Along with it they and their “flower-like children were burnt to death” (SAP I 117).
In Lalithambika Antharjanam's "A Leaf in the Storm", the educated independent Punjabi feminist girl Jyoti is tormented by her trauma in a refugee camp. The girl who belonged to a Punjabi Zamindar family is haunted by her memory of the past. She was born in a happy family, and "she grew up in perfect happiness" (SAP I 142). She was the darling of her people. She joined college and took a degree. She gave up her purdah and "shocked her people" (SAP I 142). She loved her freedom. She refused to settle for a marriage. She thus sought freedom not only for herself but also for her community, "indeed for the whole human race" (SAP I 142). In her good old carefree happy days, she thought, "she could knit together a net of silver threads" (SAP I 143). Ignoring all warning from her kith and kin, "she dedicated herself to the upliftment of women"( SAP I 143). But now she had been raped repeatedly and thrown out by violent Muslim goondas. And as a result, she was pregnant and was tormented by her harrowing experiences. Alok Bhatta observes:

Her rage is intense. She understands the bitter irony of the fact that during the Partition, as during all processes of 'ethnic cleansing', the bodies of women have become the contested sites for men of the warring communities to prove that they have the proper claim to be called God's own people and, hence, the right to possess or to kill the women whom they find in their Kingdom. (xxvi)

Initially she wanted to abort the foetus, in order to avoid the social stigma. Many women in the camp had done that. However she boldly resisted that temptation. But the moment the baby was born, she was filled with enormous compassion for the new life she had brought into this world, and her responsibility to sustain it, As Alok Bhatta comments, "In a moment of visionary understanding, she decided to nurture and nourish it and so ensure the ongoingness of the earth" (xxvi-xxvii). Though
haunted frequently by "memory...frightening scenes from memory..." (SAP I 143), and she decided to bear everything and came to the conclusion, "one must carry one's cross oneself"(SAP I 144). With this conviction, she swooped the child in her arms and slowly walked towards the camp. As Alok Bhalla points out, "Instead of thinking endlessly about days under the curse of evil, she realizes that, the longer she lives in the world, the more profoundly is the sense of its immortality aroused in her...the more 'natural' it is for her to love the child"(xxvii).

Soon after Partition and its accompanying senseless bloodshed, madness and crime, it was very awful to see the villages, towns and cities in Pakistan. They seemed desolate and forlorn as Kulwant Singh Virk's "Weeds" shows. All sorts of household items like trunks, cots, chairs, tables, stools, sofa-sets, pictures, almirahs had been seen in the premises of police stations and public squares. Once upon a time each of these items had a special place in the houses but now "those cherished items lay in undistinguished piles in public places" (SAP I 203). The ruined and destroyed houses were now occupied by people who had been uprooted from their own homes elsewhere. Everything seemed to be out of joint. There was no joy on people's places. They seemed "lost and bewildered"(SAP I 204). They looked "as if they had lost their bearings"(SAP I 204). People who had been living in a place for a long time couldn't say 'salaam-alekhum' to their neighbours or begin a conversation. Even the older residents "had begun to feel alien"(SAP I 204). They could no longer recognise the places where they were born and brought up. Strangers now occupied the old havelis. The rivers and canals looked "reddened by blood and be fowled by the bodies of men and women who had been mutilated and killed"(SAP I 204).

There was devastation all around. And life in every locality had been turned upside down. Not giving up to despair totally people were trying hard to find some
way of rediscovering their old rhythms of life. It seemed that no matter how grim the tragedy was, the human spirit would never be extinguished. This was because for some people, even the nostalgia for the past had disappeared, and they seemed to be rather settled in life.

Satinath Bhaduri’s story “The Champion of the People” takes place in Nagar, a small trading centre on the western side of a wobbly bridge which links Bengal and Bihar. The action centres on the mixed population of Hindus and Muslims, a few months prior to Independence. There were rumours in the market circles that some places nearby around would go to Pakistan, and some would be with Hindustan. The champion of the Hindus was a popular trader known as Munim Sahib. He smuggled sugar often to the other traders on the other side of the bridge and made money. It was only a few months ago that there were serious riots in Calcutta, Bihar, and Noakhali. Bhaduri says, “it had cut deep, but the scars were soon covered over. The compulsions of habit and livelihood were beginning once again to pull their patch work lives together” (SAP I 209).

Darpan Singh was an important member in that area. His father, a migrant from the other side, exhorted the Hindu traders not to pay any toll to a Mussalman ijardar from then on. In a sentimental, crude tone he said, “We’ve left our heart and home, land and chattel to come to Hindustan. And for what? I have heard they are not going to let Hindus live there with their wives and daughters, And are we to pay tax to a Muslim here as well?” (SAP I 218). When he left everything there, his Muslim servant Irfan would covet his sixty-bigha estate. He burst into tears at this cruel state of affairs. He had left the place in a hurry to save the honour of his women folk. He kept on saying, “The honour of the women at least is safe” (SAP I 219). However before leaving, what Darpan’s wife did was (in her words),
I smashed the oven…. It was a beautiful smooth clay oven that I had built. God knows what filth Irfan’s aunt will now cook on it. And what am I to do with this image of the Lord? We had worried so much about it. But the Lord takes care of Himself; we worry because we are ignorant fools. Let’s see now what the priest has to say about it. There is such a mishmash of castes in this place. The Lord has left no way I can get a proper bhog cooked for him. (SAP I 220)

As a conclusion Bhaduri describes their predicament in one sentence, “One can stomach the disappointment, the pain—but where does one hide from the shame?” (SAP I 227).

One thing that is common in all the Partition narratives is the horror that the Partition unleashed. There is a note of utter bewilderment. The victims’ homes were reduced to rubble, and to quote Alok Bhalla, “the memories of their collective rites and traditions, stories and songs, names of birds and trees were permanently tinged with the acrid smell of ash, smoke and blood”(ix). Sirajuddin, in Saadat Hasan Manto’s story “Open It” is such a pathetic victim. Bewildered by what he had seen, he lost his memory. He had only a tragic vision. When he left Amritsar in a Refugee Special for a safer place or a refugee camp, possibly to Delhi, he was a totally a broken man. He was in deep and agonised thought about something. When he calmed down a bit, he had “the nightmarish vision of his wife’s body flashed before his eyes—he saw her lying on the ground with her entrails hanging out. After that his mind went blank” (SAP II 69). And his only daughter, Sakina, a young and beautiful girl was missing. Like “a demented person” (SAP II 69), he searched for her throughout the camp. But there was no trace of her. How and where he lost her, he couldn’t tell, for his memory failed him. Only the nightmarish vision repeated—
“flames, loot…. People running…. a station….firing….darkness and Sakina” (SAP II 69). How was he going to deal with the blank space left in his mind by witnessing helplessly the gruesome murder of his wife, and the abduction and rape of his only daughter by the self-appointed social workers whom he considered then his sons, is a moot question. After reading the story one gets the impression, as Alok Bhalta rightly observes, that “the inhumanity of the Partition has so obliterated the moral realm and there is nothing left to retrieve and nothing to hope for; people are now so degraded that they can only act as beasts” (xxi).

In S.H. Vatsayan Ajneya’s story “The Refuge”, Devenderlal, a respectable Hindu gentleman, and a close friend of Rafiquddin, a lawyer, is made to feel treachery even by his own intimate friend’s kith and kin at the time of the Partition. Ajneya shares Devenderlal’s agony with us: “One had told him that he would force him to stay back, but had turned him out of his house. The other had not only offered him shelter, but had also given him poison” (SAP II 82).

When most of the terror-stricken Hindus were running away from Lahore, Devenderlal was also planning to leave. He had already despatched his wife to Jullundar where her mother lived. However, his Muslim friend, Rafiquddin, compelled him to stay back with his encouraging words:

How can you leave your own home and become a refugee in your own city? We will not let you go—we will force you to stay. It is the duty of the majority to protect the minority, and to make sure that they don’t abandon their homes and run away. If we can’t protect our neighbours, how can we possibly protect our country? (SAP II 73)

But this sort of encouragement and companionship did not last long, as there were communal murders everywhere. Even doctors belonging to the other
community, attending the sick, were stabbed and killed. By nightfall, the city was in flames. Devendralal reached Rafiquddin's house with his baggage. With the deepening nostalgia for his house, and place and people, he had to abandon everything. Rafiquddin put him in a Muslim policeman's garage for safety. He "stood still like a statue" (SAP II 77), and the agony of parting with friends and neighbours pressed him very much. The front gate of the garage was locked. His only companion was a cat. With uncontrollable sadness, he felt, "Freedom! If earlier a foreign government put our people behind bars because they wanted to be free, now, after independence, our own brothers imprison us because they want to save us from being killed!" (SAP II 77-78). His old ties and bonds with his friend began to feel strain. For his Muslim friend was under threat. In a day or two his Muslim ladylove Zaibu's people sent a plate of poisoned food to eliminate Devendralal, for "they want a victim" (SAP II 77). However a note from someone (in all probability from Zaibu) saved him at the nick of time. It was so tragic that even when people were running away for their life, they were mercilessly hunted down at the time of the Partition.

Intizar Husain's "The City of Sorrow" in the words of Sanjay Iyer is "an existential classic" (05). It is a very powerful story that pronounces condemnation to three goondas who are unbearably burdened with their past sins. They no longer know whether they are alive or dead like T.S. Eliot's Sweeney in Sweeney Agonistes who speaks about a man whom he knows pretty well:

He didn't know if he was alive
And the girl was dead
He didn't know if the girl was alive
And he was dead
He didn't if both were alive
The three men in Husain's story identified as First, Second and Third were shamefully and regretfully recounting to each other the manner of their 'deaths', "the existential transformation," as Sanjay Iyer points out "they underwent when the unspeakable horror they perpetrated were mirrored in the deeds of others"(06). The three men kept on asking each other as to where they should go. By their heinous and unimaginable crimes, they turned their city in to 'The City of Sorrow' as the Israelites did in the days of the prophet Micah. The prophet denounces the Israel's leaders:

You hate what is good and love what is evil. You stain my people alive and tear the flesh off their bones. You eat my people up. You strip off their skin, break their bones, and chop them like meat for the pot. The time is coming when you will cry out to the lord, but he will not answer you. He will not listen to your prayers, for you have done evil.

(Micah 3: 2-4)

In the same manner, the nameless men, who had lost their faces, or rather their faces were disfigured because of the ruthless animal instinct that emerged from them at the time of the Partition, now as everything was over, reaping what they sowed. They became just walking corpses. If there was any salvation for them, it was perhaps their disfigured faces and their eyes "which had neither light nor life" (SAP II 98).

Intizar Husain gradually brings out the horrifying things that the three had committed. He helps them open their memory banks and each of them shares with the others, their heinous crimes, and how they are punished for their sins. The first man remembers how his wife, for instance, looked at him viciously and growled, "You...your father is dead, your daughter has been raped and dishonoured...you are dead. At that moment, (the first man continues) I realised, I had died" (SAP II 88).
Husain, thus delicately inflects this desolate abyss with a concrete sense of history and the fading fragrance of remembrance. He also helps us "to comprehend" as Mushirul Hasan observes, "in the light of India's rich, ancient and medieval traditions, how the 'new man', cruel, violent and ruthless, appeared on the scene in 1947" (35).

In Suraiya Qasim's "Where Did She Belong?" Qasim uses the character of an orphaned sex worker by name Munni Bai who nostalgically longs for her two lovers, a Hindu and a Muslim long after her migration to India. Besides this, the author also raises the question of community and "the usually suppressed question of class" (Sanjay Iyer (06). Munni Bai the beauty from Hira Mandi in Lahore very often, mostly in the middle of nights, lost herself completely in thoughts as to who her parents were, how she came to be in that brothel, was she a Hindu or a Muslim etc. The answer her madam provided her was "What difference does it make whether you are a Hindu or a Muslim? You are, in fact, better than both because you combine both in you? (SAP II 110). Munni Bai gradually understood that she was just a foundling, cast away by her parents on the main road, "equidistant from a mosque and a temple" (SAP II 110). Her madam happened to pass that way at that time and took pity on her and picked her up in her shawl and brought her home, gave her a name common to both the communities, Munni Bai. Her two lovers, Raj Kamal, the Hindu hen-pecked, and Jafer Khan, a poor Muslim thief sworn repeatedly and severally that after the Partition, she would be married off and taken care off. But when the country was clef into two and the popular frenzy abated and the arsonists were "tired of doing what they had been doing or run out of objects of hate" (SAP II 115-116), and when "the business of destruction was nearly over" (SAP II 116), Munni Bai found herself as a refugee in a Delhi camp with her Madam and a few other girls. The madam very shortly moved the entire paraphernalia to a bungalow on the G.B.Road and
comfortably began her operation. Soon Munni Bai’s fame and beauty began to spread in and around Delhi and she had many customers. Some of them were very rich. It was generously believed that quite a sizable number of the population were perished and property worth several millions of rupees was destroyed in the holocaust. Nevertheless, it was quite ironical, to note that Munni Bai never had a dearth of customers or lack valuable gifts and money. One of her customers was a Raja and another a Nawab who came separately in their limousines and after availing of her services, lavishly rewarded her. Sadly and cynically, Munni Bai asks, “Who lost and who died in the Partition?” (SAP II 117).

In Ramesh Chandra Sen’s “The White Horse” besides describing the fear over the city Calcutta, the story also expresses the anxiety of the tensed people who had seen good and bad days there. At the time of the Partition, these people who were full of nostalgic feelings kept on asking every passer-by, “Will everything cool down, sir? Will hackney cabs run again? There wasn’t any fear on the street?” (SAP II 132). They were thinking about the good old days when real peace reigned on the streets and people minded only their business.

It’s awfully surprising that soon after the Partition, instead of according a red carpet welcome to the migrated Muslims from the East to the West Pakistan, the communally and provincially inspired Muslim roughs in Pakistan persecuted the Muslims from the Indian side in unimaginable cruel ways. Muslims from the Indian side especially the Biharis and the Bengalis had to undergo hell in Pakistan. Ibrahim Jalees’s “A Grave Turned Inside-Out” precisely speaks about that. Ayesha on whom the story centres is a pathetic victim of many such cases. She had to migrate twice in her brief life, firstly from Bihar to East Pakistan and then from East Pakistan to West Pakistan. On both the occasions she had plenty of dreams and expectations. Having
her husband brutally killed by a Muslim goon in Dakha for being a migrant Bihari Muslim, the widow Ayesha had to leave Dakha for Karachi to look for her daughter, Razia there. She was made to believe that a certain Qazi Basheeruddin had sent her to Karachi with his children for safety. Ayesha never knew that Razia had been abducted and Qazi Basheeruddin violated her tender body. Nobody knew her whereabouts. She was dreaming that in Karachi she could meet her beloved daughter face-to-face and live with her peacefully in the newly formed Islamic state. Sitting in the plane with her husband’s friend, she was building castles in the air. She never knew that she was migrating for the last time in her life. Her mind was full of memories of her earlier migration with her husband. As Ibrahim Jalees observes, “During their first migration, her husband, sitting next to her in a crowded railway compartment, had woven before her sleepless eyes, beautiful patterns of a new and comfortable life in Dhakha in East Pakistan” (SAP II 148).

Having lost everything in East Pakistan, she was migrating to the West Pakistan. Ironically West Pakistan proved worse than the East Pakistan, for it was here she was raped and killed. There was no one to protect her, no one to shed a tear for her. Her dream of meeting her daughter became a wild goose chase. The reader is sadly reminded of the words of Sardar Patel about the Pakistanis in West Pakistan, in his book, In Tune With the Millions-II, “If anyone amongst you believes that they will protect you (the minorities), you will be sadly disillusioned” (166).

Saadat Hasan Manto in his story “Mozel” brilliantly portrays the sacrifice of a Jewish girl for her Sikh neighbour Tirlochen in Bombay at the time of the Partition. Mozel did the uncommon for her friend because she was full of lovely memories of her association with Tirlochen. Mozel’s boyfriend Tirlochen recollects nostalgically a couple of months after the Partition, how Mozel miraculously saved him and his wife
Kirpal Kaur. One can surmise that Saadat Hasan Manto's characters are real and not necessarily fictional. Mozel too seems real. Living quite comfortably in the Advani Chambers in Bombay, Tirlochen was blissfully unaware of the communal deaths in Delhi and the other places in the north. But when the Partition plan was announced even Bombay was in turmoil. There were widespread killing of people, and arson and looting. Several houses and some important nerve centres were burnt down. Tirlochen's mind was heavily burdened with disturbed thoughts.

There was a time when Tirlochen was deeply in love with Mozel. She was living in the same Advani Chambers then. He was, as Saadat Hasan Manto observes, "in love up to his knees ...and it was the kind of love that he had never experienced before in all of his thirty-five years" (SAP II 155). Whenever he attempted to go beyond hugging and kissing, she repudiated him. She was his greatest weakness. And he wanted "to hold on to her at all cost" (SAP II 157). She wanted him to shave off his beard and let his hair down for she said, "I cannot love a Sikh" (SAP II 157). He complied with her request with great agony for it was against his religious beliefs and practices. The day of wedding was fixed but on that day of wedding she was missing. He thought, "she was shameless, she was callous, she was inconsiderate" (SAP II 161).

Once Mozel had gone away from his life, Tirlochen fell in love with Kirpal Kaur, "a chaste girl" (SAP II 162). In the mean time, his hair grew, and he became a Sikh again. Quite unexpectedly Mozel returned again to the Advani Chambers. It was at this time that the whole of Bombay was in the grip of communal flare up. Violent Muslims were looking for a Sikh victim. Curfew was clamped. Once when an irate Muslim took his dagger to kill Tirlochen, Mozel saved him by calling him Karim and gently rebuked the stranger. The same day when death was closing in on the Sikh
couples, Mozel, using her resourcefulness, saved them from the jaws of death. When the Muslim rioters surrounded the Tirlochens, she removed all her garments to sidetrack their attention, and saved them. She rolled in front of them on the staircase. They were all watching “Mozel’s naked and fair body, which was covered with bruises” (SAP II 171). The rioters forgot their business and stood in awe. When they disappeared, Tirlochen removed his turban “unfurled it and covered Mozel’s body with it” (SAP II 172). When he stooped down to thank her, he found “blood bubbled from her mouth” (SAP II 172) and her arm fell lifelessly over her robust breasts. Tirlochen was full of her memory and the whole event used to give him a “fever in his brain” (SAP II 153).

Kamleshwar reminds us in his story, “How Many Pakistanis?” that the “schism is not merely in the geographical but in the psychic map of the subcontinent...” (Sanjay Iyer 05). The young Hindu narrator in the story is full of nostalgic feelings of living in the same locality of a few Muslim families in Chinar on the banks of the Ganges. He was deeply in love with Bano alias Sakina, daughter of a drillmaster turned biographer of Bhartrhari. The narrator recollects how he was forced to leave Chinar for an unknown destination because of communal riots. He ruminates, “Oh, how beautiful were the nights at Chinar! The waters of the Ganga; the boats going to Kashi; the ruined wall of Brarthari’s fort...and the courtyard of the check-post at the banks of the river where I used to wait for you (Bano)...” (SAP II 175). He thinks sadly that it was the creation of Pakistan that separated him and his beloved. Pakistan thus has played havoc in the lives of many. It was that “dark blind space...Pakistan” (SAP II 174) that fell between them “like an abysmal silence” (SAP II 174).
Syed Waliullah’s “The Story of the Tulsi Plant” narrates the helpless occupation of some displaced Muslim migrants (mostly government servants) of a deserted bungalow in Calcutta and their frantic efforts to hold on to it till the government evicted them. A prosperous Hindu owner had owned the bungalow earlier. At the time of the Partition, obviously scared of the horrific events, the Hindu family had taken to their heels. At the rear side of the house, near the kitchen, there was a tulsi plant. The present Muslim occupants wanted to uproot the plant immediately as it told them a story. It brought to their memories how the landlord watered the plant everyday, how she stood before it and worshipped, etc. The refugees who were inside now “could not tolerate any signs of Hinduism” (SAP II 194). Their minds hovered on the plant and saw in their mind’s eyes how “the grihakartri, who had placed the lamp at the back of the tulsi plant year after year” (SAP II 195). But now everything was abandoned, unpossessed. But wherever she was, the present inmates thought, “when the shadows deepened every evening, her eyes would be brimming with tears at the memory of the deserted tulsi plant in the house far away” (SAP II 195). When such a thought crossed their mind, they left the plant untouched and someone even watered it secretly. The communal flare up in the city obviously tore the mistress from the house and her tulsi plant. If she were alive, she would be full of nostalgic feelings “when she remembered the abandoned tulsi plant” (SAP II 195).

Now a refugee in the Indian soil, the ninety year old Muzumdar, a lady from the Zamidari parambara from a region now Bangladesh, airs out her memories in Lalithambika Anantharanam’s “The Mother of Dhrendu Muzumdar”. Sadly she says, that of the nine children she had, “Five I sacrificed for India, four for Pakistan” (SAP II 199). She wants to die in the place where she was born. Her ancestors were born on
that soil and became part of it. The bones of five of her children turned to dust in the Indian soil. Her mind is always crowded with memories. In her, “Memories surface. Thrilling memories. Neither of one person, nor of one family. The pitiful story of a whole region” (SAP II 199).

She remembers that she was married off at the tender age of nine and was taken to her husband’s house in a palanquin. Born in the second half of the nineteenth century, she says, “I did not venture out of the house till I was fifty” (SAP II 200). Even when the Governor visited her house, she did not go out to receive him. Such was the strict family custom then. All her five fine children took part actively in the freedom struggle, and met with a pathetic end. They were filled with patriotic feelings and felt firmly that “dying for one’s mother land is salvation” (SAP II 202). The illustrious mother of such illustrious children, says with tears in her eyes, …I am just an outsider, who has come here as a refugee begging for your mercy” (SAP II 203). Her love and attachment to her motherland was so much. She loved her Bengal as her “mother and daughter” (SAP II 204) with her angry rivers overflowing most of the time.

Joharmal, the Sindhi, now a refugee in the Indian soil is quite unable to reconcile himself to the drastically changed situation. Narain Bharati’s story, “The Claim” shows how he put in the claim for the whole of Sind. He felt that it should be given back to him. Joharmal tells the officer-in-charge “the proof of the claim is that Joharmal is a Sindhi, his language is Sindhi and his culture is Sindhi” (SAP II 221). He had no other documentary evidence for the claim. The officer was flabbergasted. The emotionally charged Joharmal continued, “Every part of my body is replete with memories of Sind. I am a Sindhi and Sind is mine. I have the right to put in a claim for it. We hear that the Punjabis got Punjab, the Bengalis got Bengal. What crime
have we committed that we are denied our Sind!” (SAP II 221). He kept on repeating that the Sindhis must get back their Sindhis. He had no other claim. He became emotional and tears filled his eyes. His friendship with his companions was dearer to him than his fields. He says, “I immigrated because my son-in-law forced me to and my daughter cried bitterly…. Otherwise I would never have left Sind!” (SAP II 222)

In Maheep Singh’s “The River and the Bridge”, one of the pilgrims who visited the gurudwara in Lahore, recollects how her mother had all the time been acutely aware of the deeper feeling of loss, of sundering links with the past. At the time of the Partition, she had left the village Sarai. Now she was approaching her village with the pilgrims, “old memories came flooding back” (SAP III 80). Though there was nothing at Sarai which belonged to them anymore, and had no relations there now, the mother had been “staring into the darkness outside” (SAP III 81), when the other pilgrims were snoring soundly. When the train stopped, there was a big commotion outside the station. A good number of people, having known that this lady was passing through their village in a pilgrim party, spoke aloud whether there was anyone from Sarai on the train. The brother’s face “was glowing with pride” (SAP III 81). Knowing that the lady was Moola Singh’s wife, many people had brought small bundles of almonds, walnuts, and other dainty dishes in their hands to be presented to her. Overcome with uncontrollable emotion, she and her daughter quietly accepted them with thanks. The lady covered her head with her dupatta and greeted everyone with folded hands. Partaking such a touching scene, “her lips were quivering with uncontainable delight. No word escaped her lips, but her eyes were welled over with tears” (SAP III 82). As a parting greeting, many voices said, “May Allah give them a long life” (SAP III 83). Mother was crying uncontrollably. She went on wiping her tears again and again with her dupatta.
Jyotirmoyee Devi's Partition novel, *The River Churning* is a sad recollection of an unfortunate victim of Partition holocaust from East Bengal, a young girl by name Sutara Dutta. Serving now as a lecturer in History at Yajnaseni College in Delhi, she lets her mind roam and returns to the past. She recalls nostalgically how in the good old days she lived quite comfortably as a little girl in her village in Noakhali near the River Padma with her father, mother, sister and brothers. They had two domestics Rahim and Karim, and they had been with the family for many years. To the orthodox Hindu family, Tamijuddin Saheb, their Muslim neighbour, was 'Kaka Saheb'. Tamijuddin Saheb's daughters were the close chums of Sutara. Everything went blasted in a day.

Through the novel the author tries to lift the veil on a 'stree parva' in history—"the blood-stained, chequered history of 'secular' modern India" (Jasodhara Bagchi xxix). It is no accident that Sutara grows to be a Lecturer of History in the capital city of India, and that the novel opens in one of her 'modern' Indian History class. When Sutara was speaking to her students she paused for a while. In the pause her story becomes history. Old memories folded back in her—the vicissitudes of her life. The story develops in small doses from her reflection.

In 1946, there was a sudden blaze of communal frenzy that destroyed the peace of a neighbourhood in East Bengal, where Hindus and Muslims had lived in peace and amity. Within a few hours, there was complete havoc in the Hindu household. Before they had registered what was happening, the father disappeared, the mother jumped into the tank to save her honour and the married sister did not stir and Sutara was gang-raped. The irony was their own trusted orderlies were behind all these cruelties. When Sutara opened her eyes she was in Tamijkaka's house. She had not recovered from the tremendous shock she had received. It had "shaken her to the
core. The exact nature of the blow which had stunned her physically and mentally was unknown to her—she was only aware of something terrible having crushed her existence out of shape" (The River 16). It took many days for her to somewhat recover from her shock and agony. All those days, she had a daze and an uncomprehending stare on her eyes. She could not remember what had exactly happened. However, "the dreadful memories of that night kept returning like a nightmare" (The River 16). Many a time she was delirious with fright. When Sutara’s elder brother who was in Calcutta was informed what had happened to the members of his household, he did not show any undue hurry to get back his sister. His letter to Tamijkaka showed not a trace of concern for Sutara. Her brothers were “more concerned about their good name, the honour of the family, than they were about Sutara” (The River 23). This puzzled her still more. She had not the age or experience to realise why all these happened to her. She had many perplexing questions. She was so homesick that her eyes were never dry.

Though her brothers were well placed and in a position to give her a good nursing care, they hardened their hearts. However Tamijkaka was “really concerned about the child” (The River 18). Even when he knew it was dangerous to keep a Hindu girl in his household, and though his well-meaning friends advised him to hand over her to the Hindu Mahasabha or the search party, he did not budge an inch. When Sutara was able to walk a little, she went to see their burnt-down cowshed. She viewed everything from a distance and “there were the invisible scenes in her mind which she could not get rid of” (The River 19). Her mother was constantly in her mind. She could hardly restrain her tears whenever she thought of her. Her eyes grew moist thinking of her lost Hindu neighbours and of the remains of her burnt down house.
Sakina remembers how Tamij Saheb came to her rescue. His wife said to her husband rather emphatically, “She can stay with us like our daughter. Among the Hindus even parents reject their daughter—and they are only her brothers!” (The River 26). This way the high caste Hindu stayed with the Muslim household until her brothers relented to take her back. But it was not in the near future. Everyday she longed to go back to her family and as it receded, “tears filled her eyes” (The River 28). Finally when the green signal came from her brothers, she was taken in a boat to the railway station. In the boat, again and again, “Memories of her lost family came to her but her eyes were dry, her mind, a total blank” (The River 28).

When the train reached the Sealdah station, Sutara saw her brothers—Sanat, Subodh, Sudhir and Bimal, her brother-in-law standing on the platform. This meeting “brought tears to her eyes” (The River 29). She touched the feet of the older brothers and her brother-in-law. But none of them spoke. It was obvious that their thoughts were confused by so many questions. Walking with them she felt then that she was one of them. Years later, a more mature Sutara looked back and realised that “in actual fact they were separated forever” (The River 30).

In Sanat’s in-law’s house, where she was taken, she was always treated as an unclean. The women even talked about purifying her with Ganga water. She had to undergo untold sufferings there. The treatment meted out to her was worse than that of a menial servant. There was no respite to her problems. She was not even allowed to touch the pitcher. The wounding words spoken aloud and whispered in the house were “deeply etched in Sutara’s memory that even now she recalled every word of it and flushed with humiliation” (The River 36). On those occasions “tears sprang to her eyes” (The River 37). The brothers were of no help to her. They usually averted their glances. The reader is reminded of the irate words of Sarah to her husband, Abraham
to drive away the Egyptian slave woman Hagar with her infant, nevertheless, the father of the infant was Abraham, “Send this slave-girl and her son away” (Genesis 21:10). Just the same way, the orthodox women were trying to drive away Sutara from the household. It is painful to note that more than the men it is the women who heartlessly ill-treated Sutara more. Perhaps as Jyotirmoyee Devi comments, “society has remained the same since the time of the Ramayana” (The River 45).

Sutara was sent to a boarding school. That was a good compromise and a decent way to keep her at a distance. It was a real trauma for the young girl. Though her brothers were alive, she was made to feel a refugee. Her face looked “worried and scared” (The River 50). She felt like the refugee Sita.

After her schooling, her brothers not wanting her back home, put her in a college. It was a girl’s college. Most of them were local girls. Many of them were refugees and had gone through horrifying experiences. They looked still scared and “the terrible memories of those days and nights had left a permanent mark on them” (The River 57).

Every time she visited home mostly on invitation to attend some family function like the marriage of a family member, she was treated like a low-caste. On those occasions she came back weeping. In Sutara’s friendless life Sakina’s letters were like a treat. Tamijkaka’s daughter had always a soft corner for Sakina. Her companionship had filled her with warmth and tenderness. Besides her, Sutara had no one to call her own, and “she was absolutely alone” (The River 75). Once when Sakina met her, Sutara had many things to ask her. But the questions “which welled up from the depths of Sutara’s heart found no way to surface” (The River 75). That was the first time they were meeting after the disaster. Naturally, “the memory of those days acted as an unspoken barrier” (The River 76). Scenes of her playmates'
humiliation passed before her eyes. Behind everything, “hovered the still figures of her panic-stricken didi, confused mother and helpless father. The picture remained vivid even after so many years…” (The River 76).

Sakina wrote a long letter once. The letter came from one who was happy and contented, one who was secure in her own place, one who had neither lost her dear ones nor been subjected to any act of humiliation. Every line of her radiated joy and happiness. Her mind had not turned bitter and revengeful because she had been spared the agony of the conflict and violence. She could still feel nostalgic about their childhood, the love of their neighbours, the sharing of all their happiness and sorrows, the childhood memories of fruit-picking, swimming in the pond, walking to school together. Sutara felt that people like Sakina could forget the terrible days as a sudden and natural calamity, a passing nightmare. But “Sutara could hardly get her memories out of her system. For many like her it was not possible to forget, they just couldn’t” (The River 90). With the letter in her hand, she recalled the ties of kinship that had grown between her and Sakina’s family and “the sweetness of that memory still lingered especially now that she had nobody left to call her own” (The River 90). She felt very grateful to her Muslim friends who stood by her during those bad days. Such feelings “inevitably brought back memories of the night everything went up in flames” (The River 90-91). The “social outcaste” (The River 90) paused in the course of her musings. She felt as if “she had reached a dead end, the shore of an endless sea” (The River 91). Nobody not even Sakina could fathom her secret sorrow. When Sakina tried to make her feel normal, her face turned pale and with overflowing tears she had said just one thing, “How can I forget that night? How can I ever forget the fate of my sister, my parents?” (The River 93).
Shiv K Kumar too has a sad tale to relate. His protagonists Gautam Mehta and Haseena’s harrowing experiences lie deeply embedded in their minds and Shiv K Kumar brings them out in his Partition narrative, *A River With Three Banks*. A Punjabi born in Lahore, Shiv K Kumar came to India in 1947. Traumatised by the horrible experience of the communal holocaust, he brought out the Partition novel *A River With Three Banks* in order “to exorcise the ghost of Partition from his being” (Shiv K Kumar in an Interview with Mohanty xvi). According to him every Punjabi writer has to get the trauma of Partition out of his system sooner or later, as Kushwant Singh did in his *A Train to Pakistan* in 1956. Shiv K Kumar’s novel could be taken as a painful emotion recollected in tranquillity. In his words, “an emotion has to be recollected and recaptured after a passage of time so that you have a better understanding of your experience” (Interview with Mohanty xvi). So much so Shiv K Kumar’s novel is a visualisation of his memories of that fateful year 1947, which still linger in the minds of countless people who crossed across the Radcliffe Line leaving behind their ancestral property and homes. As Mulk Raj Anand comments, the novel is “a poet’s visualisation of India of 1947—its brutality and romance, its agony and ecstasy” (Swaroop Singh 40).

The action of the novel takes place when “evil was rampant everywhere” (*A River* 11). It’s the story of “horrid memories” (*A River* 19) that had ambushed Gautam Mehta, a young Delhi-based journalist. The background was Partition. Gautam’s wife Sarita had developed an illicit affair with Mohinder, Gautam’s friend and colleague. Gautam and Sarita had a son by name Rahul. But Gautam had been assailed by “gruesome thoughts” (*A River* 22) as to the real father of the child. Sometimes he even lapsed into melancholia. To his horror, he saw “the imprint of Mohinder’s features etched indelibly on the child’s face” (*A River* 22). However, the
child did not live long. He died of “sudden haemorrhage or something” (A River 45). The child’s words kept on ringing in Gautam’s ears: “Daddy, when will you come back again?” (A River 46).

In Delhi Gautam could not move freely as “rioters had been prowling about everywhere” (A River 24) and often times he was “trapped in the curfew” (A River 24).

Gautam and his parents were refugees. They had arrived in Delhi after “many harrowing experiences on the way from Lahore” (A River 31).

The journalist felt as though he had been poised precariously like a spider between two ends of a cobweb. He was a burnt-out young man around thirty. He felt that he was fast becoming a manic-depressive. He thought that only a divorce from his unfaithful wife alone would make him sane. He approached Father Jones of St. John’s church for a certificate of conversion. He obtained it without much difficulty. On the basis of that the judge granted him divorce.

Having once seen a gruesome communal murder of an old helpless Muslim man, Gautam felt aghast. And then he had to see derobing of a helpless woman before the very eyes of her brother by some rioters. She and her brother were victims of psychic epidemics. Strangely, Gautam lost all impulse for sex. He had begun to feel a sort of impotence creeping all over him. He wondered if it was due to “the trauma of betrayal” (A River 68). His intimate friend Berry noticed it and reprimanded him saying, “You’re a prisoner of your past…. You must now learn to pull yourself together” (A River 67).

Gautam fell in love with an abducted Muslim girl by name Haseena from Allahabad, the city of God. He had seen her father’s cruel death in the hands of some Hindu fanatic rioters and his burial in a Christian cemetery. He met this young
Muslim girl in a brothel kept by a Hindu pimp in a murky dungeon. She was forced into prostitution at knife-edge. Gautam felt that it was only through some mystic force that he and Haseena had come together. Ironically, at the behest of Berry he had gone to that brothel to test whether he could really make love any more.

From the very first moment they decamped the brothel, they had to go through hell, for Pannalal was up to anything. Even in Allahabad the lovers were not free from danger. They were in a dazed state of mind. Communal violence was everywhere. As before Gautam was beginning “to entertain serious misgivings about his potency” (A River 151). Sarita’s betrayal was not out of his mind. This and the other horrifying incidents he saw around in those days of Partition, made him feel frozen. Haseena in the mean time was full of gratitude for Gautam and was expecting an avowal of love from him. Gautam’s dramatic rescue of her from the murderous pimp was deeply embedded in her memory. Trying to forget the sad past, she was ruminating a ghazal by a local Urdu poet:

Let all our yesterdays be cinders.

Come, my soul, let this moment stir
Us into a new ecstasy
Known only to angels

For they commune not through words alone. (A River 154)

The peace that came to Haseena was short-lived. For the whole city was soon gripped into communal disharmony. It seemed as though the two communities sworn to eternal enmity, were primed for another clash, this time unfortunately over Pannalal’s accidental killing. It was ironical that Gautam who had all along been working for communal harmony, tolerance and peace had himself become the cause of tension in the city. The fact was that he had to kill Pannalal in sheer self-defence.
But the journals as usual made it a sensational issue and covered it as a communal backlash. The killing had been grossly fabricated and attributed to the Muslim community. Later when Gautam tried to ease off his burdened memory with Berry, the latter felt as though he was listening to an incredible tale. He asked Gautam, “Are you fantasizing... How could a spineless, non-violent creature like you kill a tough guy like Pannalal?” (A River 189). Gautam Mehta consoled himself with the thought that even Lord Krishna had to “exhort Prince Arjuna to kill his own kinsmen on the battlefield of Kurukshetra” (A River 199).

Later when he escorted Haseena’s kith and kin to the Wagha Border, rioters ambushed his train and he had to protest that he was a Hindu. The marauders whisked him off to a maize field and stripped him naked to see whether he was circumcised. Though he escaped unhurt, his eyes welled up with tears. He felt sadly that he would “now have to carry this scar on his soul all his life” (A River 211).