CHAPTER - IV

CLOUSE-UP : ANALYSIS OF THE EARLY NOVELS

I. INTRODUCTION

"A traumatic historical event," writes Govind Nihalani, "usually finds the artistic /literary response twice. Once, during the event or immediately following it and again after a lapse of time, when the event has found its corner in the collective memory of the generation that witnessed it."¹ It is very important to note that compared to the Indian regional novels, the response of the Indian novel in English to the Partition is rather belated. The comprehensive treatment of the Partition in the Indian novel in English appeared in 1956, with Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*. The Indian novel in English took almost a decade to respond to the Partition.

The novels discussed in this section are Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, B. Rajan's *The Dark Dancer*, Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column* and Manohar Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges*.

II. KHUSHWANT SINGH'S *TRAIN TO PAKISTAN*: A VILLAGE DIVIDED

Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (1956) has been the first comprehensive fictional representation of the Partition in the history of Indian literature in English. It is unique not only from the historical viewpoint but also from the viewpoint of a success as a work of art. Hence, in the opinion of V.A. Shahane, it "is one of the finest realistic novels in the post-second-world-war phase of Indian fiction in
English and it is Khushwant Singh's supreme achievement."² The novel records a phase in the political history of India at the height of the communal frenzy. It represents how the Partition divided a village community. Out of the crisis of Partition what Khushwant Singh creates is a romantic tale of love and adventure.

Khushwant Singh, historian, journalist and fictionist, shot into eminence with the publication of *Mano Majra*— later issued under a popular title, *viz. Train to Pakistan*. The novel, which one won him the Grove Press Indian Fiction Prize, has been translated into thirteen European languages. Both the western tradition and the Punjabi tradition have shaped Khushwant Singh's creative genius. His indigenous sources have provided him with material for creativity, and his exposure to the west— he himself acknowledges the influence of Aldous Huxley and Evelyn Waugh on his creativity³— might have influenced his technique. To quote Shahane again, his "mind and personality have been moulded by western education and culture, but he is at heart a Sikh and an Indian."⁴

Khushwant Singh, who underwent the ordeal, has had first hand experience of the agony of Partition. C.N. Srinath, a critic, calls him, "the witness-turned-writer."⁵ It seems that he happened to write *Train to Pakistan* as a therapeutic exercise to overcome the pangs of Partition. The writer accounts for why he wrote the novel:

The beliefs that I had cherished all my life were shattered. I had believed in the innate goodness of the common man. But the division of India had been accompanied by the most savage massacres known in the history of the country (...) I had believed that we Indians were peace-loving and non-violent, that we were more
concerned with matters of the spirit, while the rest of the world was involved in the pursuit of material things. After the experience of the autumn of 1947, I could no longer subscribe to these views. I became (...) an angry middle-aged man, who wanted to shout his disenchantment with the world (...) I decided to try my hand at writing.6

What is remarkable about Khushwant Singh is that his disillusionment with the event has been portrayed without his personal anger and voice being allowed to dominate the novel.

*Train to Pakistan* narrates the story of the transformation of a Punjabi village under a crisis when an individual- Juggut Singh, a Sikh ruffian- saves the refugee train at the cost of his own life. The novel begins with the description of the Indian weather in 1947, which was "hotter than usual and drier and dustier."7 Thus, the beginning suggests the setting of the novel- the year 1947, the most turbulent phase in the political history of India. Accordingly, the novel covers a span of quite a few months- it begins in August, the month which witnessed the transfer of political power from the British Empire to the natives, and ends in the month of October. The description of the weather anticipates the forthcoming communal weather, which destroys the community relationship in the novel.

History tells us that the Partition affected the northern part of India. Cities like, Calcutta, Noakhali, Delhi were early victims of the violence of Partition and "the only remaining oases of peace were a scatter of little villages lost on the remote reaches of the frontier. One of these villages was Mano Majra"(10), which is the locale of the novel. Mano Majra is a typical tiny Punjabi village on the bank of the Sutlej river, where the social structure was the traditional
Indian one consisting of different communities. The two important communities depicted in the novel are the Muslims, almost the tenants, and the Sikhs, the owners of the land. For many years they have lived together. The harmony between these two communities is so strong that all of them have faith in the local deity called ‘deo’, though they belong to different religions; Hindu, Sikh and Muslim or pseudo-Christian.

The Mano Majrans are train conscious people. Like the fast moving train their way of life is lively and forceful. The train timetable— the coming and going of the trains— corresponds to different schedules in the regular activities of the people in Mano Majra. The blowing whistle of the train to Lahore awakes all the Mano Majrans. It is Mullah’s time for the Morning prayer and the priest at the Sikh temple starts his prayer. With the coming of the passenger train from Delhi at 10:30 the villagers start their daily routine; when the midday express passes by they take rest, and again they get back to their work when the evening passenger comes. The Mano Majrans go to bed when the goods train passes by. Thus, the goings and comings of trains are woven into their life-pattern. Like Narayan’s Malgudi, in Mano Majra one can see different kinds of people engaged in different types of work; the Mullah at the Mosque crying Allah -ho-Akbar, the Sikh priest at the Gurudwar, men in the fields, and busy women, cattle grazing children and playing girls. Khushwant Singh seems to suggest that these are people naturally engaged in their work. They are not bothered about the high political drama that has taken place on the Indian political scenario. They are so unaware of the situation that one of the characters says:

“As is well so far. The lambardar reports regularly. No refugees have come through the village yet. I am sure
no one in Mano Majra even knows that the British have left and the country is divided into Pakistan and Hindustan. Some of them know about Gandhi but I doubt if any one has ever heard of Jinnah.” (33)

Not all is well with Mano Majra. The murder of Lala Ram Lai, the Hindu moneylender, by Malli and his gang initially disturbs the even tenor of life in the village. Two things coincide with the act of dacoity. First, Juggut Singh, a notorious robber warned by the police not to leave the village after sunset, goes to the field to make love with Nooran, a Muslim girl; second, the arrival of Iqbal, a communist social worker, at the village. Juggut Singh is arrested for going out during the night, and Iqbal is a stranger to the village and the ambiguity in his name— Iqbal Singh or Mahammad Iqbal— complicates the situation. He is mistaken for a worker of the Muslim League. Thus both are arrested. The depiction of the dacoity scene, tinged with melodrama, has four-fold significance in the novel. First, it does not give a chance to idealize the pre-Partition days. The strength of Indian village life is represented through the peaceful and regular life in Mano Majra. But the novelist also shows his awareness of the other side of social life during the pre-Partition days by depicting the Lala Ram Lala murder incident. Khushwant Singh in depicting life during the pre-Partition days is fair and objective in that he portrays both sides of life in Mano Majra— the darker experience and the brighter. It certainly is no utopian myth. Secondly, the dacoity scene throws light upon the character of Juggut Singh and Iqbal; thirdly, it brings three principal characters of the novel— Hukumchand, Iqbal and Juggut Singh together for the denouement. Apart from this the scene also serves as “a prelude to the heinous
crimes that are committed against the people in flight from their homes.\textsuperscript{8}

Early in the month of September, the irregularity of the trains, due to the impact of the Partition, disturbs the peaceful life moving in rhythm with the movement of the trains. Nobody knew what had really happened. The arrival of the Sikh soldiers with machine guns and the coming of a ghost train from Pakistan create a commotion in the Mano Majrans. The arrangement of pyre-wood by the policeman places them in bewilderment. But the burying of the dead bodies make them aware of what has happened. Now, the effects of the Partition slowly begin to sink into the minds of Mano Majrans, and "the mob psychology of communal fear and prejudice\textsuperscript{9} begins to manifest itself. Then, Mano Majra splits into "two halves as neatly as a knife cuts through a pat of butter" (141). Love turns into hate, when they hear rumours of rape, desecration of mosques, tearing of the Koran. Not only the train load of Sikh bodies massacred by Pakistani Muslims and the sad plight of the refugees, but also the historical antagonism between the Sikhs and Muslims begin to haunt the psychology of the Mano Majrans.

Now the first priority in face of the crisis before the villagers, especially the older generation, is to accommodate the Hindu and Sikh refugees from Pakistan and the safety of their Muslim friends, for whom there may be a threat from the revengeful refugees and the youths spurred by mob psychology. Finally, Lambardar asks the Muslims to evacuate to the refugee camp for safety with the hope that they might come back after some days. But they are unhappy: "The lambardar felt a strong sense of guilt and was overcome with emotion. He got up and embraced Imam Baksh and started to cry
loudly. Sikh and Muslim villagers fell into each-other's arms and wept like children" (149). Khushwant Singh is highly successful in portraying the emotional bond between the two communities. According to Urvashi Butalia, "partition was not only a division of properties, of assets and liabilities. It was also, to use a phrase that Partition victims use repeatedly, a 'division of hearts'." One can cut the land and property but difficult are those things like human relationships with emotional attachment. The novelist very effectively depicts this aspect as also one's unbreakable bond with one's own land, as when Nooran is not ready to go to Pakistan. Her father insists upon her leaving Mano Majra for the newly created nation. She comes to meet Juggut Singh, but meets his mother instead:

Nooran felt heavy and lifeless. "All right, Beybey, I will go. Don't be angry with me when Juggut comes back, just tell him I came to say 'Sat Sri Akal'. The girl went down on her knees, clasped the old woman's legs and began to sob. "Byebey, I am going away and will never come back again. Don't be harsh to me just when I am leaving." (152)

The most moving moment in the novel is not the final act of sacrifice by Juggut Singh but Nooran meeting Juggut's mother and her uprootedness.

The story of the Sikhs and Muslims does not come to an end here; on the contrary it grows into more complication when a stranger youth in his teens from outside Mano Majra comes and injects the feeling of revenge into the Mano Majrans. He infuses the poison of communal frenzy. He says:

"(...) for each Hindu or Sikh they kill, kill two Mussulmans. For each woman they abduct or rape,
abduct two. For each home they loot, loot two. For each train they send load of dead over, send two across. For each road convoy that is attacked, attack two. That will stop the killing on the other side. It will teach them that we can also play this game of killing and looting.” (171)

If the above passage expresses the sense of retaliation and enmity, the old men of Mano Majra show in contrast the Sikh code of conduct, and the real ethics of religion. Meet Singh says:

I am an old bhai; I could not lift my hands against anyone—fight in battle or kill the killer. What bravery is there in killing unarmed innocent people? As for women, you know that the last Guru, Gobind Singh, made it a part of a baptismal oath that no Sikh was to touch the person of a Muslim woman. (172)

Finally, the stranger succeeds in winning the hearts of the young Mano Majrans, and they hatch a plan to attack the refugee train to Pakistan. One by one, including Malli and his gang and the youths of Mano Majra, join their hands with the conspirators to subbotage the train. Thus, the novel narrates the story of Mano Majrans getting divided, and the Sikhs seeking revenge on the Muslims.

Khushwant Singh depicts the handicaps of the bureaucracy of the time. This is very well represented through the character of Hukumchand, the district magistrate. As a custodian of law and order he is an utter failure. He is so tired that “one week had aged him beyond recognition” (178). But at the end he cleverly manages to save the refugee train by releasing Iqbal and Juggut Singh with the
hope that they would prevent the train attack. He worries himself over much about the communal disharmony in Mano Majra.

After his release, Iqbal, whose mission was social work when he first came to Mano Majra, comes to the Gurudwar not to do something to the people in trouble but to protect himself. For him “In a state of chaos self-preservation is the supreme duty” (194). In contrast to Iqbal, Juggut Singh too comes to the Gurudwar to get inspiration from the lines in the Granth Sahib before going to save the train. He alone undertakes the adventure of saving the whole train. He cuts the rope tied to the bridge with his Kirpan and succeeds in averting the disaster, but “The train went over him, and went on to Pakistan” (207).

Thus, *Train to Pakistan* is also a story of an individual who sacrifices his life in a state of chaos. As the foregoing analysis shows, in *Train to Pakistan* the Partition, as a dehumanizing event, affects both public and private lives. Manaver, Twinkle B. says, “Partition touched Mano Majrans at both levels— at the community level and at the individual level.”11 In general, public life in Mano Majra is disrupted very badly, and the only individuals who are affected by the Partition are Juggut Singh and Hukumchand. Though individuals undergo a change, the focal point in the novel is the transformation of Mano Majra, which is “by and large typical of the rural Punjabi life.”12

“In *Train to Pakistan,*” writes K.C. Belliappa, “the treatment is sociological.”13 As rightly pointed out by the critic, the novel depicts more a community tragedy than an individual tragedy. The whole story is told from the point of view of Mano Majrans. According to Shahane, “the chief protagonist of the novel is Mano Majra.”14
Though the change of the title from 'Mano Majra' to 'Train to Pakistan' seems to minimize the importance of the village and emphasize "the symbol of the 'train' as central to the novel's narrative and thematic structure," the centre of the novel is life in Mano Majra. It should be noticed that without the picture of Mano Majra the novel remains incomplete. The use of the train symbol adds a new dimension to the life of Mano Majrans, but does not contribute very much to the development of the plot. Apart from a recurring symbol and a means of transportation in the exchange of population, the portrayal of the train is less important than the picture of Mano Majra. Almost all the events in the novel take place in and around Mano Majra.

Unlike Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* the emphasis in terms of the effects of Partition is more on public life than on individuals' life. The impact on the two individuals—Juggut Singh, who sacrifices his life and Hukumchand, who undergoes a subtle psychological change— is not so deep as the transformation of the village. Juggut Singh spends most of the time in jail when the cataclysmic drama is enacted in Mano Majra and his final heroic death comes as a surprise in the end. Though the Partition wearies Hukumchand, the transformation in him is not so deep as that of Lala Kanshi Ram in *Azadi*. However, Hukumchand is not central to the novel. In terms of the character of Iqbal, the Partition is nothing to him. He finds an occasion in the event to demonstrate his heroism; that too he fails to do. So, again to quote Shahane, "Mano Majra is the real protagonist in *Train to Pakistan* and neither Jugga, nor Hukumchand nor Iqbal has a fully dominant role which may be described as the hero's imperialistic way over the created world."16

The novel "traces, with meticulous care and studied detachment the rapid transformation" of the village. Like Raja Rao's village in
Kanthapura, Mano Majra is a village under transition. If the Freedom Struggle, under the impetus of the Gandhian leadership, affects the people in Kanthapura, in Train to Pakistan the Partition affects the Mano Majrans, and brings about a radical change by dividing the people with two different destinations– the Muslims to the newly created Pakistan and the Sikhs to India. Khuswant Singh portrays the crisis in the village and its transformation. The whole way of life in Mano Majra is disturbed. The emotional attachment between the two communities is so strong that there is no one “who could say to the Muslims(...) to go away from Mano Majra” (146). But the Partition comes as an anti-human force and the harmony in social life ends up in enmity. What distinguishes Mano Majra from Kanthapura is that the latter is a traditional village with mythical links, and a village of the 1930s, a pre-Gandhian village. The former is a typical Punjabi village of 1947– a post-Gandhian village. The transition of Kanthapura is positive whereas Mano Majra’s is a negative one. If the Kanthapurians unite, the Mano Majrans fall apart. Kanthapura represents most Indian villages of the time; Mano Majra represents just a few villages across the border between India and Pakistan. Its representation is confined only to the northern part of India, especially the Punjabi villages. The Freedom struggle affected the whole of India whereas the Partition impacted the northern part of India. In this connection Harish Raizada opines, “If Kanthapura was the microcosm of the national upsurge in the country in the twenties, Mano Majra became the microcosm of vivisected India.”

The most important aspect of the novel in depicting village life is the portrayal of its pastoral aspect and Punjabi ethos. Khushwant Singh’s intense preoccupation with the pastoral life of Mano Majra
explains his dissatisfaction with the film versions failure to capture it. In an interview he said: “However, I have two regrets about the film: more of the pastoral life was not shown.”

A typical village on the Punjab border, Mano Majra is peopled with a variety of pastoral individuals. Juggut Singh is a down-to-earth Punjabi rustic. One can meet good people like Meet Singh and bad people like Malli and his gang; God-fearing traditional peasants; the Lambardar, Imam Chacha and Nooran. All these characters are thoroughly rooted in Punjabi peasant culture. And, also, religion forms an integral part of the peasant life. They have faith in God. Imam Chacha in the Mosque, Meet Singh in the Gurudwara “are most prominently shown in relation to their religious functions.” Meet Singh demonstrates the Punjabi code of religious ethics. He says:

“It is just the Guru’s word. If you are going to do something good, the Guru will help you; If you are going to do something bad, the Guru will stand in your way. If you persist in doing it, he will punish you till you repent, and then forgive you.”

But in the drama of Mano Majra characters like Hukumchand and Iqbal, who are not peasants but educated elites, also take part along with the peasants. The main focus of the novel in depicting the society is limited only to the Sikh and the Muslim communities. The only Hindu character, Lal Ram Lal, dies before the Partition affects Mano Majra. However, the novelist’s greatness lies, as Shakti Batra writes, in “dealing with a limited number of characters” and “integrating them with their background, which has been etched painstakingly and with precision, which Khushwant Singh himself knows very well.” In depicting the life in Mano Majra and portraying
the rural characters in a rural environment Khushwant Singh’s novel, like Rahi Masoom Raza’s novel *Adha Gaon* and Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura* belongs to the tradition of the rural novel.

It is interesting to note that the story of individual self sacrifice comes as a corollary to the community story. If the story of the Mano Majrans is a historical truth, Juggut’s love story is a poetic truth. The depiction of Punjabi life before the impact of the Partition and after is grounded in historicity. But the final act of sacrifice and the creation of Juggut Singh seem products of the author’s own imagination. As Khushwant Singh himself says, “he (Juggut Singh) is the only character which is entirely fiction.” It is evident that in the creation of Juggut Singh and his depiction of pure love through him the novelist finds a suitable background in the Partition to demonstrate his philosophy of humanism—love triumphing over hatred and good over evil. Like Mulk Raj Anand, Khushwant Singh is a humanist. Shahane aptly describes his humanistic vision as “deep and ethical humanism.” As a humanist Khushwant Singh celebrates values such as love and sacrifice as against communal fanaticism and violence. In contrast to Iqbal, Juggut Singh’s adventure comes as a surprise and in contrast to Sikh-Muslim enmity, his sacrifice for his beloved who belongs to another community, represents the writer’s humanistic vision of things as they should be. What Khushwant Singh demonstrates is that “Literature is not a crime reporter’s diary. If the duty of a writer is to expose, it is also his mission to portray the brighter side of the human psyche.”

By and large, Khushwant Singh has been successful in weaving the community story with the story of an individual artistically. “In
"The history of Partition," as Urvashi Butalia writes, "was a history of deep violation—physical and mental— for Women."26 Here in the novel the portrayal of woman as the Partition victim is confined only to Nooran, which has got a little attention. But Khushwant Singh depicts the atrocities perpetrated against women in the embedded story of Sundari:

Every one was ordered off the bus. Sikhs were just hacked to death. The clean-shaven were stripped. Those that were circumcised were forgiven. Those that were not, were circumcised. Not just the foreskin: the whole thing was cut off. She who had not really had a good look at Mansa Ram was shown her husband completely naked. They held him by the arms and legs and one man cut off his penis and gave it to her. The mob made love to her. She did not have to take off any one of her bangles. They were all smashed as she lay in the road, being taken by one man and another and another. (203)
No less than the men and women, the children too suffered in the ordeal. The story of Sunder Singh narrates what happened to the children:

Sunder Singh's children cried for water and food. So did every one else. Sunder Singh gave them his urine to drink. Then that dried up too. So he pulled out his revolver and shot them all. Sunder Singh aged six with his long brown blonde hair tied up in a topknot. Deepo aged four with curling eyelashes, and Amro, four months old, who tugged at her mother's dry breast with her gums and puckered up her face till it was full of wrinkles, crying frantically. (203-204)

The violence depicted in these two embedded stories is more horrendous than the traumatic effects of the Partition on the Mano Majrans. Here the melodrama is depicted not as a report in the newspaper's but the two stories are told as an integral part of the novel. It is partly because the stories come to the reader through the consciousness of Hukumchand. Here lies the importance of literariness of the novel. The stories not only accentuate the horror and outrage of the Partition but also play an important role in shaping the character of Hukumchand.

Khushwant Singh's characters are both types and individuals. For example, Hukumchand, Iqbal, Meet Singh, and Imam Chacha—all represent their respective professions and class. At the same time they live as separate individuals. The real individual in the novel is Juggut Singh, one of the three important characters in the novel. The other two are Iqbal and Hukumchand. Juggut Singh, "just a peasant" (24), is a typical Punjabi youth, who belongs to a dacoit
family. He is crude and “the most violent man in the district” (135). The following description shows how violent and crude Juggut is:

Jugga's hands shot through the bars and gripped Malli by the hair protruding from the back of his turban. Malli’s turban fell off. Jugga yelled murderously and with a jerk brought Malli’s head crashing against the bars. He shook Malli as a terrier shakes a piece of rag from side to side, forward and backward, smashing his head repeatedly against the bars. Each jerk was accompanied by abuse: “This to rape your mother. This your sister. This your daughter. This for your mother again. And this... and this.”(136)

In the beginning of the novel Juggut Singh is depicted as a criminal. He belongs to a robber family; police cases against him brand him a villain. He is a low type character with no sense of values. But in the course of the narrative Juggut wins the sympathy of the readers. His final act of sacrifice comes as a surprise. In the end this villain becomes a hero, the common man becoming a “big brave man” (187). Commenting upon the character V.A.Shahane writes, “Basically, Juggut Singh, whose nature is split between earthly brutality and passionate love, represents a significant aspect of Khushwant Singh’s view of man: he is a being inexorably and hopelessly divided between good and evil, noble and ignoble, sacred and profane.”27 There is a tinge of romanticism in the delineation of Juggut Singh. He is a “romantic lover.”28 His romance with the Muslim girl Nooran represents earthly love and reminds us of the Punjabi love story of ‘Heer Ranja’. It is pathetic that the lovers meet only in the beginning; they never unite once again in the novel.
“Jugga’s love,” as R.K. Dhawan remarks, “is indeed a positive and
dynamic force of the novel. The love affair between the burly Sikh
Jugga and the pretty Muslim girl cuts across religious barriers.”29
Deeply rooted in Punjabi ethos and soil, Juggut Singh represents a
sense of adventure, valour and crudeness, which are associated with
Punjabi blood. Punjabi life itself is romantic in spirit. Juggut Singh’s
romantic affair with Nooran, his display of heroism in saving the train
and traits which characterize a typical Punjabi, are romantic.

Juggut Singh is not an ideal tragic hero but; to use H.M.
William’s phrase, he is “a doomed hero”, because he is a “little man
lost.”30 He is a peasant and rogue, nearer to Fielding’s picaresque
hero than a traditional Virgilian hero. Unlike Shakespeare’s tragic
heroes, Juggut Singh is a common man, who meets his tragic end
not by a wrong choice but by a noble act. The concept of Aristotle’s
‘ideal tragic hero’ now needs reinterpretation. What Margaret P.
Joseph says with regard to a modern tragic hero very aptly applies
to Juggut Singh also:

Historical and social forces have changed these
concepts in this century. The World wars, racial violence
and terrorism have proved that the enemy need not
necessarily be within a man’s own nature: it can also be
outside of anything connected with himself (...). The new
tragic hero struggles not so much with a crisis as with a
condition (...). He does not shape events—events shape
him. His characteristic state is indecisiveness amounting
initially to “paralysis of will”, hence the tendency to call
him pathetic rather than tragic; a victim rather than a
hero.31
Accordingly, *Train to Pakistan* is exemplifies a tragedy arising out of a situation. Juggut Singh does not contribute to the moulding of events; events, on the contrary, mould him.

If Juggut is a romantic character, Hukumchand is a realistic one. Hukumchand is one of the finest characters in the fictional world created by Khushwant Singh. He is a jolly officer whose sources of entertainment are wine and woman. Hukumchand, "a *naradmi*- and clever" (51), is a typical bureaucrat trained under the British administration. At the time of a crisis his duty is to maintain law and order. In the beginning Hukumchand is depicted as a corrupt and immoral officer. He dances, listens to songs, drinks and smokes. His cigarette, wine and his affair with Haseena leave the impression that he is a hedonist, not a committed custodian of law and order. But his concern about the crisis also comes as a surprise. As a man appointed to maintain law and order he is weary and helpless in finding a solution. But a man with a pragmatic vision, he releases Juggut and Iqbal to avert an imminent tragedy. He is neither heroic like Juggut nor unheroic like Iqbal.

According to H.M. Williams all the three characters— Iqbal, Juggut and Hukumchand “are transformed by the experience of violence.” Of the three the most affected individual is Hukumchand. Juggut is hardly affected, except at the end putting himself to death, because he is in jail when the crisis takes place. Iqbal does not bother about it; he has his self-interest. As J.F. Adkins rightly points out, “Although the villagers remotely sense their involvement with some dire event, it is Hukumchand who watches at close range the macabre burning of the corpses, and it is he who suffers most.” His transformation takes place at two levels— his
affair with Haseena and the massacre following the Partition. In the beginning Hukumchand’s affair with Haseena seems to be a case of fornication and an immoral activity. But physical lust changes into genuine love when Haseena, who used to entertain Hukumchand just for the sake of money, says: “If you do not eat, then I won’t eat either” (120). Then, Hukumchand tries to see an image of his own daughter in Haseena. There is no dross of immorality or fornication left but only pure love and affection in their relationship:

Hukumchand stroked the girl’s hair. His daughter would have been sixteen, seventeen, or eighteen, if she had lived. But he had no feeling of guilt, only a vague sense of fulfilment. He did not want to sleep with the girl, or make love to her, or even to kiss her on the lips and feel her body. He simply wanted her to sleep in his lap with her head resting on his chest. (121)

The Partition haunts Hukumchand’s psyche—“Death had always been an obsession with Hukumchand” (104). The holocaust— the dead bodies, and violence—reminds him of his aunt’s death. He is panic-stricken by the violence of the Partition: “But a trainload of dead was too much for even Hukumchand’s fatalism. (...) It bewildered and frightened him by its violence and its magnitude” (104 - 105). By and large, If Juggut Singh is a romantic portraiture, the realistic strain is allowed full play in the portrayal of Hukumchand.

Juggut Singh, a bandit and a low character, proves himself a noble and heroic soul in the end. Hukumchand worries about the situation and is transformed by the trauma of the Partition. Both the characters hold the sympathy of the reader and their endeavour
to avert the train attack evokes our admiration. But the character of Iqbal is the exact opposite of these two characters. In the beginning he creates a lot of expectations in the Mano Majrans as a social worker when he says:

“I am a social worker, Bhaiji. There is so much to be done in our villages. Now with this Partition there is so much bloodshed going on. Someone must do something to stop it. My party has sent me here, since this place is a vital point for refugee movements. Trouble here would be disastrous.” (48)

The above passage shows that Iqbal comes to the village to do something for the people in a time of crisis. But he fails, because his effort is not motivated by the real concern of a social worker; on the contrary he wants to put on the mantle of a hero. He fancies that his role in the crisis “would all go to make him a hero” (188). There is a wide gap between his intention and performance. When Meet Singh asks him to do something at the time of the trouble, Iqbal says “Me? Why me?” (…) what have I to do with it? I do not know these people” (193). Iqbal is passive; but he is self-centered all the same. According to him “In a state of chaos self-preservation is the supreme duty”(194).

One can find an alter ego of Khushwant Singh in Iqbal. Like Khushwant Singh, Iqbal too, as a western educated youth, fails to save the life of innocent people during the great ordeal. As the novelist himself confesses, “The Partition theme was born out of a sense of guilt that I had done nothing to save the lives of innocent people and behaved like a coward.”34 Like Joseph Conrad’s Lord Jim, Iqbal prepares himself for a crisis but utterly fails when the
real situation makes demands. However, Conrad’s art takes his hero further in the direction of expiation and self-effacement. In this respect, as R.K. Dhawan thinks, Khushwant Singh “reminds us of Joseph Conrad who as a young boy quit Poland, which was then under the oppressive rule of Russia, and who later on always carried a feeling of guilt having betrayed his country, by not coming to the rescue of his fellow-country men.”35

Finally, Iqbal represents the failure of the intelligentsia to contribute anything during the ordeal. Here Khushwant Singh makes use of a mild satire in the portrayal of Iqbal’s character. The author seems to show that heroic deeds like self-sacrifice need solidarity, commitment, at least love and affection rather than mere intellectuality.

HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Khushwant Singh is a writer with a strong historical sense. He began his career by writing history. Primarily a historian, Khushwant Singh has written 5 books on Indian history and is an authority on Sikh history. Being a creative writer as well, Khushwant Singh is a novelist with a sense of historicity. Most of his novels deal with a historical past.

H.M. Williams states that Train to Pakistan is “a passionate comment on recent Indian history.”36 The novel depicts an important phase in the political history of India— the Partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947. Writing a decade after the event provides the author with a vantage point of view. The novel begins with a historical introduction— “The summer of 1947 was not like other Indian summers.” (1)— which also forms the ‘Introduction’ of Khushwant
Singh's essay on *Why Hindu and Muslim speak Hate*.

Khushwant Singh is of the opinion that the Partition affected the elites immediately. Villagers and common people were hardly aware of it. They had nothing to do with the politics of the Partition. All the same the real sufferers in the ordeal were the common masses. In this respect the author is true to historical happenings. As the historiography of the Partition shows north Indian cities like Delhi, Calcutta, Lahore became the early victims of the catastrophe. In the opinion of K.C. Belliappa, "Train to Pakistan is at best a successful recreation of the event of partition in terms of the evocation of atmosphere, the historical details and the authenticity of the locale." The village in the novel represents the historical villages of 1947. What happens in Mano Majra was really what happened in many of the villages across the border.

Being a historian of the Sikhs, Khushwant Singh does not forget about the historical antagonism between the Sikhs and the Muslims. One of the characters says:

The Sikhs were sullen and angry. "Never trust a Musulman," they said. The last Guru had warned them that Muslims had no loyalties. He was right. All through the Muslim period of Indian history, sons had imprisoned or killed their own fathers, and brothers had blinded brothers to get the throne. And what had they done to the Sikhs? Executed two of their Gurus, assassinated another and butchered his infant children; hundreds of thousands had been put to the sword for no other offence than refusing to accept Islam; their temples had been desecrated by the slaughter of kine; the holy Granth had been torn to bits." (141-142)
However, one should not mistake these opinions for Khushwant Singh’s personal opinions. Here the novelist presents how the age-old rivalries were instrumental in kindling the spirit of religious fanaticism during the Partition. Here the novelist as a historian is giving an unbiased picture of the past. He does not take sides either with the Sikhs or with the Muslims. According to him “Muslims said the Hindus had planned and started the killing. According to the Hindus, the Muslims were to blame. The fact is both sides killed. Both shot and stabbed and speared and clubbed. Both tortured. Both raped” (9). Hence, as C.N. Srinath thinks, “In *Train to Pakistan* it is the historian who is the witness-turned-writer that presents all the graphic details of violence in a neutral tone of voice which has an advantage of achieving an objectivity and even some sort of detachment.”

*Train to Pakistan* occupies an important place in the tradition of the Indian political novel in English also. In the opinion of Malashri Lal and Vijay K. Sharma, Khushwant Singh’s novels “provide a unique insight into one of the major political catastrophes of this century.”

It is the politics of the Partition that appears in *Train to Pakistan*. If a political novel deals with “action, characters and setting (...) firmly grounded in politics” there is no doubt about the political ingredients of the novel. As a political event, the Partition appears as an anti-human force and affects the lives of the characters in the novel. The action of the novel takes place during the turbulent year of Indian politics. According to Morris E. Spear, in a political novel “the main purpose of the writer is partially propaganda, public reform or exposition of the lives of personages who maintain government, or of the forces which constitute Government.”

Though *Train to
Pakistan, however, does not contain any political propaganda, nor an agenda for public reform, it draws the character of Hukumchand to expose the maintenance of law and order by the government. Hukumchand's position reflects the failure of Indian bureaucracy at the time. There hangs the shadow of Jawaharlal Nehru over Singh's portrait of Hukumchand. Hukumchand, as head of a district, is helpless. At the level of high political drama Nehru too was uneasy. Hukumchand's direct political comments serve to establish the political overtones of the novel:

"But they maintained order with power behind them; not opposing them. Where was the power? What were the people in Delhi doing? Making fine speeches in the assembly! Loud-speakers magnifying their egos; lovely-looking foreign women in the visitors' galleries in breathless admiration. "He is a great man, this Mr. Nehru of yours. I do think he is the greatest man in the world today. And how handsome! Wasn't that a wonderful thing to say? 'Long ago we made a tryst with destiny and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure but very substantially'. Yes, Mr. Prime Minister, You made your tryst. So did many others on the 15th August, Independence Day." (201)

The above passage ironically presents the historical speech made by Nehru on Independence Day. Thus, there is a deliberate tone of parody behind the delineation of Hukumchand's character and personality.

G.S. Amur remarks, "Except for the few spontaneous outbursts of Hukumchand, the magistrate, there is no direct political comment
in the novel."43 But, there are some political comments made in the conversation between the Mano Majrans and Iqbal. The Mano Majrans know little about "What is happening in the world?" and "What is all this about Pakistan and Hindustan?"(61). For them political freedom means "little or nothing (...). They did not even realise that it was a step forward and that all they needed to do was to take the next step and turn the make-believe political freedom into a real economic one" (61). For the Mano Majrans Freedom means comforts—"more land, more buffaloes, no debts" (63). But in contrast to the Mano Majrans Iqbal's perception of Freedom is that of an elitist's view. For him, Freedom means getting rid of slavery. He says to the Mano Majrans: "Why, don't you people want to be free? Do you want to remain slaves all your lives?" (62). But the matter of slavery too means little to them, because, "Freedom is for the educated people who fought for it. We were slaves of the English, now we will be slaves of the educated Indians or Pakistanis" (62). So the common people found no difference between foreign rule and native rule. But Iqbal, as an educated Indian, is aware of the British chicanery. According to him, "politically they (British) are the world's biggest four-twenties. They would not have spread their domain all over the world if they had been honest" (64).

Here, the novelist incisively presents the significance of political freedom from two different points of view— the elitist view and the view of the common man. For an elite who rules is important, for the common man safety and security are important. Lambardar says:

“All we hear is kill, kill. The only ones who enjoy freedom are thieves, robbers and cutthroats.” Then he added calmly; “we were better off under the British. At least there was security.” (64)
Thus, *Train to Pakistan* occupies an important place in the history of the Indian political novel in English if a political novel is a "a piece of fiction," as M.K. Naik says, "devoted to a presentation of political ideas." What is important about the novel is that it successfully transforms political history into a work of art by investing it with symbolism and by its compelling art of narration. There is a fine balance between the virtues of a historian and of a fictionist. Joan F. Adkins aptly points out thus: "Through the transformation of history into art form, the author shapes and orders an event which, in its over-powering reality, is difficult."

To conclude, as the present analysis shows, Khushwant Singh deploys literary techniques such as symbolism, satire, and unbridled imagination in his treatment of the theme of Partition. In spite of the fact that it lacks psychological delineation of the characters and overlooks refugee and rehabilitation problems, *Train to Pakistan* remains a classic of Partition literature. It is historically important for being the first Indian novel in English to respond to the Partition. It is moreover a successful blend of art and history presenting a humanistic vision.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


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18 Harish Raizada, "Train to Pakistan: A Study in Crisis of Values" 162.

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22 S.C. Harrex, The Fire and the Offering 163.

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27 V.A. Shahane, Khushwant Singh 80.


33 Joan F. Adkins, “History as Art Form: Khushwant Singh’s Train to Pakistan,” The Journal of Indian Writing in English, 2.2 July (1974): 3.

34 Khushwant Singh, “Compulsions to Write,” Three Contemporary Novelists 36.


43 G. S. Amur, “Political Novel,” Encyclopaedia of Post-colonial Literatures in English.


45 Joan F. Adkins, “History as Art form; Khushwant Singh’s Train to Pakistan” 11.
It is interesting to note that a couple of years after the appearance of Khushwant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan*, the theme of Partition appears in B. Rajan’s *The Dark Dancer* (1959). As in *Train to Pakistan*, the theme in this novel, too, is not a central theme. But B. Rajan treats the theme more or less on the same lines but in a different context, which will be explained by and by.

B. Rajan belongs to the tradition of “the native-aliens.”¹ Like Santha Rama Rau and Kamala Markandaya, he too is a South-Indian expatriate writer. His novel *The Dark Dancer* (1959) narrates the tragic story of Krishnan, a Cambridge educated South Indian; it deals with his love and marriage, separation and re-union, and identity crisis. This story of an individual is enacted against the backdrop of the Indian political turmoil of the late 40’s. The forces of Partition affect also the lives of the major characters in the novel.

Epic in dimension, the novel encompasses a large canvas. The action of the novel moves from South-India to North-India– Delhi and Shantihpur, where the communal-riots break out. As K.R.Srinivas Iyengar puts it, “There are two clear strands in the story: the tragedy of Krishna’s marriage and the tragedy of Partition.”² The novel begins with V.S.Krishnan’s homecoming. He returns to India after ten years of his education in the west. His arrival coincides with the great upheaval of the Independence Movement in the country. According to the wishes of his family, he marries an Indian girl, Kamala, just “in order to get married.”³ Because his family wants him to be an administrator, he joins the Civil Service at Delhi, though he wanted
to be a teacher. As Meenakshi Mukherjee says, "he submits to every family decision."\(^4\)

Krishnan leaves for Delhi along with Kamala, and his friend Vijayaraghavan joins him there. The story takes an interesting turn when in a club Krishnan meets Cynthia, "the person he had known at Cambridge and for whom he had felt of more than fondness" (67). She has come to India for fieldwork in connection with a book she is writing. This happens to be the time India is preparing for her political freedom, the time of political turmoil. Two free nations are going to be born out of the subcontinent of British India. A hint of the Partition is given in the beginning, though effects of it are portrayed in the end. In chapter 3, Krishnan says; "What'll happen to us, I mean Independence, with or without Partition? We're going to be a free nation, or may be two free nations (...)"(73). When Radio broadcasts announce the coming of the long awaited Freedom accompanied by Partition, Vijayaraghavan anticipates the forthcoming ordeal: "We're going to be responsible for ourselves. Who knows what it will cost us and how much blood will flow ? – perhaps more even than half a century's struggle"(75).

When Kamala goes to the South to see her mother, who had had a heart attack, Krishnan is drawn closer to Cynthia. Here begins the story of east-west encounter. On the insistence of his family Krishnan succumbs himself to the job and wife. But later motivated by a strong sense of individualism, which is a legacy of the western education to him, he makes his own choice- he decides to leave Kamala for Cynthia. When Krishnan discloses his decision, Kamala leaves him without leaving a trace. The story of cultural conflict takes a new turn as the Krishnan-Cynthia relationship fails to culminate in
their union. Being a mere physical attraction, the relationship breaks down for a silly reason. Krishnan's relatives oppose his relationship with Cynthia, and the priest at Mathura hesitates to bless him. At this stage the story of marriage, romance and separation stops short almost abruptly. And the story of the Partition begins.

When Krishnan is informed that Kamala is serving the victims of Cholera in Shantihpur, which is "the centre of hurricane,"(188) he leaves for the town to join her. The chapter, 'Day Train to Disaster' describes Krishnan's journey to Shantihpur. It gives a graphic description of the violence of the Partition. Krishnan is shocked to witness the plight of the refugees on the railway station platform. In the railway compartment, he meets a panic-stricken Muslim. Krishnan assures him of his safety. In the middle of the journey the Sikhs and Hindus attack the train. The Muslim is scared, when a Sikh inquires about his identity. Krishnan tries to save the Muslim at all costs. But the Sikh identifies him from his circumcision and kills him. Krishnan fails to save the Muslim, in spite of his desperate efforts.

The couple reunites at Shantihpur, where Kamala is engaged in nursing the wounds of the victims with a medical officer. Shantihpur is now suffering from Cholera and the communal virus. The story of Shantihpur has ironical overtones. In fact, as Taqi Ali Mirza writes, "The outstanding quality of The Dark Dancer is irony." Shantihpur is a place where there is no Shanti–there is no "peace in the town named after peace" (230). Krishnan too joins the humanitarian service band of Kamala. They serve the Muslim patients who have taken shelter in a hospital. Since the hospital is crowded with Muslim patients, the Hindus and the Sikhs of Shantihpur attack the hospital itself.
During a walk Krishnan and Kamala witness a Muslim prostitute being followed by some Hindu hooligans. They try to protect her from the attack. Kamala tries to convince the hooligans, but they do not listen to her. When Krishnan and Kamala come in their way, Krishnan is knocked down, and badly wounded, and in trying to save the Muslim, Kamala is stabbed to death. Like Juggat Singh in Kushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, Kamala dies a heroic death while saving a person belonging to another community. We next witness Krishnan performing Hindu rites—immersion of his wife's ashes into the holy Ganges. Rejecting his mother's appeal to remarry, Krishnan lives with the memory of his noble wife and thus finds his identity.

The novel realistically portrays some other aspects of the Partition—communal riot, the Sikh point of view and the South-Indian response to the Partition. According to Madhusudan Prasad *The Dark Dancer* uses the Partition "mainly for the melodramatic ending." No doubt the novel deploys the melodramatic technique in the presentation of the effects of Partition. For instance, this is how the novel depicts the aftermath of the Partition:

(...) And now even in the capital, where the call to order was issued, it was no longer safe to walk in the streets, and the Muslim houses with their constricted entrances, huddled together in the clenched city's heart, shuttered their windows and waited for the assault, while the home-made, petrol soaked incendiaries were flung in, primitive but deadly in that murderous congestion. Old Delhi was a city made for burning. And the Muslims, so it was said and echoed in every narrow street, had stores of arms hidden for an uprising. So it was preventive war and
anticipatory looting. (...) Vengeance and agony in the ferocious, endless cycle. How long would it last, how deeply would it wound the newly-born reality? How many must die, how many be dispossessed, how many scars be inflicted on the uninjured, before the pestilence devoured itself, leaving behind it the unwashed blood in the stairway and the flickering fear walked up behind the great stones? (162-163)

Also, the blood shedding scene in which a Muslim is encountered by a Sikh during Krishnan’s journey, the communal riot in Shantihpur, and Kamala’s death at the hands of the Hindu hooligans— all have a melodramatic tinge. To give another example of the melodramatic element, the M.O. (medical officer) narrates Kamala’s ruin:

“(...) I went out with a gun looking for trouble. The two boozers, as it turned out, had completely forgotten the girl. They’d stripped Kamala of her diamond ear-rings and were messing around her body, fumbling idiotically with the clasp of her necklace. ”(284)

From the Partition point of view the novel is remarkable for the presentation of the Sikh point of view of the ordeal, though the novelist belongs to the non-Sikh group of writers on the Partition. This point of view is presented through Pratap Singh, Krishnan’s colleague. He says; “The Hindus want independence. The Muslims want their theological state. We’ll have to pay the price between the millstones”(90). Historically speaking, the Sikhs suffered a lot during the Partition, because, Punjab, the homeland of the Sikhs, was the victim of geo-politics. The Radcliff line placed them in a dilemma.
The novel implicitly argues that vengeance led to violence, which led to further retaliation during the Partition. The Muslims took revenge upon the Hindus and Sikhs, and vice-versa. In the novel Pratap Singh is a person who has lost his parents. Their killing, according to him, “was a reprehensible accident, which the League leadership solemnly deplores” (150). And the Sikh, who kills a Muslim in front of Krishnan in the train, has earlier been a victim of the Muslim attack. So he wants to retaliate. Also the mob in Shantihpur attacks the Muslims in sheer retaliation:

Huzoor Sahib, we are peaceable men, we wish to kill nobody. We have suffered at their hands, each of us, Sikh and Hindu, we have lost our property, seen our wives and sons die. We have never taken vengeance, Huzoor Sahib. But in our own country, in this home we have built with the little we took away, is it right, sahib, that the poison of them should kill us?" (244)

The Hindu vengeance reaches its zenith when the Hindu hooligans attack a Muslim girl. They attack her because, as one of them says:

(...) “Her people burnt my house down. My mother and father were killed. My sister was taken away. If she’s alive now she’s somebody’s chattel. Get out of the way, it’s time for them to pay now. It isn’t half of what they’ve taken from us.” (276)

Thus, the novel is true to the probables of history in presenting the atrocities, imaginatively, with reference to mob psychology at the time.
It is a common notion that the tragedy of the Partition affected mostly the northern part of India. It is true that North-Indian writers contribute much to the literature on Partition. It is abundant in Punjabi, Hindi, Sindhi, Bengali and Urdu languages. And many of the Indian writers in English who deal with the Partition theme are North-Indians. The simple reason is that they were the victims of the holocaust. Many of them have found refuge in creative literature to exorcise the pangs of Partition haunting their minds. But it is also true that the Partition has been a tragedy of national proportions. It is a blot on Indian history and a scar on its psyche. A true Indian must have felt the agony even though he/she was not a direct victim. Any sensitive writer can respond to it as instinctively as a victim-writer, though probably he/she does not react from the depths of experience which of a victim-writer does. There is indeed some literature on the Partition by South-Indians, though it may not be as rich in quality and quantity as that of the North-Indians. There are many Marathi novels on the Partition. Also, in the history of Indian literature in English there are a few writers like Manohar Malgonkar, Sharf Mukudam, and B. Rajan from the South who have imaginatively captured the traumatic experience of the Partition in their fiction with a great measure of success.

What is important about B. Rajan among these three writers is that the South-Indian response to the holocaust is presented conspicuously in his *The Dark Dancer*. First, the novelist himself is a “South-Indian native alien.” The action of the novel moves from South-India to North-India. Two major characters—Kamala and Krishnan, who are victims of the Partition—are South-Indians. When Krishnan goes to North-India he is identified as a South-Indian.
A Sikh character calls him a "South-Indian (...) crackpot" (201). The novelist shows the validness of national unity in diversity through Krishnan, who, when accused of being a South-Indian, asserts that he is able to feel the trauma nonetheless. The following conversation between Krishnan and Pratap Singh makes it clear:

"I know," said Krishnan. "I've felt some of it myself."

Pratap Singh looked unbelieving. "Thanks for sympathising, but you don't know. You couldn't possibly, unless it happened to you. You're a south Indian, you're two thousand miles away from it, your people aren't on the invasion route, your land isn't torn by this kind of dissension."

"It's our country," Krishnan reminded him gently. "It doesn't matter how far away the corners are. What happens in the room happens to us."

(76-77)

It clearly indicates that even a South-Indian who is away from the ordeal can respond to the trauma. As K.K. Sharma and Johri put it, "Through Krishnan, Rajan shows that distance does not matter much; even a south Indian, far away from the scene of tragedy, knows and understands the gruesome tragedy of partition and its horrible consequences." Rajan seems to be much closer to Chinua Achebe's concept of the novelist as teacher, when he uses Kamala as his mouthpiece to 'teach' Indians to be conscious of their national unity. Kamala in the novel is a symbol of that unity. She says to Imtiaz and Pratap Singh:

"It's no one's fault but ours that we are divided. We ought to look into ourselves, count our mistakes, and do
what we can to understand each other. But if the best we
can do is to stand here bandying insults, how can we even
begin to live as a nation?” (114-115)

Perhaps this is the novelist’s message to divided Indians. Also
through the character of Kamala, Rajan projects his humanistic vision.
Kamala represents the sacrificial figure. She tries to save a Muslim
at the cost of her life. She rises above all communal barriers. When
it becomes very dangerous to treat the Muslim patients, Kamala
expresses her humanitarian attitude:

“They (Muslims)’ re sick, they’ re in danger and our
duty is to care for them. If they’ re afraid to come to us
because they don’t trust us, or because they can’t risk
being discovered, then it’s our responsibility to go out and
bring them in.” (226)

Thus, the novelist gives expression to his perception of the way
national consciousness should work in us.

Though Krishnan is the protagonist of the novel, Kamala is the
centre of attraction, not as a betrayed woman, but as a victim of the
Partition. Her risking of her life for the sake of protecting a Muslim
makes her a noble figure. Her heroic death reminds us of the death
of Juggat Singh in Khuswant Singh’s Train to Pakistan. It is interesting
to note that Rajan’s novel treats the theme of Partation more or less
in the same way as Train to Pakistan does, but the context here is
different. Here a Hindu woman sacrifices herself to save a person of
another community. Both the writers express subscribe to the
philosophy of humanism. In both the novels sacrifice is contrasted
with communal fanaticism. When the two communities are fighting
madly and are involved in a fratricidal war, these two individuals save the souls of another community transcending the communal divide. According to Meenakshi Mukherjee, it is an "idealistic approach to Hindu-Muslim amity." Comparing both the characters she further writes:

The Indo-Anglian novelist has repeatedly attempted to show that genuine human feelings are beyond artificial barriers of religion, (...) Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (1956) (...) hinges on the love between Jugga, a Sikh ruffian, and a Muslim girl. Similarly in B. Rajan's *The Dark Dancer* (1959), the idealised character Kamala dies trying to save a Muslim prostitute from the attack of two Hindu hooligans. In both these cases there is a well meant attempt to invest these deaths with some greater significance through deafening symbolic overtones.¹⁰

Even so, Kamala stands on a nobler pedestal than Jugga. "Rajan's *Dancer,*" writes Gomathi Narayanan, "endows Kamala with a self-awareness as a sacrifice...( ...) Khushwant Singh, on the other hand, features his hero Jugga as an unselfconscious sacrifice."¹¹ However, Juggat is a low-type character. He is guided by his instinct to save his beloved. Unlike Kamala, he is not aware of the communal situation around him, because, when the drama of Partition takes place he is in jail. On the other hand Kamala is a mature character. She is aware of the situation around her. She is guided by her strong belief in right action. She thinks that it is right to save the Muslim regardless of her religion. This is clear from the conversation between Krishnan and Vijayaraghavan;
"She didn't die for anything," Krishnan said.

"Not even to save a Moslem prostitute?"

"Not even for that," Krishnan maintained, surprised by his own firmness. "No to protect her but to do what was right." (311) (Emphasis added)

However, Krishnan's perception is pure academicism. He could not have fathomed emotional involvement. In the opinion of Meenakashi Mukherjee, like Sanad's wife in A Time to be Happy and Pramila of Some Inner Fury, Kamala belongs to "idealised Indian womanhood." She derives her "strength from service and sacrifice," and she believes "in non-violence as a creed and in right action rather than happiness."12 As rightly pointed out by Mukherjee, Kamala finds her self-identity in serving the distressed, the victimized, instead of returning to the south after her broken marriage. Influenced by Gandhian principles, she pledges herself to social service.

The novel is also different from other Partition novels as it relates the Hindu-Muslim conflict to that of the conflict among the brothers in the Mahabharat. It seems T.S. Eliot had had considerable influence on Rajan.13 Like Eliot, Rajan uses myth in his work of art.14 There are allusions to the Mahabharat in The Dark Dancer. The last chapter being titled 'Son of Kunti' is an explicit reference to the analogy between the Hindu-Muslim conflict and the brothers' conflict in the Mahabharat. Cynthia says; "The sons of Kunti fought a war of fratricide. It was a war of annihilation to finally settle a gambling debt. (...) I was in the country to the north and the west. It is coming, Krish. Brother against brother. The battle of inheritance once again" (127).

The above quoted paragraph shows that, like the brothers in the Mahabharat, the Hindus and Muslims, who had lived together in
India for many years, are killing each other. The Partition is the context for this war of fratricide. *The Dark Dancer* is one of the rare novels on the Partition to use this analogy. The title of the novel *The Dark Dancer* has also mythical and symbolic significance. *The Dark Dancer*, writes C.T. Indra, "is Lord Nataraj (an aspect of the Hindu deity Shiva). His is the dance of destruction and creation, the opposites in one."

From the political point of view it can be said that India's Independence demanded a heavy price in terms of the Partition. If Independence stands for creation, the Partition does for destruction—"for something to be born something must die"(29).

Commenting upon the thematic concern of the novel, Anniah Gowda writes:

The focal point of *The Dark Dancer* is this cultural conflict. It is reflected in the country throwing off the shackles of imperialism to become an independent nation. The involvement of Krishna, a product of the culture of West and East, in this struggle gives the novel an epic dignity. The interest is primarily human and only subsidiarily politics; politics figure very little.

But the political turmoil does affect to a considerable extent the lives of the major characters in the novel, although the political theme is secondary. In the very beginning there is a reference to the Non-co-operation Movement. The third chapter is entitled ‘Seventy Days to Freedom’. Some characters comment on Independence and the Partition. Above all, the political events shape the destinies of the major characters. This political turmoil is so to say the external counterpart of the turmoil that is within the soul of the protagonist.
As a commentary on the Partition, *The Dark Dancer* condems the role of the British in the drama of Partition. The protagonist, who is educated in Cambridge, targets the British. Krishnan says to Cynthia:

(...) "You made this awful thing grow. For a whole generation you British have stirred up the trouble. It is you who made the religious divisions take priority over our common political interests. Communal electorates, communal representation in the Civil Service. Communal this and communal that. Even the cricket matches are communally organised." (163)

As has already been pointed out, there are two major themes in *The Dark Dancer*; the theme of marriage and the theme of Partition. The weak point in the former theme is Krishnan’s separation from Cynthia, which is unconvincing. Because, unlike the Rama-Madelein relationship in Raja Rao’s *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960), where the couple is separated because of “a basic metaphysical difference in their conception of self and reality, which are rooted in their own separate cultures and traditions,” the Krishna-Cynthia relationship is broken for a silly reason.

As far as the blending of these two themes and the artistic success of the novel are concerned, there are varied opinions among the critics. According to M.K. Naik, “the Partition holocaust takes on a curiously unreal air.” In the opinion of Madhusudan Prasad, “B. Rajan does not seem to succeed well in blending the two themes.” According to K.R. Srinivas lyengar, “the two strands often stand apart.” On the other hand, Dwivedi thinks, “it is better artistically, thematically and linguistically.” According to Kalpana Wandrekar,
“personal and political fates are intertwined.” Thematically the novel can be structured thus: Krishnan’s marriage; his union with Cynthia, which separates him from his wife; failure of Krishnan-Cynthia relationship, which leads to the re-union of the couple; Kamala’s sacrifice and Krishnan’s suffering during the Partition, finally leading to his self-knowledge. There is a logical connection in the development of the plot in the novel. Thus, against his own wish to be a teacher, Krishnan joins the civil service, where he accidentally meets Cynthia. The separation leads to Kamala’s dedication of her life to the welfare of riot stricken. The broken affair re-unites the couple, and the two become victims of the Partition. This interweaving provides the novel with an organic structure. Both the themes complement each other; they are corollaries to each other. Bruce King has a point when he says, “this story of east-west encounter also suggests an analogy between a divided man and a divided nation.” What binds them together is the protagonist’s involvement in both of them. The man who is experiencing the personal tragedy of marriage is also the man who experiences the tragedy of the Partition. Both the experiences together lead to his finding a new purpose and a new identity. As Kalpana Wandrekar rightly sums up:

The Partition experience is an expansion of the divided self of Krishnan’s wounded psyche. The Partition of India, “The waste land experiences” give Krishnan an insight into the forces that have divided India and also his self. Krishnan, like India, is seeking freedom. The freedom struggle is associated with violence and partition. Krishnan plunges from inaction into action but he has also to part from Kamala.
Thus, both the themes go hand in hand and they are woven skillfully together, though not fully integrated. However, it does not mean that *The Dark Dancer* has no shortcomings. The novel, in fact, suffers from many faults. Thus, one might say that the theme of east-west encounter is not as effective as that of *The Serpent and the Rope*. This is probably because it is not the main theme, but a part of the making of Krishna's tragedy. Again, Rajan’s approach is too intellectual and suffers from his pedantic style. As Meenakshi Mukherjee says, “the exalted style and the self-conscious rhetoric hardly suit the occasion.” The critic in Rajan seems to have dominated the novelist in him. The language of the novel is more of a critic than of a creative writer. In this regard Anniah Gowda comments as follows;

Rajan's language is sophisticated, no doubt; but it is the style of a cultivated critic and is above the general run of novelists who, either from inclination or simple helplessness, restrict themselves to very few of the language's possibilities. Rajan uses an evolved vocabulary deliberately to evoke an Indian sensibility.27

*The Dark Dancer* may not be a work of the highest order, but from the Partition point of view it deserves acclaim, because, it is one of the earlier responses to the Partition in the history of Indian literature in English. And it is remarkable for its objective and realistic portrayal of different aspects of the Partition—violence and sacrifice, vengeance and forgiveness, and the celebration of the national sentiment.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


7 Uma Parameswaran, *A Study of Representative Indo-English Novelists* 86.


12 Meenakshi Mukherjee, *The Twice-Born Fiction* 84.


14 For the discussion of myth in *The Dark Dancer*, see Meenakshi Mukherjee, *The Twice-Born Fiction*. 161-163.
15 Sheshi Tharoor in his *The Great Indian Novel* (1989) uses the *Mahabharat* myth to portray the modern Indian political theme, where Jinnah is compared to Karna—Mohammad Ali karna. He is the founder of Karnistan (Pakistan).


26 Meenakshi Mukherjee, *The Twice-Born Fiction* 89.

27 Anniah Gowda, "Rajan: The Serious and the comic" 46.
IV ATTIA HOSAIN'S SUNLIGHT ON A BROKEN COLUMN: A MUSLIM POINT OF VIEW OF THE PARTITION.

Moving from Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* and B. Rajan's *The Dark Dancer* to Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column* is an entirely different reading of the Partition experience. Because, Attia is the first Muslim writer and the first woman writer to respond to the Partition in the history of Indian literature in English. What is unique about the novel is that by narrating the impact of Partition on a Muslim family the novelist unfolds the Muslim point of view of the Partition.

Attia Hosain, one of the pioneering Indian women fictionists in English, has not been as prolific a writer as Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya or Sheshi Despande. But her *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961) and *Phoenix Fled and Other Stories* (1953) have established her status as an outstanding writer in English of the Post-Independence era. "In her novel *Sunlight on a Broken Column*, however," writes Mulk Raj Anand in the 'Profile' to the novel, "she has revealed herself as one of the most talented pioneers of the novel in Indian-English literature."¹ It is a rare tribute from a male writer to a female fellow-practitioner of the craft.

*Sunlight on a Broken Column* is a *bildungsroman*. Like Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man* (1988) this novel too traces the growth of its protagonist, Laila—modelled on Attia herself in fictional form. Everything is seen through her eyes. It is also the story of a decaying Muslim feudal family of Lucknow. The socio-political condition from the 1930's to the Post-Partition days provides a background to the story of Laila and her family. The Partition also figures in the end as a backdrop and crisis. The novel presents the Muslim perspective or
response to the ordeal. But the Partition is not the central theme here. Unlike Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (1956) and Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* (1975), the theme of Partition in the novel is peripheral. It belongs to the genre of the Partition novels like B. Rajan's *The Dark Dancer* (1959) and Manohar Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964) which cover the political upheaval of the epic movement for Freedom and the attainment of it, where the Partition plays no lesser role.

According to Amina Amin, the novel "is basically a study of the disintegration of a family which, like most of the *taluqdar*s of the Pre-Partition days, had to encounter the onslaught of the changes the country was undergoing." The novel realistically depicts the theme of decay—the fading away of a traditional family of Lucknow to which Laila is an eye-witness. Accordingly, she is the narrator of the story. The disintegration of the family takes place for various reasons. The inner forces of domesticity and the outer forces of politics bring about changes in the family. Deaths and marriages within the family, and the changing socio-political scenario of the time exercise a considerable influence in distorting familial bonds. The politics of the Partition, one of the outer forces, enters the drawing room and things fall apart in the family.

The novel is divided into four parts. The first part gives a realistic picture of the family. It is a typical orthodox Muslim family, where the *Koran* is read and followed, the *purdha* system is practised, and other Islamic ways of life are strictly observed. The head of the family is, as Laila calls him, Baba Jan (Syed Mohammed Hasan) who is a symbol of traditional feudalism. His eldest son uncle Hamid is abroad with his family much against the wishes of his father. Also the family
consists of Baba Jan's elder daughter Majida, a widow and her
daughter Zahra, aunt Abida, Baba Jan's younger daughter who is
yet to be married, Asad and Zahid, who are distant relatives, and
Laila, the orphaned daughter, is being looked after by Hakiman Bua.
Thus, it is an extended joint family. The fading way of the *taluqdhar*
family tradition—its feudal grandeur—is suggested in the very
beginning of the novel when Baba Jan is on deathbed. It is implicitly
revealed by Laila when she says, "We know Baba Jan had not much
longer to live." Thereafter, the disintegration of the family starts,
which occupies part two of the novel. The very beginning of the first
chapter shows this:

> All those people who had so far been a part of life
> were pushed farther and farther away. After they were
> married aunt Abida and Zahra went away to their own
> homes. Aunt Majida stayed on at Hasanpur with Ustanji
> and Hajjan Bibi as companions, living in one part of the
> large house(...). (118)

Thus, after the death of Baba Jan the family begins to scatter
and the servants too. But the homecoming of uncle Hamid brings a
new air into the family. He is a product of both east and west traditions.
Hence, he is half feudal and half western. As an educated elite he
decides that Laila has to continue her education. She will have her
share in the ancestral property and she will continue to stay with her
uncle and aunt. In a dramatic scene of Viceregal visit Laila falls in
love with Ameer, a lecturer in history, who too dies in the end. Asad
is badly wounded in a riot during the *mohurum* procession which
anticipates the forthcoming communal turmoil. Zahid and Asad leave
for higher studies.
In the third part of the novel politics begins to affect the family affairs. Hot discussions take place among the members of the family. The whole atmosphere is charged with politics:

Even visitors argued. A new type of person now frequented the house. Fanatic, bearded men and young zealots would come to see Saleem; rough country-dwelling landlords and their 'courtiers' would visit my uncle. Saleem had, metaphorically, discarded his old school tie and my uncle his spats and gloves. Suave, sophisticated tea and dinner parties had become infrequent, and Government House receptions an interlude. Every meal at home had become an ordeal, as peaceful as a volcanic eruption. (230)

With the political changes in the state—emergence of the Muslim League and the announcement of constitutional elections—differences arise between Saleem and his father Hamid. Hamid is one who believes in Hindu-Muslim unity and "always found it was possible for Hindus and Muslims to work together on a political level and live together in personal friendship" (234). On the other hand Saleem suspects his father's notion. According to him, "The majority of Hindus have not forgotten or forgiven the Muslims for having ruled over them for hundreds of years. Now they can democratically take revenge" (234). As a nationalist Muslim Hamid calls the Muslim League communal. And Saleem thinks that the Congress is an anti Muslim organization. Thus, the son and the father hold to two different ideologies.

The fourth part is about the crippling effects of Partition on the family. When it is decided that the country is going to be divided into
two different nations—India and Pakistan, naturally Saleem opts for Pakistan and Kemal, his brother, wants to remain in India. It is here that the theme of the Partition enters the novel. At the geo-political level the subcontinent is divided; at the level of the family too the two brothers are divided. Saleem visualizes a better future for himself in Pakistan. He suspects the forthcoming Hindu government. With Nadira, who is also committed to Islamic ideals, Saleem goes to Pakistan. Kemal wants to stay in India. For him loyalty to his land becomes important. Thus, the two brothers are separated. Also there is a division between Asad and Zahid. The former, who is a Gandhian man of non-violence, opts for India and the latter Pakistan. Zahid meets his tragic end in a train to Pakistan. Zahra's sympathies too are with pro-Pakistanis. Thus, the Partition brings about a rupture in the family. This whole drama of the Partition is narrated through the nostalgic mode. So according to Novy Kapdia, *Sunlight on a Broken Column* is "a work of nostalgia." She further writes, "Laila ruminates and wanders in her disbanded ancestral home Ashiyana, after Partition, memories come flooding back." 

After the departure of Saleem, Kemal sells 'Ashiyana' and starts staying with his mother at his ancestral village called Hasanpur. The new laws enacted due to the Partition compel Kemal to sell his house in a helpless and desperate state, because, Saleem's share in the property is considered the property of an evacuee and so might be allotted to refugees. After the Partition Laila visits 'Ashiyana' and is surprised to see her house filled with refugees. Thus, Ashiyana, meaning nest, symbolically "indicates that the Muslims had made India their home," completely loses its past grandeur and unity. And the family is dislocated. After two years Saleem and Nadira visit
India not as citizens of India but as Pakistanis. They feel strangers in the country of their ancestors. The novel ends with Laila, who is now a widow, waiting for Asad, and that is the sunlight of hope for her in the broken world.

As has already been remarked, the central theme of the novel is not the Partition. Then the question arises: what is the role of the Partition in the novel? The reply would be that it is the Partition that brings about the climax of the split in the family. The dislocation of the family reaches its nadir due to the Partition. The final blow that causes its disintegration is dealt by the Partition.

Though *Sunlight on a Broken Column* is not a political novel in the sense that Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938) and Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* are, the politics of the 30's and the subsequent Partition serve as background and in the end the Partition dominates the novel. Like *Kanthapura* the preoccupation of the novel is not politics. The centre of the novel is the story of an individual, viz. Laila. The political milieu does not overtake the human story. But the decay of the feudal system, Hamid's entry into politics, the division of the family due to Partition, the characters breathing the political climate and discussions on the political issues enrich the political flavour of the novel. Laila's friends in the college hold divergent views about contemporary political happenings. Nita Chatterji, who is a nationalist, upholds the Congress; Nadira, an ardent follower of Islamic ideals, upholds the Muslim League and Joan, an Anglo-Indian, upholds British rule. The novelist very interestingly holds the mirror up to three main streams—the Congress, the Muslim League and the British Raj — through these characters. In addition to that, as Novya Kapadia observes, "Asad's head injury, Nita's dismissal from college and death
caused by lathi blows on her head, students' protest at the Viceroy's arrival and plain-clothes policemen at the University campus were all signs of political ferment. The novel implicitly deals with the wranglings in the power corridor. After the abolition of the feudal system, Hamid wants to find a new political identity by contesting election. Saleem says to Hamid: "In the final analysis, what you are facing is the struggle for power by the bourgeoisie. It is not really a peasant's movement, but when it comes to division of spoils even class interests are forgotten" (231).

From the point of view of the Partition Sunlight on a Broken Column does not record the various aspects of the Partition—communal violence, rape, abduction, killing, refugee problems etc. Nor does it trace the genesis and growth of the communal conflict between the Hindus and Muslims, since the locale of the novel is Lucknow, which is far away from the border area where these things were happening. On the other hand, the focus of the novel is on the crisis within the Muslim community. Historically speaking, the Partition was an enigma. During the rumblings of the event the Muslim community was being subjected to disruptive forces. They were torn between two worlds— the newly created Pakistan, a separate homeland for the Muslims, and India, the country where they were born and had lived for many years. This kind of climate yielded two types of Muslim stands; one, pro-Pakistan, demanding the division of the country, and two, pro-India, supporting a united India. At the highest level of political goings-on one could trace the crystallization of the former in personalities like Jinnah and Liakhat Ali Khan and the latter in Maulana Azad. It is this type of conflict that is articulated in Sunlight on a Broken Column through the polarisation of the brothers. The novel provides remarkable insights into the socio-
political attitudes of the Muslims during the Partition with admirable objectivity. In the novel the line-up of characters like Kemal, Uncle Hamid, Nita, Asad etc represents secular nationalists. They stand for united India and outrightly condemns the division of the country. On the other hand, Saleem, Zahid, Nadira and Zahra stand for forces demanding the division of the country and opt for "The Muslim neoparadise across the border" (279).

The crisis of the Muslim psyche— a separate homeland exclusively for the Muslims where the Muslims expected bright opportunities and economic security, and on the other hand the fear of Hindu dominance after the British withdrawal and minority status— is unmistakably represented through the character of Saleem and Kemal. Both are elites and products of a western education. But their attitudes are different. When Saleem returns from England he becomes a Muslim Leaguer under the influence of Raza Ali and Nadira, who are committed to Islamic ideals. Saleem's attitude to Islam is not that of a fanatic. He does not blindly follow the politicians. Influenced by Marxism he is "an earnest Muslim" who believes that "Islam was a spiritually higher form of Communism" (172). Saleem's support for Pakistan has historical legitimacy. As history evidences the demand for Pakistan had mainly three reasons— political, psychological and economic. Politically speaking, the Congress was dubbed as an anti-Muslim organization, since Hindus dominated it. The Muslims began to find their identity in the Muslim League and so alienate themselves from the Nationalist Congress. In the novel Saleem believes:

(... the Congress has a strong anti-Muslim element in it against which the Muslims must organize. The danger
is great because it is hidden, like an iceberg. When it was just a question of fighting the British the progressive forces were uppermost; but now that power is to be acquired, now the submerged reactionary elements will surface. Muslims must unite against them. (233)

And also he thinks that the Muslims "in the Congress are being used as dupes to give it a secular appearance"(255). This kind of political aspect was based on the psychological factor that after the departure of the British the Hindus would dominate the political scenario, and the Muslims would be considered second rate citizens. This haunted the Muslim psyche. The political fear of the ghost of Hindu Raj is explicitly expressed through Saleem in the novel. Saleem says:

"The majority of Hindus have not forgotten or forgiven the Muslims for having ruled over them for hundreds of years. Now they can democratically take revenge." (234)

Another important reason for the demand for a separate homeland was the economic factor. The Muslims saw a bright future for them in Pakistan. They thought that there would be job opportunities, promotions and economic safety in a newly created land. According to Asghar Ali Engineer, Pakistan was the result of "secular interests rather than of any religious concept of a theocratic state or a concept of Millat (nation) or Muslim Umma (followers)."7 Accordingly Saleem's concept of Pakistan is not based on the ideal of theological Islam. On the other hand it is motivated by a concern for the economic security of his community. Again to quote Asghar Ali, "we also have to remember that a society is not constituted purely by religion. There are other equally important constituents of society, economic and political in nature, which motivate human behaviour."8
Saleem sees a bright future in Pakistan—promotions and good prospects. He says to Kemal:

It has been suggested that I should take charge of the branch in Pakistan. That is, you understand a promotion. On the other hand, if I stay, I have been warned that prospects are not so bright here. (287)

Saleem tries to influence Kemal into opting for Pakistan. “Think of the future,” he says, “Naseer has opted for Pakistan. He has it on good authority. He will become a secretary the moment he goes there. Have thought of what will happen to you?” (288). Thus, Saleem has every material reason to go to Pakistan. In contrast to him, Kemal is committed to India. He thinks of loyalties. Kemal says, “I see future in the past. I was born here, and generations of my ancestors before me. I am content to die here and be buried with them” (288). Thus, the two brothers are oriented differently.

The same split can be seen between Asad, who is committed to Gandhian ideals of non-violence and Zahid, who stands for the cause of the Muslim League. Zahid opts for Pakistan and dies during his train journey. Though Asad loses his brother he works hard to help the victims of the Partition. As a Gandhite committed to non-violence he stands the test of the time:

The manner of Zahid’s death had been a terrible test for Asad's faith in non-violence. He had accepted it as such, believing that bitterness and retaliation could only breed violence and start a never-ending cycle which was negation of life (...). (318)

Though a minor character, Asad is likely to affect the readers profoundly with his concern for the Gandhian heritage.
The most important aspect of Partition that the novel questions is the adequacy of Jinnah’s Two-nation-theory. Rajendra Prasad in his book *India Divided* says, “The proposal to divide India into separate Muslim and Non-Muslim zones, (...) is based on the theory that Hindus and Musalmans constitute two separate nations.” Then he elaborately quotes Jinnah’s presidential address at the Lahore session of the Muslim League, according to which “Muslims must have their homeland, their territory and their state.” Further Jinnah was of the opinion that Islam and Hinduism are two different social orders and ways of life. He said, “To yoke together two such nations under a single state, one as a numerical minority and the other as a majority, must lead to growing discontent and final destruction of any fabric that may be so built up for the government by such a state.” Ironically, Jinnah’s theory did not solve the minority problem. It failed to take into account the fate of the remaining Muslims, especially the south Indian Muslims. The novel raises precisely this question. It is explicitly brought to the fore when Nadira defends her option for Pakistan and says that there would be safety and freedom for Muslims in Pakistan. Kemal questions the logic behind the Two-nation-theory:

“Safe from what, Nadira?”(...) “oppression ? By whom ? According to you that danger exists here—there will still be millions of Muslims here. Who is to look after them? Those whom you warned them against? Or those who prophesied doom? Are they going to stay and share it ? Are you? (288)

It is significant that the narrator does not make any out-right value judgements regarding different attitudes towards the politics.
But, as Meenakshi Mukherjee notes, "It is not difficult to see with whom the narrator's sympathies lie." Her sympathies are certainly with united India. She shows her inclination towards Kemal. It is clearly indicated when she says, "My heart was with Kemal"(288). And Laila upholds the Hindus for their co-operation during the riot. Because, the novelist herself being under the influence of Progressive writers like Rashid Jehan, can't think in terms of division. As a humanist she hates violence and celebrates love and non-violence. The novelist implicitly makes it clear that co-operation and tolerance will help the world survive, not hatred and violence. In this sense the novel belongs to the tradition of humanitarian novels.

However, the novelist is not biased. She gives a fair picture of both sides. For example, Laila gives the illustration of Hindus helping Muslims during the Partition. And when aunt Saira cries over the loss of property which is occupied by refugees, Kemal points out, "how much more property had been left behind by Hindus in Pakistan"(279). Thus, the novel presents both the attitudes and achieves a remarkable balance and detachment. With an impartial attitude the novelist finds the Muslims as much guilty as the Hindus.

Another marked feature of the novel, as far as the Partition is concerned, is the arrival of Saleem and Nadira in India as the citizens of Pakistan after two years. They come as aliens. When a blue-turbaned man in the Lucknow club calls Muslims "bloody traitors" both Saleem and Nadira are "stunned by a sudden sense of being alien and vulnerable (...)"(302). Here the novel shows the Post-Partition effect— the continued vengeance. The novel realistically depicts how the division of the country spoiled familial relations. It made the members of the same family foreigners to each other. Also
the novel inevitably portrays the role of the British during the crisis. According to Asad the English have taught us “Hate each other—love us”(56).

As a Partition novel Sunlight on a Broken Column is much closer to Bapsi Sidhwa’s Ice-Candy-Man than any other novel on the Partition, at least in terms of narrative technique. As far as the theme of Partition is concerned, as Novy Kapadia writes, “Both these sensitive women writers share similar perspectives on the calamities of Partition. The denouement of both novels is quite similar. Both stress a similar vulnerability of human understanding and life, caused by the throes of Partition which relentlessly divided friends, families, lovers and neighbours.”12 In its narrative technique— that of the first person narration— and chronicling the female development against the background of the political upheaval, the novel reminds us of Lenny in Ice-Candy-Man.

The Partition in Sidhwa’s novel is a central theme whereas in Hosain’s novel it is a peripheral one. Like Sidhwa’s novel Sunlight on a Broken Column too is a female bildungsroman. The Partition and other political happenings are viewed through its narrator’s consciousness. Both the narrators in these novels are eyewitnesses to the Partition. According to Novy Kapadia, “The mature Laila rationalizes against communal tension whereas the young Lenny instinctively reacts against the horrors of communal violence.”13 Lenny in Ice-Candy-Man is a Parsee girl. Hence she is an outsider to the crisis of Partition, whereas Laila is both an outsider and an insider. Laila herself is a Muslim, the community which played an important role in the Partition and her sympathies are with Kemal and united India. Her nostalgic account of the Partition and she herself being an
eyewitness make her an insider. But she does not involve herself in
the crisis of the Partition directly as Kemal, Saleem and Nadira do.
She is the least affected of them all by the Partition. Nor does she
show an emotional indulgence in the crisis directly. Moreover, as a
persona of the novel Laila achieves a remarkable objectivity. Thus
she is both an outsider and an insider:

I felt I lived in two worlds; an observer in an outside
world, and solitary in my own (...). (124)

Though the Partition is not the central theme of the novel, it
has to be considered an important piece of literature about the
Partition, because, this is the only novel which gives the Muslim point
of view of the Partition among the Indian novels in English. The Muslim
point of view of the Partition is very objectively projected through
Saleem and Kemal. More importantly, the novel is successful in
transforming the experience of the ordeal into a work of art.

Another unique feature of the novel is that it articulates the
crisis of the Muslim identity during the turmoil. The author herself
belongs to the Muslim community. The protagonist Laila, who
represents the point of view of the novel, is modelled on the writer
herself. And she is an eyewitness to what ever happened to the family
during the Partition. In addition to that, G.S.Amur rightly places Attia
Hosain in the tradition of Muslim novelists who have depicted the
Muslim way of life in different phases. According to Amur, the novel
"shares the distinction of being an out-standing novel of Muslim life
and attitude in India with Ahmed Ali's Twilight in Delhi."14

Finally, in the opinion of Mulk Raj Anand, Sunlight on a Broken
Column "is one of the few deeply sensitive novels in Indian English
Writing of the last generation, a poignant, tragic narrative full of the poetry of remembrance with an undercurrent of stoic calm." The novel occupies an important place in the history of Indian literature in English, because, it is the only novel on the Partition where the first person narrative technique is used; it is also the first among women's responses to the Partition and the first Muslim novelist's record of the crisis of Partition in the history of the Indian novel in English. Above all, the novel successfully transforms the material of the Partition into an art form. Hence, it is in a class by itself.
NOTES AND REFERENCE


6 Novy Kapadia, “Identity Crisis and the Partition in Attia Hosain” 173.


8 Asghar Ali Engineer, “Hindu-Muslim Relations before and after 1947” 182.


10 Quoted in Rajendra Prasad, *India Divided* 1.


13 Novy Kapadia, “Communal Frenzy and Partition” 84.


15 Mulk Raj Anand, A Profile, *Sunlight on a Broken Column* XI.
V. MANOHAR MALGONKAR'S *A BEND IN THE GANGES*: THE PARTITION AS AN IRONY OF INDIAN HISTORY

If Khushwant Singh traces a community tragedy, and B. Rajan views Partition as a national tragedy and Attia Hosain presents a Muslim point of view, Manohar Malgonkar in his *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964) looks at the Partition from the politico-historical point of view. It is evident that Malgonkar's roots are in history. He presents the Partition as an irony of Indian history— the irony of how the fight against Imperialism ended up in communal divide.

Manohar Malgonkar, one of the leading Indian novelists in English, has been a prolific writer. Primarily hailed as a Maratha historian, he turned to fiction writing with a purpose— the purpose of "pure entertainment." His fictional world, comprising eight novels and three collections of short stories, artistically records different historic events and facets of Indian life.

His *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964) is a cogent account of India's political history of the 30's and 40's— unfolding an epic movement for Independence, and its attainment at the cost of the division of the sub-continent. As Meenakshi Mukherjee rightly points out, "*A Bend in the Ganges* is panoramic in scope and epic in aspiration, crowded with events from modern Indian history, beginning with the Civil Disobedience Movement of the early thirties and ending in the post-partition riots in the Punjab." Unlike as in Kushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (1956) and Chaman Nahal's *Azadi*, (1975) the theme of the Partition in this novel is peripheral. The events of the Partition are narrated towards the end of the novel. Yet *A Bend in the Ganges* is one of the few novels on the Partition which are notable for their
humanism, historical accuracy, treatment of the genesis of communalism, their ironic vision and artistic success.

The novel begins with the making a bonfire of British cloth. It was the time of Civil Disobedience Movement, when Mahatma Gandhi replaced Tilak as a mass-leader spear-heading the fight against colonial rule. As a young boy Gian Talwar, who hails from an agrarian family, comes under the impact of the Gandhian Movement, rather superficially. In the beginning he tries to practise Gandhian principles as a way of life. But very soon he ceases to be a Gandhian when he murders Vishnu Datta, who had murdered Gian's brother Hari owing to a family feud between the Big house and the Little house. K.R.Srinivasa iyengar interprets the rivalry between the two families as "a prologue to the main act (...) (It) is to be viewed as the advance micro-tragedy foreshadowing the macro-tragedy on a national scale in the year of the partition."³ As rightly pointed out by Srinivas iyengar, like the brothers of the Big house and Little house, the Hindus and Muslims in India shared a common history and lived together as brothers. Just as the division of a family ends up in violence, the division of the Indian sub-continent results in violence of the worst kind in Asian history.

After Vishnu Datta's murder Gian confesses his guilt to the British police and is sentenced to life imprisonment in the Andamans. Coincidentally his friend Debi Dayal, the only son of the aristocratic Tekchand of Kerwad, is brought to the Andamans on the charge that he was involved in terrorist activities against the British. Both Debi and Basu are the Hindus working with Shafi Usman, a Muslim nationalist and "the most 'wanted' man in the state,"⁴ to drive out the British. Unlike Gandhian followers, they are revolutionaries who believe in violence as a means of achieving their goal.
Asha Kaushik calls Gian one of "Machiavellian pragmatism of opportunists." He always turns every situation to his own benefit by all means. In the Andamans he manipulates the British officer Patrick Mullgin to win his sympathy, and deceives Debi, who remains a sworn enemy of the British. When the Second World War breaks out the Japanese attack the Andamans, Debi joins them, and is sent to India to start terrorist activities again. Gian too escapes and manages to get a job under Debi’s father. He also wins the heart of Sundari, Debi’s sister, whose marriage with Gopal has turned out to be an unhappy one. At this stage the political developments in India give rise to communal problems. The Muslims exit from the Congress and try to forge their identity with the Muslim League. This development is very realistically represented through Shafi Usman, who was earlier a staunch nationalist. Instead of fighting for a united India, Muslims like Hafiz and Shafi set out to divide the country on the basis of the Two-nation-theory.

Debi, along with Basu, goes to Lahore in search of Shafi. To avenge Shafi, Debi buys Shafi’s beloved Mumtaz, a prostitute in a whore-house at Lahore. In his encounter with Shafi, Debi’s hand is injured; Mumtaz takes care of him and her caring eventually blossoms into love, and they decide to marry. Thus, Debi withdraws himself from public life and slips into “the coils of Sansar” (314). Along with Mumtaz Debi goes to join his parents in Punjab, which is seething with communal passions. On their way they fall victims to a communal riot. The Muslim rioters search for Kafirs in the train. Debi is identified as a Hindu and mercilessly put to death while Mumtaz is dragged away.

On the other side Debi’s family is caught up in the communal turmoil. Tekchand, with his wife and daughter, tries to join the convoy
to India. Gian helps the family, when Shafi and his followers attack Tekchand’s family; he does this not for his own benefit, but out of genuine concern. During the fight Shafi and Tekchand’s wife are killed, and Gian, Sundari and Tekchand join the convoy under the shadow of the crisis of two-way mass migration. Gian and Sundari continue their journey without waiting for Tekchand, who has disappeared.

The novel can be read as an epic story of the era told through the lives of three young men– Gian Talwar, Debi-Dayal and Shafi Usman. Through these important characters, the novelist unfolds the political theme of the novel. The novel has two protagonists; “Gian, the unheoric hero and Debi-Dayal, the heroic hero.”6 It is Gian who is a round character. This character develops in depth as well, as the theme moves forward. Perhaps Gian is one of the few enigmatic characters to be met with not only in Malgonkar’s fictional world but also in the history of Indian fiction in English. As Ayyappa Paniker remarks, “Gian Talwar appears to be the most confusing portrait in Malgonkar’s impressive gallery of human types.”7 Though he sometimes seems cunning and opportunist, he honestly confesses his guilt as a murderer and tries to help Tekchand’s family during the Partition riots. Through Gian, perhaps Malgonkar seems to suggest that man is a strange mixture of good and bad, weakness and strength.

If Gian is a dynamic character, Debi-Dayal remains a sympathetic and lovable character to the readers. Debi, a person from an aristocratic family, is committed to terrorist roadmap against the British. He, who wants to take revenge against the British soldier who tried to rape his mother, ends up as a sacrificial figure like Jugga
in *Train to Pakistan*. In spite of the fact that Debi ceases to be a nationalist worker and finds his moorings in private life, he remains a great figure in our eyes because of his genuine love for Mumtaz. Malgonkar too is hung up on a typical pattern of love affairs recurrently found in the novels about the Partition—love between a Hindu boy and a Muslim girl or vice-versa. The novel presents "love as a transcendent value, (which) attains a degree of universality." The character of Debi is invested with humanism. Like Jugga in *Train to Pakistan*, Debi is a symbol of humanism. He also dies in a communal riot. By trying to marry Mumtaz he crosses the narrow communal barriers. Out of this "The value that the novel does seek to affirm is the value of love which transcends violence and non-violence." It is to be noted that Debi’s point of view in the novel is significant. The following views of Debi throw light upon the author’s perspective:

Would terrorism have won freedom at a cheaper price and somehow still kept the Hindus and Muslims together? Perhaps not. But least it would have been an honest sacrifice, honest and manly— not something that had sneaked upon them in the garb of non-violence. How had they (the Hindus and Muslims) come to this? After living as brothers over so many generations, how had they suddenly been infected by such virulent hatred for each other? Who had won, Gandhi or the British? For the British at least had foreseen such a development or had they both lost through not having allowed for structural flaws in the human material they were dealing with? Had Gandhi ever envisaged a freedom that would be accompanied by
so much suffering and release so much hatred? Had he realized it might impose transfers of population unparalleled throughout history? (355-356)

The above lines imply that terrorism might have failed to prevent the Partition but it is honest and manly. The novelist questions the Gandhian context.

The portrait of Shafi is not so central to the action of the novel as Gian and Debi are. However, from the point of view of the theme of Partition Shafi is an important character. He represents the Muslim psychology of the time and the deviation of the Indian Muslims from the Nationalist Movement towards the Separatist Movement, which led to the division of the country. Shafi, who wages a terrorist war against the British due to his father's massacre "in the enclosure of the Jallianwala bagh," (74) works under the Hanuman club. In the beginning he is a staunch nationalist. Having a firm faith in violent means to achieve the country's freedom, he believes that:

Freedom has to be won; it has to be won by sacrifice; by giving blood, not by giving up the good things of life and wearing white caps and going to jail. Look at America—the United States! They went to war. Turkey! Even our own Shivaji. Non-violence is the philosophy of sheep, a creed for cowards. It is the greatest danger to this country. (18)

Shafi, the nationalist, soon degenerates into a communalist due to political forces—rift between the Congress and the Muslim League, and Hafiz communalizes his mind. Hafiz says:

'(...)We have to turn fanatic in sheer self-defence.(...) we (Muslims) are second-rate citizens, working ants in a society of ants.'
'(...) Muslims, who are members of the Congress, are renegades. (...) Now we Muslims have to look after ourselves. Organize ourselves before it's too late. Carve out our own country ...' (90)

Here the novelist shows this is how the Muslim mind worked for a separate homeland.

The novel deals with two important aspects of the Partition. One, the genesis of communalism— how the anti-colonial struggle turned into a feud between the two communities; the other, violence of the Partition. As the historical writings on 'Indian Nationalism' illustrate the task before Indians during the Pre-Independence period was to oust colonial masters. The struggle for India's Independence in the initial stages gained momentum with the joint efforts of Hindus and Muslims. After the late 30s, however, when the British departure from India became certain, the Muslim psyche underwent a radical change. Due to socio-economic, political and historical reasons the road to India's nationhood split into two different directions— towards two different nations. Personalities like Iqbal and Jinnah carved out a separate homeland for the Muslims. This kind of development is subtly worked out through the character of Hafiz and Shafi. One can find echoes of Jinnah in Shafi. As in Jinnah there are two stages in the development of Shafi's personality. In the beginning he represents the Hindu-Muslim amity phase, the pre-communalization of a Muslim mind, and later the Hindu-Muslim enmity. Initially Shafi is such a symbol of the Hindu-Muslim unity that “he wore a Kada, the steel bangle of the Sikh religion” (76) and “looked like Buddha, transcending the religious insularity of ageless Indians” (77). But the developing situation changed the course of history. Ironically enough,
the anti-colonial struggle was sidelined by hatred between the Hindus and Muslims. The reasons for this kind of development that the novel refers to are that of fear of the forthcoming Hindu Raj, the 'divide and rule' policy of the British rulers etc. As Hafiz says, the Muslims felt the treatment of "second rate citizens" (90) by the Hindus. The following statements account for the reasons:

‘(...) We don’t want freedom if it means our living here as slaves of the Hindus. If we succeed in driving out the British, it is the Hindus who will inherit power. Then what happens to us? We are heading for a slavery far more degrading ... struggling for it. That’s what Jinnah is worried about. That’s what all of us are worried about.’ (...) 

‘It has to be done. We have to organize ourselves—Muslims against the rest of India, if we are to survive. Organize, not so much to win freedom, but to protect ourselves from being swamped by the Hindus; emasculated, to become a race of serfs in a country ruled by idolators.’

‘But this is just playing into the hands of the British. They want to keep the Hindus and the Muslims divided, so that they can go on ruling (...)’

‘(...) They (Congress) made it clear that there is no place for anyone in this country except on their terms. For them (The Congress) the great Muslim League does not exist; according to them they alone represent India (...)’ (91)

Thus, the novel depicts the reasons for the division of the country. Though the novel portrays the unity among Hindus, Muslims
and Sikhs before the late 30's, it does not by any means idealize the communal harmony of the Pre-Partition days. As Tekchand reveals that the communal tension prevalent before Partition would come to an end with police lathi-charge and the imposition of curfew. On the other hand communal riots of 1947:

(...) were occasioned by the cutting up of the country. A vast landscape packed with people was now being partitioned according to religious majorities: the Muslims in Pakistan and the Hindus in India.

Every citizen was caught up in the holocaust. No one could remain aloof; no one could be trusted to be impartial (...). The administration, the police, even the armed forces, were caught up in the blaze of hatred. Willy-nilly, everyone had come to be a participant in what was, in effect, a civil war.

Tens of millions of people had to flee, leaving everything behind; (...).

As a background to this great, two-way migration, religious civil war was being waged all over the country; a war fought in every village and town and city where the two communities came upon each other. The most barbaric cruelties of primitive man prevailed over all other human attributes (...).(331-332)

One of the thematic preoccupations of Malgonkar's novel is violence. As a military officer he might have had first-hand experience of the violence. As has been noted earlier the violence of the Partition finds its true expression in the novel. The author himself acknowledges that "Only the violence in this story happens to be
true" (Author's note). The murders of Hari and Vishnu Datta, and Debi and Mumtaz as the Partition victims are some of the violent episodes in the novel. The Partition brings about a tragic disintegration of Tekchand's family. Unlike Lalakanshi Ram's family in Chaman Nahal's Azadi, this family is unhappy in its own way—the only son of the family is a terrorist imprisoned in the Andamans; the only daughter's marriage is unsuccessful. Like Lala's family Tekchand's family too undergoes the trauma of Partition. It is an aristocratic family totally unprepared to meet the communal disturbances. All the Muslim servants quit the house. Like Lalakanshi Ram Tekchand is optimistic about his stay because, "It was his land, his town; its people were his people" (339).

But the communal tension worsens the situation. Tekchand's friend Awtar Singh's house, filled with fifty Sikh men and women, is set on fire. By the time Tekchand decides to join the convoy to India the administration has already been collapsed, there is no Police to help, no telephone connection, "no milk, either for Hindus or Muslims" (335). Except Sundari the whole family is destroyed in the holocaust; the head of the family is lost in the mass migration, his wife is put to death and the only son is murdered by the fanatics. Hence, in the opinion of M.K.Naik the novel is a melodramatic political novel. The last two chapters are given to depicting the violent scenes of bloodshed during the Partition. Note for instance, the killing of an innocent child: "Someone threw a small child high in the air, and before it fell down, a man with a sword ran forward and caught it on the point of his sword" (367-368).

C.Paul Verghese thinks that the 'melodramatic' in Malgokar is his chief weakness. As a romantic novelist Malgonkar is interested
in 'action' and as such depicts violent actions. It is inevitability on the part of a novelist writing on the theme of Partition to imagine the worst that might have happened in the holocaust. What is important in Malgokar is that his depiction of melo-dramatic scenes is not nauseous. It is a creation of realistic imagination, not a melodrama. Of course unlike Raj Gill's *The Rape*, it is not reportage in the form of documentary realism. On the contrary it is an artistic dramatization of violent history.

**POLITICAL AND HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS**

M.K.Naik considers *A Bend in the Ganges* as a melo-dramatic Indian English political novel, and Kai Nicholson calls it a “Political novel with a definite goal.” The central theme of the novel itself is political in nature i.e the Freedom Movement. The novel explores the dichotomy between violence and non-violence as two different means to achieve political freedom. The novel is set during India's Freedom Movement and the characters are steeped in politics. Asha Kaushik rightly interprets the political theme of the novel as follows:

> The central configuration of political orientation is between Gian Talwar and Debi Dayal, the former symbolizing faith in Gandhian non-violence and the latter personifying militant nationalism.

What make *A Bend in the Ganges* a political novel is Debi's involvement in terrorist activity in order to drive out the British, the presentation of the colonial administrative machinery, communal politics, the genesis of the Two-nation-theory and the Gandhian ideology.
In terms of conflict also the novel is political. In their book *Understanding Fiction*, Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren state, "All fiction involves, at one level or another conflict." The conflict in the novel is about politics—the conflict between violence and non-violence as different means of the nationalist Movement to achieve freedom. In the opinion of Partha Chatterjee, "nationalism as a political movement (...) challenges the colonial state." In challenging the colonial power many of the colonies adopted violent mode of terrorism as their *modus operandi*. But the unique way of the Indian Nationalist Movement was the Gandhian creed of non-violence. It does not mean that terrorism played no role in India at all. As B.S.Naikar puts it, "There was a controversy among the Indians whether they should follow the path of non-violence preached by Gandhi or to resort to violence and terrorism." Though the novel does not pass a value judgement as to which was successful in achieving 'Freedom' for India, it explores the tension between these two forces. This conflict is made clear in the beginning itself when a Gandhian says:

‘But we are a new kind of soldiers. Our weapons are truth and non-violence. (...) We are aware that there are in our country those who do not believe in our methods, those who aim to achieve freedom by resorting to violence(...).’(8)

That is the philosophy of non-violence; Shafi in the guise of Singh gives tongue to its opposite:

Freedom has to be won; it has to be won by sacrifice; by giving blood, (...). Non-violence is the philosophy of sheep, a creed for cowards.(18)
Bringing out the dichotomy between those two forces, the novel exposes the limitations of non-violence as a political creed. The Partition provides an occasion for the writer to illustrate his thesis that “What was achieved through non-violence, brought with it one of the bloodiest upheavals of history; twelve million people had to flee, leaving their homes; nearly half a million were killed; over a hundred thousand women, young and kids were abducted, raped, mutilated” (Author’s Note). As a political philosophy the creed of non-violence failed because, “the sunrise of our freedom” (354) was accompanied by the dark shadow of the Partition. One should not read the novel as a political satire on the Gandhian creed of non-violence. Though, in the opinion of V.S Naipaul, “Gandhi was a failed reformer”, the fault lies not with Gandhi’s principles but with the people who failed to carry them out. Tekchand in the novel very well comments about this:

(... as far as the people of India were concerned, Gandhi’s message was merely a political expedient, that for the bulk of them, it had no deeper significance. At best, they had accepted it as an effective weapon against British power. It seemed that the moment the grip of British power was loosened, the population of the sub-continent had discarded non-violence overnight and were now spending themselves on orgies of violence, which seemed to fulfil some basic urge. (333)

The aim of the writer seems to be to show that “mankind is not prepared for true non-violence”(290). As Manohar Malgokar himself says, “In A Bend in the Ganges I tried to show how non-violence does not suit a large country like ours.” The novel does pertinently show
where the creed of non-violence succeeds and where it fails. As one of the characters reveals:

(...) Non-violence is all very well, if the other party too plays by the rules. It may prove an effective weapon against the British because of their inherent decency. How far would it have gone against Hitler? Yes, tell me, what would non-violence do against brute force? (291)

It is quite evident that to some extent the philosophy of non-violence succeeded in India on account of the ‘inherent decency’ of the British. Before dictators like Hitler it is certain to fail. But the novel does not uphold the view that violence is not an axiomatic over non-violence. On the other hand the novel “concedes the reality of violence but shows it to be self-consuming and destructive. On the novel’s showing, violence is certainly not an alternative to non-violence.”

This conflict embedded in the political theme achieves a human dimension when the novelist unfolds it through two of the characters—Gian, who initially adhered to non-violence and Debi, a nationalist, committed to violence. The failure of non-violence as a way of life is depicted through Gian, and its failure as a political philosophy through the Partition. Also the futility of violence is shown in the portrait of Debi. But the contrastive study of these two characters, as Asha Kaushik rightly says, is “uneven.” Because in the context of non-violence and violence, Gian is not a strong foil to Debi. He is neither a Moorthy of Raja Rao’s Kanthapura (1938) nor Sri Ram of R.K Narayan’s Waiting for the Mahatma (1955). But what is unique about A Bend in the Ganges is that over the dins of these two conflicting
forces the novel affirms "the value of love which transcends violence and non-violence— the real and the unreal(...)". As in most of the novels on Partition here also Debi and Mumtaz are symbols of this transcendental value.

As a political novel dealing with Partition *A Bend in the Ganges* seems to make out Jinnah as being responsible for the Partition. As Shafi says, "Jinnah is a great man. He has pointed out the way"(89). “Jinnah has exposed them (The Hindus); ‘The Hindus have shown that Hindustan is for Hindus’. Now we Muslims have to look after ourselves. Organize ourselves before it’s too late. Carve out our own country...”(90).

We note that Malgonkar has been charged by some critics as an Anglophile. But the evidences point to the contrary. He clearly suggests that the ‘divide and rule’ policy of the British was the real villain in bringing about a rift between the two communities. As one of the characters says:

(...). Religious differences among the races of India were the root cause of the country's slavery, and the British had learnt to take the fullest advantage of these differences, playing the Hindus against the Muslims and the Sikhs against both. (73)

The novel can be read as a chronicle of Indian life from 1920 to 1947 too. Malgonkar is a novelist with a historical sense. Uma Parmeswaran compares him with Walter Scott, but T.N.Dhar finds fault with her analysis of Malgonkar as a historical novelist. Undoubtedly Malgonkar's roots are in history. As he himself acknowledges, he is very meticulous about historical accuracy:
Though some would criticize my style, they don’t criticize my historical veracity. I take great pains to be absolutely accurate. If I write that something happened on a Saturday or on a moonless night, you can be sure it was on a Saturday or on a moonless night.²⁴

We see that in *A Bend in the Ganges* he accurately records the historical events— the Civil Disobedience Movement, the outbreak of the Second World War, the Japanese occupation of the Andamans, the Bombay dock explosion etc. Hence, it “is a carefully documented novel.”²⁵ However, the novel is not a mere factual documentation of a historical period. What George Lukács observs about Scott holds true in the case of Malgonkar also. Like Scott, Malgonkar too “portray(s) the struggles and antagonisms of history by means of characters who, in their psychology and destiny, always represent social trends and historical forces."²⁶ All the characters in the novel are real men and women of the time. The historical forces bring about radical changes in their lives. There is “the poetic awakening"²⁷ of these people. The characters are alive with flesh and blood. M.K. Bhatnagar rightly comments, Malgonkar’s novels are “political chronicles, delineating the hopes, fears and aspirations of the people at a particular historical milieu in the recent past."²⁸

The novel at once deals with the personal and the political theme in an ironic mode. Manohar Malgokar’s vision of life is ironic. He portrays the Partition as an irony of Indian history as has been noted above. The novelist deploys different kinds of irony. The theme of the novel— India’s Freedom Movement— is portrayed ironically. Indian Nationalism, the aim of which was to form a united India, ended up in ‘a great divide’. Gandhi’s creed of non-violence witnessed the violence of the Partition.
The very thought of a separate state for the Muslims, a vague ideal until the 40's came true within a few years. Jinnah, a green horse earlier, assumed power as a Muslim leader. It is a great irony that the Congress accepted the Partition plan and the sub-continent was divided. The unique strategy of achieving political freedom through the Gandhian creed of non-violence degenerated into an orgy of communal violence. The epigraph itself sets the ironical tone of the novel:

This non-violence, therefore, seems to be due mainly to our helplessness. It almost appears as if we are nursing in our bosom the desire to take revenge the first time we get the opportunity. Can true, voluntary non-violence come out of this seeming, forced non-violence of the weak? Is it not a futile experiment I am conducting? What if when the fury bursts, not a man, woman, or child is safe and every man's hand is raised against each other. (Epigraph)

The title of Chapter 35- “The Sunrise of Our Freedom” has an ironical over tone. The sunrise, a positive element, becomes overcast when the Freedom Movement is shadowed by the darkness of Partition.

If “Irony involves contrast, a discrepancy between the expected and the actual, between the apparent and the real” 29, Malgonkar portrays his characters in an ironical manner. What the readers expect from Gian is a Gandhian hero, but actually he turns out to be an anti-Gandhian. Shafi, a symbol of Hindu-Muslim unity, ends up as a communal fanatic. Debi, a committed terrorist, withdraws from public life and finds his moorings in non-violence. According to R.T.Robertson, “It is a gigantic irony” that “(...) modern India was made by heroes like
Debi Dayal and consists of a nation of Gians.\textsuperscript{30} Hence, in the opinion of G.S.Amur, Gian “Can only be an ironic symbol of non-violence.”\textsuperscript{31} Thus, for Malgonkar Partition serves as a context to present the irony of Indian history.

Manohar Malgonkar is an accomplished craftsman. As a conservative novelist he firmly believes in the art of narrating a story to entertain his readers. As the novelist himself says: “I do strive deliberately and hard to tell a story well.”\textsuperscript{32} Accordingly, \textit{A Bend in the Ganges} narrates a fine story. Romanticism and realism are two modes of his art of narration. As a historian he realistically depicts historic phases and recreates his characters in the semblance of beings rooted in that time of history. In his treatment of the theme of love, violence, and sex, and in giving twists, Malgonkar often evokes the romantic atmosphere in his novels. He wants to belong “to the advance guard in swing back of the romantic novel.”\textsuperscript{33} According to Meenakshi Mukherjee, he is one of the few “writers who have bypassed the linguistic and stylistic problems inherent in the Indo-Anglian situation.”\textsuperscript{34} Malgonkar’s English makes interesting reading. It is simple and free from ambiguities.

In the opinion of S.Z.H Abidi, Malgonkar in \textit{A Bend in the Ganges} is biased towards the Hindus in his treatment of the theme of the Partition.\textsuperscript{35} The negative portrayal of Shafi Usman and Hafiz as fanatics, and Jinnah as the master-mind behind the idea of Partition might have led the critic to comment so. His allegedly biased treatment of Usman and Hafiz cannot be taken so seriously, because, the main focus of the novel is not on the Partition. Unlike as in \textit{Train to Pakistan} and \textit{Azadi}, there is no attempt to give a comprehensive picture of the Partition. Moreover, the Muslim fanaticism and Jinnah’s
portrayal are not far from the truth. It would have been better if he had presented a picture of Hindu fanaticism, too. But Malgonkar condemns the Congress. R.S. Singh convincingly defends Malgonkar in this respect:

The feeling that Malgonkar has written this novel from a biased Hindu's point of view does not hold good since, if he had condemned Shafi, a Muslim, for religious fanaticism and lacking in human qualities, he has damned Gian also who, although a Hindu, was mean and disloyal. What Malgonkar dislikes most is hypocrisy, and he would not spare anyone who would lack in human sympathy and ideals, be it Shafi or Gian, a Muslim or a Hindu.  

Also, the novel has been dismissed for its "sketchiness," "lack of intensity in Partition story," and for its "ludicrous and contemptuous image of our Freedom Movement" by Robin White, G.P. Sharma and Qurratulain Hyder respectively. The panoramic and epical nature of the novel cannot be mistaken for sketchiness. The story of Debi and Mumtaz is very intensive and the trauma of Tekchand's family is as intensive as that of Lala Kanshi Ram's family in Azadi. Contrary to being ludicrous and contemptuous, the treatment of the Freedom Movement is grand and ironical.

All in all, A Bend in the Ganges is one of the finest narratives bearing on the Partition. It is remarkable for the treatment of the genesis of communalism out of the very womb of nationalism itself in the context of the Gandhian creed of non-violence. It is an artistically satisfying novel because of its happy mingling of fact and fiction.
VI CONCLUSION

As the foregoing analysis shows, these novels deal with different aspects of the Partition. Kushwant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan*, B. Rajan’s *The Dark Dancer*, Attia Hosain’s *Sunlight on a Broken Column* and Manohar Malgonkar’s *A Bend in the Ganges* are early fictional representations of the Partition in the history of the Indian novel in English.

Here *Train to Pakistan* portrays the community tragedy—the impact of the Partition on the rural communal fraternity. Within the compact narration Khushwant Singh has been successful in capturing the traumatic experience with remarkable objectivity, historical and political authenticity, the whole treatment being informed with a humanistic vision. Then B Rajan’s the *Dark Dancer* treats the Partition as a national trauma. The novel relates the communal war of the Partition to the fratricidal war in the *Mahabharata*. And Rajan treats the theme on the same lines as Kushwant Singh. Like the earlier novel *The Dark Dancer* also strikes the note of humanism. Attia Hosain’s *Sunlight on a Broken Column* is entirely a different novel. A woman writer for the first time responds to the trauma. And that too a Muslim writer. The novel gives the Muslim point of view of the Partition, which is a rare phenomenon here. It unfolds the impact of the Partition on a Muslim family. It is also objective in its treatment of the ordeal. Mahohar Malgonkar looks at the Partition as an irony of Indian history. His *Bend in the Ganges* traces the genesis of communalism—how the epic movement for India’s Independence ended up in the Partition. In his critique of Gandhian non-violence Malgonkar unfolds the pangs of Partition through the fortunes of a Hindu family. As a Partition novel the merit
of *A Bend in the Ganges* lies in the fact that it depicts the trauma at both levels—public and private. All these novels are successful fictional articulations of the Partition experience. Khushwant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan* can be singled out as the most important novel as it was the first comprehensive fictional representation of the event and the most artistically satisfying, too.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


4 Manohar Malgonkar, A Bend in the Ganges (New Delhi: Orient Paperbacks, 1964) 71. All further references are to this edition.


8 G.S. Amur, Manohar Malgonkar 123.

9 G.S. Amur, Manohar Malgonkar 104-105.


14 Asha Kaushik, Politics, Aesthetics and Culture 64.


16 Quoted in Ania Loomba, Colonialism/Postcolonialism (London and New York: Routledge, 1979) 190.


20 G.S. Amur, *Manohar Malgonkar* 104.

21 Asha Kaushik, *Politics, Aesthetics and Culture* 64.

22 G.S. Amur, *Manohar Malgonkar* 104.


27 Georg Lukács, *The Historical Novel* 44.


33 Quoted in G.S. Amur, “Manohar Malgonkar and the Problems of the Indian Novelist in English” 15.

34 Meenakshi, Mukherjee, *Twice-Born-Fiction* 175.


37 Quoted in G.S. Amur, *Manohar Malgonkar* 118.
