Chapter I

Introduction

A Widening Gulf and a Darkening Shadow

I could a tale unfold whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul; freeze thy young spheres
Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their blood;
Thy knotted and combined locks to part,
And each particular hair to stand on end.
Like quills upon the frenzied porcupine:

Hamlet 1.5.20-26.

In the middle of March 1990's, when I accidentally happened to read Alok Bhalla's Stories about the Partition of India (3 Vols), I took a sudden interest in the Partition that caused a very great convulsion in history. I was deeply touched by the sufferings and trauma people underwent in those horrifying 1940's in the northern, northwestern, and eastern parts of the undivided India. The more I learnt about Partition, the more seemed to be coming along. I felt that there was so much that remained to be learned about Partition wherein "about 12 million people moved," to quote Urvashi Butalia from her book The Other Side of Silence, "between the new, truncated India and the wings, East and West, of the newly-created Pakistan" (03). Around one million people died. About 75000 women were abducted and raped besides instances of other vandalism. When I went to some history books on this subject, I found to my dismay and anger that historians curiously did not pay much attention to the trauma, the feelings, the emotions, the pain, the anguish and the sense of loss of the victims. I was also very much pained to notice the silences in which many things lay shrouded. It made me wonder why historians were unable to face up
to a trauma so riven with pain and grief. To me, it seemed quite strange that historians
had by and large chosen not to explore the underside of this history.

It is quite sad that the legacy of Partition has been continuing in some form or
other in our nation. It seems unlikely that Partition cannot so easily be put away inside
the covers of history books. For several disturbing events have taken place since then.
Some of them—like the couple of Indo-Pakistan Wars, Movement for Kalisthan, the
Blue Star Operation, the assassination of Mrs. Gandhi, the violence in Punjab and
Delhi, the massacre of the Sikh, the increasing tension in the north-east, the revival of
the Hindu fundamentalism, the demolition of the Babri Masjid, the Hindu-Muslim
riots in Bombay, the Coimbatore serial bombs, the unending mass massacres of
innocent people in Kashmir, the Kargil occupation and evacuation, machine-gunning
the god-fearing Amarnath Pilgrims, the Godhra carnage and its terrible backlash in
Ahmedabad—still unmistakably take us back to the trauma of Partition in 1947. With
an ashy paleness, we watch all these helplessly in horror whenever partition revisits
and resurfaces in such incidents. It has been disheartening to see the fabric of Indian
society shredding on lines of ethnic and communal identity. Going by these, it is
shown that Partition is not a closed chapter of history.

My interest in Partition Literature was evoked partly because I wanted to re-
examine the history of Partition and partly to see by myself that which lacks in history
and to substitute it, if possible with the traumatic experiences of innumerable number
of characters from hundreds of pages of literature produced in the 1990’s. They
unmistakably echo the real Partition tales “told and retold” as has been very painfully
observed by Urvashi Butalia, in her book The Other Side of Silence, “inside so many
households in India and Pakistan” (03). They furnish the missing link, because it is
through these pages we come to know how people survived the holocaust, how the
survived coped with the trauma, how the affected rebuilt their lives, their experience of dislocation, their existence in the strange localities, amidst strange customs and manners. What is more important now is not the facts or figures of those affected, but how they remember those facts, and how they represent them through bearing their baggage of bitterness and pain.

There was an unprecedented widespread brutality amidst the cry for independence across the length and breadth of northern India in the middle 1940’s. With limited exception most of these did not afflict southern India. The responsibility for this, any reasonable person would agree, should rest with the preaching and propagating of hatred and violence by crooked political bigwigs for narrow political gains. Corollary to this, the acts of brutality committed on men, women, and children fill every decent person with shame and humiliation. In the bitter harvest that ensued, the grim reaper, even according to conservative reports, claimed nine million lives, and some ten million people were uprooted from their ancestral homes. The Partition caused an unfolding human tragedy of enormous proportions. However “in this human event, human voices are strangely silent” (Talbot 39).

Literary artists, unlike historians, have fully comprehended the human agonies that preceded and accompanied Partition. A good number of poems, novels and short stories have taken these as their key issues. There were many eyewitness accounts too. Though many novels and short stories were written in English, the body of narratives produced in Hindi and Urdu outnumber English. Of them many excellent narratives have been re-rendered into English. Of the many texts that appeared in the 1990’s, I have chosen the following appealing narratives for my research into the ever-gnawing trauma of Partition: Jyotirmoyee Devi’s The River Churning (1995), Shiv K. Kumar’s A River with Three Banks (1998), Muhammad Umar Memon’s (Ed.)
In the texts of Muhammad Umar Memon and Alok Bhalla, there are a number of creative outpourings by some well known literary artists like Saadat Hasan Manto ("Sahae"), Rajinder Sing Bedi ("Lajwanti"), Ashfaq Ahmad ("The Shepherd"), Ahmad Nadim Qasimi ("Parmeshar Singh"), Intizar Husain ("An Unwritten Epic"), Ismat Chughtai ("Roots"), Khalida Husain ("The Wagoner"), Syed Mohammad Ashraf ("The Rogue"), Ali Imam Naqvi ("The Vultures of the Parsi Cemetery"), and Ilyas Ahmad Gaddi ("A Land Without Sky"). These writers and their colleagues (not mentioned here) have captured the pathos of suffering of millions of people at the time of Partition and uncovered the human dimension of these victims' harrowing experience in their creative outpourings.

In the early 1940's the theory that the Hindus and Muslims constituted two separate nations was sedulously propagated. The political party that contributed more to it was the Muslim League. But it should not be construed that all the Muslims were for partitioning the country. There were quite a good number of Muslim community leaders like Abul Kalam Azad who opposed the move tooth and nail.

In 1946, the festival of light Diwali came upon the people in mourning. Arson, looting, pillage, and death of kith and kin darkened innumerable numbers of homes in Bengal. Fratricide degenerated into an abysmal level. Things done in the name of religion that would make one hang down one's head in shame and lose one's faith in human nature itself. There could not be any feasting or illuminations when the atmosphere was rent with wailing, lamentation and woe of helpless and martyred innocence. Gandhi grimly remarked, 'starvation and nakedness stalked the land' (Gandhi 1949, 403).
The immense disruptions that now occurred began with the horrendous Hindu-Muslim communal killings that erupted upon an unprecedented scale from 1946 onwards. Fifty-six years later it is even now a paradox why such grotesque animosities were suddenly displayed between two peoples who hitherto had dwelt in relatively amicable harmony with each other, nonetheless, from time to time sudden conflicts erupted between them.

To a very large extent, the Great Calcutta Killings of August 1946 were “an elite propelled battle between Hindus and Muslims for control of this key city...in which both sides unabashedly patronised ‘goonda’ gangs in the city” (Low 05). Strangely, the majority of the Muslims in India did not regard India as their home of which they must feel proud. Many, to quote Gandhi, in his Communal Unity, “regard themselves quite wrongly...as belonging to a race of conquerors” (112). Gandhi’s response to the Great Calcutta Killings was quite characteristic of him: “We Hindus are in a measure to blame for this aloofness on the part of the Mussalmans. We have not come to regard them as an integral part of the nation” (1949, 112). He felt that the best option before the nation then was to watch, wait, and pray. He hoped that the evil that came to the surface would disappear much quicker and “thus send the dirt to the bottom again instead of allowing it to throw itself out” (1949, 113).

Quite a few Congress leaders including Gandhi considered that the British had ruled India on the principle of Divide and Rule. Though many among the British genuinely wished to modernise the country, and to raise its intellectual and moral standards, a small number undoubtedly worked with a sinister motive. As Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan spoke in the Constituent Assembly on the late night of 14 August 1947, “they tried to increase the disunity in the country, made the country weaker and
more disunited" (411). It was not without truth that they continued for such a long
time by coquetting now with one and then with the other party.

One should understand that it was the Congress alone that fought for freedom.
At the call of the Congress, several thousand people—Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs,
Christians, Parsis, Anglo-Indians, Jains, Buddhists and Samajists wholeheartedly
joined the freedom struggle, and went through a great agony. They never asked for a
separate electorate. They were never a party to the heartless proposal of vivisection.
Truly speaking, the bugbear of communalism confined largely to the cities and the
elites. Well-meaning politicians thought that very the moment the alien wedge
removed, the divided community would be bound to unite. But, Jinnah, the Muslim
League supremo had a different dream. When the great destiny of India was taking
shape with travail and suffering, Jinnah announced on that fateful evening of 3 June
1947, in the New Delhi studio of All India Radio, that he had won the Muslims a
state, an Islamic State on the sub-continent and concluded with the words ‘Pakistan
Zindabad’. In their book *Freedom at Midnight* Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre
point out that on hearing this, “crumbled up in his arm-chair like a bird with a broken
wing, Gandhi kept raising and dropping one hand, lamenting in an almost inaudible
voice, ”it’s so awful, it’s so awful” (162).

A year before independence, there was an increasing fear of civil war that had
led to the build up of private armies. The Muslim League mobilised Muslim public
opinion through the Muslim League National Guards (MLNG) and the Hindu
Mahasabha and its militant front, the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSSS) sought
to rally Hindu popular opinion. Both the MLNG and the RSSS formed their own
armies, which were without ceasing being expanded. Panic attracted panic. The
country was in the grip of a sort of supernatural invasion. People saw the old-time war
of the Kauravas and the Pandavas, as they had seen it in Kurushetra. There was a kind of madness everywhere. Bhimas were seen hunting down Dushasanas. Draupadis were publicly being undressed. Lanes and by-lanes were strewn with corpses. Half a century later when the Booker Price winner Arundhati Roy describes in unmitigating terms the "Duryodhana Vadham" in her highly acclaimed, criticised and most sensational book, *The God of Small Things*, we get a feel of what exactly had happened:

Bhima clubbed Dushasana to the floor. He pursued every feeble tremor in the dying body with his mace; hammering it until it was stilled... He continued to kill him long after he was dead. Then, with his bare hand he tore the body open. He ripped the inards out and stooped to lap blood straight from the bowl of the torn carcass, his crazed eyes peering over the rim, glittering with rage and hate and mad fulfilment. Gurgling blood-bubbles, pale pink between his teeth.... When he had drunk enough, he stood up, bloody intestines draped around his neck like a scarf and went to find Draupadi and bathe her in fresh blood. He still had about him the aura of rage that even murder cannot quell. (235)

Many women were forcibly made pregnant and they were going to bring forth bastards, children of an unknown union. As the protagonist-narrator Saleem in Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* says... “All over the new India...children were being born who were only partially the offspring of their parents—the children of midnight were also the children of the time: fathered by history” (118). And so, when India was attaining freedom, she was attaining it in such a manner that did not produce any joy in the hearts of people or a radiant smile on their faces.
In the pre-partition days, when the Muslim League was clamouring for splitting India into Hindustan and Pakistan, the Hindu Mahasabha functioned on an equal footing to the League. It was true that Gandhi’s personality posed a deterrent to the spread of Hindu nationalism. But, with regard to certain sections of Hindu Society and on some issues affecting the Hindus, they had a considerable following. Even within the Congress, the Hindu Mahasabha had sympathisers like Madan Mohan Malaviya, Purushottam Das Tandon, K.M Munshi and several others. A leader like Shyama Prasad Mookerji held the view rather strongly that creation of Pakistan was a sheer impossibility. The Hindu Mahasabha opposed it tooth and nail, as observed by Mookerji, because...“the Hindus cannot tolerate the idea of vivisection of their motherland...because both economically and politically such a division would be dangerous to the welfare of India as a whole” (342).

It should be remembered that if the Muslim League was a political organisation in India, then the Hindu Mahasabha was also one. If one was communal, the other too was communal. However there was a slight difference. Whereas the League considered itself as the sole champion of the rights of the minority Muslims, as Mookerji maintains the Hindu Mahasabha considered it their exclusive prerogative “to defend the rights of the Hindus and of India as a whole” (342). The Mahasabha thought so because, according to them, in the past, “the rights of the Hindus were jeopardised in political spheres because of a misguided policy of appeasement pursued by some Congress leaders”(Mookerji 342). Unfortunately the majority of the Muslims considered the Congress as a Hindu organisation. And the Hindu Mahasabha thought that in the field of Indian administration there was a sinister Anglo-Muslim conspiracy that helped the Muslim masses enjoying the favours of the British government.
It was common knowledge that Hindus and Muslims sometimes fought with each other and at other times lived together in amity and brotherhood. They were not, of course, always free from suspicion, distrust and malevolent habits and practices of the other. Occasionally such conflicts would lead even to gruesome murder, arson and looting. But such tensed moments of communal frenzy were very rare. For both the communities had realised the need to live together and had evolved mechanisms for containing tensions and outrage. So even if there were disruptions, “the rich heterogeneity of the life of the two communities was never seriously threatened--the Hindus never ceased from paying homage at darghas, the Muslims continued to participate in Hindu festivals...”(Bhalla viii). That means there had never been in the Indian history irreconcilable hatred or non-negotiable aversion between the Hindus and the Muslims. However as there was mutual distrust and jealousy over the other prevailing in India in the pre-partition days, there was every possibility of an imminent civil war. Even Lord Mountbatten confessed“...communal tension and rioting had assumed proportions of which I had no conception when I left England” (414). When the idea of Partition was mooted and when the leaders announced it in a hurry over the media, it brought an abrupt end to a long and commonly shared history.

The drastic change in attitude in the Communist party in India should also be taken into account now. In 1939, when Hitler began the World War II, the Indian Communists branded it an ‘Imperialist War’ and did everything in their power to sabotage the war-efforts. But when Germany invaded Russia on 22 June 1941, in no time, the Imperialist War became a ‘People’s War’. The Indian Communists started helping the British in all possible ways. They helped them against their countrymen who were fighting for freedom, because Russia, their godfather, was an ally of the British. To quote Nehru from his address, ‘Betrayal by the Communists’ “When the entire
country was in revolt against the British imperialism, the Communists cut themselves away from the main current of national life.... It was a dangerous thing for them to call the war a people's war, when all knew that it was an imperialist war"(346). The secret pact of the Communists with the Muslim League was another distressing anti-social stance. They supported the Muslim League's demand for Pakistan. According to them the Pakistan Movement represented the Muslims' urge for freedom. Jinnah wanted India to be divided into two—the Muslim India and the Hindu India. But the Communists wanted India to be severed into several parts. Strongly condemning the betrayal of the Communists, Nehru sadly observes in his speech, "Betrayal by the Communists" that there had "never been any love lost between the Indian Communists and the British government"(346-347). May be it was this trait of the typical Communist which inspired Arundati Roy in 1997 to call him "a professional omeletteer"(14). Referring to the typical comrade of Ayemenem, Roy adds, "He walked through the world like a chameleon. Never revealing himself, never appearing not to. Emerging through chaos unscathed"(14). Even K.A.Abbas in his thought-provoking article, "Who Killed India?" makes a scathing attack on the Communist Party of India for providing the Muslim separatists "with an ideological basis for the irrational and anti-national demand for Pakistan"(234).

The Muslim League, which met in Bombay under the leadership of Jinnah, passed a couple of resolutions on 29 July 1946. The first one was concerned about the withdrawal of the acceptance of the Cabinet Mission's May 16 proposal. The second one was strongly worded and quite detrimental to all peace-loving people. It declared that the time had come for the Muslim nation to resort to direct action to achieve Pakistan (emphasis added). When a correspondent asked Jinnah whether it meant violent action, he quickly retorted, "I am not going to discuss ethics"( Nagarkar 441).
August 16 was the day fixed for direct action. On the morning of that day, there was an advertisement in the League Newspapers—Dawn, Eastern Times and Morning News. Anita Inder Singh has quoted those ill-fated words in her book Origins of the Partition of India 1936—1947:

Today Direct Action Day
Now might alone can secure right. (181)

As was planned already to give a threat to the entire nation, direct action was unleashed in Calcutta on 16 August. The orgy of violence, killings, stabbings, lootings, arson, and rapes continued for three days unabated. It left five thousand dead and property worth many crores were destroyed. According to Anita Inder Singh the figures were much higher. She says that ten thousand were dead. This was a bitter prelude to Partition.

In those troubled times, Jinnah's speeches were highly inflammatory. With his unbridled tongue, he spoke:

We have been attacked on two fronts—the British front and the Hindu front. Today we have bid good-bye to constitutional methods. Throughout the painful negotiations, the two parties with whom we bargained held a threat to us; the one with power and guns behind it and the other with non-cooperation and the threat to launch mass civil disobedience. This situation must be met. We also have a pistol (emphasis added). ("Direct Action" 360)

He further reiterated that the Congress could not be relied on, for it "practised nothing but deception" (Jinnah "Direct Action" 360). According to him, the only party that had acted honourably and came out with clean hands was the Muslim League. He repeated that the Congress wanted "to crush the Musalmans" (Jinnah "Direct Action" 361). For
the Muslims hence, “there is no room left” (Jinnah “Direct Action” 361) and Jinnah exhorted “Let us march on” (“Direct Action” 361). He concluded his address in the League Council meeting in Bombay on the 29 July 1946, quoting Firdausi,

We want peace, we do not want war.

But if you want war, we accept it unhesitatingly (“Direct Action” 361).

It is interesting to note that the same Jinnah who assumed office as the president of the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan on 11 August 1947, spoke in a hypocritical manner. The person who got the country divided on the basis of two-nation theory, and refused to participate in the Indian Constituent Assembly (which started working in December 1946), and exhorted to use ‘Direct Action’ and gangster methods to achieve a separate nation for the Muslims, now observed in his speech, ‘The Future of Pakistan’ “that we have achieved it peacefully and by means of an evolution of the greatest possible character”(407). May be he was very much disoriented by the conflagration throughout the subcontinent and by the cyclone of events, when hundreds of thousands of terrified innocents were slaughtered, and a similar number were fleeing their homes, and their ancestral villages into refugee camps in strange territories. He continued in the same speech “ . . . In course of time the Hindus would cease to be Hindus and the Muslims would cease to be Muslims, not in the religious sense . . . but in the political sense as citizens of the state” (“The Future of Pakistan” 408). In this manner he worked up a religious frenzy among his community warning them that after the British left, they would be reduced to being slaves of the Hindus.

Researchers and historians like Rafiq Zakaria prove now with documentary evidence that it was Jinnah who masterminded dividing India. V. R. Krishna Iyer, in his review of Zakaria’s book, The Man Who Divided India—An Insight into Jinnah’s Leadership and its Aftermath categorically points out that
The man who divided India, the protagonist in that diabolic operation was, M. A. Jinnah whose divisive genius conceptualised, pragmatised and, with vicious verve pressed forward its vivisection. Forever he demolished India’s geographic, political, economic and culturally pluralist integrity and promoted a dubious process of disintegration founded on a pernicious political fiction called Two-Nation theory. (03)

Filled to the brim with “mega-ego, that vice of talented mavericks whose ambition, when frustrated, stultifies them into roles which make history blush, never spared him” (V. R. Krishna Iyer 03).

‘The Great Calcutta Killings’ unnerved the British government. They feared that it was just a prelude to a very widespread civil war, which was imminent. Very much concerned about it, Lord Wavell, the Viceroy in his address entitled ‘Interim Government’ spoke that “the recent terrible occurrences in Calcutta have been a sobering reminder that a much greater measure of toleration is essential if India is to survive the transition of freedom” (364). Lord Wavell announced the formation of an interim government comprising thirteen Indian representatives under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru. Though five seats were offered to them, and though repeated requests were made to the Muslim League, Jinnah flatly refused to join the government. Nehru took oath of office on 2 September 1946. The British began to pack up their baggage. In his broadcast address Lord Wavell unequivocally condemned the attitude of some of the ruthless politicians whose sole aim was to fish in troubled waters. He spoke: “We have come to another critical and solemn issue in the affairs of India. Never have tolerance and soberness in thought and action been more necessary. Never were the wild speaking and rash deeds of a few fraught with greater danger for many” (“Interim Government” 364).
The Constitutional Assembly was constituted according to the Cabinet Mission Plan of 16 May 1946. After the elections in July the Constituent Assembly started functioning on 9 December 1946. It was working on the assumption that India would not be partitioned. It was clear that when Nehru moved the Objectives Resolution it was for united India. However the Congress could not shake off the minority syndrome. Hence, Nehru had to add Clause 6 in "The Aims and Objectives of the Constitution":

"Wherein adequate safeguards shall be provided for minorities, backwards and tribal areas and depressed and other backward classes . . . ."

("The Aims and Objectives of the Constitution" 368).

While seconding the Resolution, Purushottam Das Tandon observed, "We shall try our utmost not to hurt the cause of the Muslim League"(Nehru "The Aims and Objectives of the Constitution" 368).

In the House of Commons in England, Prime Minister Attlee stated on 20 February 1947 that Britain would be quitting India by June 1948. Till then Nehru's interim government would be in power. However, when the India debate was launched in the House of Commons, Churchill condemned Attlee for fixing a date for the final withdrawal. In his address, "An Imperialist's Swan Song" he pointed out that "it was a cardinal mistake to entrust the Indian government to a leader of caste Hindu, Mr. Nehru" (370). He added, "the government of Jawaharlal Nehru has been a complete disaster" (370). He made this observation after getting the whiff of news that there was a horrifying spectacle of corpses of men, women and children littering the ground in thousands in Lahore and Calcutta in warfare between the two communities.

It was in this critical juncture, the Viceroy Lord Wavell was unceremoniously sacked. Outwardly there was not even the slightest indication of any difference of opinion between the British and the Viceroy. No reason was given to the public why he
was cast aside. The new Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten was given a barely fourteen months’ time before the departure of the British Raj to bring in Indian unity. Churchill asked: “How can you suppose that a thousand years’ gulf between Muslims and Hindus will be bridged in fourteen months?” (371). In his characteristic, sarcastic manner Churchill added more like a prophet that “these fourteen months will not be used for melting the hearts and uniting the Hindus and the Muslims, but for the preparation of civil war. They will be marked continually by disturbances and disorders such as are going on in the great city of Lahore . . .” (371).

It was Churchill’s contention that Indian political parties and political classes did not represent the Indian masses. So he felt that “in handing over the government of India to the so-called political classes we are handing over to men of straw, of whom in a few years no trace will remain” (372).

As was very well predicted by Churchill, the Indian interim government headed by Nehru did not function smoothly. One principal cause was that the Muslim League did not render any constructive co-operation to the government. At the same time the Muslims once again resorted to ‘Direct Action’—this time in Punjab, and North-West Frontier (N.W.F.P). There were horrifying riots in Rawalpindi, Lahore, Amritsar, Peshawar, Multan, Bombay, Ranchi and Kanpur. In the borrowed phrases from Arundhati Roy, rampaging mobs with “batons in their hands. Machine-guns in their minds”(307) roamed about spreading violence. Conservative official reports quoted 2049 were killed and more than 10,000 were seriously injured within two weeks. After the replacement of the Viceroy, the Muslim League put more fire in their direct action. The Punjab situation seemed totally out of control. Communal tension was acute in all the districts and was fast spreading to villages. Day by day the casualties were rising.
According to one reliable report the "mayhem counted approximately six Hindus and Sikhs for every Muslim murdered" (Welpart 320).

The principal actors responsible for partition were outstanding personalities of that time. It could not be ruled out that these leaders were not inspired by their lust for quiet and easy access to power. Jinnah realised his dreamland of Pakistan from a mere slogan he repeated for seven years. He played upon the fears of his own community. But it should not be construed that he was a religious fundamentalist because he went a safe distance from his followers, refusing to conform to orthodox Islamic practices. A brilliant man, as he was, he fell out with the Congress because he proposed a constitutional approach to independence rather than Gandhi's mobilisation of mass movement. The prominent Congress leaders, of course, showed a green signal to Partition because as Nehru later confessed to Mosley:

> The truth is that we were tired men, and we were getting on in years too. Few of us could stand the prospect of going to prison again—and if we had stood out for a united India as we wished it, prison obviously awaited us. We saw the fires burning in the Punjab and heard everyday of the killings. The plan for partition offered a way out and we took it... We expected that partition would be temporary, that Pakistan was bound to come back to us. (qtd. in Bhattacharjee xxvi)

Leaders, in general, then were so blinded by their uncontrolled desire to wrest by foul or fair central power, that they overlooked the salutary aims of the freedom movement. Durga Das perhaps aptly captured the inner sentiments of the leaders then. They were old men "too weary to carry on the struggle any further and were, in their heart of hearts, anxious to grasp power and enjoy the fruits without further delay" (255).
Sir Cyril Radcliffe was entrusted with the most painful task of vivisecting Punjab, Bengal and Assam. Though a sincere officer, he was rather ignorant of the Indian affairs, and displayed not much interest in her problems. He was asked to mark the demarcation lines in such a short time of five weeks. Rivers and irrigation canals criss-crossed the villages in which Sikhs and Muslims lived. Sikh shrines were found all over the place. Radcliffe did not consult any important Indian leader. He was answerable only to Mountbatten. In Punjab the Army was asked to take the key positions to tackle any situation once the demarcation plan was announced. Though Radcliffe completed the stupendous task well before the expiry of five weeks, Mountbatten kept the contents of the Radcliffe Award a secret. Being a great strategist and cousin to the King George V, Mountbatten, very cleverly planned it beforehand to keep the trump card the Award (the most deadly weapon) for the time being without making it known, so that the new government would deal with the riots and massacres after 15 August at their own will and pleasure. His intention was that the British should not be held responsible for the violence and the massacres. It took some five decades to unearth the sinister role of the British in the creation of Pakistan. The Indian researcher, Swapna Dasgupta after declassifying the Mountbatten papers at the India Office Library in London shows convincingly that it was British intrigue rather than Nehruvian idealism that was responsible for many of the Indian follies. She points out with documentary evidence that the British strategic interests had a distinct pro-Pak tilt. Swapna Dasgupta believes that Mountbatten’s treachery was of a lesser order compared to the treachery of Lord Noel Baker, then secretary of state for Commonwealth relations. He presented proposals in the council that “involved the unqualified acceptance of Pakistan’s demands and outright rejection of Indian views” (Amitabh Mattoo 61). Many prominent citizens among the Muslim community too assert this
view, that “the violence was political and its containment was the responsibility of the
then British Administration led by the last Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten, chief villain of
the Partition tragedy” (Riaz Hasan, 10). C. Dasgupta (career diplomat and author of
War and Diplomacy in Kashmir 1947-48) in an interview with Rashne Sehgal to The
Times of India points out that Noel Baker “was reprimanded by Prime Minister Attlee
for following a totally pro-Pakistan policy. Attlee had asked Baker to lean in favour of
Pakistan but Baker went overboard in the most grotesque manner in his unqualified
support for Pakistan. So much so that the Americans felt his position was unjustifiably
pro-Pakistan” (10). Even some prominent English historians like Andrew Roberts point
their accusing finger at Mountbatten. As the Letter of Riaz Hasan shows, the Viceroy is
described as “a mendacious, intellectually-limited hustler, whose negligence and
incompetence resulted in many unnecessary deaths, the numbers of which increased
exponentially as his meteoric career progressed” (10).

The communal carnage went on unabated in Punjab, Bengal and in the North-
Eastern Frontier. Soon other provinces followed suit. The situation seemed totally out of
control. Leaders no longer had any sway over their following. The Congress in the
meanwhile on 8 March 1947 demanded the partition of Punjab. Later, Bengal was
added in the list. This amounted to conceding to partition of the nation. To add fuel to it,
Jinnah never even once deviated from his ideology and thesis that “Muslims and Hindus
are two separate nations,” as Gandhi observes in his speech entitled “Gandhi Advocates
Partition” that “Hindus will for ever be Hindus and Muslims for ever Muslims, that the
two will never unite, and that the gods of the two are different”(384).

Lord Mountbatten who succeeded Lord Wavell on 24 March 1947, very soon
realised that in the present circumstances the Cabinet Mission, if implemented, would
be a complete fiasco. On 3 June, Nehru in his radio talk, ‘Freedom Along With
Partition’ addressed to the nation confessing, “nine months have passed, months of sore trial and difficulty, of anxiety and some times even of heartbreak” (375). He added that those nine months had been “full of tragedy for millions” (376). With a very heavy heart he continued his talk ‘Freedom Along With Partition’,

...my mind is heavy with the thought of the sufferings of our people in the areas of disturbance, the thousands who are dead and those, especially our womenfolk, who have suffered agony worse than death. To their families and to the innumerable people who have been uprooted from their homes and rendered destitute, I offer my deepest sympathy (376).

K. A. Abbas, on hearing Nehru’s monologue over the radio observes in his article, “Who Killed India” that “There was no joy even in the hearts of his listeners. I saw tears in the eyes of the people listening in along with me” (233).

The Congress had already passed a resolution on 8 March that Partition was quite inevitable. On 14 June, the Congress accepted the Mountbatten Plan of partitioning the country with the studied surmise that it would be quite unwise and impractical to fritter one’s energies in trying to keep unwilling people in the Indian Union. This was very much in tune with Jinnah’s declaration that “Muslim India will not rest content until we have established full, complete and sovereign Pakistan” (Nagarkar 457). However, when the move to partition the two provinces—Punjab and Bengal—was on the anvil, Jinnah condemned it saying that it was a sinister move actuated by spite and bitterness; it was a nefarious plan mooted by the Congress and the British government to unnerve the Muslims by emphasising that the “Muslims will get a truncated or mutilated or a moth-eaten Pakistan” (Nagarkar 457). On 10 June the League endorsed the Partition. But some Muslim Organisations like the Khaksars and
leaders like Rahmat Ali were not happy to accept a truncated Pakistan. Rahmat Ali was credited with coining the word ‘Pakistan.’

Gandhi was the first important national leader to yield to the notion of Partition after the League passed the resolution in 1940. He felt that if they did not yield there would be large-scale destruction; and there was no other effective practical solution to the menace. It was rather strange that Gandhi had been quite flexible with regard to the Partition proposal from the very beginning. As far back as 1909 he wrote that the Hindus should give the Muslims whatever they ask for and willingly accept whatever sacrifice this might involve. On 14 June 1947, Gandhi, in one of his addresses, "Gandhi Advocates Partition" spoke that “the Working Committee has, . . . accepted Partition . . . Both the Congress and the League have a share in the formulation . . . the Working Committee has accepted it because there was no other way. They now see clearly that the country is already divided into two camps” (383). However it should not be construed that he gave his assent in a thoughtless mood. He underwent a tremendous agony at his helplessness. He told a handful of Congress leaders who opposed to endorse the Partition resolution on 14 June 1947 that “If I felt strong enough myself I would, alone, take up the flag of revolt” (Bhattacharjee xi)

Mention must be made at this juncture about Sardar Vallabhai Patel, Minister in Charge of the Department of States, and the onerous job he was entrusted to integrating about 565 states, into one Indian territory. About half a dozen of these states were within the Indian territory of the proposed Pakistan. The rest were within the Indian territory. A few had a common border with India and Pakistan like Kashmir, Jaisalmar, Jodhpur and Bikaner. The integration of all these states with India was a formidable task because some of these states aspired to be independent and a couple of them were even toying with the idea of joining the proposed Pakistan. In his speech "India Integrated"
delivered on 3 July 1947, Patel reminded those leaders that politically India was in a fragmented condition because of their “mutual conflicts and internecine quarrels and jealousies” (386). In the past such issues had been the cause of its downfall a number of times. As India was then in the threshold of attaining its independence, he said with severity, “we cannot afford to fall into those traps again” (Patel “India Integrated” 386). With a sad heart he added “to the bitter disappointment and sorrow of many of us, some parts have chosen to go out of India and to set up their own government” (Patel “India Integrated” 386). He wanted such states to wholeheartedly conform to integration of India and not to militate against his plan of integration, for, he observed, “We are all knit together by bonds of blood and feelings no less than of self-interest. None can segregate us into segments, no impassable barriers can be set up between us” (Patel “India Integrated” 386). He noted that if all came together by common endeavour they could raise “this sacred land” (Patel “India Integrated” 386) to a new greatness while lack of unity would expose them to fresh calamities, anarchy and chaos.

In the meantime in Delhi, Mountbatten herded 75 of the most important Maharajas and Nawabs of India and Divans in their decoration-covered uniforms and urged them to sign the Act of Accession. The Viceroy put them one by one “into Patel’s waiting apple basket” (Collins and Lapierre 203). However Kashmir’s Hindu Maharaja, Hari Singh could not be cowed down or coerced successfully by Mountbatten though both had been friends. As Hari Singh failed to fall into Patel’s basket, Mountbatten proposed to drop the Kashmiri Apple. Logic seemed to dictate that Kashmir wind up in Pakistan. An overwhelming 90 per cent of its people were Muslims. It had been one of the areas originally selected for an Islamic State by Rahmat Ali when he had first formulated his ‘impossible’ dream. The ‘k’ in Pakistan stood for Kashmir. If Hari Singh had annexed it with Pakistan, India would not have raised any objection. But
Hari Singh said that he didn't want either to accede to Pakistan or India. He told Mountbatten, as is shown by Collins and Lapierre in their book *Freedom at Midnight*, "I wish to be independent" (205). The two authors have rightly captured the mood of the Viceroy:

You can’t be independent. You’re a land-locked country. You’re over-sized and under-populated. What I mind most though is that your attitude is bound to lead to strife between India and Pakistan. You’re going to have two rival countries at daggers drawn for your neighbours. You’ll be the cause of a tug-of-war between them. You’ll lose your throne and your life, too, if you’re not careful. (205-206)

This had no effect on the Maharajah. And the ‘Kashmiri Apple’ was going to remain firmly attached to its tree. In the next morning when the Viceroy tried to meet the Maharajah, the latter’s special messenger came with the news that the Maharajah had a stomach upset, and his doctor wouldn’t allow anyone to see the Maharajah. A perennial problem that caused untold suffering to mostly the minority Hindus and to some extent even to the Muslims, and would embitter Indo–Pak relations for more than half a century and imperil world peace, “had found its genesis” in the sarcastic words of Collins and Lapierre “in that diplomatic stomach-ache” (206). Hari Singh’s letter to Mountbatten written in a moment of great crisis shows the Kashmir situation in a better light. Tariq Ahmad Bhat reproduces it in his cover story “Brother Versus Brother” to the magazine *The Week*:

1947 October 26

My dear Lord Mountbatten,

I have to inform Your Excellency that a grave emergency has arisen in my state and request the immediate assistance of your Government....
Afridis, soldiers in plain clothes, and desperadoes with modern weapons have been allowed to infiltrate into the state (by Pakistan), at first in the Poonch area, then from Sialkot and finally in a mass in the area adjoining Hazara district on the Ramkote side.... The wild forces thus let loose on the State are marching on with the aim of capturing Srinagar.

I have no option but to ask for help from the Indian Dominion. Naturally they cannot send the help asked for by me without my State acceding to the dominion of India. I have accordingly decided to do, and I attach the instrument of accession for acceptance by your Government....

In haste and with kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

Hari Singh (47).

In spite of the foolish steadfastness of a last batch of some die-hard Maharajahs, on 15 August 1947, Patel's basket of apples was overflowing. The Viceroy had successfully achieved a seemingly impossible mission. Five princes whose states would be inside Pakistan rallied to Jinnah. Mountbatten and V.P. Menon had collected all the rest, with only three exceptions. They were the Nizam of Hyderabad, the Maharajah of Kashmir and the Nawab of Junagadh. How they were annexed to the independent India was part of Indian history.

As preparation for the independence was underway, the British Intelligence Officer Gerald Savage had nerve-raking information to the law-enforcing authorities. A group of Sikh terrorists had links with the Hindu fanatical political group the RSSS (The Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh). Master Tarasingh, the formidable leader of the RSSS, as Collins and Lapierre point out, had called on his followers in a secret meeting in Lahore "to drench India in blood" (209). The Sikh and the RSSS had decided to pool
their resources and spread terror. The Sikhs would destroy the heavily guarded ‘Pakistan Specials’, the trains destined to carry from Delhi to Karachi the key men and stores assigned to the new state. Both the groups had sophisticated weapons and communication aids. Collins and Lapierre present the gruesome report in their Freedom at Midnight:

On 14 August, those men were to station themselves along the route, which would carry Mohammed Ali Jinnah in triumphant procession through the streets of Karachi from Pakistan’s Constituent Assembly to the official residence of the new Governor-General. As a young Serbian had plunged Europe into the horror of World War I, so one of the zealots was to assassinate the founder of Pakistan at the height of his glory by hurling a grenade into his open carriage. The furore provoked by that grisly murder, the RSSS hoped would launch the entire sub-continent into a savage civil war from which the numerically superior Hindus were bound to emerge as undisputed rulers (210).

Presenting the hurriedly drafted Indian Independence Bill on 10 July 1947 in the House of Commons, the Labour Prime Minister Attlee in his speech "The Curtain Falls" regretted the division of India and called it a “grave drawback” (392). But, according to him, there was no other option but to sever India. Speaking as though it were a funeral oration for the British Empire, he observed,

They have all wanted to maintain the unity of India, to give India complete self-governance and to preserve the rights of minorities. Every one of them has hoped that a solution might be found without resorting to partition. I know that many Indians of all communities passionately desire this, but it has not been found to be practicable (390).
It would be worth noting here that the original plan of the British to leave India was set on 3 June 1948. But unable to pull on for long the British decided to hurriedly leave India and it was Mountbatten, who accelerated the date of quitting from the original date to 15 August 1947. As Bhattacharji rightly observes, “speed was the essence of Mountbatten’s strategy... As a military commander long inured to bloodshed, excessive casualties did not deter him from securing his objective” (x). It was obvious that the British Government was handing over power at a time and manner of their own choosing. Indians were a ploy in their own game.

There had been some strong criticisms against the British for their alleged divide and rule policy. In their long innings as the ruler of unified India it was strongly felt to be unbecoming on their part to secede it in fragments at the time of their leave-taking. It should not be construed that the divisions found in India were a colonial creation. At the same time, one should not forget as Rajmohan Gandhi points out in his book Revenge and Reconciliation that “every step forward in the struggle for independence... turned out to be a step in the direction of partition” (262). This being so, many patriotic Indians believed rather firmly that “Indian divisions were a British import, and that Indian unity would flow from independence and from the struggles for it” (R.Gandhi 262). However, in the couple of centuries prior to independence, there had always been the Muslim section of the society that feared the end of the foreign rule and put greater trust in the English administration rather than the dominant political organ, the Congress. If the English were to go, the Muslims decided to ask for a separate state or status for itself. They are reluctant to be part of a united or centralised India. As Rajmohan Gandhi observes, “a subcontinent of mistrust had invited alien rule. A continuance of mistrust divided the independent subcontinent, politically into India and Pakistan, and
emotionally into several religious, sectarian, caste, ethnic or linguistic groupings in both countries” (263).

Perhaps it would not be out of place here to point out that the course of modern Indian history has been different, if Moulana Abul Kalam Azad, who had been the President of the Congress Party for seven years from 1939 to 1946, had chosen to continue for some more time, or preferred and proposed the name of Sardar Patel as the President of the AICC, and not Nehru. Regretting his decision later, Azad confesses in his book, *India Wins Freedom* “this was perhaps the greatest blunder of my political life. I have regretted no action of mine so much as the decision to withdraw from the Presidentship of the Congress at this crucial juncture. It was a mistake which I can describe in Gandhiji’s words as one of Himalayan dimension” (162).

Abul Kalam Azad’s second blunder was that when he decided not to contest himself, he “did not support Sardar Patel” (Azad 162). Had he been made the President of the AICC, he would not have acted as Nehru did, but differently. And in that case Jinnah would never get the opportunity to sabotage the Cabinet Mission Plan, which proposed to form the interim government. Though the Muslim League accepted the Cabinet Mission Plan, it did so only under duress. It was not surprising that Jinnah was not very happy about it, because the Cabinet Mission Plan had no agenda for an independent Islamic State. To make matters worse, Nehru’s declaration came as a bombshell to the League leaders, “that the Congress could change the scheme through its majority in the Constituent Assembly” (Azad 165). This was malevolently interpreted that the minorities would be placed at the mercy of the majority.

It would be revealing to many that as far as 1937 itself, some three years before the League’s Pakistan Resolution, Savarkar, the President of the Hindu Mahasabha had argued that “Hindus and Muslims were two nations” (R.Gandhi 263), in the borrowed
phrase from Arundhati Roy "an unmixable mix" (44). However, the Mahasabha had neither the vision nor the willpower and strength to have a Hindu-controlled India. The principle of non-coercion or self-determination on the part of Gandhi and the unwillingness of the departing British to transfer power to Congress facilitated and speeded up the process of the Partition of India, Punjab and Bengal.

There has been a theory very much prevalent in India is that Partition and the carnage that followed it was derived from religion and in particular from Gandhi's introduction of religion into politics. The proponents of this theory like Ainslee Embree point out that Gandhi's use of a religious vocabulary, mostly Hindu in origin damaged the prospects of Indian unity. In fact, religion was very much brought into politics to play, if not by Gandhi, at least by others. India's political air was thick with religion when Gandhi came back to India in 1915. As has been observed by R.Gandhi, well-known politicians like “Tilak had invoked Ganpati in the late 1880’s, and Aurobindo Ghosh had solicited just there after” (265). This inevitably increased the Muslim anxieties and depressed their sentiments. R. Gandhi adds,

Religious metaphors flew like missiles in the skies of Bengal when, in 1905, the Presidency was partitioned into Muslim-majority and Hindu-majority parts, and again in 1911, when Bengal was reunified. Appealing to the Raj in the name of religion, the Muslim League had secured separate electorates for Muslims in 1909. (265)

Though Gandhi spoke as a Hindu, he spoke as a reconciling Hindu. Time and again he addressed the Muslims that they need not entertain any fear from his hinduness. His only intention was to bring Hindus and Muslims together. He wanted the Indians to see as Kabir had seen five centuries earlier, that Ram and Rahim were one. By yoking them together, Gandhi hoped to deflect and overcome the Hindu-Muslim
suspicion. He firmly believed that both Hinduism and Islam preached fraternity and not hate. However Gandhi’s opponents did not see as Gandhi saw. They painted him as a Hindu communalist. Even Jinnah’s leaving the Congress was ascribed to Gandhi’s endorsement of ‘khilafat’ and also to Gandhi’s willingness to experiment with mass defiance of laws.

Many saw India’s advancement towards independence as a move towards Partition. It’s not without validity. Notable among them was Rabindranath Tagore. He was very much troubled by Gandhi’s principle of nationalism especially, the Non-cooperation Movement. He warned Gandhi of nationalism’s negative impact. He felt that it would create in the Indian’s mind an intense consciousness of separateness. In other words, Tagore, as far back as in 1921, was afraid that the “Indians could become ‘intensely conscious’ of their separateness from the British, a Muslim, Dalit, Assamese, Tamil or another group in India could also be roused to a fierce awareness of its separateness from others in India” (R.Gandhi 268).

It is a disheartening thing to note Indian nationalism spearheaded by some very well known leaders was irretrievably intertwined with communalism. In terms of ideology and political practice, the relationship between Indian nationalism and communalism was quite complex and ambivalent. Nationalist campaigns very often manipulated religious imagery and issues to win the majority support. Most nationalist thinkers prompted to describe national identity in terms of religion and tended “to equate being an Indian with being a Hindu” (Chatterji 02). This was particularly marked in Bengal in the writings of very well known writers like Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, Aurobindo Ghosh and Swami Vivekananda and “in the brand of ‘extremist’ nationalism they inspired” (Chatterji 02).
In 1905 when Lord Curzon partitioned Bengal, it created a furore and a vehement protest, which in turn resulted in repealing it within six years. But in 1947 when Bengal was partitioned for the second time, no voice was raised in protest. Nevertheless, it ensued as Chatterji shows, “horrific clashes between Hindus and Muslims” (01). In fact there had been an organised move for quite some time to vivisect Bengal on the basis of religion. This movement was spearheaded by Bengal’s so-called elite group of people, ‘bhadralok’ or ‘respectable people’. They had been manoeuvring their move quite cautiously in the nationalist politics ever since Bengal’s first partition. Gradually their nationalist agendas started assuming narrower and parochial. This shift from nationalism slowly tended towards communalism. The bhadralok perceived politics more and more in communal terms. They considered themselves as a modern, enlightened, western-educated, cultured middle class. The nationalism that they displayed had drawn its inspiration mainly from Hindu revivalist ideologies. As Joya Chatterji observes,

Aurobindo Ghosh, packed off to England at the age of seven and educated in London and Cambridge, developed the philosophy of ‘political vedanta’ which preached the identification of the nation with the mother Goddess Kali when he returned home, while Bepin Chandra Pal and Sarala Devi, both from old Brahmo families, introduced Kali Puja and Shivaji festivals onto the nationalist agenda. (13)

The other prominent bhadralok leaders like Chittranjan Das and Subhas Bose also were no exception to this trend. They and their inspired followers concomitantly tended to equate India with Hinduness. They also worked with other Hindu communal forces to mobilise for a Hindu nation. To realise this, they attempted by petty manoeuvrings to forge a greater Hindu political community bringing together the disparate castes and
tribes of the putative Hindu family into a single unit. The bhadralok leaders naturally "saw themselves as the standard-bearers of Hindu Bengal's destiny" (Chatterji 14). Slowly their central concerns moved away from anti-British to anti-Muslim.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Muslims were a slight majority in Bengal's population. However, according to Chatterji, "it was bhadralok Hindus who dominated Bengali society and held most of the levers of power . . ." (15). The Communal Award, however, topsy-turvyed the communal equation and allotted less seats in the new provincial Legislative Assembly. So they were reduced to a minority and would be naturally subordinated to the Muslims. "The Poona Pact," Chatterji observes, "that followed close on the heels of the Award further reduced high-caste Hindus to a small minority in a House which they had always expected to dominate" (15). In the meanwhile, the economic depression too threatened Bengal with the sudden collapse of agrarian prices. This naturally affected the rural credit. All these, along with the Government of Bengal's proposed move to promote Muslim education and employment had a negative impact on the bhadralok Hindus. They were fuming inside. They even thought that the British rule was better to Muslim rule and so gave support to the British "who freed the Hindu Bengal from Muslim tyranny" (Chatterji 16).

The Fazlul Huq ministry gave local bodies greater powers. So there was a stiff competition for the control of local bodies, and as a result, tension between the two communities grew more accurate. In Chandpur, Maulvis from Noakhali preached in mosques and elsewhere against voting for Hindus. Any Muslim supporting a Hindu was threatened with ex-communication. More often, trouble broke out in Hindu bhadralok strongholds, where the Hindu parties were unable to check the growing influence of the Muslims. Finding themselves losing ground to Muslims on all fronts, the bhadralok Hindus thought it wise to demand Partition for the creation of a separate Hindu
homeland rather than to being humiliated under the Muslim rule. So they organised a campaign for the Partition of Bengal, in collusion with the Bengal Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha.

From the mid-thirties onwards, efforts were taken by the Hindu organisations in Bengal to break the caste barriers and bring all the low-caste people under one label—Hindu. They achieved some success because as Chatterji points out “caste hierarchies in Bengal were not as rigid as in some other parts of India” (192). The Mahasabha invited the aboriginals in 1931 to assume caste Hindu names and to register their caste as ‘kshattriya’ in the coming election. The exhortation ran as follows. “They should record as ‘Hindu’ as their religion, and ‘kshattriya’ as their caste and ‘Singhar’ or ‘Ray’ as their family names” (Chatterji 195). They were also urged to stop working under the Muslim landlords and to break all their connections with their Muslim employers. This appealed to many low caste organisations and they responded quite eagerly with aspirations of higher social status. They constructed Hindu temples in every village, and introduced Sarbojanin Puja (combined worship by all castes). Quite naturally, all these campaigns and efforts by the Hindu organisations “were an enormous irritant to Muslims” (Chatterji 196) which fuelled communal bitterness in the localities of Bengal. Very soon many incidents of communal violence erupted throughout Bengal, involving low caste Hindu groups and Muslims. Desecration of mosques and temples, removal of images of gods and goddesses were reported from many parts of Bengal. In the Dacca disturbances of 1941, hundreds of people lost their lives and several villages were burnt down. In 1946 when Noakhali experienced one of the worst communal carnages in Bengal’ bloody history of communal conflict, many of the victims were the low caste Namasudras. In all 101 Namasudra families of Chandipur, Ramgonj Police Station were affected. Describing his experience as District Magistrate, S. Rahmatullah recalls:
Troublemakers came down from Calcutta to invite local Hindus... who were moneyed people and owned trucks in large numbers. They hired the militant Santhals who fired their arrows with tips carrying flames of fire at the huts of Muslims and roasted them alive... [I faced] a mob of Santhals armed with big bows, arrows and spears, beating drums, performing the war dance and shouting war-cries... we noticed Santhals sending up lighted arrows to set fire to the house[s] of Muslim villages...

(Chatterji 202)

Bad feelings between the communities continued to simmer when pamphlets like the Ain-al-Islam's "Goru O Hindu-Mussalman" ("The Cow, Hindus and Muslims") which argued that cow-slaughter was an essential religious duty and exhorted the Muslims not to give up sacrificing cows until Hindus gave up worshipping idols. Such incidents naturally deteriorated the relations between the two communities. Riots also frequently broke out when the Hindu processionists played music loudly before mosques during the immersion ceremony at the Durga Puja. Similar conflicts broke out at Kali Puja and the celebration of Ramzan. The bhadralok felt that the Muslims had become increasingly assertive under the protection of the Huq and Nizimuddin ministries. All these made the Hindus long for a separate 'Hindu homeland'. Even Patel strongly supported the Bengali Hindus in their demand for partition. He opined, "Bengal has got to be partitioned, if the non-Muslim population is to survive" (Chatterji 261). The Congress too gave its assent without much murmur. Nationalist Muslims like Ashrafuddin Chaudhuri were heartbroken at the imminent threat of a communally inspired division. Even most of the Muslim factions opposed to chopping Bengal into two. Jinnah and his followers in Bengal wanted Bengal to be a part of Pakistan. As Aruna Asaf Ali says rather pungently in her article, 'The Ganges in Mourning', even the
Bengal Government was soft-peddling. She observes, “Furies roused by the politician-demagogues of the Muslim League’s hatred-dispensation in Bengal initiated this communal war. Had the Government not been a party, the course of action followed by the inflammatory anti-social gangster stuff in Calcutta could have been checked” (226).

Printing and distribution of communal pamphlets were quite common in those times. One such pamphlet warned the Bengal Hindus

... not to forget that under the self-same ministry ... [Muslims] have not only rested after committing murder, outrage on women and forcible conversion, but have rubbed off with their feet the vermilion marks from the foreheads of your mothers and have smashed the bangles on their hands with your shoes in order to humiliate the entire Hindu community ...

(Chatterji 263)

Such pamphlets blinded the people belonging to both the communities. Mob fury became uncontrollable. Even men of learning and good breeding behaved as the unlettered, prejudice-ridden fanatics or gangsters. Gruesome forms of revenge were perpetrated. “Wherever the victims were isolated,” as Asaf Ali points out, “and defenceless they suffered death and much worse than death”(225).

Seen in this light, Partition was clearly an outcome of communal politics the seeds of which were sown in the 19th and the early 20th centuries. Hindus and Muslims participated in the revivalist movements with an inspired fervour. To add fuel to it, the colonial government’s introduction of the constitutional reforms that paved the way for the separate communal electorate created the political chasm in the Indian society on the communal lines.

The 1945-46 general elections bear ample evidence to the spectacular growth of the Muslim League. In 1937 it had captured only 109 seats of the 533 reserved Muslim
seats to the Central Assembly. But now it captured 460 out of the 533 from the Muslim Constituencies. Emboldened by the results, the Muslim League made it rigid in its demand for Pakistan. All negotiations failed and the sub-continent was split into two along communal lines, as per the provisions of the India Independent Act passed by the British Parliament on 3 June 1947. Thus, the two new states came into existence on 15 August 1947. Pakistan would comprise Sind, North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) and 16 districts of Punjab where Muslims were the majority. The rest of the 13 districts of Punjab would be part of India.

Even before the Boundary Commission demarcated the boundary line, the migrations started in large scales between the two new states. Hardly a week passed by, when more than a million Hindus and Sikhs crossed over from west to east Punjab, and then in a few days of that migration, another 2.5 millions collected in the refugee camps in west Punjab. By 6 November 1947 nearly 29,000 refugees were transported in both directions. Some 673 refugee trains were operated between August 27 and November 6, carrying nearly 2.3 million refugees inside India and across the border. Of these, 13,62,000 were non-Muslims, and 9,39,000 were Muslims. Huge foot convoys, each with 30,000 to 40,000 capacity were organised and manned by the Military Evacuation Organisation and Liaison Agency. They formed the bulk of the rural population. According to some reliable estimate, within as short as 42 days, i.e., between September 18 and October 29, some 24 non-Muslim foot columns of 8,49,000 strong went into India. In all, when the migrations were over, some 8 million people had crossed the newly-formed boundaries of Punjab and Bengal, “carrying with them memories of a kind of violence” to quote the words of Menon and Bhasin “that the three communities had visited upon each other that was unmatched in scale, brutality and intensity” (03).
The joy of wresting freedom had not touched the people even remotely. In the words of Kashmiri, “The League had made them untouchables to their fellow-Indians; they had been reduced to the state of political harijans in India” (155). Partition in fact sounded a death knell to India. People burst out their sentiments, protests and revolts in a flood of tears, for they felt that their beloved country was dead, butchered. Conscientious nationalist leaders like Abul Kalam Azad wept bitterly in solitude. The hearts of millions of people were “seized with fear at the approaching morrow about to dawn with daggers drawn and knives aimed at them” (Kashmiri 155). In his article, “Who Killed India?” K.A. Abbas analyses the factors, which caused the severance of India:

India was killed, and stabbed in the heart, by every Hindu who killed a Muslim, by every Muslim who killed a Hindu, by Hindu or Muslim who committed or abetted, or connived at, arson, rape and murder during the recent (and earlier) communal riots.

That an imperialist power planned the dismemberment of our country in the very hour of our freedom is not surprising. The wonder, and the tragedy is that India should have been killed by the children of India . . . .

(234)

Partition left a trail of devastating communal discord. Clashes and killings were rampant. The night skies invariably looked blood red as flames shot up from the scorched cities and towns. The looters, arsonists and killers stalked their streets in groups. Partition rendered thousands of millions of people homeless, city less and country less. The haunts and places, which had been so dear to them suddenly, turned alien. Businessmen and landed gentry overnight became paupers and refugees. “A new state of Pakistan”, as Chakravarty and Hussain observe “rose within India on
the debris of an unprecedented holocaust that shook the subcontinent, resulting in heavy
toll of human life and property” (16).

The Partition of India is a benchmark in Indian history. It had, in the words of
Alok Bhalla, “broken the covenant that men must make with men, castes with castes,
religions with other tolerant religions, without which our survival is always precarious
and our enslavement by some barbarian is certain (xi).

The holocaust has since evoked a tremendous interest among scholars through
out on this subject. Strangely, researches on this harrowing event have not been many.
Still, this painful issue has been the central theme of several movies, songs and other
forms of popular arts.

It is common that great events generally inspire artists and literateurs. The
Partition of India has been no exception. Ever since the witness of that great storm of
hatred and violence, it has provoked writers on both sides of the Radcliffe Line to
respond to it. In fact, “no other single historical event of modern India has left such an
indelible imprint on the minds of writers of Indian languages and produced such a vast
corpus of literature than the Partition of India” (Chakravarty and Hussain 28-29).
Volumes of literature have been produced on this subject. A good number of writers of
the subcontinent have recorded their emotional responses. Many have delved deep into
this event. “This kind of literature has come to be known as Partition literature”
(Chakravarty and Hussain 16). Tens of hundreds of pieces of Partition literature has
been produced over the past 50 years in Hindi, English, Urdu, Punjabi, Bengali, Sindhi,
Gujarathi, Marathi, Pashti, and Dogri. Such literatures have added a new dimension to
the world of Indian literature. They also provide the reader with enough source material
for the reconstruction of the history of Partition. Such material can comfortably be
classed as historical documents.
Litterateurs generally blame the politicians for their narrow political outlook. They “failed to visualise the outcome of partitioning the country” (Chakravarty and Hussain 17). Authors point out how the helpless hordes of people were caught unawares and put to untold sufferings in the violence that Partition unleashed. They depict the feelings of deep nostalgia of the survived and displaced and acute pain of losing their motherland forever. They have recorded different types of hazards, which the migrated people had to suffer from while migrating from their ancestral homes to an unknown, alien territory. Riots and other forms of violence also have found a prominent place in their writings. Communal riots occurred in Bengal form the background of Jyotirmoyee Devi’s *The River Churning*. It presents the anguish and trauma of Sutara, a Bengali, Hindu girl caught unawares in the single most traumatic experience. Deteriorating communal situation is the background of Shiv K. Kumar’s *A River with Three Banks*. It portrays not only some poignant aspects of the communal holocaust but also the romance of a Delhi-based Hindu journalist and a helpless Muslim abducted woman. Alok Bhalla’s stories, *Stories about the Partition of India*, not only present the unprecedented, unexpected and barbaric violence, but also show how “ordinary Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs wrecked on each other, coarsened our social sense, distorted our understanding of moral rightness” (Bhalla vii). The sad, painful memory those terrible days have been indelibly etched deeply in our souls and that is why “it still provokes us into irrational behaviour and careless thought” (Bhalla vii). Muhammad Umar Memon’s short stories likewise through the protagonists that inhabit their fictional space present “what we have gained through Partition, what we have lost as a consequence of it” (Bhalla xv). His characters, though willing, are unable to forget the cataclysmic event. Their minds are withered, as that of his character in the story, “Do You Suppose it’s the East Wind?” who says, “My one abiding fear is that the landscape of my memory might
become a yawning wasteland, derelict, empty, blanched" (An Epic 180). However there is some saving grace, for as in the story “Lajwanti”, the husband Sundarlal, though in the good old days was cruel to his wife Lajwanti, happily embraces her after many months of her abduction and repeated rape. Though she “had been ruined”, “she had been rehabilitated”, and “could never hope to be the old Laju ever again” (An Epic 29). Both the husband and wife never ever try to dig deep the shocking records of the cyclonic events of those predatory times. The hate campaigns and Partition formulas spread in every nook and corner pummelled in bloody revenge, arson and looting and mass murder in the full glare of the law-enforcing authorities. It was India's darkest hour. And this forms the focus of the succeeding Chapter.