Chapter VI

Narrative Strategies: Some Instances

...I have reconstructed many different ‘voices’ of Partition: official, unofficial, informal, others. These include the voices of people telling stories, the voices through which they speak in memoirs, diaries, autobiographies, those that emerge from the official narratives, those that are evident in communal discourses, and woven through all this...

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It was the Urdu poet who had said, ‘Mujhe sab hai yaad zara’ “I remember every little bit” (Nirupama Dutt 2). This statement holds true of any artist anywhere. Litterateurs don’t forget. They tell it all. They share everything—from the personal to the political. Their narratives recall the traumatic times. They remind us that Partition is not a closed chapter of history but ever present in our lives. The Partition holocaust can never be put away easily inside the covers of history books. Each of the artists whose stories are analysed here has adopted a particular narrative strategy to help us realize that the stories of Partition are no longer remote from us. Some of these stories were actually heard by authors from the survivors. Some of them came to the authors second or third hand. The researcher found it hard to believe some of the atrocities committed on the weaker section of the society.

In the 1970’s and 1980’s literary critics in the U.S. and Britain took an enormous interest in the relationship between literature and history. They took pains to examine how literature reflected, shaped and represented history. Such new group of critics,
known as New Historicists, were responsible mainly for popularising the historicist approaches to literature. New historicists, as John Brannigan shows, are inclined "to read literary texts as material products of specific historical conditions. New historicism approached the relationship between text and context with an urgent attention to the political ramifications of literary interpretation" (417). One of the important premises on which New Historicism operates is that "literature and history are inseparable" (Brannigan 417). Literature is a vehicle for the representation of history and it focuses the formation of historical moment like the trauma of Partition of 1947. The novels, the short stories and the other forms of literature besides the multifarious accounts like the letters, interviews, reports in the newspapers, official documents, etc. reveal the tensions and the trauma by which historical changes come about. They reflect Partition history as a mirror. In other words, Partition literature is seen as a constitute part of Indian history in the making.

The researcher, in the narratives taken up for scrutiny, has revisited these literatures of the past in order to see the trauma of men and women and children of all ages at the time of the Partition holocaust. These narratives are, in the borrowed expression from John Brannigan "a loyal watchdog, patrolling the fences of a conservative social order" (420). They are embedded in the social and political contexts. They share common images, themes and metaphors that have a direct bearing on the clash of interests, power equations of the major political groups and communal organisations of those turbulent times.

One of the important aspects of New Historicism is the conception of the relationship between power and subversion. To the historicist Greenblatt, "texts of all
kinds offer us glimpses of subversion, but only in order to contain subversive elements effectively" (Brannigan 422). The texts under scrutiny collectively come to us as a common discourse of power relations at that time of Partition. Not only literary texts, but texts of all kinds are “vehicles of power” (Brannigan 422). According to the historicist Patterson, “There is no space outside power… (Brannigan 425).

Texts are inseparable from their contexts. The novel The River Churning firmly rooted in the historical context presents the “experience of centred helplessness” (Gallagher 437) of Sutara who is caught unawares in the power struggle between the two major political parties who more or less champion the causes of their supporting religious organisations. The whole societal edifice was deconstructed; the overbearing culture was destabilised; victims like Sutara felt self-distantiated and marginalized. The barbarian-patriarchs unleashed an uncontrollable cannibalistic violence against women so as to break the morale of the opposition to gain power in the nation building or debuilding exercise. The novel can be seen as interplay between representations of gender and power in a demarcated and stratified society.

The novelist takes us back to 1946 to Noakhali in East Bengal. A sudden blaze of communal disharmony disturbs the entire Hindu households in that area and there was utter havoc in every Hindu home in the predominantly Muslim neighbourhood. Invariably women were the target of attack. The idea of the trouble-shooters was to cripple the women forever so that the opposition would never be on its feet again. In out patriarchal society from time immemorial, the woman has been a protected species. Her father, brother, lover, or lord claims a kind of property in her. Her strength is her virginity. But the perpetrators of violence usurped that power from her and imposed upon
misery, suffering, and weighed down by worry and by the inequities of experience, she personalized guilt. The perfecting Sunna thought leaves to modify her make-up. This personal guilt. The perfecting Sunna thought leaves to modify her make-up. This does not mean that the Sunna thought leaves to modify her make-up. This does not mean that she is destined to suffer, who can save her? (The Brother 46) as the New Historian

She is destined to suffer, who can save her? There is no chance, neither in this life nor beyond. She will lose her power and her dependency, like she will lose her chance on the street. This is why...
has to live a barren sister all her life. Until Promode proposes to her, “love, marriage, a family life, never entered her mind” (The River 133).

Shiv K Kumar adopts the third person narrative for his novel A River with Three Banks to present the violent implosion in Delhi and some other pockets of northern India at the time of the Partition. He makes the main plot gush forth like a blood stream with all vitality and liveliness. He has written this novel in a highly evocative language for, Kumar being essentially a poet, “thinks and feels in terms of images and metaphors”(Swaroop Singh 40).

The narrative structure of this novel is not circular like the personal narratives like Kadambari or Panchatantra. In a circular narrative, as Meenakshi Mukherji observes, “either there is a large story which contains a smaller one which in turn contains another and so on, or a number of shorter tales are strung together in the larger thread of the central narrative”(05). The narrative pattern of A River with Three Banks, on the contrary, is linear where “the events grow organically out of each other instead of being loosely strung together through a common thread.

A River with Three Banks is not meant to be a fable or an allegory. It is an organic product of a specific environment in a particular society at a given point of time in history. And so its historical and geographical coordinates bind it. It doesn’t have, as most of the pre-novel tales, a ‘once upon a time’ ambience where the tensions of past and present are conspicuously absent. But in the novel in reference, Shiv K Kumar depicts situations on spatial and temporal axes, employing realism. It is by all standards, one of the viable modes of viewing the concrete human reality. Another noteworthy aspect of the novel is that the characters there are not types or representatives of some social class,
but in the words of Mukherji, “specific individuals who are required to be convincing in the context of a given time and culture” (06). In this way, the novelist as he is an excellent creative artist transcends his limited model by a firm grasp of his own milieu and time.

Living in Lahore at the time of the Partition, and witnessing the holocaust and the mammoth exchange of refugees from either side of the international border led to an unprecedented upsurge of violence—killing, abduction, rape, humiliation, looting and violence. Ever since Shiv K.Kumar witnessed it, it became a trauma, and he had to grapple with his inner disquiet. Even after he migrated to India as a refugee, the sorrow and the uneasy feeling continued. He did not know, to quote Daruwalla, “where he stood with himself, his soul, his solitudes” (02). All that he had seen with his naked eyes started haunting him wherever he went to. So after many years, Shiv K Kumar has crystallised the chunk of reality, which is his experience as well in his A River with Three Banks.

Placing the novel in the background of Partition, the novelist deftly handles man-woman relationship that centres on marriage and divorce, love and hate, forgiveness and revenge. In short, in this novel, here is a poet’s visualisation of the India of 1947—its brutality and romance, its agony and ecstasy.

Shiv K Kumar has used irony very effectively. He resorts to it to bring out the doubleness of loyalty of Sarita towards her husband Gautam and also to highlight plenty of ironic situations in the novel. The term ‘irony’ is derived from a Greek word meaning ‘dissembler’. Patric Murray defines the expression ‘dissembler’ in his Literary Criticism: A Glossary of Major Terms:
The dissembler was a character who assumed a false appearance, who pretended to be less intelligent than he was, who dealt in understatement, who was able in these days to triumph over his opposite...who tended to take things at their face value and was easily deceived. At the root of all irony is a contrast between what is being said, implied or suggested and what is actually the case. (69)

The novel, *A River with Three Banks*, which is a story of revenge and romance, presented against the backdrop of the communal disturbances at the time of the Partition, abounds with dissemblers. It is quite ironic that the middle class, educated, Hindu wedded wife of Gautam Mehta, instead of being loyal to her dutiful, loving husband, at the very first opportunity of her husband’s temporary exit from home, develops a secret love affair with a colleague of Gautam, Mohinder. She even begets a baby fathered by Mohinder. In reality, what happens in such a household is that the husband would take the cudgel and give a sound thrashing to his erring woman. But, ironically, what Gautam does is, he is trying to sever himself “from the eerie spell of Belinda’s gaze” (*A River* 07). Belinda in the novel is a pet cat of Father Jones. However the cat merges with Sarita, Gautam’s wife. Interestingly, Belinda in Pope’s *Rape of the Lock* though she is a flirt rejects the amorous advances of the Baron with lightning in her eyes. But Gautam’s wily wife surrenders meekly to Mohinder. It is ironic that even “an uncanny stare” (*A River* 07) from his wife “almost chilled him” (*A River* 07). It is again ironic that Gautam who has lived with Sarita for a few years is unable to wait even for a couple of months to come out of the wedlock. He wants, as in these days of instant mail and instant nirvana,
“an instant release, a way out of this labyrinth, a quite, painless deliverance” (A River 06). Shiv K Kumar deftly blends here the situational irony with a lovely metaphor.

The reader is fully aware that not only Sarita is a dissembler, but also even Gautam is one. Posing as an innocent chap, he asks Father Jones whether an unbelieving wife could be converted through her husband. But his intention is not to convert her but to divorce her. Gautam’s initiation into Christianity is not out of his love for Christ as his saviour or Christ’s love for the sinners, but Gautam’s belief that through Christianity he can get a passport to an early divorce. It is quite ironical to see that Gautam who is a strong believer in communal harmony, religious tolerance and peace, himself has become the root cause of furthering tension in Allahabad. There is ironical humour when the general public of India referred to Lord Louis Mountbatten as “Pandit Mountbatten” because of his close association with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. There is ironical subversion when many Indian gossip columnists referred to Lady Edwina Mountbatten as Nehru’s Ladylove. According to them, she “had a crush on Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru” (A River 01).

There is situational irony when Father Jones thinks that Gautam embraces Christianity on his own accord and without any axe to grind; the Father adds, “We should come to the Lord only out of the freedom and power of our soul. Like yourself” (A River 07).

There is a sense of irony that when the whole country is witnessing the communal holocaust, in the brothel centre in Neel Kamal, (a posh restaurant in Delhi), there is perfect communal harmony, for “in this nefarious business, both Hindus and Muslims are operating as close accomplices” (A River 10). Hearing the names of the
inmates as Haseena and Lakshmi, the Police Commissioner in an ironic vein comments, “Here is a real intercommunal home, with Pannalal and Suleiman Ghani as its heads” (A River 181). It is ironical to note that Neel Kamal is quite famous for its cuisine; its hospitality is limitless. It offers its patrons everything—“wine, women and song” (A River 16). And again, the historical ruins of Kotla Feroze Shah are ironically referred to an ideal place for “an open-air romantic setting for a brief fling” (16).

An irony of situation is presented, when Gautam returns from Singapore with many dreams, what awaits him back home is an awful thing. On the auspicious Diwali evening, he gets a special gift from Lord Rama and from Mohinder, his colleague and friend; it is Rahul, a chubby boy. And all this time, he has loved Rahul “as his own child” (A River 19).

There are multiple ironies in the incident connected with Gautam’s house. With enormous care, Gautam has built his house. The architect has not made any alterations. Ironically, now, Gautam has a sense of exile whenever he comes into his house. Even “the fourteen-inch walls were not quite sound proof against his wife’s ceaseless hollering” (A River 22). The bedroom specially designed for Gautam and Sarita, now serves for Mohinder and Sarita. Whenever he thinks of it he feels “as though his heart had missed a beat” (A River 22).

Both the belligerent communities want the British to leave the Indian soil at an early date; but the blood-soaked letter of the dead man provokes Gautam to ironic reflections: “How very ironic”, Gautam ruminates, “that both communities were still looking to England for help” (A River 38). When the hour of horror and grief comes to Allahabad, Gautam realises the irony of situation, he thinks that he is safe as long as he
moves about “in a dhoti and kurta, some caste mark displayed on ...(his) forehead…. How funny, one’s life depends upon what one wears these days!” (A River 119).

Irony, as has been shown by Hutcheon in her book Splitting Images: Contemporary Canadian Ironies, has an inbuilt mechanism of disparate elements like “contradiction, division, (and) doubleness” (97). According to her, “these are the contesting elements that irony lets in by the front door” (97). In Berry’s day-to-day conjugal relationship too we find such disparate elements of irony. Berry gets a call from his English friend Bob for a cocktail party. Berry’s wife Sona too very much wants to attend that party. But Berry thinks that his wife will be a stumbling block to enjoy the evening. So he camouflages his intention and hugs his wife tightly and asks her whether she really wants his English friends to leer at her. She says that it is very horrible and she doesn’t want any one other than her husband to look at her. But the irony of it, “she imagined how very exciting it would be to be hustled by a white man—so clean, so perfumed, so sophisticated” (A River 136). It should not be construed that marital fidelity is scarce in modern Indian society. The novelist has employed a couple of situational ironies. In Allahabad, Gautam is wounded in the scuffle with the panda Bhole. On seeing a taxi, Gautam calls it for a ride to a nearby hospital. On seeing the caste mark on the forehead of Gautam, the driver feels an enormous sympathy for him and offers to take him “to a very good Hindu doctor” (A River 162). On the way the driver curses the Muslims, “Oh, these villains!” (A River 162) Ironically he is not aware of the fact that a fellow Hindu inflicted the wounds. The Hindu doctor was quite solicitous. He flatly refused to accept any money “from a victim of Muslim stabbing” (A River 162). Nor would the taxi driver accept any fare for the taxi. Gautam was inwardly amused. He said
to himself, “Such generosity...towards one’s co-religionists only!” (A River 162). Gautam is taken-a-back that the very next day the leading journals reported the stabbing incident and ironically attributed the killing to the Muslim community.

The novelist’s use of irony and empathy yokes him with Graham Greene, who has evinced tremendous sympathy for the socially beleaguered or deviants like the Whisky Priest in The Power and The Glory. Similarly in A River with Three Banks, the novelist never condemns either Gautam or Berry or Haseem, who are not paragons of virtue or excellence.

Shiv K Kumar excels not only in the use of irony but also in the employment of animal imagery. It (animal imagery) blends quite comfortably with the structural irony in many places of the novel. Sarita always looks at Gautam with her burning eyes, as the cat Belinda does “riveting its burnt sienna eyes on Gautam’s face” (A River 06). Taking her burning eyes for an instant from Gautam, Belinda’s angry gaze is now riveted on the Bishop’s aquarium, “where it observed one goldfish furiously chasing another” (A River 07). The goldfish in reference is none but Sarita who chases Gautam away his abode. When Gautam satisfies the Bishop with his knowledge of the Bible, the Bishop gets ready to give him baptism. Seeing this, “Belinda slunk out of the room, as though crestfallen...” (A River 08). Sarita also looks crestfallen later when she learns that the divorce is through. In another incident, pointing out a girl’s naked breasts in a brothel, Berry asks him whether he doesn’t feel like swigging off those cups. When Gautam answers in the negative, Berry says that what Gautam actually needs is a lovely girl to exorcise him. Then he will wake the next morning like “a phoenix from the ashes” (A River 67). Referring to the rioters, Gautam derisively says, “We are dealing with
bloodhounds, not human beings” (A River 10). And again, Gautam’s lawyer advises him to convert to Christianity to get the desired release, otherwise it is very difficult because “the Hindu law is a vicious python that never slackens its clasp” (A River 18). Again when Gautam goes back to his own house where his estranged wife is housed, he notices an image of “a fish staring at him out of the wood” (A River 18). As he lets his right hand run over the panel, as if to feel the fish’s contours, he suddenly flinches as a globule of blood oozes out of his forefinger. The fish that stings is a warning that he should not touch anything in that house anymore including his wife. Having fully convinced that his wife has ditched him, Gautam decides to get a divorce from his wife with out much fanfare. He needs his wife’s help to this. So he gently coaxes her to agree to it. She relents. Continuing the animal imagery, the novelist comments that like a foolish fish, “Sitting there on the sofa, she was swallowing the bait” (A River 26).

Gautam remembers to have seen a cobra a few months ago in his backyard. He took a casuarinas hedge and chased it across the hedge. Sarita was then standing near the tree. Now when he conjures up the scene in his mind, Sarita merges with the “cobra under the lemon tree in the backyard” (A River 24). In another incident, Gautam calls his friend Berry who has a hairy chest like that of “a large ape” (A River 42) as a “lion-tamer” (A River 92). Gautam who has witnessed two deaths (Rahul’s and Abdul Rahim’s) is poised precariously “like a spider” (A River 47). Encountering Sarita’s secret lover Mohinder once, Gautam asks him why he shouldn’t marry her. Mohinder never expects this from Sarita’s husband and expresses his surprise. As Mohinder has spoiled Gautam’s marital bliss irrevocably, he is fuming and calls Mohinder, “You deadly viper” (A River 49).
The novelist using the image of a bird beautifully brings out Haseena’s confinement in the dirty, murky dungeon with a group of abducted girls and forced into prostitution in Delhi; she is “like a caged bird, fluttering helplessly against the steel bars” (A River 102-103). This simile promptly reminds us to a similar simile in Margaret Laurence’s The Stone Angel. In the novel in reference, Hagar Shipley finds herself, like “a fenced cow meeting only the barbed wire whichever way she turns” (53). Whenever Haseena let a customer take her for a sexual ride, she would invariably feel as though she had “thrown a bone to a dog” (A River 103).

Escaped from the mouth of hell where Pannalal was the gatekeeper, Gautam fell into a deep sleep in the train. He dreamed then that he had strayed into a dark, narrow tunnel, over a rail track, “winding like a python” (A River 105). He heard voices “hissing all about his ears” (A River 105). Shamlal, Gautam’s father refers to Purnima, Gautam’s former servant-maid as a “viper” (that) “goes about spitting venom everywhere” (A River 113). In Kanpur, the shopkeeper that Gautam meets for purchasing tickets for a boat ride is said to have breasts, “sagging like those of an old gorilla Gautam had once seen at the Wellington Zoo in Lahore” (A River 124). The same shopkeeper when seeing currency notes in the hands of Gautam, snatches them, “like a performing monkey, asking for a handful of peanuts from one of the spectators” (A River 125). As Gautam pays the entire money for the ticket then and there, Bhole, the shopkeeper, leaps off the shop, “like a wild animal, beckoning his customers to follow him” (A River 125).

Even an ordinary expression of surprise has a tinge of animalistic flavour in it as the following expression shows: “The bull’s eye!” (A River 126). Having quite narrowly escaped from the ‘panda’ Bhole, in the Ganges, Gautam and Haseena return to the bank,
the ar... the stretch of the Lizard carriageway over a dry field scattered in Caw诛's, ects." (A River 214)

thrown the band—its transparent belly tingling with heat, its wings flitting in and out in
helpless Caw诛 in a honey pot on the banks of the Caupen, "a huge hand clamped up
circumstances—straddling their cows, Caw诛's, the paddle, these... these is the ordinary

If is interesting to note that a very singular creature in the ordinary
down—sand washed." (A River 214)

small belly lifts itself with some indescribable heat, "they... how round and round, up and
swoops into the sky, and begins to circle jovially over the maw of rocks on either side. Then
the shapes of some prehistoric mammoths. (A River 214) Suddenly, a hook of firms
cross the border with utterance a single syllable: the sky above them begins to assume
them. They are the bees helping their scaly wings in the dark. (A River 213). They
simply non-voluntary creature. (A River 189) As Saba and her mother walk in the
swarming bit like cocoon of misty and reeling. (A River 187). To Betty, Caw诛 is a
Sarah's marriage to Mohinder will... Caw诛 from her splendid scented monstrosity and
complained bits in panda Purnima's bosom are the hook of carved bread. (A River 180).
cows' spindly claws on his own back. (A River 150). The abashed and... his monkey
hunching his ears, "Somehow, Betty calls her, "My cow... (A River 136). In the
this mouth is a... a heavy prey, a tawny-muscled cowman, and "boothoon... (A River 130). He
book. Below his revealed vertices across his self... "Lake a cromlech. (A River 130). He
with their noses totally dimmed. They feel as though they had waded through a river of
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River160). Gautam shouts that there is a snake and diverts the attention of the 'panda'. In an unguarded moment, Gautam bounces upon the 'panda' "like a wounded leopard" (A River 160) and saves himself by plunging the 'panda's own knife. Coming to know this incident a little late, Haseena jokingly comments, "So the lizard was your saviour" (A River 166). To the English couple, Jim and Alice Panda Bhole is "a real leviathan" (A River 172), bringing in associations to the legendary monster mentioned in the Bible—"...how to control Leviathan" (Job 3:8).

In Syed Mohammad Ashraf's "Separated from the Flock" too the author uses animal imagery to bring home the idea of separation from one's one kith and kin and birthplace. Those who opted for Pakistan at the time of the partition was compared to the birds whose "wings were broken" (SAP I 14). They would "never be able to fly again" (SAP I 15). Some birds hit by the bullets from the hunters, "were frantically beating the water with their broken wings and were desperately trying to get away from the hunters" (SAP I 14). In Pakistan there are people with "broken wings... like Gulam Ali's wife and Vaziruddin's wife and Nawab. Each one still dreams of those fields beyond the mountains..." (SAP I 23). Symbolically the birds stand for the refugees struggling to get a little respite so that they could quickly make a visit to their former home and return. But this just desire of them is denied and as the birds with the broken wings suffer, the migrants have to suffer. Looking at the birds, the police officer says, "I too suffered as much as you did" (SAP I 24). In this realistic story the author seeks to convey his intended meaning by presenting an actual experience. The animal imagery employed by the author is a symbol which is casually related to its meaning and as Ursula Brumm observes, "the symbol represents the hidden cause" (372). She adds that "a bird with a
broken wing (symbolically stands) for a frustrated longing" (Brumm 372). To go by Ursula Brumm’s observation, the symbol used in the story is “the cause-linked ‘realistic’ symbol” (375), which is the opposite of the transcendent or magic symbol of the poetic novel.

The imagery—birds with broken wings—is quite popular with other writers as well. For instance, Manik Bandyopadhyay uses it for his tale “Childishness”. In the tale, Indira and Halima had been living as good neighbours with their two naughty children. But now everything went topsy-turvy with the announcement of the Partition. The children feel like birds whose “wings clipped” (SAP I 131). With enormous sadness, they felt that “it was the whim of their owners to keep them like poultry” (SAP I 130). They asked each other, “Are we no better than birds...? Are we going to be driven around—here today, there tomorrow? Are we going to nest in trees?” (SAP I 130). In the heightened tension, Indira and Halima pressed forward like mad women with their heads knocked together. They looked at each other with savage eyes, “like two tigresses about to attack” (SAP I 134).

La lithambika Antharjanam’s “A Leaf in the Storm” treating the plight of a rape victim in a refugee camp in Punjab, points out how the hardworking Punjabis were hounded out of their houses—their ancestral homes they had inherited—“like stray dogs...hunted out of them like wild hen” (SAP I 140).

In Umm-e-Ummara’a “More Sinned Against Than Sinning”, the father who opted for the Pakistan side at the time of the Partition, much against the wishes of all his family members, is likened to a stubborn animal. The narrator’s younger brother tells his father, after a long futile argument with him, “It’s futile to argue with you, Baba. What you
want me to do is to snatch sugar cane away from an elephant. What can one possibly do when one isn’t even allowed to open one’s mouth?” (SAP I 112).

In Bhisham Sahni’s “The Train Has Reached Amritsar”, a mixed group of people were travelling in an overcrowded train from the west to Amritsar. There were Pathans, Sardharjis, and Hindus. As the train was passing through the Pathan’s area, the Pathans were behaved in a terribly atrocious manner. But the moment the train crossed their area, a Babu, watching everything in the train, became very violent. Looking at a mischievous Pathan, the Babu shouted, “You pretend to be brave like a lion in your own backyard. Now talk, you son of a bitch” (SAP I 154).

Vatsayan Ajneya’s “Refugee” describes how a domestic cat saves the life of a refugee who has taken shelter in the garage of his Muslim acquaintance. The cat ate the meat meant for Devenderlal and “snarled furiously...(and) screamed as if in pain… shrieked without much energy, groaned, let out a long sigh, and finally, gasped for breath and died” (SAP I 81). Devenderlal stared at the food for a long time.

In Intizar Husain’s “The City of Sorrow”, the third man’s atrocities against his helpless victims project him as an alien even to his once pets, the dog and the cat. The dog that had always wagged his tail and greeted him affectionately, now growled. That day “there was hostility and fear in his (dog’s) eyes, and his hair stood on end” (SAP I 87). The dog snarled at him and backed away as if he were an alien creature. Even the cat looked at him strangely as if he were an enemy and quickly slunk away.

In Mohan Rakesh’s “God’s Dog”, the narrator, who has been running from post to pillar for a small piece of land in India after losing every inch of his property in Pakistan sarcastically calls himself as a ‘god’s dog’. In sheer exasperation, he looks at all those in
the office and addresses, “All of you here are dogs... I am also a dog! The only difference is that you are the dogs of the government—you tear people to bits and bark at the orders of the government! I am God’s dog. I live by his grace and bark at his command” (SAP I 122). When asked about his name is, he answered, “My number is 1226/7. The name given to me by father and mother has been devoured by those dogs! Now the only name I have is the one given to me by your office. It is 1226/7” (SAP I 123). The reader is reminded of W. H. Auden’s “The Unknown Citizen” in which the citizen of a modern welfare state is reduced to a mere number (JS/07/M/378) by the bureaucracy which ignores questions like,

Was he free? Was he happy? The question is absurd:

Had anything been wrong, we should certainly have heard (David Green 198).

Ramesh Chandra Sen in his story “The White Horse” sadly tells us how the miscreants ignominiously sacrifice an innocent white horse, which symbolically stands for purity, at the time of the Partition. The incident makes us recall the ancient custom of the Greeks who “believed that the sun drove in a chariot across the sky; hence the Rhodians, who worshipped the sun as their chief deity, annually dedicated a chariot and four horses to him, and flung them into the sea for his use” (Frazer 104). But in the story in reference, the rioters shot the innocent animal on the right temple for sheer joy. It lay dead on the pavement.

In K. A. Abbas’ “The Death of Sheikh Burhanuddin” the narrator Sheikh Burhanuddin when surrounded by Hindu fanatics feel “like a wounded deer, running hither and thither, with the hunters’ hounds in full pursuit” (SAP I 230).
The existence of the refugee boy who had not been wanted by his fellow travellers in Masood Ashar's "A Very Old Story" is compared to an "earth-worm, which alone can travel like that" (SAP I 239).

Mulk Raj Anand's classic tale "The Parrot in the Cage" evokes in us the memories of the ancient Indian belief of keeping one's precious life/soul in birds or animals. J. G. Frazer in his The Golden Bough presents a popular Indian folk tale, in which a magician called Punchkin confesses to his ladylove that thousands of miles away there is a thick jungle and

... in the midst of the jungle grows a circle of palm trees, and in the centre of the circle stand six chattees full of water, piled one above another: below the sixth chatee is a small cage, which contains a little green parrot; --on the life of the parrot depends my life; --and if the parrot is killed I must die. (Frazer 876)

In the same way the old refugee woman, in Mulk Raj Anand's story "The Parrot and the Cage", Rukmani, puts her life on the parrot she is carrying wherever she goes. The male parrot is her son. In sheer despair, She talks to the parrot, "Son, I don't know where I am..." (SAP III 86). It is a sad sight to see that in spite of gnawing hunger, she gets some food for the parrot and feeds him. For if the parrot dies, she will also die as the parrot is her only companion.

Dipendranath Bandyopadhyay presents his story of a violent episode at the time of the Partition through animal symbolism. The story titled as "Jatayu" unmistakably evokes Kampan's Jatayu in his Ramayana, Rama, Lakshmana and Sita in their exile in the jungle meet Jatayu, the king of vultures. He takes the visitors as Vishnu, Brahma, and
Siva. Finally finding their resemblances with his friend Dasaratha, Jatayu asks them who they are. The visitors reply that they are the sons of King Dasaratha. Jatayu enquires after Dasaratha’s health. Hearing that Dasaratha has gone to his heavenly abode, Jatayu is unconscious. After regaining consciousness, he laments his friend’s death. To the stunned visitors, Jatayu tells “he is going to leave this world by jumping into the fire” (Padmanabhan Thampi 56). In Bandyopadhyay’s story “Jatayu”, Nityacharan and Durga, the husband and wife, imitate what Jatayu intends to do. But there is a difference. Jatayu postpones his jumping into the fire in deference to the visiting dignitaries. But Nityacharan and Durga have no such dignified visitors to make a request to postpone their death by fire. The harried victims of the Partition see their settlement burning and jump into the chariot of fire that “speeds towards Calcutta” (SAP III 103).

In Bhisham Sahni’s “Pati”, seeing a “kafir’s polluted child” (SAP III 127) in the lap of Zenab, the maulvi asks her, “Do you want to nurture a snake?” (SAP III 127). But in reality, she doesn’t find anything polluted about the boy nor does he look like the young one of a serpent.

It seems that the snake image is quite popular with the litterateurs. Sultan Jamil Nasim also employs this for his tale “I Am Game”. Having gone into Pakistan with plenty of pleasant dreams, Afroze’s mother is waiting for realising at least one such dream. But she is shocked to know that her good Samaritan turns out to be a pimp who wants none but the charming Afroze at any price for one of his wealthy customers. In a voice of full of hatred, Afroze’s mother tells Majid the pimp, “I...I...never expected this from you of all persons. You have been a snake in the grass. I don’t want your help... You evil-minded man, get out of my sight!” (SAP III 149).
To the Sardarji Udham Singh too in N.G. Gore’s tale “A Mouthful of Water…” the innocent Muslim boy Anwar who once lovingly called him ‘chachaji’ is though “a golden lad, …a snake all the same” (SAP III 224). As he is the progeny of a Muslim, Udham Singh decides to kill him. And when madness was unleashed in Delhi, Udham Singh saw Anwar playing in a lane and stabbed him to death because to him it was a judgement day and on that day “all snakes will be crushed!” (SAP III 226). The innocent child Anwar “that rabbit, that bulbul” (SAP III 228) was now lying lifeless in the tarred Delhi street beside a handful of blood trickling away! The snake image employed in these tales corroborates more to the biblical image of the serpent than with Indian impression of the animal. In the Bible it is the snake that trips the earliest mankind. In the Book of Genesis it is said: “Now the snake was the most cunning animal that the Lord God had made” (Gen.3:1). 

To the visiting millionaire Ali Husain, in Aga Sohail’s tale “Outside the Haveli”, Lucknow his former birthplace is backward, defeated, and decrepit. The Pakistani visitor feels suffocated. Visiting his old haveli, he feels disgusted and mutters to himself, “Allah, Allah, how many years did we spend here living like animals!” (SAP III 176).

The modern avatar of Kalki feels terribly disgusted at seeing man cutting the throat of the other in Gulam Abbas’ tale “Avatar: A Hindu Myth” and charges his ‘supposed’ worshippers, “You are not human beings. You are worse than jackals” (SAP III 204).

Ali Imam Naqvi tells his story “The Vultures of the Parsi Cemetery” through the image of vultures. Invariably the vultures in the Parsi cemetery would eat the dead bodies of the Parsees. But at the time of the communal holocaust, the vultures were conspicuously absent in the cemetery. The Parsi people were taken a back. Only much later, to their great
consternation, they understood that they had gone to feast on the corpses of the Hindus and Muslims littered in streets. To the terrified community people, the City Police Commissioner reported, “After the street’s been cleaned up, the vultures will come on their own accord” (An Epic 315).

The narrator Chinta Ram in Ashfaq Ahmad’s “The Shepherd” usually “sat still as a porcupine” (An Epic 71) whenever his saintly master Dauji went into a reverie. The master would sometimes grab his student’s chubby hands and retort, “Be a thoroughbred Arabian charger, don’t just sit around like a tethered donkey!” (An Epic 74). In Dauji’s house, the narrator observes that Bebe “stuck to Dauji like a bitch with pups” (An Epic 77).

Upender Nath Ashk’s “Tableland” gives us a hint of the Indian politics at the time of India’s struggle for independence through an animal imagery. In a conversation with Dina Nath, Qasim says

There was a time when they (the Hindu masses) elected Subhash Babu a second time as the Congress president, without knowing exactly the wishes of Mahatma Gandhi. But when Gandhiji equated Patabi Satya Ramya’s defeat with his own, the very same Subhash Babu was removed like a fly from a glass of milk. (An Epic 115)

The narrator, in Intizar Husain’s tale “An Epic Unwritten”, presenting the uneventful and humiliating end of the story’s hero Pichwa of Qadirpur, says that though Pichwa was a sensational hero, he “has vanished like horns off a donkey’s head” (An Epic 166) from his mind.
In Ismat Chughtai’s tale “Roots”, the author shows that as the Muslims in the states of Marwar are terribly shaken by seeing the goings on of the time and as the relatives of Amma are coming one by one seeking shelter and protection from the rioters, the other members of her household felt that the mouth of the chasm widened and when Nirmila’s in-laws came from Lyallpur nearly half-dead, “serpents began to hiss in this chasm” (An Epic 196).

Damayanti in Hasan Manzar’s “Kanha Devi and Her Family” felt at the time of the communal riots that her unalterable fate had brought her into a cul de sac from which she couldn’t possibly hope to escape and “she was the animal tied to a stake and beaten to death” (An Epic 217).

Most of the authors of these narratives consciously or unconsciously have resorted to one of the most important techniques of structuralism/post-colonialism namely ‘intertextuality’. It is a term coined by Julia Kristeva in 1966 to denote the interdependence of literary texts, “the interdependence of any one literary text with all those that have gone before it” (Cuddon 424). It is a device wherein authors have scope for making references to myths and legends, and commentaries of some well-known texts ancient and modern, folk songs, and holy texts. And as such, intertextuality could be seen as a device built on the premise that “every text builds itself as a mosaic of quotations, every text is absorption and transformation of another text” (Kristeva 146). She has used the Freudian expression ‘Transposition’ to denote that texts not only echo each other but also the discourses or sign systems are transposed into one other—“so that meanings in one kind of discourse are overlaid with meanings from another kind of discourse” (Cuddon 424). Explaining and at the same time showing the discrepancies of the mystical
concept of the textual theory propounded by eminent critics like Barthes, Derrida, and De Man, Leonard Jackson, in his sensational book, The Poverty of Structuralism gives a disparaging view of ‘intertextuality’: “...texts inhabit a vast and essentially unspecifiable intertextuality; ...they make allusions to other texts and partly have to be understood in terms of other texts...” (15). It is not out of place to point out here a very important critical tenet put forward by George Steiner: “Criticism is, necessarily, comparison” (Lodge 626). Understandably, comparison includes allusion and reference. Roland Barthes, the French Structuralist and one of the fathers of French Semiology prefers to use the term ‘intertext’ to ‘intertextuality’. He uses the word ‘Intertext’ to label the writers who have influenced him. As he puts it, “The intertext is not necessarily a field of influence; rather it is a music of figures, metaphors, thought-words”...(Jackson 129). According to him, any new text, a reader takes up for reading, operates partly “by direct comparison with a whole series of earlier texts, without the intervention of any system of formal rules” (Jackson 150). He doesn’t stop with this. He brings out a textual hypothesis in the form of a claim “that each text is traversed by numberless other texts” (Jackson 150). It is an important part of the concept of textuality/ intertextuality. Not going into the merit of Leonard Jackson’s view, the researcher has identified some instances of intertextuality in the diverse narratives analysed here.

The novel A River with Three Banks has plenty of biblical overtones. Bhole, the stout boatman of the Ganges is about to find out the true identity of Gautam and Haseena who pose themselves as Lalit Tripathi and Seema for fear of falling victims to Hindu outrage. Having narrowly escaped from the goon, Gautam felt “like Lot’s wife” (A River 132) described in Genesis19: 26. The old bearded man brutally stabbed in front of the St.
John’s Chapel, is a Christ-figure. Just as Christ had nobody to go to his rescue, the old man too had nobody to help him when the Hindu fanatics surrounded him. He was abandoned by all and was as helpless as Christ. As Christ was beaten and bruised all over his body, the innocent man desperately searching for his abducted daughter was “riddled with stab wounds” (A River 09) on “his chest, neck and abdomen” (A River 09). On seeing the mangled body of the old man, Father Jones, crossing his chest, exclaimed “Oh Jesus!” (A River 09). The expression ‘Oh Jesus’ is not only a cry of agony, but also refers to the bleeding Jesus Christ on the cross. The bishop in pain mutters, “Is it another crucifixion?” (A River 09). As Christ frantically knocks at the hearts of men who easily don’t admit him, the old man too “knocked frantically for admittance” (A River 09), but no one admitted him in. Again, in the bishop’s drawing room, there hangs “a large canvas of a wounded Christ lying on Virgin Mary’s lap” (A River 03). As Christ shed his blood to save the sinners, the old man shed his precious blood not only for his daughter Haseena, but also for his wife and the other daughter and possibly for the other relatives too to save themselves from the enemy’s snares. With tears welled up in the bishop’s eyes seeing the dead body, he wonders, “Was it the legacy of the Original Sin?” (A River 11). Seeing the madness on the streets, Father Jones whispered to Gautam, “Let Christ be with you hereafter—let him guide your steps” (A River 12). And again Syamlal, Gautam’s father, an Arya Samajist describes Christ as a yogi, “a real karmayogi” (A River 35). He offers a new interpretation to Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection:

Being a yogi, he (Christ) had controlled his organs, had sort of anaesthetized himself before they nailed him on the cross. And since he went into a deep ‘samadhi’, a yogic trance, he felt no pain—nor did he
really die. So, he rose from his grave after a brief spell—a kind of subterranean meditation. That was the Resurrection! (A River 35)

Nehru, the interim Prime Minister once goes to the air to address the nation. His speech is very inspiring and goes as follows: “We have hitched our destiny to the stars; we have miles to go and promises to keep...” (A River 38). This is an echo of Robert Frost’s popular poem, “Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening” which closes as follows:

The woods are lovely, dark and deep
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep (Oliver 406).

Hearing Nehru’s speech, Shamal comments, “That’s our young prince—a sort of Hamlet...too flamboyant, too poetic, too impractical” (A River 38). This recalls Shakespeare’s Prince of Denmark Hamlet who is more a scholar than an administrator, dreamy, poetic and totally impractical who is “too much in the sun” (1.2.68), who seeks his “noble father in the dust” (1.2.72), whose words of irresolution are almost proverbial:

To be, or not to be, --that is the question: --

Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer

The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,

Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,

And by opposing end them? —To die, to sleep, --

No more; and by a sleep to say we end

The heartache and thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to, --'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, --to sleep; --

To sleep! Perchance to dream: --ay, there's the rub (Hamlet 3.1.65-74).

Gautam kneels down on the rostrum when Father Jones is reading out a passage from the Bible. Gautam was very much touched by the passage from the book of Joshua in which Joshua, the successor of Moses escorts his followers to cross the river Jordan into the land of new promise: “Get some food ready, because in three days you are going to cross the River Jordan to occupy the land that the Lord your God is giving you” (Joshua 1:11). Hearing this verse Gautam thinks that he too is about to cross over to freedom. Sprinkling of holy water on Gautam’s head, Father Jones says, “Since you are one of Jesus’s flock, the Lord shall take care of you” (A River 52). Soon after Gautam’s dissolution of marriage, he feels a kind of sexual impotence creeping all over him. Berry senses it and calls him, “My dear Gautam Buddha” (A River 68). This recalls Buddha, who renounced all sorts of worldly pleasures including sexual enjoyment. The Hindu journal described Mahatma Gandhi as “a Hindu Messiah” (A River 87) an intertextual echo of Christ: “Some of the people in Jerusalem said... can it be that they really know that he is the Messiah?” (John: 7:25-26).

Soon after Gautam’s divorce, Purnima, his servant and a talebearer meets Gautam to permit her to continue serve him. Gautam knows that she is not a good woman. But he is about to be carried away by her avalanche of words. He wondered, “If Satan had worked assiduously on Adam, our first man too would have succumbed to temptation. But, of course, the Devil found Eve more exciting, more vulnerable” (A
River 91). It is an instance of intertextual irony of narration that connects it to the legend of creation and the disobedience of man:

The woman (Eve) saw how beautiful the tree was and how good its fruit would be to eat, and she thought how wonderful it would be to become wise. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, and he also ate it. As soon as they had eaten it, they were given understanding and realized that they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and covered themselves. (Gen. 3: 6-7)

There are some references to Hindu mythology in the narratives mentioned here. When Haseena puts 'kumkum' on her forehead and stands before Gautam, she looks like “one of the Hindu goddesses—Parvati or Lakshmi” (A River 122). Standing on the banks of the Triveni at Allahabad, Gautam is reminded of the merging of the Ganges and the Jumna with the third river, the Saraswati, flowing invisibly underneath to forge the Triveni. Everyone knows that “Hindus consider this confluence as the most sacred spot to immerse the ashes of their beloved dead” (A River 122). Going deep into the waters at Triveni, Gautam dips his right hand into the Ganges and his left into the Jumna, feeling as if he was holding the two rivers within the palms of his hands. But “it was the mythical Saraswati, flowing on in the subliminal zones, that really excited his imagination” (A River 128).

Here is another instance of intertextuality. Such devices of intertextuality show the author’s obsessive concern with his cultural identity. Gandhiji was trying to establish or bring home the idea of a sort of universal religion; however, our nation then was “not yet ready for his Utopia” (A River 195). The Utopia in reference recalls the ideal state
ordered by reason and it is a very famous work by Sir Thomas More in the 16th century. Gandhi’s prayer meeting in the Birla House in Delhi usually begins with a recitation from almost all the holy texts. Sometimes Cardinal Newman’s “Lead, Kindly Light”, follows it which is a very popular Christian hymn sung in churches to invoke god’s guidance in these turbulent times:

Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,  
Lead Thou me on;  
The night is dark, and I am far from home;  
Lead Thou me on (Hymns for College Worship 89).

The original (Bengali) title of Jyotirmoyee Devi’s novel The River Churning is Ithihasey Streeparva (The Woman Chapter in History). It is highly reminiscent of its links with the Mahabharata. To quote the words of the author, “I do not know if the history of any other country contains anything like the ‘Stree Parva’ of the Mahabharata (xxxiv). The novel is an instance of ironic intertextuality marking a continuity of the patriarchal system in which groups of cowards revelled time in and time out in the savage acts of barbarism mostly by exploiting the female body. The novel particularly connects the incidents occurred after the suicidal ‘Mushal Parva’ when the Yaddhu clan was destroyed. They occurred after the passing away of Krishna and Balram, Arjun arrived at Dwarka to look after the women. The author’s note continues:

Total anarchy prevailed in a land bereft of men. Robbers openly attacked and abducted the women in the presence of Arjun, who tried to use his mighty weapon, Gandiva, against them but found himself powerless to lift it. The Gandiva slipped from the hands of its powerful owner. Before his
very eyes, women were insulted and humiliated, some were forced to accompany the bandits out of fear, perhaps some were killed—the chronicler has not been able to give us a complete account. (xxxiv)

Jyotirmoyee Devi’s novel is an intertextual continuity of the earlier Indian classics like The Ramayana and The Mahabharata. The novel makes frequent references to the trauma of the early Indian prototype women like Sita and Draupadi. This helps us to see the structures of myth lying embedded in the human mind, which is common to all people. Myth thus “becomes a language—a universal narrative mode that transcends cultural or temporal barriers of feeling and experience” (Guerin, 336). Witnessing the plight of Sutara, the reader can unmistakably construe that the Indian “society has remained the same since the time of the Ramayana” (The River 45). By the willing suspension of the illusion of impartiality, one could find out that the heinous crimes against women have been committed “since the time of Amba of the Mahabharata and Sita of the Ramayana” (The River 47).

As none of her relatives came to her rescue, the sexually harassed Sutara had to live in a Muslim family. Nobody bothered about the trauma she had gone through. She was even considered a low caste. Earlier on, “Sita was exiled for the same offence” (The River 43). Whenever some good soul argued for protecting the women, those who unleashed violence against the women argued, “Can you tell us a single instance when women have not been molested, pushed about? Look at the stories in their Puranas—What about the abduction of Sita? What about Draupadi? (The River 14).

The elderly women of the household where Sutara was living as an exile treated her like dirt. Prompt instructions were given to the youngsters not to encourage her to
touch anything in the family, for she would be “polluting everything” (The River 36). This has an echo to what the sage Gautama did to his wife Akalya. Though Akalya had not done anything wilfully to mar the family’s reputation, she was treated “like a stinking, soiled garment” (A.S.Raman: 99). It looks as though Jyotirmoyee Devi had deliberately used the device of intertextuality to drive home her theme of violation of female sexuality for personal gains and to boost up male ego. In Sutara’s household, an elderly woman shouted, “What business did she have to come back? She should have stayed there” (The River 61). Damned by all and despised, Sutara looked like Akalya who lost her chastity for no sin of her own, in a divine plot. Clinging fast to her husband, the great sage Gautama, Akalya cried bitterly, “My lord, forgive me. I was not at all a party to what had happened. Do not spurn me” (A.S.Raman 99).

The novelist’s sensitive linking of Sutara to all the brutalised and fragmented women in history and her frequent reference to Mahabharata and Ramayana “turns her into a symbol of woman oppressed through history by other women who allow themselves to be dictated by male-dominated values” (Maitreyi Chatterjee 07). Sutara became “the exiled Sita, or other neglected girl—a symbol for all of them” (The River 50). The senior ladies justified their treatment of Sutara by recalling the practice of stoning deviant girls at the time of Jesus Christ. The incident is mentioned in John 8: 3-11. It should be remembered that Jesus, unlike the teachers of the Law and the Pharisees did not punish the woman caught red-handed committing adultery. He told her, “I do not condemn you.... Go, but do not sin again” (John 8: 11). Allusions to Mary holding the baby Christ, Good Friday, Christmas and the crucifixion of Christ are also made in the text (The River 55). Frequent references are made to Buddha too (The River 50,56).
Sutara became part of the history of women where countless “Draupadis were disrobed and humiliated” (The River 68). The reader on reading this is instantly reminded of Draupadi’s humiliation at Duryodhana’s court. At the behest of Duryodhana, Duhsasana dragged Draupadi to the court and in the presence of the courtiers, started pulling at her robe. Draupadi sobbed aloud and appealed to the elders gathered there: “If you have loved and revered the mothers who bore you and gave you suck, if the honour of wife or sister or daughter has been dear to you, if you believe in God and Dharma, forsake me not in this horror more cruel than death!” (Rajagopalachari 93).

Sutara is also likened to other prominent historical personages. She became part of the history of women of all time—“Satya, Treta, Dwapar and Kali Yuga—of what had gone before it” (The River 69). Seeing refugee students from Punjab, Sutara’s imagination went far back into the days of Mahabharath, for those girls were slim and pretty and came from the old lands of “Kekaya, Gandhara, lands of Kaikeyi and Gandhari…” (The River 73). There is also a reference to Charumati Bai, the princess of Rupnagar, and Bankimchandra’s Raj Singha and Rani Padmini.

Besides these, there is also a reference to the story of Lucretia. The plight of Lucretia links her with the popular ladies of the Hindu mythology like “Sita, Sati, Amba, Tapati, Vedavati, Draupadi and the rest” (The River 102).

Moinu realises the futility of the Hindu-Muslim conflict and understands that the sole objective of such an ignominious clash was to gain power ad wealth. He thinks such a kingdom of power and wealth at the cost of trust, love and respect is a foolish proposition. His thoughts lead him to remember a verse from Omar Khayyam:
The voice of the muezzin calls from the
darkness of death

Fools! What you want is nowhere
to be found.

What does man crave? What is his desire?

(The River 105)

There are also references to other important episodes in The River Churning. For instance, Pramode remembers the opening of the earth, from where Mother Earth emerged to take back her daughter Sita. He also remembers the abduction of Sita and the battle that followed between Ram and Ravana (The River 118). Pramode sarcastically avers that “Sita followed Ram in his forest exile but ram did not do the same for Sita” (The River 118).

In the text An Epic Unwritten too there are many instances of intertextuality. The exiled protagonist in Jamila Hashimi’s “Banished” feels exactly like Sita. She ruminates sadly, “Why did Sitaji, after her exile had ended, pray for only one thing: to meet her Ramchandraji again?” (An Epic 87-88). And again, from the day of her forceful confinement, she “felt like Sita, enduring her exile, incarcerated in Sangraon” (An Epic 89). As nobody has gone to her rescue, she sheds tears and mutters, “Who has the time or inclination to listen to Sitaji’s lament in this country?” (An Epic 94). The reader knows that Sita has never forgotten her husband in her exile and every moment that she is there, she longs for him. And when Hanuman secretly visits her, the first thing she wants him is to “tell Rama that she is very miserable and request him to redeem her within a period of two months, killing the ten-headed Ravana” (Padmanabhan Thampi 106-107).
Understandably as nobody came to rescue the modern Sita, and as she had no strength to step out of the darkness, “rather than embrace a second exile, Sitaji has accepted a life with Ravan” (Hashimi 104).

Ashfaq Ahmad’s moving story, “The Shepherd” also abounds in allusions to popular mythic beliefs and religious conventions and intertextual references. The devout student Chinta Ram considers it a very great fortune to carry his scholar-master and saintly figure Dauji and says, “I feel I’m carrying the phoenix, whose auspicious shadow falls on me alone” (An Epic 65). The reader’s imagination goes back to the fabulous bird connected with the worship of the sun especially in ancient Egypt and in classical antiquity. It is a very long-lived bird. According to some chroniclers it lives for 1461 years. As its end approaches the phoenix fashions a nest of aromatic boughs and spices, sets it on fire, and is consumed in the flames. From this pyre, miraculously springs a new phoenix. “The Egyptians”, as the Encyclopaedia Britannica shows, associated the phoenix with intimations of immortality, and the symbol had a widespread appeal in late antiquity” (Vol. 17: 897).

Dauji in the story would sometimes affectionately pat Chinta Ram’s head and give him a rupee. The disciple considered it as “precious as the Black Stone of the Kaba and kissed it...” (An Epic 65). The Black Stone of Kaaba, according to popular legend, was a stone given to Adam on his fall from paradise. It was originally white but has become black by absorbing the sins of the countless thousands of pilgrims who have kissed it and touched it. “Every Muslim” as the Encyclopaedia Britannica points out, “who makes the obligatory pilgrimage is required to walk seven times around the Ka’ba.
In this process it is customary to kiss and touch the stone, and forgiveness of sins is believed to come to all who do so" (Vol. 13: 178).

Again in the story, when Chinta Ram recited Sikandarnama from his memory, Dauji was so overjoyed to hear it and he blessed Chinta Ram with the words, “you’re like Moses…” (An Epic 65). This is an echo to Moses whom God had specially chosen though he was an ordinary shepherd and one with a stammering speech habit. God told him, “Now I am sending you to the king of Egypt so that you can lead my people out of his country” (Exodus: 3: 10). He thus became the leader of the Israelites in their exodus from Egypt.

Seeing the excellent resourcefulness of Pichwa, Intizar Husain is tempted to cast his hero Pichwa “as a twentieth century Tipu Sultan in his “An Unwritten Epic”. The reader on reading this immediately tries to recall to his memory the various exploits of Tipu Sultan, the Sultan of Mysore, who won great fame in many wars he led in the 18th century. In 1789, he provoked the British by attacking their ally the Raja of Travancore. He held the British at bay “by brilliant generalship for more than two years…” (Encyclopaedia Britannica 22:12). Talking about his pitiable death of Pichwa, Intizar Husain writes, “And what a death indeed this crazy Pichwa found! His life was a drama, and so was his death” (An Epic 176-177). This has an echo to Shakespeare’s Macbeth:

Life’s but a walking shadow; a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing (5. 5. 26-32).

In the story “Roots” by Ismat Chugtai, Roopchandji, the conscientious neighbour of a Muslim family terribly feels agitated having known that he didn’t do anything concrete to dispel the fear in the minds of his minority neighbours. He feels guilty that he is responsible for the family “to disintegrate, to fall apart” (An Epic 200). The phrase “to fall apart” recalls W. B. Yeats’ “The Second Coming”:

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
   
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
   
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
   
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world (58).

As the bearded old man symbolically stands for Jesus Christ, the title of the novel, A River with Three Banks is startlingly symbolic. It is common knowledge that no river will have more than two banks. ‘The three banks’ symbolically stands for many things. Shiv K Kumar himself explains the paradox of the title in an Interview given to Sachidanada Mohanty:

What I had in my mind was three religions. The relationship between Gautam and Haseena was consummated through three religions. Gautam a Hindu becomes a Christian in order to get his divorce and then accepts Islam to marry Haseena. So these three religions in a sense are the three banks of the rivers—a sort of confluence that brings Gautam and Haseena together.
There is another line of interpretation that can be seen. Pannalal gets killed on the bank of the Ganga, which is also the confluence of Yamuna and Saraswati (xvi).

‘Three Banks’ also stands for the Allahabad fort where the dangerous pimp Pannalal encounters Gautam with a mad fury. It is here Pannalal meets with his end. Surprisingly, Allahabad Fort is three-faceted. It was built by Ashoka and renovated by Akbar. It was in this fort where a Christian garrison was massacred during the Great Uprising of 1857. It is not out of place at this juncture to point out that the Ashoka Pillar at Allahabad too is triple-faceted, with its Hindu, Muslim and Christian associations.

A person, none other than Dr. C. Rangarajan, the Governor of Andhra Pradesh offers another interesting interpretation. He observes that besides the two embankments India and Pakistan separated by a river, there is also a third dimension, which is “the sky common to people across the border” (Shiv K Kumar Interview with Mohanty xvi).

The transcendent river Saraswati is described in the novel as flowing white under the Ganges and the Jumna, “unseen and untouched” (A River 158). This symbol is brought into the novel because white symbolises purity. The element of purity, as Shiv K Kumar avers, “is entirely lacking in contemporary India. We seem to live with all kinds of imperatives—religious, financial and moral” (Shiv K Kumar Interview with Mohanty xvi).

As authors sometimes resort to the ‘motif’ of the letter to throw more light either on the situation or on the plight of the hero or heroine, Shiv K Kumar too employs the letter in the structure of the novel as a “fitting structural aid”, in the borrowed expressions of T. V. Veerasamy when he comments on Akilon’s Cinekitti, “to depict the mental state
of the people, and conflict of inner feelings, offering a neat solution to the complications in the plot" (77). The letter in A River with Three Banks presents the chaotic situation in Delhi, Allahabad, Lucknow and Patna. It shows Abdul Rahim’s agony over the plight of his abducted daughter Haseena. The letter by Abdul Rahim to his wife Begum shows that his innocent daughter is in the cruel clutches of dangerous pimps like Suleiman Ghani who would force her into prostitution. In addition to these, the various issues of communal holocaust are also very clearly brought out in the letter.

The plight of a refugee boy who has lost both his parents and all his kith and kin is graphically described by a post card image in S. H. Vatsayan Ajneya’s story “Post-Box”. The orphan boy standing near the post box with a post card intended for his father but ironically no address on it tells the sad tale of the violence that erupted at the time of the Partition. Roshan the innocent boy had seen her mother being beaten with the blunt end of an axe and even after her death, her assailant was hitting her with his axe. With the post card in his hand he told the narrator this story. There was some satisfaction on the boy’s face when the narrator took leave of him. He took the card from the narrator and waited there for some other knowledgeable person who could tell him how to send the letter to his father. His “tears had dried and ...confidence and infinite patience had returned to his face” (SAP III 109).

In A River with Three Banks, Abdul Rahim’s daughter Haseena wrote an important letter to Gautam expressing her deep love and gratitude to him. Haseena feels that such things cannot be communicated orally comfortably. The letter goes as follows: “The written word can be such a comfort since it’s a sort of smokescreen to cover up the brazen exposure of the spoken word” (A River 153). For a few days Gautam was under
the spell of Haseena’s letter because she has unequivocally expressed her deep love for Gautam in it: “I felt this afternoon like a nun who renounces her church to take a man she’s fallen in love with” (River 154). When he meets her next, the first thing he asks her is, “Haseena, do you remember all the beautiful things you said in your letter?” (River 167).

Gautam received two more letters, one from his father and the other from his friend Berry. His father congratulated him for handling the Bishop tactfully and the letter from Berry was just a casual thing with a pat on the back: “Have a good time. But don’t overdo it, old boy” (River 156).

Upender Nath Ashk too employs the letter motif in his “Tableland” to describe the tense situation in Lahore and the senseless massacre of women and children there and how in those days even in the middle of the curfew the most abominable crimes were committed. Dina Nath’s brother has written this letter to Dina Nath. On receiving this letter, Dina Nath writes a letter to his brother describing the Delhi situation and the plight of the refugees and how leaders like Gandhiji are making efforts “to enable the greater number of refugees to get up and walk” (Epic 112). The letter also reveals the skyrocketing of prices and the lukewarm attitude of the wealthy: “In spite of constant appeals for money, blankets, medicines, and other necessities, the fat-cats are concerned, even in this dreadful situation, only with adding more flab to their already bulging bellies…. Bribery is rampant. Life here in Delhi isn’t easy” (Epic 112).

Though Intizar Husain’s tale, “An Unwritten Epic” is written in the form of a diary, Husain also uses a letter motif to close his “Qadirpur Mahabharata” (Epic 176). The letter is sent by one of the former associates of the narrator. Subedar Sahib has
written it from Qadirpur. The letter mentions all that happened in Qadirpur and also what happened to Pichwa the hero:

You ask what condition the wrestling arena behind the Weavers’ Mosque is in, and I doubt there is even a mosque any more. … Your asking brought it to mind—Hindu butchers sell ‘jhatka’meat there now. Your country had no room for Pichwa, but the earth of his former country clasped him to her bosom. I was not able to meet this fortunate person, but, yes, one day the whole village got excited, and I saw on the same branch of the peepul tree by the Eidgah where Kalwa and Mammad had flown the flag of their party, their master’s head was now hanging (An Epic 176).

This letter recalls the tragic end of Okonkwo, the protagonist of Things Fall Apart, Chinua Achebe, describes it without displaying any emotion:

There was a small bush behind Okonkwo’s compound. The only opening into this bush from the compound was a little round hole in the red-earth wall through which fowls went in and out in their endless search for food. The hole would not let a man through. It was to this bush that Obierika led the commissioner and his men. They skirted round the compound, keeping close to the wall. The only sound they made was with their feet as they crushed dry leaves.

Then they came to the tree from which Okonkwo’s body was dangling, and they stopped dead. (167)

In one of his articles, entitled “Communication and the Artist”, I.A. Richards says, “The arts are our storehouses of recorded values” (David Lodge 110). It carries
weight because arts spring from the unique experience of exceptional people whose "command of experience is at its highest..." (Lodge 110). The literary experience found in the narratives analysed elaborates in this thesis is as a result of the diverse litterateurs' varied and unique experience. Their presentation of the "terror of the loneliness of the human situation" (Lodge 111), in all the narratives ranks them with the universal litterateurs and their common experience. The multifarious imageries that they use in their narratives do not produce any jarring effect in the narratives, but rather enhance their communicative efficacy. These imageries, which include metaphors and similes, go so handy to the artists to make their narratives "embody, accord with, and represent the precise experience" (Lodge 107). The artists whose sole motive is to provide their experience to the audience seldom spend their time to the communicative side because it is generally construed as "the dissipation of attention" (Lodge 107). If they give too much attention to the communicative side, they may be susceptible "to fall into a subordinate rank" (Lodge 107).

The language of The River with Three Banks and the narratives analysed here are deeply metaphorical. Metaphor—"the co-operative fusion of meanings" (Fowler 111), appears to be one of the very important devices of creative literature. Metaphors found outside literature are generally considered 'dead metaphors' and the metaphors of creative literature are 'live metaphors'. Such live metaphors often have a rich compound of meanings illustrated by a built-in analogy. Metaphors are usually characterised by two elements—'tenor' (for the abstract or literal meaning) and 'vehicle' (for the concrete or figurative meaning). These terms have been introduced by I. A. Richards. They usually stand for literal and figurative meanings respectively. The difference between a metaphor
and a simile is that “metaphor is a dramatic, absolute and intuited identification of two phenomena, simile is a comparison, discursive, tentative, in which the ‘like’ or ‘as...as’ suggests, from the viewpoint of reason, separateness of the compared items” (Fowler 172). Imagery, on the other hand is a collective expression, which includes metaphors, similes, symbols and the similar aspects of the figurative language. Among other things, they promote in the reader a visual and a sensuous response. Explaining how language works in modernist texts, Sperber and Wilson give a graphic account of metaphors:

A good creative metaphor is one in which a variety of contextual effects can be retained and understood as weakly implicated by the speaker. In the richest and most successful cases, the hearer can go beyond just exploring the immediate context and the entries for concepts involved in it, accessing a wider area of knowledge, adding metaphors of his own as interpretations of possible developments he is not ready to go into... The result is a quite complex picture, for which the hearer has to take a large part of the responsibility, but the discovery of which has been triggered by the writer. (236)

Shiv K. Kumar and the other authors show an astounding felicity in employing such good creative metaphors and colourful and luscious imagery in their works. The unexpected downpour on Saturday morning besides freshened, “immobilized all traffic, with rilles of water swishing across roads and pavements, everyone felt a new fragrance in the atmosphere—the smell of scorched earth drinking in lustily” (A River164). The sun “broke through a cluster of grey clouds” (A River 164). Maia, the Indian girl friend of the English man Bob is quite beautiful with her “arched neck of a swan, limpid eyes of
a doe and a mole on her left cheek (*A River* 141). Even though her complexion is dark, her fawn-coloured sari has toned it down. Shiv K Kumar is ecstatic about her appearance:

Round her neck, she wore a fragile gold chain with a pendant of onyx. But what attracted Berry most was her ebony hair, rolling down her shoulders in a wave. Each time she moved her head, her long hair swung like silken tassels. Berry wondered how much sex was in a woman’s hair. Her ‘choli’, a couple of inches above her navel, revealed her belly down to the waistline. She resembled an Ajanta woman. (*A River* 141)

In the hotel room in Allahabad, Gautam sees his beloved coming close and nestling on him. His heart then leaps out of joy, “like a dolphin out of some bottomless sea” (*A River* 152). Like a young apprentice in love who has promptly learnt his lessons, Gautam begins “to taste the flavour of her body, drinking off at every fountainhead. The two bodies now sparked off each other, caught in a frenzied rhythm of love—the ebb and flow of wanton breathing, of touch and go” (*A River* 152). Haseena’s face is “glowing like a candle in a crystal vase” (*A River* 169).

The imageries of these narratives mostly carry the desperate human existential situation, blind fanaticism, the rage of a nation scarred, the helpless silence of millions of people whose lives had been destroyed for no sin of their own by the madness of the communally charged violent groups. Imageries like “one gold fish furiously chasing another” (*A River* 169) present not only the plight of Gautam in the hands of his faithless wife but also the surreal scene present then in the nation at large. Seeing a greeting card by chance in an old copy of *Good Housekeeping*, Gautam felt “as if he’d been pushed
into a deep crater of seething lava” (A River 19). This is because Mohinder, Sarita’s secret lover, had acknowledged in that card that he was the father of Rahul, believed to be Gautam’s son. When Gautam imagined Mohinder in his wife’s bed, he felt “as though his heart had missed a beat” (A River 22). Gautam was not sure whether his wife would agree to a divorce. If she chose to deny him the divorce, “he would be bound to the wheel of fire forever” (A River 24). When Gautam’s offer of remarriage to Sarita, changed her heart from an emphatic ‘No’ to a ‘Yes’, Gautam felt that “she’d swallowed the hook” (A River 26). Living with a faithless wife was quite an ordeal for Gautam. Whenever, he entered his house, he felt “almost like a burglar” (A River 18), and “an unwelcome visitor” (A River 21). The Hindu law that has no provision for a divorce is “a vicious python that never slackens its clasp” (A River 18). Sarita’s voice came to Gautam’s ears “harsh as a matron” (A River 20). An uneasy “eerie silence” (A River 28) had fallen in the lanes in Delhi the day after a heavy dose of violence. Pahar Ganj, a popular lane in Delhi looked like “a forsaken fortress” (A River 31). Gautam’s parents had arrived in Delhi after many a traumatic experience from Lahore. They had been looking forward to seeing their grandson, but soon “they felt unhoused—their second partition” (A River 31); Sarita had made it impossible for them to stay in the house. Gautam’s father, Shamlal Mehta was like “a crusader against the combined might of the British Empire and the Anglican Church” (A River 32). The lane of Gautam, Anand Parbat looked like “one of those refugee colonies” (A River 33) which had sprung up all over Delhi. In “grimy environs” (A River 33), his was “a battered cottage” (A River 33). The “unmitigated lecher” (A River 44) Berry was “another Nero” (A River 44) to Gautam. Though Rahul was another man’s son, Gautam felt “a rifle of compassion ran through
him” (A River 48), whenever he caressed and fondled him. At the same time, he felt “a stab of revulsion” (A River 48) for Mohinder and Sarita. The afternoon heat in Delhi was “sizzling like a furnace” (A River 49). But he could manage it, what he could not manage was the “other blaze” (A River 49) of “intense loathing” (A River 49). Sitting in the church for answering some questions relating to the Bible, Gautam and Berry were “looking like two nervous candidates about to be interviewed for some post” (A River 52). When the judge declared the dissolution of Gautam’s marriage, Gautam threw up his hands in the air jubilantly “like an athlete who finishes first in a race” (A River 65). Berry to the irate Sarita is “a bone-breaker” (A River 66). Gautam to Berry is a “knight-saviour” (A River 67). Pannalal’s brothel was “a sort of concentration camp” (A River 80). Waiting for Haseena outside the brothel house for long for Gautam was like sitting “on pins and needles” (A River 93). Seeing Pannalal, Gautam “felt frozen to the marrow of his bones” (A River 94) and his heart was pounding against his ribs. The bald patch on Pannalal’s pate “gleamed like a sheet of Belgian glass in the candid moonlight” (A River 95). Standing half-naked, Bhole’s body glistened in the afternoon sun “like a granite pillar” (A River 125). When Bhole was rolling his bloodshot eyes menacingly at Gautam and Haseena, the latter “blanched with fear” (A River 129). A little later, Gautam noticed that she “had gone death-pale” (A River 129). Gautam himself felt “a cramping sensation in his stomach” (A River 131). The English Police officer Bill Thornton was “like a gynaecologist who may be called away to deliver anywhere, anytime” (A River 140). Bhole threatened Gautam saying, “I’ll make a minced meat of you” (A River 160). At these words, Gautam felt “as though he had a stroke of sensory paralysis” (A River 161).
Like the letter another important motif employed by the authors is the train motif. In Krishan Chander’s tale “The Peshawar Express”, the long distance train tells her painful experience on her way to Peshawar en route to Ambala Cantonment via Wazirabad, Jullundur, and Ludhiana. The train returned to Bombay after a long time and she was given “a thorough wash and stalled in a shed” (SAP III: 215). As she was standing in her shed, “in the stillness of the night ghostly figures seem to come to life and the shrieks of the wounded fill the air” (SAP III: 215). She has no strength in her body to “go on such a horrible journey again” (SAP III: 215). Even though the automobile is a lifeless thing, a structure of wood and steel, and devoid of feelings, she hates “to carry a cargo of blood and flesh dripping with hatred” (SAP III: 215).

‘Another important stylistic device that takes a prominent place in the narratives is ‘heteroglossia’. This was coined by Mikhail Bakhtin, the Soviet critic “to describe the variety of languages used in epic and in the novel” (Cuddon 381). In his discussions of language and discourse in literature in which he examines the different voices and suggests how the use of discourse in a literary work may influence and disrupt the author’s single voice. In Bhaktin’s words, characters are liberated to speak “a plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousness, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices…” (Cuddon 219). To quote another critic, Robert Stam, “Heteroglossia refers to the dialogically interrelated speech practices operative in a given society at a given moment, wherein the idioms of different classes, races, genders, generations and locales compete for ascendancy” (121).

In The River Churning for instance, Sutara’s neighbour Tamijuddin Saheb was “kakasaheb” (The River 05) to Sutara. In Sutara’s village, the Hindus were mostly of the
“namah sudra” (The River 05) caste. Family relationships are referred to in the vernacular. For instance, Sutara’s brother’s wife is “Didi” (The River 09). Sutara’s father and mother are referred to as “Baba” and “Ma” (The River 10). Sutara’s suffering is ascribed to “the karma of her previous birth” (The River 46). When Sutara went home to attend a wedding in the family, she was not allowed to eat with the bridal party. She was taken to a deserted place for the dinner. As she was treated as an outcast,

...she was served, not on a banana leaf but on a brass plate overflowing with food—puri, pulao, fish, mutton, vegetables, fried brinjal, chutni, sweets—a sumptuous array. Supervising this lone diner were Bibha, her sisters, some older women of the household, aunts of all varieties—mashi, pishi, jethima, khurima (The River 63).

As she was asked to participate in a pilgrimage to Hardwar, with some of her senior colleagues, the poor homeless Sutara, “the lonely soul trying to find companionship among strangers” (The River 95) joined them. On the way, She listened to devotional songs—

katha, kirtan, satsang—organized by her Punjabi colleagues. Folk songs were sung. ‘Chalo musafir bhor bhayo ab rain khaha jo sowata hai’. The deep sweet voice of the singer told her to ‘watch your steps with care. The way is difficult, you may be led astray. Despite your hurdles, you have to keep going, it might be slippery, but still…. (The River 94)

At Hardwar she was asked to worship the deity with offerings of water, ‘pinda’ (111). As she did not know how to offer the ‘pinda’, she hesitated. The priest asked her the name of her ‘gotra’ (The River 111). Hindus believe “in the concept of karma, of rebirth” (The
Interestingly, Sutara's kith and kin attributed this aspect of Hinduism to all the sufferings of Sutara.

Such a combining of languages and styles into a higher unity is the hallmark of these modern narratives. It is interesting to recall Mikhail Bakhtin's definition of the novel here. He defines it as "a diversity of social speech types, sometimes even diversity of languages and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized" (32). Authors use heteroglossia to provide distinctive links and relationships between utterances and languages. It is by using different languages and speech types and by moving the theme by dispersion into the rivulets and droplets of social heteroglossia, the authors orchestrate their intentions and values quite effectively. As Mikhail Bakhtin shows, "These 'languages' of heteroglossia intersect each other in a variety of ways, forming new socially typifying languages..." (34).

_A River with Three Banks_ too is replete with such instances of heteroglossia. After his meeting with the bishop, Gautam hires a 'tonga' (horse carriage) (_A River_ 13) to go to his place. Reaching his house, Gautam sees his wife standing on the door way dressed attractively "in her pink Kanchivaram sari" (_A River_ 23). According to the Arya Samajist, Shamlal, Christ was a yogi and "being a yogi, he had controlled his organs, had a sort of anaesthetized himself before they nailed him on the cross. And since he went into a deep samadhi, a yogic trance, he felt no pain—nor did he really die" (_A River_ 35).

At the time of the Partition, Delhi witnessed a terrible scene in many parts of the city. It would be a day-to-day occurrence to see violent crowds led by tough young guys, blaring away through a microphone: "Khoon-ka-badla-khoon! Blood for blood!" (_A River_ 54). Hindus were 'kafirs' (_A River_ 54) to Muslim fundamentalists. Once when Gautam and
Berry were standing in a lane, they saw a violent crowd waylaying a young woman and her brother. She was wearing a sari and her brother was in "dhoti and kurta" (A River 59). Berry had a fascination for Muslim women, who he thought, were full-blooded because "they fed themselves on such hot stuff as mutton, 'rogan josh' and sheesh kabab, while most Hindu women were pale, anaemic creatures living on rice and lentils" (A River 70). Gautam was of the view that in India, there was no risk of violating any law of pornography, "because Hindus worshipped the genitals, particularly the 'lingam', as fervently as they aspired to nirvana" (A River 75). Berry's English friend Bob had a fancy for Indian food—"rogan josh and hot chutney" (A River 83). Getting a handful of currency notes from Gautam for enjoying Haseena, Pannalal thanked Gautam profusely "baring his betel-stained teeth" (A River 93). Giving a lift in his jeep to the fleeing Gautam and Haseena to the railway station, Bala "jeeped away" (A River 97). When Haseena addresses Berry as "Berry Sahib", he corrects her "Bhai Sahib—that would be more appropriate now that I've adopted you as my sister-in-law" (A River 101). After seeing Gautam and Hassena off, Berry "taxied back to Delhi" (A River 101). Going in a taxi at Allahabad, Haseena noticed that the driver "displayed a three-striped caste mark on his forehead" (A River 115). When Gautam saw Haseena's mother for the first time, he "salaamed" (A River 117) her. Brimming with gratitude, she said to him, "You've been a 'farishta' to us, a guardian angel!" (A River 117). He called her, "ammijan" (A River 118). Whenever, Gautam took Haseena out, she was asked to put "kumkum on her forehead" (A River 120).

At Allahabad Gautam saw three white swans on the holy bank. Gautam was told that those birds were the incarnation of three pious pandas who in their previous life had
served Mother Ganga as high priests. Their souls had now returned to the holy river as white swans. A little before dawn, they would even chant mantras from the Bhagavadgita. At sunset, they would “fly away to ‘parlok’, the other world” (A River 121).

When Bob visited the Berry’s to invite them for a party, Berry’s wife, Sonali, “brought in a plateful of ‘papadam’ and a bottle of beer” (A River 135). In the party, Mala exhorted Thornton to taste “some meat biriyani” (A River 149). Staying in his hotel room at Allahabad, Gautam saw a stream of vehicles along a winding road—“tongs, pushcarts, rickshaws and taxis” (A River 150). After lunch, Gautam “put on his kurta, and khadi jacket (since he knew he’d be moving about in the vicinity of the holy Ganges), and got into a tonga” (A River 155). When Gautam escorted Haseena’s mother and sister to Amritsar and from there to the Wagha Border, Gautam’s party heard a sudden outburst of shouting: “Pakistan Murdabad! Kill the bloody Muslims!” (A River 205). Most of the passengers in the train were “turbaned Sikhs, holding ‘Kirpans’ in their hands, while their women were draped in ‘shalwar’ and ‘kameez’” (A River 205). At the Wagha Border, brimming with tears, Hassena’s mother said to Gautam, “Insha-Allah!” (A River 213) which means, “God willing we’ll meet again” (A River 213). Then they greeted each other, “Khuda Hafiz! God be with you!” (A River 213).

In the renewed attention to Partition writings, short stories understandably outnumber novels. Alok Bhalla’s three-volume collection, Stories About the Partition of India and Muhammad Umar Memon’s An Unwritten Epic are stories in addition to the oeuvre that already exists. Nonetheless, narratives like these have been an important way to recover the underside of the trauma/history of Partition. It is certainly not true to say
that among fictional accounts, the best-known names are those of men. Partition has
occupied women authors as much as it has men. Some of the women writers who have
presented their narratives on this theme and whose stories have been taken up for analysis
are: Ismat Chughtai, Jyotirmoyee Devi, Amrita Pritam, Krishna Sobti, Attia Hosain, Umm-
-e-Ummara, Jamila Hashmi, Suraiya Qasim, and Lalithambika Antarjanam. We go to the
narratives of these writers for a complete picture of the trauma of the Partition, for
historical documents and other official records despite their apparent transparency give us
only one part of the story. Official documents are silent about the abduction, rape and
mutilation of women, the exodus of the refugees, the breaking apart of families, the
violence that they suffered, and the pain and anguish that people endured. In all, some
forty-seven short stories from Alok Bhalla’s three volumes and nine from Muhammad
Umar Memon are taken up for an in-depth analysis.

Short story is probably the most widely read of all modern genres. It appears in
diverse periodicals and books and many distinguished writers find this medium
congenial. There are many critics who speak disparagingly of this genre. Bernard
Bergonzi, for example, is not very enthusiastic about this genre, because “the modern
short story writer is bound to see the world in a particular way (and that) the form he is
using has an insidiously reductive effect” (Reid 01). This view is pooh-poohed by many
others like Ian Reid. Though the short story takes only a couple of pages, it can very
easily move the reader, which the novel is sometimes unable to sustain. The short story
can comfortably be defined as “a recital of events” (Reid 05). Aristotle’s remark that a
plot must have a beginning, a middle and an end in order to be whole is scrupulously
followed in the many appealing stories found in this thesis.
The expression 'short story' is usually applied to any kind of fictitious prose narrative briefer than a novel. The extent of words that short stories use are varied—from as low as 21 (Sadat Hasan Manto's "Compassion") to as high as 10,000 words (Bhisham Sahni's "Pali") in the selection of stories for this thesis. It shows that there is no hard and fast rule about the size of a short story. It is more flexible.

This being so, well-known critics of short stories like Joseph F. Trimmer and C. Wade Jennings give a free allowance up to 40,000 words to a short story. According to them, a short story is

... a work of fiction that is unified by a structured 'plot' in which a chain of circumstances and events is separated from the rest of human experience and treated as a coherent whole. We expect the 'characters' in such a story to be developed enough for us to understand both what they do and why. We usually expect that the people and their actions in the story will lead to some understanding on our part of why these things matter—a sense of meaning or 'theme'. We also expect the writer to give us a clear sense of the 'setting' of the story—the place, time, and social circumstances within which the narrative unfolds. Finally, we have to know from whose perspective we are seeing the events and the characters—the 'point of view' in the story. (04)

These five elements—the plot, the characters, the theme, the setting, and the point of view invariably work together to achieve the short story's purpose. Almost all the short stories analysed here fulfil all these functions.