Chapter - 4

Partition: Bhisham Sahni and Intizar Husain
The social realism of the Progressive writers prepared the ground for the traumatic events opening up a new wave by the major short-story writers of the period: Saadat Hassan Manto, Rajinder Singh Bedi, Krishan Chander; Ismat Chughtai as well as scores of others. In stories such as Thanda Gosht and Khol Do, Manto perfected his written art to create taut, compact narratives going beyond the search for the lost ideals of humanism, to a quest for what constituted the human dilemma. While Toba Tek Singh goes beyond the political questions to what is essentially the safer human condition. Partition Literature has been prone to manipulation for reasons, which have less to do with literature and more with ideological positioning of the critics involved. However, this brings us to another twist in the tale. In the first instance, the Partition had been written as a story, a tale which needed to be told, and then other view of the Partition as narratives that provides the reference for an assessment of particular stories.

This change marks a turn in the probablity of the Partition. The meaning of Partition, has been studied from the fictionalist standpoint, recovering the broader perspectives beyond the boundaries of the discourses of Partition. For this specific reason, two important novelists from the Indian and Pakistani side have taken and related to signify fictional perspectives regarding the category of Partition
literature. The two novelist are namely; Bhisham Sahni for the novel *Tamas* and Intizar Husain for the novel *Basti*. Both follow the pattern of the narrating histories, locating traumatized socio-political realities with a focus on the shared culture across the subcontinent. Both the novelists drag the literature of Partition beyond the realms of history, fulfilling the demands of Partition category transcending/breaking open this category by taking it beyond the Partition to a broader view of history, of which the Partition is one component.

These two writers represent the pinnacle of achievement in reliable fiction. Sahni’s *Tamas* is an attempt to interrogate the roots of hatred and religious differences altering the communal balance of nationalities contesting for an Indian nationalism. *Tamas* deals with the divisionary forces of Indian society, both the Hindu and the Muslim counterparts contradicting and contesting for alternative nationalism with all the deep-seated communal harmony as self-evidently present in their outcry for Indian nationalism. Intizar Husain’s major novel, *Basti* is a mid-career work, and bears an interesting relationship to the writer’s work. It draws on a number of themes from the writer’s earlier and successful short stories in a manner where the author can be seen to be cannibalizing the previous work to some extent. Although, in a number of instances, portions of the novel cover the same ground, but the different components connect together to create a unified whole. Breaking out of the conventional framework of time, *Basti* contemplates historical time, giving way to miraculous time. Between the two, covers the richness and multiplicity of their past, or pasts as both seem to have access to more than one past.
Their techniques indicate the influences of the traditions of the ancient East as well as the Modern European novel. Neither of them wants to give up one for the sake of the other and the ease, with which, they freely move from one to the other, is especially difficult to grasp for Urdu critics who are inclined to be myopic and seem to resent the fact that to see it devoid of any spittle—the closest that any characters of Intizar Husain come to each other in physical proximity—when suddenly the story is transported and the reader is jolted into the realization that this is the realm of memory which has just been splintered by the narrator/author’s wife watching a loud-playing television and commenting on the news. The news too is about strained relations between India and Pakistan, amounting to further difficulties, for travelers across the border, which in the post-Partition world have solidified into the absolute, denial in spite of all the beerbahautis (martyrs).

The shattered ‘memory’ can not be restored, except to recollect that the beerbahautis have died, their death symbolizes the loss of the childhood innocence, replaced by the politically charged colorless present. The question at the end of Basti is the unanswered question of Partition literature—did the miracle take place or not? By not answering the question, the novel says it all. The mastery of the narrative form and control over technique displayed best in the novel’s conclusion, as the writer brings together the various threads to weave together a final scene. It closes the long, historical narrative and its irrevocable finality contributes to the sense of tragedy that it highlights. History does not provide us
all the explanations; as literary side reflects the most subtlest of interpretations envisaged and informatively shared across the readerly communities aspiring for retrospect things left aside or untold in the greater historical process. Bhisham Sahni witnessed the turbulence of the period as an adult. That was the period of intense turmoil, people sacrificing their lives for the freedom of the country, people dying fighting for the country.

The unprecedented Communal violence provoked by the callous manipulation of religious sentiments of different communities by the elements who used religion as weapon to achieve political objectives heightened his sensitivity towards human suffering and also strengthened his firm commitment to secularism. Tamas is an episodic instrument, which from the point-of-view of literary craftsmanship may not exactly be considered flawless, yet, as a piece of literature, Tamas reveals the vision of one detached yet passionate, quietly reflective, yet emotionally intense. In 1974, the novel Tamas was published.

The Television-mini stories based on Tamas and two other short stories by Sahni (Sardarni and Zahud Baksh) was shown on 9th January, 1988. It evoked an unprecedented response all over the country both emotional and political, several questions were raised, why Tamas now? Why dig up old graves of tragic memories, when the country was constantly tense with apprehensions of communal violence? Amidst the accusations of being biased against the Hindu community and unjustifiably glorifying the Communists and thus, distorting
history fears were expressed that the uneducated, poor and insecure ‘common man’ might find it highly inflammatory and that a fresh wave of communal strife might sweep the nation. *Tamas* depicts a human tragedy of greater dimensions. In Bhisham Sahni’s *Tamas*, universal Indian values of life are revealing through some characters. One such character is Shahnawaz. The landscape of the novel is historical. The valley in this small town at its end diverges in two directions: one way goes to Tibet and the second one to Afghanistan.

The small town is peaceful. However, during the Indian Partition, the people of both Hindu and Muslim communities are virtually hostile. The mounting communal violence affects all in the town. Hindus living in Muslim dominated areas try desperately to procure some weapons to fight against the Muslim rioters if they attack them. Lalaji somehow manages to procure the woodchopper that can only serve as a weapon in addition to some sticks, which Lalaji’s family uses to hold-up the mosquito nets. Lalaji’s only son, Ranvir during these trying days has not returned home and Master Devbrat has managed to inform Lalaji of Ranvir’s engagement in the party work. Lalaji is very much disturbed with all looting and burning incidents taking place at the town. One day a blue-coloured Buick car stops in front of his house. Lalaji’s Muslim friend Shahnawaz steps out of the car and meets Lalaji.

Shahnawaz asks Lalaji to pack up essential household things and to go with him to a safer place immediately. Within a couple of minutes, Lalaji, his wife and
their daughter, Vidya board the car and leave the house for a safer location keeping the house in the custody of their servant Nanku. Shahnawaz drops Lalaji and his family at a relative’s house in the cantonment. Had there been no Shahnawaz, during this crucial moment when the town was in the grip of communal violence, the Muslim rioters would have definitely killed Lalaji and all members of his family. The truth in this supposition is that Nanku whom Lalaji entrusts with the responsibility to guard the house has been, brutally murdered by the rioters later. After dropping Lalaji and his family in the cantonment, Shahnawaz travels over different areas of the town in his Buick car. Finally, he arrives at a place where Raghunath and his family take shelter, leaving their own house where their security is in danger. At the time when Shahnawaz knocks at the door of Raghunath’s temporary house; Raghunath is in his bathroom; his wife opens the door and welcomes Shahnawaz. After sometime, Raghunath appears and they embrace each other. They then talk about the deteriorating condition of the town. Communal riots spread even in villages.

Janaki, Raghunath’s wife after a while returns there with a cup of tea for Shahnawaz. She then requests Shahnawaz to take care of the jewelry box, which she has left in her house at the time of leaving her house for safe shelter. She informs Shahnawaz of the place in her house where the box of jewelry lies and gives him the key of the house. This request is significant because it shows how a Hindu woman trusts a Muslim friend. This conversation between Janaki and
Shahnawaz is followed by the authorial comment: Shahnawaz felt elated at the thought that so much trust was reposed in him, that bhabhi was handing over keys of jewellery worth thousands of rupees, that she regarded him as one of their own (Tamas 122-23).

Communal violence whirlwinded everywhere, the external refugees was seeking the safest place to exist their life with their own community people. There is only Sikh house in the entire village, Karim Khan assured them that no one can harm them. The village scenario changes abruptly, Karim Khan informed him, the outside refugees might attack the other religious people. The thing that surprises Harnam Singh is that Karim Khan never stops in front of his shop. Karim Khan also adds that the local residents of the village will not attack him but the people of other villages will attack him and the local people will remain passive.

Karim Khan informs him of all these and moves on. For the first time, Harnam Singh looks shaky and his faith in God wavers. That Karim Khan has not stopped at his teashop also worries him very much. He now realizes that the real danger is ahead. After a couple of minutes, Karim Khan appeared again nearby. This time also he does not stop in front of his shop. He pretends to cough, and mumbles, “Don’t delay, Harnam Singh, he said, panting while climbing the path, his hand resting on his back. “There’s bad news everywhere. The rioters may be come here at anytime” (154). Harnam Singh is very confused and does not know what he should do then. He comes to the room behind his shop and tells
everything to his wife. Banto is almost on the verge of collapse. The night is approaching. They decide to leave the village. Suddenly they hear the beating of drums coming from the distance. They also hear shouting of slogans by the members of the Muslim League Party. Without any further delay, these two old persons leave their home and enter into the nocturnal wilderness.

The point to consider here is that Bhisham Sahni introduces this event in *Tamas*, clearly illustrate that Indian values were not altogether lost. Even in the darkness of ‘savagery’ and ‘barbarity’, a person like Karim Khan stands like a light-fountain—a hope for the sane world. On the Television screen, elderly Sikh couples hobble away from the charred remains of a home looted by Muslim mobs. The man clutches his rifle and tells his wife: "If it comes to worst, I’ll first kill and then myself" (154). The heart rendering situation puts the audience into grief, the aged couples plight is hindered and unexpressable in the novel. Bhisham Sahni’s *Tamas* is a novella, written in Hindi, that captured the nation’s imagination with its simple but powerful storyline about the life in a city and its surrounding villages in a district near what would now comprise the north-western border of India and Pakistan. Sahni only clues us in about the setting of the novel through the discussions of Richard, the English Deputy Commissioner has with his wife about visiting the nearby ruins of Taxila. While the names of several villages, tehsils and nearby cities indicate the setting is an undivided Punjab, the story revolves around several different protagonists—Hindu, Muslim and Sikh. This shift
in subject position prevents the readers from identifying closely with any one perspective, from Nathu’s despair at killing the pig, to Richard’s responses with his wife Liza, to Ranvir’s initiation into the Youth Sabha, to Lala Lakshmi Narayan’s fear of being trapped in a Muslim locality to Shahnawaz’s unconditional help for his Hindu friends to Harnam’s Singh’s forced exile with his wife from the only home he knows, the storyline shifts from person to person, from one collective entity to another.

It starts with Nathu, a poor chamar, a tanner by profession, who is asked to kill a pig by Murad Ali for a pittance-five rupees. Nathu buys Murad Ali’s make-up story about the pig being required by the veterinary doctor and struggles to tackle the resilient pig. The pig is finally killed and as per Ali’s instructions it is hauled away by Kalu, the jamadar (the sweeper) just before the break of dawn. The dead pig thus, (deemed, unclean and dirty by Islam) unceremoniously left on the steps of the mosque, stirring trouble in the city. Meanwhile a group of Congress workers trying hard to follow Mahatma Gandhi’s resolve decides to step out singing patriotic songs, which quickly turns into a mission to clean the streets of the community to foster pride in the local and civic infrastructure. Their own disdain at being forced to do this work is obvious and some of them perceive it to be meant only as a symbolic gesture and do not want to physically labor on public amenities. The trouble starts out early with the party being stopped from entering a Muslim locality by Mahmood Saheb because he declares the Muslims who are
accompanying the Congress party as traitors to their religion. He asserts that the Congress party is only for Hindus and the Muslim League alone looks out for the interest of Muslims.

The hurling of stones at the Congress party workers and the general feeling of unrest disrupts any further cleaning efforts and the party disperses immediately. Vanprasthiji, a local Hindu religious leader, leads his congregation in chanting Vedic mantras and *shlokas* (couplets from the Vedas). The tone of the meeting that is to follow is established early on for he says: “Horrible have been the sins of the Muslims in the land Even the sky has refused us its favor and the earth its bounty” (57). The discussion led by Members of the Executive Committee and prominent leader of the Sikh community focuses on how to protect the Hindus and Sikhs from the reprisal they fear by the Muslim community. The dreaded retaliation for the killing of the pig with its dead carcass polluting the steps of the Mosque seems to be forthcoming according to this gathering. The rumor about a slaughtered cow and its parts being strewn in front of the Mai Sati Dharmasala according to a Sikh gentleman further inflames the Secretary who declares, “If they dare slaughter a cow, rivers of blood will flow in the city” (60). Then privy to some of the arrangements made to ensure the safety of the Hindus and the Sikhs, which include the stockpiling of rudimentary arms like sticks, axes and knives.

Meanwhile, we are also introduced to Richard, the powerful British Deputy Commissioner, and his wife Liza. Richard, at the helm of the administrative
The tension builds-up in the city, there are some stray incidents of people being killed in various localities which makes people rush to take precautions to protect themselves, like Lala Lakshmi Narayan rushes his family to safety in Shahnawaz’s Buick. The deaths of Milhki, the General and Inder, the perfume seller amongst several others add-up the flames of revenge as the Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs close their ranks, and prepare for the forthcoming bloodshed. Outside the city limits in the village of Dhok Illahi Buksh, Harnam Singh and his wife Banto, as the only Sikhs in an all-Muslim village, forced to leave their home for fear of losing their lives. Their forced exile and the misadventures of the old couple reveal more of the intertwined nature of the lives of the Muslim and Sikh communities now worried about the dangers of Communalism.
Their son Iqbal Singh is chased and forcibly converted to Islam after being subjected to greater ridicule and their daughter Jaswant jumps to her death in a well fulfilling an age-old ritual, to protect her honor. The clashes between the Muslims/Hindus and between the Muslims and the Sikhs intensify once the fires burn themselves out. The British intervenes to bring peace to the city and its neighboring villages. Deaths, gang-rapes, the destruction of property and the looting is registered and recorded by the Records Clerk in precise detail, leaving out the horrific narrative that accompanies each incident. In the end, peace is restored, the bazaars re-open, people get back to business and the leaders of all communities get back to their amicable bantering over forming a Peace Committee suggesting a normalized Communal equation.

Bhisham Sahni was reaffirming his personal political and religious past. Tamas his novel on Partition narrates his thoughts regarding the emptiness of meaning, logic and purpose revealing the dark blackness of Partition. 'Partition' according him was a mistake that turned into reality due to the politics of Partition. The composite ethos of India according to Sahni, needs to be safeguarded for preserving unity and diversity in Indian nationalism. “This sense that for a majority of the Hindus and the Muslims, the Partition happened without any forewarning, recreated with terrifying precision in Tamas in the scene in which Indar, a young Hindu fanatic, kills an old Muslim perfume-seller” (Setter and Gupta, Vol. II, 87).
Sahni and Alok Blalla (Setter and Gupta, Vol. II 88) agree to the dialogues of Partition like other dialogues in medias res is true of all dialogues of communication between religious communities. Sahni is a writer who refuses to speak the language of ‘hate’ and ‘revenge’. He speaks of Lahore and Rawalpindi not with the sense of a vague nostalgia of those places connected with him but with memories connected with those places that helped in offering moral and political judgements. Therefore, we get some glimpses of the geographical situation of the action. There is a long dialogue between Richard, the District Deputy Commissioner, and his wife, Liza while they are riding together: “On the other side of that hill, nearly seventeen miles from here one ruins of Taxila” (Tamas 212). In fact, the realistic theme of the novel is overwhelming filled with scattered symbols like: “…Two small children ran round and round an electric pole, playing catch. Shahnawaz saw another group of children playing. They were standing in a circle. A small girl lay in the middle of the circle, her kurta pulled about her waist. A boy sat astride her, his kurta also pulled about his waist. The other children stood around the pair giggling…” (119).

The British power in the novel is very central towards the understanding of the novel. As soon as the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs notice the British airplanes flying over the area, all religious groups return to normalcy. This is an example of the British tacit approval of the fanatic violence between the religious groups. Partition was the outcome of diverse political forces. Congress as well as Muslim
League both were responsible and political leaders of both the parties could not see beyond the immediate future and the seeds of Communalism, which were sown by the British.

The graphic presentation of Hindu and Muslim militancy is very forceful. The Congress and Muslim League leaders were obsessed with themselves and averse to each other. Their differences had percolated down to the remotest areas and the division of 'hearts' had taken place long before the Partition. All these external factors have portrayed neutrally in the novel Tamas. Essentially Tamas is a socio-political-historical novel and forces of destruction take the center stage matching the strain of thought of W.B. Yeats: “The best lack all convictions, while the worst! Are full of passionate intensity” (Green 170). It would be apt to close the discussion with words from The Refugee by S.H. Vatsayan Ajneya: “The real danger in the world lay not in the strength of evil but in the weakness of the good. The lack of courage of those who are good is the greatest evil. Dark clouds are not responsible for the night. Night falls when the sun declines” Tamas reverberates the thoughts of Ajneya. How apt and true they are even today! (Anand et al. 233).

Sahni reflects the capacity of the ordinary people resisting the rise of Communal feelings, and the struggles of ordinary people against religious differences. Raghavan Iyer provides an interesting argument about those societies which share the notations of scheme and perfectibility rather than guilt and sin agrees with scope of the novel (Raghavan 382-83). Sahni’s narrative describes the
Communal violence turning into a genocidal event. Conveying a sense of irrational and helplessness of the government bureaucrats to the tragic turn of events. Sahni depicts collective violence and those forces working behind those sins in a realistic/naturalistic manner challenging the rational human behaviour.

There is mythological construction of burning and looting taking place as a consequences of the Partition of India which point out to the legend of Ramayana and the celebration marking the *Dussehra Day* this can be seen when, “The fire spread, turning the north-westerly sky over the city red. The flames licked upward like the red fangs of a mighty snake gradually spreading towards the north. The scene was reminiscent of the burning Lanka on the Dussehra Day” (Tamas 110). The mutual hatred between the Hindus and the Muslims is self-evident error as agreed by the butcher in the novel, “The Angrez has done us no wrong. It’s the age-old enmity between the Hindu and the Muslim. A Kafir is a Kafir. As long as he does not profess the right religion he will remaining our enemy. To kill a Kafir brings merit” (168). As the communal riot ends and the ending lines remind through Richard and Liza relaxing before their loneliness and helplessness where, they understood as making no difference to the communal decide (236).

*Tamas* ruthlessly shows that “if people who do not know history are perhaps condemned—as Santayana puts it, they are certainly prone to repeat it” (Sundaram, Vol. 28, 78). This becomes clear in the conversations between Richard and Liza. Basically, Indians, whether Muslims or Hindus, are one nation—their roots were the same. Richard emphatically said: “The first lot came
from Central Asia... And those that followed after a lapse of many centuries were also from the same stock. Their origin, so to speak, was the same. The first bunches were known as the Aryans. They came into this country thousands of years ago. The others who were known as Mussalmans made inroads into this country thousand years ago. But their roots were the same” (Tamas 36-37).

Those Indians in whose memories history and myth were so often blurred had only observed the differences. The ethos of a race or a nation is a continuum, it is rooted in the past, it shapes the present, and is an-inspiration for the future. However, the people stood ignorant of these facts since “they don’t know their history. They only live it” (37). Their gross ignorance about the present was even more engrossing than their blindness to history. This brought out clearly when Richard explained to his wife about the fundamental oneness of the Indians. Have you ever taken a good look at these people? They belong to the same stock, the same features, same noses, mouths, broad foreheads, brown eyes (36).

They look after one another so much that Liza could not distinguish between a Hindu and a Muslim. Though Richard expatiated on the subject, it did not dawn upon her. In the same way, Roshanlal found it very difficult to throw light on the subject. There were some outward differences among the ‘people of the same stock’ belonging to different religions, but these paled into insignificance when, for instance, Iqbal Singh who was converted to Sheikh Iqbal Ahmed before nobody could find the difference because the fanatics obliterated the signs of Iqbal Singh’s Sikhism; “in their place were all external Muslim signs” (85).
Sahni throws into the measures of relief that people belonging from the same community were different. It is ironical to note that Murad Ali, who was a notorious Communist and the one behind the spate of communal violence, was “dark, thick-set, short statured... small penetrating eyes in stark contrast to Shahnawaz, who was the voice of sanity helping his Hindu brethren during riots, was ‘a portly man, broad chested’ and handsome” (119). Milkhi, a Brahmin, was a ‘dirty, slimy lizard’. ‘Nobody knew his origins.’ (127). What Mushirul Hasan told is worth mentioning: “The obvious fact that the Indian Muslims do not constitute a single, homogeneous and monolithic entity and the differentiating features that characterise Indian society as a whole are also to be found within the Muslim community” (Hasan, In Search, Vol. 23, 2467).

Co-existence and interdependence are the marked features of the town. The intimacy between the close friends, Raghunadh and Shahnawaz, was very warming and touching to observe during the riot. Raghunadh’s wife did not veil herself before Shahnawaz. She did not observe Purdah and she affectionately called him ‘Khanji.’ Even Congress and the Muslim League leaders were prone to exchange pleasantries with great warmth of feeling when they were together. Thus, “the multifarious activities of the people, like the measured tones of a symphony, were attuned to the heart-beat of the city” (Tamas 88). In general, integrative and syncretic forces were at work both at the popular and the elite level, though their progress impeded by stray localized and sporadic incidence of conflict over religious symbols.
The main thrust in *Tamas* is the grim consequences of Communal politics leading to Partition. Glorifying of the popular leaders on communal lines and associating religious symbols with party-politics, which caused a ripple effect absolving into the very structure of a communal society. Though often adopting diametrically opposite and hostile positions, the communal interpretation of history adopted basically, the same historiographic framework, premises and assumptions. Often, the only difference was that the other community was held the culprit. Quite often, in the hands of the Communalist, the entire treatment of the past was allegorical. In the novel, *Vanprasthiji*, a Hindu priest, chanted the couplet. “Horrible have been the sins of the Muslims in the land Even the sky has refused us its favour and the earth its bounty” (57). The crisis was being used to serve divergent political objectives. The priest-craft sought to use it to appropriate it for a harmful cause.

Religion brought in actively during the mass fascist phase of Communalism when it used to mobilize the common people. People came to the revered *Vanprasthiji* not for religious reasons. After the service was over, the members of the congregation continued to sit and listen to the Communal speeches by religious leaders. They had a readymade topic to discuss, the highly charged communal tensions in the city. In his ‘sermon’ *Vanprasthiji* referred to the sins of the Muslims in the land in a couplet. He asked the Hindus to have a canister of mustard oil and a sack of charcoal ready at hand to pour over the enemies, because
the Muslims had been collecting lathis, spears and such other lethal weapons in the Jama Masjid. The temple bell repaired at once to alarm the people in case of trouble. The same was the case with Sikhs who were very aggressive and petulant.

Partition was bound to give a deadly blow particularly when it came to the Sikhs. Hindus and Muslims mutilated Punjab into two parts. The birth of the two provinces was just like sundering a part of a complex living organism into two which were destined to lead a precarious dead-but-alive existence for a long time to come. On June 14th 1947 Lord Mountbatten’s Press Attache wrote: “We are in the heart of Sikh country here and the prevailing atmosphere is one of tension and forbidding. They (the Sikhs) see that the Partition of India means substantially and irrevocably the partition of the Sikhs.” (Hauson 189). Sardar Teja Singh and others gathered people together at Gurudwara to announce in prayer. “The Khalsa, the pure heart will dominate the world. The enemy will be annihilated…!” (Tamas 165).

Like the Sikhs, the Muslim inhabitants of the village “had overnight turned into crusaders and were preparing to earn merit by killing infidels” (163). Religiosity is a major contributory factor, as seen from the above, at the popular angle, fuelling the rage of communalism, the passion and intensity, which made it more politically effective. Religiosity may be defined as “deep and intense emotional commitments to matters of religion and religious emotions intrude into non-religious or non-spiritual areas of life” (Chanadra, Communalism 174). As
Nehru refers, there was already ‘too much religiosity in India’ (Dev 181). The religion played in Communalism, an entirely extraneous vicarious role—the scope of mask is evidently brought out if one takes a look at the Religious side of the Communal leaders in the novel.

Ramjan and Murad Ali, for example, are not orthodox or even practising Muslims. To them the Islamic appeal is simply an instrument of religious temptation. So is the case with Ranvir and Teja Singh. In fact Nathu who, in his innocence, slew the pig at the behest of Murad Ali and became, though indirectly, the cause of rioting in the city, is more religious; for he took it to heart when he came to know how he had been used as a decoy for masking the religious interests.

In the long and impressive history of India’s nationalist movement was a deep ideological schism between ardent Communal nationalist and committed champions of a secular and composite Indian state. The same pattern can be seen in the city, which was but a microcosm of the national arena of Indian politics where the battlelines was clearly demarcated and the leaguers in particular were not in a mood to relent to the pressure. As a secular party, it was the onus of the Congress party to dispel fears in the Muslims. Time and again, the leaders of Muslim League emphasized that Congress belonged to the Hindus and ‘Muslims have nothing to do with it’ and as such, it could not look after the interests of the Muslims. The allegation was not far from truth. Most of the Congress leaders were the members of the Hindu Mahasabha too. Bakshiji, a true Gandhiite, warned
Mehtaji. “It doesn’t behove a man to put his legs in two boats. But you have been doing just that all your life. One leg in the Congress and the other in the Hindu Mahasabha boat” (Tamas 79).

This political opportunism tended to orient Muslims towards a Communal outlook, with the feeling that the success of such a national movement led by Congress would mean a Hindu supremacy in Indian politics. There were “only a handful of Muslims” (79) with Congress. Of these, “except for Muzaffar, no Muslim wears a Gandhi cap” (78). To make matters worse, some Congress leaders were so suspicious of Congress Muslims that they liked to maintain ‘some distance.’ Sardar Bishan Singh had no compunction in working with Hakimji, a Congress Muslim. During the riot, some Congress Muslims left the Congress saying that Hindus were behind the throwing of the pig on the steps of the mosque. The bickering in the party on every issue taken, without any ideological basis, are indicative of the loss of the Gandhian values. The novel, indeed, is a successful exposition of the failure of Gandhian ideals. This is clearly evidenced in the speech between Bakshiji and Mehtaji. When Bakshiji demonstrated with him to keep away from the Hindu Mahasabha, Mehtaji was quick to retort. “If trouble breaks out, will you come to my rescue?...If trouble comes will.. Bapuji come to my help?” (79).

However, Bakshiji and the General stood their ground and did not forsake Gandhian ideals. In troubled times, their integrity had been tested and they did not
succumb under pressure. Though Bakshiji was called a “Hindu dog,” (80) he remained calm. The General was struck to death when he harangued on the importance of living in amity during riots. They offered supreme sacrifice in the face of overwhelming odds. The novel delivers the stances of neutrality taken by exceptional individuals who understood the consequences of communal differences in making the amity of communal difference necessary for peaceful living.

Sahni demonstrates that the historical incident became a pretext for the evil in human minds to manifest itself. Soon after the killing of the pig thrown on the steps of the mosque, a Muslim was after a cow inclined to kill it. On watching the events Bakshiji remarked, “Soon vultures and kites will fly over the city” (55). The prophecy came true and soon the city was on flames. “The flames licked upward like the red fangs of a mighty snake gradually spreading” (110). Harman Singh’s shop was looted and set ablaze in the burning fire of the place.

Iqbal Singh, was circumcised and was converted to Islam. Many poor people cutting across religious lines were, ruthlessly butchered. Rioting, arson, murder and forced conversions went on unabated for a few days. When riots came to a grinding halt, two refugee camps were set up to take care of the uprooted people of the twenty villages in the area. These were the horrors let loose during the pre-Partition days, which would seek a more vigorous, dehumanized expression during the times of Partition.
As long as the history of India’s national moment can be understood; it is an ample proof of deep ideological rift between religious nationalists and the secular nationalists of the Indian nationalism. Sahni demonstrates in the novel the capacity of human evil sustaining and manifesting itself in various core structures of Indian society. The novel depicts the dynamics of communal politics, deeply entrenched, into the rural areas challenging the ideal of Indian composite culture.

Sahni has a high regard for Gandhian philosophy as evidenced in the elevation of characters, the General, the Bhakshiji. The General took it upon himself to put a stop to the rioting and struck to death in the process. He was a semi-illiterate, slightly eccentric but he knew what to do if someone attacked him to give in the spirit of Gandhism. He was a symbol of Gandhi’s philosophy of non-violence. Sahni’s vision does not augur well for humanity in the conclusion he gives to the novel. The instigator of communal violence, Murad Ali, was posing as a lover of peace. Yet, Sahni too in the final analysis shows the futility and meaninglessness of hatred and malevolence. The message is loud and clear directed against the sickness of communalism, which marked on the eve of the vivisection of the sub-continent. Tamas shows the dynamics of communal politics, religious hatredness and the Congress-Muslim League’s rivalry deep-rooted at urban levels, moving insidiously, into its way into the rural areas.

However, its Political mechanism is not an independent in nature but an inalienable part and a microcosm of sectarian Politics at the national level. The
communal groups, which were blind to the same roots could only work and act at
the behest of their communal leaders. The novel is significant because Sahni
successfully reveals how the communal leaders, in the guise of religion, pressed
religious symbols into service and made battles over them. Nothing, could resolve
the communal tangle nor could anything restore sanity in the minds of the people
as ‘Tamas’, the darkness of intolerance and communal frenzy hovers over them.
The veil of darkness could not lift in the days to come during the fateful days of
independence. There is indeed little hope that the baptism of freedom would be
without any dark or obscure mark. As Ganesh N. Devy suggests that the concepts
and the ideas that evolved in Europe’s mono-lingual, non-colonized, non-
balkanized cultures are bound to undergo vital ideological mutations when
deployed in an essentially tolerant polytheistic and eclectic Indian culture (Devy
137). Eventhough, etched in the collective consciousness Partition experiences
that Tamas describes, indicates and remains entrenched and buried in the
wasteland of Partition memories.

Archives of historical memory regarding the seriousness of the event of
Partition recollected forcefully though literature speak abundantly overshadowed
by the official narration of the historiography of Partition. Basti like Tamas is
filled with the raptures of the past recollected; followed by the continual
reenactment of the self-same phenomenon—the engineered project, ‘forgetting’
whether conducted by the individual the society or the state coming under the
scrutiny of the powerful literary texts that reveal different colors of Partition. Thus, it questions both the censoring as well as the denial of individual experiences from various religious and individual perspectives.

Intizar Husain is a distinguished journalist, short story writer and novelist who lives in Lahore, Pakistan. His college career ended by the Partition of India in 1947, when he was deeply perturbed by the violence around him. He migrated to Lahore, where his family later joined him. Basti is a Urdu novel, translated by Frances W. Pritchett. Husain’s novel can be read as, an important reading on the Pakistani perspectives.

It would be no wonder, that for at least, Urdu Literature and particularly fiction, the Partition literature has been a fixation point from which writings on it has not been able to proceed further. It has been dominating the artistic conscience ever since. Literature in both India and Pakistan took to Modernist trend and almost isolated from the close impact of social realism. Efforts were carried to release art from regional fidelities through abstraction of the regional identities. New symbolism flourished that manifested itself in truncated torsos of men and women or in fleeting glimpses of reality and its passing snippets.

Despite Pakistani effort to identify itself with Asian ethos and the Indian attempts to cling to their mythological past, the fact of their cultural affinities, proclaims itself in various ways. Even trends of reflecting their past in their future
endeavors to reinterpret their life have been similar. The cultural patterns and the efforts to change them are also identical. *Basti* narrates the history that happened before a few months in Zakir’s life, his whole life, and more importantly, his entire cultural personality extending back through a millennium and a half Muslim history remembered through masterly arranged flashbacks. Zakir a Professor of History is aware of the course of the Muslim history in the subcontinent; being a Shiite, he is consciously aware of the historical course beyond India in the mainland of Islam. *Basti* incorporates the constant underpinning of the animosities and conflicting interests in Muslims for domination. Zakir scheming Umayyads on Islam’s Political horizon in 661C.E. introduced an endless era of disagreement, strife and communal hatred. Throughout the novel, there are references to Muslim South Asian history; the 1857 War of Independence; the division of Pakistan in 1947; the Indo-Pak War in 1965; and ultimately the 1971 Political disintegration of Pakistan with the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent nation with the help of Indian efforts. The novel concludes with this last event.

*Basti* does not reconstruct a familiar reality. Events, otherwise concrete, appear swathed in an uncanny half-light; they drift at the edge of consciousness, recognized not so much by their physical characteristics as by their impact of Zakir. *Basti* with its simple structure hides a concept war complexity of considerable magnitude. The preferred purpose of extended flashback of Zakir’s past is arrested in the novel. Zakir recalls his childhood, jovial days through the
eye of an adult Zakir, who both mediates and transforms its events, assigning them a value an importance based on his experiences in the present. The process of remembrance itself gets triggered, moreover, by clear circumstances in the present. Husain reveals a complex literary strategy in *Basti*, combining retrospective narration with a storyline set in a later phase of history. The protagonist is Zakir, a historian who looks back to the events on his childhood in India and the Partition from the vantage point of view of the experiences of 1971 in Pakistan as dual witness to momentous events, past and present. His memories of childhood in Indian village are merely nostalgic in the representation of commonality of experience between the communities and the tales and stories that formed the bedrock of a shared culture. For there is an early reference to Cain’s murder of Abel; this episode becomes a key for understanding the potential for discord within the family, or within such modes of intercommunity coexistence in ‘bastis’ or neighborhoods (*Basti* 6-7).

Communal antagonism aggravates like a plague afflicting Hindus and Muslims in the village Rupnagar in the undivided India. The young Zakir observes that Hindus are dying in large numbers. He has told that when the plague comes, Hindus die, while when cholera comes, Muslims die. But the disease soon ceases to discriminate and even the doctor’s wife is taken by the plague (12-13). Such memories spread of contagion, which embrace a metaphoric quality, are interspersed with an awareness of demonstrations taking place with the advent of the movement for freedom of the Eastern part of Pakistan, which would later
become Bangladesh. His father Abba Jan compares demonstration against this movement unfavorably with those that took place at the time of the Khilafat Movement (22-23). The poignancy of departing from the land of one’s childhood memories is powerfully evoked. It was as if, Zakir puts it, ‘a whole mythic era had stayed behind with Rupnagar’ (36). Husain dramatizes the psychological cost of the loss of one’s homeland and the resultant sense of alienation with sensitivity, providing a sense of the psychic mumbling which followed the physical dislocation.

The novel captures the impact of the historical trauma of 1947 at the level of the perception of time. In Basti time is not always presented as a linear succession of the past, present and future, given that the blackhole of 1947 led to a disturbance of temporality and the sense of continuity. There is, rather, sense of blocked or frozen time here, as well as an attempt to reach back into sacred /durational time to initiate the possibility of recuperation. Marianne Hirsch’s notion of postmemory, a form of memory transmitted by survivors of the traumatic events to their children, is pertinent with respect to the novel. Hirsch writes of holes in the memory of survivors of the Jewish Holocaust and their children and the ways in which trauma may be passed on through either discussion of horrific events, or even refraining from overt references. For her, later stories may be evacuated by such narratives of a previous generation that circulate belatedly and are shaped by traumatic events that neither can be recreated nor understood (Hirsch 22-23).
Husain is able to comprehend the belated effects of historical trauma on the later generations in Pakistan, especially in terms of such ‘holes’ in memory. He makes a conscious effort to restore a sense of the Indo-Islamic cultural amalgam, as well as other strands in the civilization of the subcontinent that had been deemed as ‘other’ by official nationalist ideologies in Pakistan. Indeed, the possibility of coming to terms with such gaps in the collective memory was further complicated due to the historical circumstances of the 1960s leading to the break-up of Pakistan. This narrative generates differing modes of representation of discontinuity shifting between the late-1960s and early-1970s during Ayub Khan’s rule in 1947, the 1857 revolt and the events during the hijrat. Husain traverses the fractured landscape of exile and post-trauma through recourse to symbolism and myth, as well as sustained reflection on lost modes of civilizational being and exchange in bastis or neighbourhoods.

There is a retrospective description of how as a student Zakir observed demonstrations during the Quit India Movement along with his Hindu friend Surender and how he began to come to terms with his sexuality with his attraction for his childhood sweetheart Sabirah (literally meaning patience) (Basti 41-42 and 47). Later, at a time when teaching is disrupted at the college in Pakistan, a letter from Surender in India brings news about Sabirah, who had stayed behind in India (137). The theme of unrequited love and the longing to be reunited with the love of his youth recurs throughout the narrative.
Zakir misses the neem trees that do not flourish in the harsher climate in the North-West; these become a symbol of lost time (96). Zakir’s friends meet at the restaurant at the hotel Shiraz, where a young radical spouting Marxist rhetoric denounces imperialism and welcomes the possibility of smashing of the system, which the war symbolized for him (124). He writes “... long war time nights it will help me discipline my distracted mind, which suffers from insomnia and wanders restlessly all over; it will help me put mind on a single track and protect myself from confusion of thought...” (125). “We find a satirical representation of over the top revolutionary posturing. There is even a question as regards where the creation of Pakistan itself was a good thing or not; finally, the reply is that, doubt must be suspended at some point” (M.U. Menon 410). As Muhammad Umar Menon argues, Husain eventually accepted the partition as a historical necessity, while recognizing its tragic outcome (410).

Surrender describes Zakir in his letter, that Sabirah’s fate as a silent, melancholy girl staying on alone in India. She had decided to stay, Zakir learns, after having been offered a position at All India Radio, even as her mother and sister set-off for Dhaka. When asked by Surender what might have happened if she had set off for Pakistan as well, she refuses to speculate on paths not taken. Zakir begins to feel that his position is similar to Sabirah’s (Basti 137-44). Indeed, her situation begins to preoccupy him more than the fate of independent Pakistan and the possibility of another Partition of his country. He is unable to reply to his
friend’s letter or make any decision about Sabirah after the announcement of war breaking out (151). Failure to act the desire gains a symbolic centrality paving the way for the long reaching effects of paralysis of will in both the personal and geopolitical realms. *Basti* stands unique for its narration of Partition impact on the Muslim side, often invoking the form of a diary, narrativising critical dates of the Civil war. In a nightmarish vision, Zakir assumes the identity of Abul Hasan of *The Thousand and One Nights* and wanders through a city of men without heads, which terrifies him (176-77). The diary entry for December 16 (also the day the Indian army entered Dhaka, assuring the birth of Bangladesh) gets interwoven with references to the 1857 revolt and the looting of the city of Delhi after the revolt (187-88).

Telescoping of differing moments of devastation and collective despair does allow an extent for a resonance with earlier historical trauma to evolve. However, there may also be a tendency to collapse discrete historical moments into a universalized account of suffering to achieve a sense of meaning through destined suffering for the community (Bhalla, Partition 89-99).

The narrative relooks at the usage of the rhetoric of religiosity in war mobilization as Zakir observes a poster depicting a man on horseback with the sword in his hand and a bloodthirsty face with the slogan ‘these fighters for the faith, these your mysterious servants’ (*Basti* 194). The picture provokes no response: it was dead for him, as were the words. A little further, he notices a car
passing with a sticker that says, 'Crush India'. This banal slogan too has no meaning for him, even as he is overpowered by numbness (194). The vacuity of such invocations of identity based on mythic conceptions of the heroic past, or promised on demonising the common enemy becomes self evident. Indeed, the foundational myth of Pakistan, as Talbot adds it, in the official reading still maintained that the Muslims of the subcontinent were separate nation from their Hindu neighbours. (Ian, Pakistan 4-5). The Pakistan demand and the logic for the Partition was based on this two-nation theory.

As Talbot reminds during the celebrations of Jinnah's 85th birth anniversary in December 1961, a Majlis-i-Istiqlal-i-Pakistan (Committee for Independence of Pakistan) meeting in Lahore unanimously resolved that the committee should list those who had opposed Jinnah and the Pakistan Movement during the period of 1940-46. Anti-Pakistan elements should be deprived of the rights of political expression, that they should be debarred from seeking Election to any future Parliament of government and that a ceiling should be imposed on their property (5-13).

This sowed the seeds for a Political culture of intolerance, which became the hallmark of successive elected as well as non-elected regimes. In its wake, curling civil liberties and selective political accountability as well as violence in the absence of a consensual and accommodationist political culture came to be considered more acceptable. This encouraged military intervention under the
pretext of restoring law and order (Ian, Pakistan 13). Ethnic stereotyping and the politics of language manifested in the imposition of Urdu as the official language on Bengali speakers resulting in the eventual breakaway of Bangladesh from Pakistan.

This was also a response to the hegemonic status of the Punjabi dominated state and the military control under Yahya Khan that culminated in genocide in the East (resisted by the Mukti Bahini) after the refusal to accept the results of the 1971 Elections (Basti 185-213). Husain’s narrative seeks to restore compassion and kindness that had been lost at this time, when few in the West were hardly aware of the atrocities committed by the Pakistan army. Indeed, such an erasure of collective memory could be traced back to an earlier period when the massacres during the Partition became a taboo subject. Furthermore, the difficulty of dealing with defeat and disillusionment with nationalist ideals come to the fore in Zakir’s conversations with his friend Afzal, a character perhaps, modelled on the real life figure of Nasir Kazmi. Afzal makes a show of mock-bravado declaring that he could make Pakistan beautiful again, given that the ugly owes have spoiled the face of Pakistan. Even the flowers have been growing fewer; due to this, people have been growing ugly and hatred has spread. He states his desire to plant roses and mangoes to counteract the ugliness around. (204-05). There is a gentle irony in the portrayal of such poetic invocations of transcendental possibilities and utopian projections of desire during the time of strife and conflict.
Zakir learns about people who fled Pakistan to rejoin their family in India. For the country that had once, been hostile to them was now matched in hostility by the country, which they found themselves in. (216). Just before his father dies, he hands Zakir, the keys of their ancestral home back in India. However, with Abba Jan's passing away, ties with the ancestral land seem to disintegrate as well. (231-32). Zakir gets a reply from Surender after the war. He charges Zakir of turning cruel after going to Pakistan, since he had made no effort to contact, Sabirah, who had burst into tears after hearing about his letters to Surender (235). The novel ends with the friends resembling at the Shiraz, where they observe the ruins of the formerly splendid hotel damaged during the rioting. Zakir again expresses his desire to write a letter to Sabirah before it is too late, but remains in a state of existential immobility, even as Afzal asks them to wait for a sign, a sign that must come during such a moment of crisis. (261-63). Again, the theme of a culture in internal decay facing the consequences of displacement at a time of political crisis comes to the fore.

As a historian, Zakir becomes witness to the ambivalent effects of the Partition's afterlife in Pakistan. This gets figured in terms of its impact on the realization of the long cherished aspirations, or productive engagement with the legacy of the Indo-Islamic cultural amalgam that might lead to an activation of will at the individual and collective levels. There are some explicit references in
Basti to the difficulties faced by Mohajirs or refugees on their way across the border in 1947, whether towards West or East Pakistan*.

Ironically, the anguish of displacement and dislocation, the violence and fear that accompanied 1947 replayed in the context of the division of hearts in Pakistan in 1971. The narrative refers to political events, then, transpiring through oblique allusions. Husain looks at the consequences of political gamesmanship and communal/ethnic/sectarian polarization at the individual levels and through his characters shows the capacity for civilizational memory to play a role amidst the ruins of the self. A network of allusions to Islamic, Hindu and Buddhist myth and history provides an allegorical structure through which the experiences of disillusionment becomes mediated (Damodaran and Maya 88). Furthermore, the poeticization of exile and loss allows even those who may not share the Shia sensibility to identify with the situation of those surrounded by events that seem to defy comprehension. In Basti, the sense of loss is diffused into the symbolic domain. The motif of separation from the beloved, though a commonplace in poetry is actualized and given contemporary resonance through the movement between the memory of childhood/adolescent experiences in pre-Partition India and the movement of the 1971.

* Sixty per cent of the 464,000 refugees from Uttar Pradesh resettled in Sindh, in cities like Karachi. The connection for a lost Uttar Pradesh world remained with many of the community, as Husain’s stories show, with an emphasis on protection of Urdu. See Talbot. Pakistan. p. 109.
Sabirah represents for Zakir the hope of possibilities, he is now cut-off from, he is left with a sense of an unrealized epiphany that might have awaited him and by extension, the community. The friends may look out for the sign that may provide the direction, a hope that might help them find a way, but in the present, there is the grim reality of repetition of the wrenching of self and community from the place of anchorage. Indeed, prolonged separation may be a mode of being that the ‘self’ might have to come to terms with, whether in concrete terms at the individual level, as in the relationship with Sabirah, or in terms of exile for the community, especially given the anxiety as regards the possibility of infinite repetition of the Partition.

Husain probes into the realm of ‘memory’ to retrieve the ground for such expressions of beauty and goodness; not merely as a romantic gesture or sentimental move. Rather, it is the belated recognition of the desolation that faces the ‘self’ and the community that impels the protagonist historian’s quest in the realm of individual and collective memory. This further impasse such a quest might run into are further elucidated in a late discussion of Husain’s short stories, in which the near impossibility of recovery of memory and the near extinction of the creative ‘self’ thematized (M.U. Menon 406-9). In Basti, however, memory becomes a route into an investigation of alternative perceptions and civilizational sites, where counter-memories such as Afzal’s rose gardens and mango orchards may still be reconstructed. Zakir (literally meaning ‘one who remembers’) is both
witness and a witness-of-witnesses; through such reflexivity a form of poetic narrativization becomes possible for the survivor-exile, even though some aspects of the collective trauma may remain undecipherable.

In the fictional habitat of Basti, myth and history jostle each other and radically question the claims each makes to represent reality truthfully until, finally, the 'self' decays in time and becomes so inextricable corrupt that it can never hope to recover its creative energies again. Once the fabled cities in Basti are torn apart by social and political cunning, they are quickly transformed into places of decay, humiliation and endless betrayals. In Intizar Husain’s break vision of fate after the Partition, ancient consecrated spaces are transformed into cities of sorrow and those who are trapped into it can never again turn their eyes away from the ruins that lie scattered round them, nor ever find at hand a remedy for their bewilderment. (Bhalla, Stories 159-69). In a splendidly imagined moment of dark epiphany in the novel, Zakir and Irfan meet Maulvi Matchbox (Maulvi Diyasalai) after a night of violence in the lanes of Lahore. The Maulvi rarely speaks to anyone, but sits in agonized silence before empty and half-open match boxes spread around him on a cloth. He does however; make a few cryptic responses to Zakir’s questions: “Maulvi Matchbox, what are these boxes? (Zakir asked) ‘Sir, these are towns.’ ‘Maulvi Matchbox, they don’t even have matches in them, they are all empty’. ‘Sir, the towns are empty now’ (Basti 128). The acting pun on the Maulvi’s name is simultaneously bitter, witty and full of sympathy over his present state of bewilderment. Once the priest of incendiary politics who could
ignite rage and passion in the hearts of men, he realizes, albeit too late, that the fire in the hearts of men can also burn cities down.

Approximately, as the novel ends, Zakir imagines that the whole city is ‘burning’ (254). He finds refugees, from the ‘Doomsday chaos’ (253) around him in the cemetery, where his grand parents are buried. And, in a hallucinatory instant, when fragments from the Buddha’s Fire Sermon; sounds of breaking vessels from the Ecclesiastes, images of Lanka burnt to as by Hanuman (in the Ramayana); lamentations of those who were betrayed at Karbala and echoes of Gandhi’s assassination surge through his memory in a strange frenzy, he finally admits that the Partition has not brought him to a more trustworthy country. However, to a place of conflagrations prophesied by the inherited religious traditions of Islam, Hinduism, Christianity and Buddhism.

In Basti, Intizar Husain’s evocation of Rupnagar as a city of beauty is much more complex than his detractors make it out to be. Zakir turns back to pre-Partition India because he is skeptical of ever finding a meaning and a purpose in Pakistan. His memories of Rupnagar offer a frame of reference within which we can critically examine those historical accounts, which retrospectively argue that, the everyday practices of the Muslims in India were only scripturally derived (Hasan, India’s 81-101). There was a systematic and grievous attempt by the Hindu society to efface the social and economic existence of the Muslims (N. Ahmad 11).
Intizar Husain’s audacity in using ‘nostalgic memory’ lies in going to his pre-Partition life history; a moral and civilizational priority over the contemporary demand that he surrender his imaginative ‘self’ to the needs of the new political and religious state. To do so, he thinks, would lead to the extinction of his imaginative and religious being. More importantly, the act of looking at the past repeatedly enables Zakir to know and interpret his ‘Indo-Islamic’ heritage, continuously in the hope of both forgetting or foregoing the recent history of violence, and of finding, thereby, some means of evading the circle of sorrow in which he finds himself entrapped. Nostalgic remembrance is for him a form of retrieving knowledge about those modes of living from the past that could be used for the redemption of ‘future-time’.

It is not surprising that Rupnagar continues to be Zakir a paradigmatic model of a creative and enlightened society against which the present life of dereliction and decay must be judged. Like his father, but with greater anxiety, he holds on to the memories of his home in Rupnagar as a ‘trust’ (Basti 231), a trust that he sorrowfully acknowledges, he can no longer and, even again fulfill. Later, the notion that one has a responsibility towards the place where one lives, that it is a ‘trust’ which one not betray occurs to Afzal suddenly in one of his drunken moments, only to vanish when he is sober again (126). His parents, however, continue to think that the only moral trust they have left is to nurture memories of the cities they had once called ‘home’. “They had left their cities, but they carried their cities with them, as a trust, on their shoulders. That’s how it usually is. Even
when cities are left behind, they don’t stay behind. They seize you ever more. When the earth slips out from under your feet, that’s when it rally surrounds you” (128).

When Zakir’s father had left Rupnagar and migrated to Pakistan, he had carried with him only a few things that were precious to his sense of selfhood reminding him that life back there, in the neighborhood of Bhagatji, had been lived close to the boundaries of the sacred as is possible for human beings. On his deathbed, he tells Zakir that in Pakistan that he has ‘no property, no money’ (131), but what he does poses, he wants to pass on to him as his inheritance. First, he gives Zakir a ‘few ancient pages’, from a book of prayers by Hazarat Sajjad, the son or nephew of Imam Hussain. The book remained him every morning of how even the best of men had betrayed by the Umayyids and had taught him to lament for all those who suffer the same fate: “What is there left now that’s good to talk about? Don’t you see what’s happening in Pakistan? As he spoke, he picked up a book stained with mould. He opened it…” and said, ‘It’s a collection of Hazrat Sajjad’s prayers keep it carefully’. He stopped and thought for a moment, then said, ‘A questioner asked, “Oh best of those who offer prayer! In what state did the morning find you?” He replied, “I swear by the provider, the morning found me tormented by the Umayyids”. As he spoke, Abba Jan grew sad, and said, ‘Son, from then to now, that morning has continued’. He fell silent, then said, ‘And it will continue the appearance’ (230).
In addition to the few yellowing pages of the prayer book, Abba Jan leaves Zakir a tablet made of ‘the healing earth of Najaf’ (231) where Imam Hussain is buried, and some prayer beads ‘made of clay from Karbala’ (231). For Abba Jan, these objects, though of little value now, are important because they are the last emblems he has of a Shia world-view. His faith has taught him that after Karbala, loss and betrayed are the fate of all good human being in ‘profane time’, and that people must lament their passage through it. As a Shia in Rupnagar, he had not ‘honored the claim of lamentation’ (230) as strictly as, more saintly believers had because he had not been called upon to do so. In Pakistan, however, he had honoured the claim of nothing else because, in addition to the elegies for Imam Hussain, he had also wept over the ruin of his civilizational home in Rupnagar—a place which had its own Karbala beside the Kala Mandir and its own burial ground for the Imam’s faithful encircles by Ravanban. In Rupnagar, his Shia identity had its established place within the unfolding history of the other religious traditions in the Indian subcontinent.

Paradoxically, his new house in the neighborhood of Shyamnagar had neither a sanctioned place for worship nor a consecrated ground for burial. As he is pushed out of one refugee shelter and into another by his fellow Muslims, he realizes that Shyamnagar is not the telos he had been promised. It is, instead, an unbounded and ambiguous pace, where ‘the days are filled with misfortune and the night with ill-omen’ (92) and the earth seems more ‘soiled and dirty’ (89).
He understands the moral consequences of forcing men from their homes, for it is written in the Koran, as the novel reminds us: “you murdered, then you were murdered. You exiled, then you were exiled” (207). Indeed, no graveyard, too can be a final abode of the body, if it had not been sanctified by the presence of one’s ancestors. That is why Zakir emphasizes with Hakimi when he learns that he had refused to leave Vyaspur because he could not carry his ancestors with him, even though his entire family had migrated to Lahore. “There was no problem about property: people could go to Pakistan and enter a claim and by entering false claims they could even get a large property in return for a smaller one but no one can enter a claim for a grave. In Vyaspur that Hakimji from the big house, you remember? (sic) His whole family went off to Pakistan, He stayed in the same place, and continued to take sick people’s pulses. I asked him, ‘Hakimji, you didn’t go to Pakistan?’

‘No, young man’

‘And the reason?’

‘Young man! You ask the reason? Have you seen our graveyard?’

‘No’ (139).

“Just go sometimes and take a look. Each tree is leafier than the next. How could my grave have such shade in Pakistan?” (139). Abba Jan understands, as he is dying, that the home he had hopes for at the end of his *hijrat* to Lahore was ironically the home he had left behind in Rupnagar. As if, in a visionally trance in
his final moments, he tells Zakir that, apart from prayers and a handful thing, he had with him, which he had kept carefully, so as not to let it trust is the bunch of keys to his house in Rupnagar: “Son, these are the keys of a house to which we no longer have any right. In addition, when did we ever have any right? The world, as Hazrat Ali has said, is a guesthouse. We and our desires are guests in it. Guests have no rights. Whatever the earth designs to bestow on us guests, it’s a favour and the earth has shown us great kindness indeed. These keys are a trust, guard this trust, and remember the kindness shown by the earth we left, and this will be your greatest act of dutiful behaviour” (231). As he spoke, suddenly “his breath choked... Slowly, with the greatest difficulty, he said, Hazrat Ali had come” (231-2).

Abba Jan and Bhagatji may have imagined that Zakir would grow to become the mythographer of Rupnagar but Zakir lives in different times. He is both a memorializer of myths, as well as a historian. As he watches the slow decline of Abba Jan, he begins to understand that in the times his inherited, myths cannot escape the corruptions of history, and that even they, however, fine their original intent, can begin to ‘rust’ and ‘corrode’ ‘their soul’. He acknowledges, even more despondently, that when myths become corrupt, men begin to use the name of god, not to defend the good, but to invent new ways of slaughter.

Many years after the Partition, Zakir, who is still tormented by grieving memories begins to recognize that even if Rupnagar was the city of beautiful
forms, it was never immune to change or possibility of moral fault. If it had been remote from time and contagion, it would not have become part of any historical or political narrative. Zakir recalls the sudden days of plague in Rupnagar and the offer of refugee from the neighbouring village of Danpur. Considering that the novel seeks its meaning through the analogical relations between the present horrors in ‘profane time’ and the historic and religious literature of the subcontinent; the name Danpur can either be literally translated as the place of ‘charity’ and ‘generosity’, or metaphysically as the city of commiseration or anukrosa (sympathize) a notion which along with ahimsa and anrsaasya (non cruelty), is as central to the dharma of the Mahabharata and the Ramayana as it is to Buddhist, Christian, and Islamic scriptures with which the novel bristles*.

In Zakir’s reconstruction of his pre-1947 life, the two Bastis, Roop and Dan together create an ideal space for all the good making and ‘grace-giving’ impulses necessary for the making of a civilizational habitat. Something new began to shape the social existence of Rupnagar one day; electric poles arrived in the village. Slowly, they became part of its landscape. After a long time, they were created along the roadside and eventually people became used to their presence. Sometime later, the poles connected with electric wires. Birds began to perch on them and monkeys swing from them. Then one day, a monkey sitting on the electric pole was invited to death.

Lanterns were replaced by electric lights, torches by light bulbs. With the coming of electricity, the moral world of Rupnagar was transformed: its lanes lost some of their romance; its mosques some of their mystery. Abba Jan refused to go to the mosque to say his prayers again. Then, in a moment of inattention perhaps, or panic, he forgot the prophetic warning against abandoning one’s home when the times are bad, and he decided to leave Rupnagar. If only he had remembered the following story, he used to tell his children: “A traveler, passing through a forest, saw that a sandalwood tree was on fire. The birds who had been sitting on the branches had already flown away, but a wild goose still clung to a branch. The traveler asked, ‘Oh, wild goose! Don’t you see that the sandalwood tree is on fire? Why don’t you fly away? Don’t you value your life?’ The wild goose replied, ‘Oh traveler! I’ve been very happy in the shade of this sandalwood tree. It is right for me to run off and leave it in its time of trouble?’... ‘Do you know who it was?’—The Buddha told this study, then looked around at the monks and said, ‘Oh monks! Do you know who that wild goose was? I myself was the wild goose” (158-9).

Abba Jan moved to Vyaspur city as the name suggests, reminiscent of the fratricidal wars for power in the *Mahabharata*, and closer in time to *Kaliyug* than Rupnagar was. That was the first migration and as he later saw it, the beginning of his permanent exile from home. Abba Jan had once understood that Rupnagar was the historical product of a long civilizational process, and that Bhagatji and he were its legitimate representatives and inheritors. But under the stress and violence
of the Politics of religious and social assertion he had forgotten what they had often told the children through their cosmogonic myths that the good, as it negotiates its way through ‘profane time’, or tries to find an anchorage in social reason, is so ‘fragile’ and ‘vulnerable’ that it needs continuous reaffirmation. Like many others, Abba Jan knew through his experiences of life in Rupnagar that one’s religious selfhood acquires its compelling significance only when its worthiness is acknowledged in the eyes of others. Yet, he allowed his anxieties about the security of his family to overwhelm his reasoning self. He left Rupnagar and drifted slowly into exile. He moved first to Vyaspur, and then to Shyamnagar, the city of twilight shadows, in Pakistan (the word shyam means evening).

However, once he reached Lahore, he recalled repeatedly, and with an ever-increasing sense of panic, the Koranic adage that only, folly can persuade anyone to leave home in the hope of finding a sanctuary in another place beyond the horizon. ‘Zakir’s mother’, Abba Jan responded gravely, ‘Death is everywhere. Where can a man go to flee from it? It is a saying of the Prophet’s that those who run from death run towards death instead’ (168). Zakir records how Abba Jan, unable to make a secure home for himself and his family in the new city, is forced to acknowledge his migration to Pakistan was not a *hijrat*; that it was not part of some necessary rite of passage towards a place of sacred longings. Regretfully, Abba Jan is forced to concede that there was no religious presence that hinted at the religious, social and historical causes for him to have undertaken the journey for him.

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After all, his destination was back in Rupnagar, his mosque was still there and the site of his grave was there too. He could have completed his pilgrimage on earth, his real hijrat, in Rupnagar. In conclusion, given the shock and horrors of cataclysmic violence and uprooting, a large-scale inability to work through the traumatic memory of the Partition may be noted in the generation that experiences the Partition of the subcontinent. There was insufficient societal as well as artistic engagement with the aftermath of collective violence of 1947 in both countries due to the predominant mood of celebration of independence and the pressures of nationalist ‘emotionalism’. Effects of historical trauma nevertheless manifested, directly, in terms of embodied forms of witnessing marked by silence, as in the cases of the abducted women. It was as if, a collective trauma displaced into phantasmal and disembodied forms that remained in circulation in the body politic (Veena et al. 79-101).

These spectral configurations of the ‘nation’ and the ‘other’ often taking the varieties of hate speech or underground pamphlets drew upon memories of previous conflicts to legitimize communal or sectarian attacks in the present. Thus, the clear witnessing became a more complex problem; indeed: the phenomenon of secondary trauma, of witnessing the trauma of witnesses, is exemplified by the writings of many in the second generation of writers. It is perhaps fitting that a chapter that began with a reflection of the afterlife of 1947, concludes, with a discussion of a narrative depicting the next major geographical/political division
during the Partition of Pakistan in 1971. For this, second Partition, re-enacted, many of the traumatic experiences of the Partition are historically relevant. Some novels written in this period do confirm extant prejudices and act out the pathological residues of violence, bitterness and hatred, as well as sadism and anomie. However, the engagement with historical/civilizational memory in the major novels discussed in detail raises the crucial question of remembrance to a different level.

Ideas about the loss of vitality in society stemming from disengagement with the realm of the popular by the elite, as well as the dangers of erasure of memory of the cultural amalgam characteristic of civilization in South Asia, led to the positing of the need for recovery of civilizational memory based on dialogic exchange. Even though, these counter-narratives remained flawed instances of surrogate testimony in many respects, the experiences of suffering and exile does become resonant for another generation, often with metaphor. While, tragic irony is the chosen vehicle of expression of disillusionment experienced by these writers, it is the reflective take on 'memory' that allows a new language of description, to emerge in the testimonial narratives of Bhisham Sahni, Intizar Husain and Bapsi Sidhwa.

The novel interprets the distinctive provocation of the close-examination of the ideological motivation force valorizing the Pakistani Nationalism. *Basti* reviews 'a national allegory', clearly as proposed by Fredric Jameson (1986) who
locates the Third-world dilemma, where the text and the critic retain the absence inherent in the aesthetic associated with the text and its critical estimation for the readers. The ‘bleakness’ and the ‘gloomy’ nationalism required the regenerative and revitalizing text replacing the novel to considerably seal the memories and humiliation associated with the Partition of India for all times (xi).

The failure to appreciate the charismatic, valorous character of Zakir in Basti is again a misreading of Zakir, mistaking him for the position of Zakir as the author’s double. Zakir is not a man of action but a man created out of the uncontrollable forces of action in the name of the Partition of India. He stands for the world backed by a powerful cultural continuum, consequently reacting to the events unexpected but standing in no way contrary to actual events triggered out of the Partition. Zakir in his silence and the disastrous failure to act reminds of the corrupt political system not though the inherent flaw in the central character of the novel dismissing all the counter-claims of courageous action during the hour of need. The novel details the weaknesses of resistances and activism providing a glimpse of survival in a morally corrupt Partition situation.

Bhisham Sahni and Intezar Hussian in their novels dealing the Partition phenomenon have been formost authors, who received the first-hand experiences of the event of Partition and its consequences on both the sides. The thesis examines the differing perspectives in dealing with the event of Partition from the Indian and the Pakistani perspectives. Basti (community dwelling) is almost closer
to *Tamas* for its treatment of communal harmony and conflicting amity before the unexpected event of Partition sets-free the irrational impulses of the communities struggling for survival during the event of Partition.

Migrations, translating the difficulties exposed and faced during the violent underpinnings of the Partition times, gradually compelling individual identities for ‘assimilation’ and ‘change’ under the Partition creating drastic reshuffling of identities and communal equations that remained more or less invisible to the religious identities entangled in conflict. The psychological discontinuities and raptures on individual identities figure in both the novels selected for the study, which provide a glimpse of the individual and the collective resistances during the time of the Partition of India. *Basti* declares the deep-ridden walls of separation between the communities and the raptures between individualities associated with various communities. Disintegration of the images of the lost home and the exodus of the communities entangled in the forced historical reality transformed the living pace of both the countries. The religious frenzy of *Tamas* is matched with the growing urbanization of the setting that Modernization had created break-ups in the community life of the *Basti*, within both communities inside and the need for change as per the arrival of the Partition syndrome. The novels taken in this chapter remain powerful literary devices echoing the pain and constant suffering of the tragedies of people remembered and altered with the Partition psychosis forever.
Politics of the Nationalities in conflict kept the strain of conflicts alive strengthening the seeds of separation, as constant, sporadic roits and curfews continued to stir an atmosphere of strife leading to ethnic tensions, sporadic violence; at many sensitive places that were to eternally cause a blot in the destinies of both the countries. If *Tamas* recollects the violent and dangerous side of the rift going on between various communities, *Basti* probes the more sensitive side leading to the fractured individual identities and moral dilemma in Zakir’s personal life.

*Tamas* carries through its episodic style and psychological realism attains a critical account of the uncanny manifestations of violence of near-genocidal magnitude. *Basti* adds the allegorical mediation on the separation, loss and exile reflecting on the devastation to the Pakistani society during 1970s as well as the haunting memories recollected of the migrations, collective violence during the time of the Partition of India. The division was a never to be forgotten tale of woe and anguish; an irrational feeling that caused ‘rapture’ and ‘fear’ followed by the re-enactments of Partition consequences on the fates of both the nationalities. The psyche of the Partition era probes numbness, disenchantment, silences and memories of hopelessness with the inability on both the sides i.e., India and Pakistan to control and return to normalcy in the wake of the Partition of India.