CHAPTER - V

A DISTANT VIEW : ANALYSIS OF THE LATER NOVELS

I. INTRODUCTION

The present chapter is devoted to the thematic analysis of the later novels, viz. those published after 1970. After the 70s the time-lag almost provides a sufficient time gap for writers to reflect on the event objectively. These writers have the advantage of being successful as far as achieving greater objectivity and undertaking historical research are concerned. The novels discussed in this chapter are Raj Gill’s The Rape (1974), Chaman Nahal’s Azadi (1975), Sharf Mukaddam’s When Freedom Came (1982) and Shiv K. Kumar’s A River with Three Banks (1998).

II. RAJ GILL’S THE RAPE : A MELODRAMA OF ‘KILL TO LIVE’

After Khushwant Singh’s Train to Pakistan, Raj Gill’s The Rape (1974) is again a Sikh novel about the Partition. The novel portrays the impact of Partition on the Jat-Sikh community. In a state of chaos man loses his sense of humanity. Life during the Partition was a chaos. There was no sense of good and bad. People degenerated into brute, nasty and barbaric animals. ‘Kill to live’, ‘rape to revenge’ became the order of the days. All the human values were thrown to the winds. It is this aspect of the Partition that The Rape focuses on.

The Partition was a civil war between the Muslims on the one side and the Hindus/Sikhs on the other side. It would not be a
misrepresentation to speak of it as more of a clash between the Muslims and Sikhs. The historical animosity between the Sikhs and Muslims can be traced back to the eighteenth century. During the Partition the Sikh community suffered immensely. The division of the Punjab, which was thickly populated by the Sikh community, left many Sikhs victims of the vivisection. “The Indo-Pakistan boundary line,” writes Kirpal Singh, “cut the Sikhs into almost two equal halves against their wishes. This was one of the biggest crisis for the Sikhs which they had ever faced.”

Apparently many Sikh writers have reacted most poignantly to the trauma of the Partition. Raj Gill, a journalist turned novelist, is a Sikh victim. And he has responded to the Partition after twenty-seven years in his fictional attempt—*The Rape*. The locale of the novel is Lylapur, a village in the west Punjab, which goes to Pakistan after the division of the sub-continent. Like *A Bend in the Ganges* the novel is an epic presentation of the theme of Partition and covers the period from the first rumblings of pre-Partition days to the assassination of Gandhi. Like *Train to Pakistan*, it articulates the villagers’ experience during the Partition.

The novel employs three different approaches to capture the transformation of life during the Partition; realistic portrayal of the Sikh way of life, romantic treatment of love affair, and melodramatic delineation of the violence of the Partition. But the two dominant themes in the novel are ‘love’ and ‘rape’. The romantic love motif and the violent theme of rape have been assimilated into the textual pattern of the novel.

The novel begins with Dalipjit, the protagonist, attending the congregation, Sikh ceremony in the Gurudwara. But Dalipjit is more interested in paying his attentions to Jasmit, a Sikh girl, than in the
ritual. In the beginning the theme of love dominates the novel. The virus of Partition attacks the Sikhs of Lyllapur through the newspapers. The newspapers report the atrocities perpetrated on the minorities. Dalipjit reads the news to the members of his family. He is worried about the ordinary people, especially, "The status of the Sikhs." The very news of dividing the country makes the village 

(...) gradually slide into a dark brooding mood.

They talked less, worked less, snapped and snarled and quarrelled over nonexistent issues and went about their daily routine under dark shadows. They were changing into living ghosts. (62)

The fear of Muslim attacks on the community begins to haunt the psyche of the villagers. For the safety of the community a secret meeting is held under the leadership of General Bal of the Indian National Army. The youngsters of the village form the combat force to fight against the possible Muslim attackers. Kartar Singh becomes the commander of the guard of honour to which Dalipjit joins as a guard commander. Santokh, Jasmit's brother, too joins the organization.

On a line parallel to these developments, Dalipjit's love for Jasmit blooms. He always thinks of his love, and plans to turn every incident into an opportunity for pressing his love towards its fruition. Amro, his cousin helps him in his love affair. Dalipjit is loyal to his family. But the event of the Partition confuses him. Now he is committed to "loyalty, obligation and love" (106). As an ideal son he wants to be loyal to his parents. As a Sikh boy it is obligatory for him to fight for his community. At the same time he is immersed in the love affair. He can easily manage his domestic needs. The community obligation
is collective work. It does not wholly rest upon him alone. But as far as his personal love affair is concerned, "There were no compromises, compensations, conveniences or considerations in love" (107). But the conflict between personal love and the outer forces has not been developed convincingly in the novel. Only the romantic love story ends tragically, Dalipjit and Jasmit's love is interrupted by Santokh, who opposes their marriage and threatens Jasmit with dire consequences if she tries to meet Dalipjit.

After the award of the boundary line the Sikhs on the Pakistan side of the boundary line leave for the Indian side. All of a sudden the Sikhs of Laylapur begin to evacuate as caravans from other villages pass through the village. The unprepared mass faces lots of problems in trying to transfer their goods from one place to another unknown place. The novel realistically depicts how hard and gruelling it was for the people to cope with the situation:

They had set out with few belongings—a cart, two oxen, a buffalo or a cow, ration, ploughs, spades, axes, sickles, hoes, seeds, spears and fifty or hundred silver rupees bearing the Queen Victoria profile. They conceived, planned and lived their bright abundant future in the carts. Their struggle with the desert bush, the wild animals, and the scorching sun was the struggle of man endeavouring to possess his woman to an ultimate consummation, contentment and peace. They lived like gypsies in their carts parked in clusters till they had snatched the arable land from the wild claws of nature and sown the seed and had the time to mould bricks out of clay and build their houses. (156-157)
The novel also narrates the confused state of women in that moment of hurry to leave their village:

Women were going neurotic with indecision and doubt as to what precious items in the household they should carry. The arguments went on among the women sharply punctuated by the men warning them that a cart was a cart and not a house. Therefore, they must try to carry only what was absolutely necessary. There would not be space for every silly thing that they could be sentimental about. The women kept quiet sometimes, and sometimes they lost their tempers. (160)

Dalipjit’s family sets out in a cart, which joins a long caravan. The size of the caravan is so long that “what happened at the head or at the tail those in the middle were never to know” (175). During their journey the caravan encounters many attacks from Muslim raiders. Dalipjit fights with his gun, his father identifies the enemies with the help of binoculars. Chapter 11 is full of melodramatic scenes of killing. Many people die suffering on the road. After a severe attack of cholera, Dalip is sent to a place called Jagdev Kalan, his ancestors’ village, with the help of military. Now he is separated from his family and stays with his relatives. Here on the Indian side Dalipjit witnesses atrocities perpetrated against the Muslim community. Dalipjit says:

That which happened this side of the boundary was in no way less ghastly, inhuman, and disgusting than that which had happened across the border. Value of human life had fallen below that of the pariah dog. (191)

This reminds us of what Lula Kanshi Ram says in *Azadi*, “What I mean is, whatever the Muslims did to us in Pakistan, we’re doing to
Comparing these two novelists K.K. Sharma says that these novelists are impartial in showing that their "own community is as much guilty as the other one." This may be true in the case of Azadi, but The Rape fails to maintain impartiality. Except for Leila, a Muslim girl, falling a victim, the novelist's focus is more on atrocities done to the Sikhs than the Muslims. What Saros Cowasjee observes about Sikh writers on the Partition holds good in the case of Raj Gill also:

(...) the Sikh writers admit to Sikh atrocities against the Muslims, but argue that it was only in retaliation for what the Muslims did to them. This last contention, however, is not supported by independent observers. Both Leonard Mosley and Michael Edward in their respective studies mention Sikhs spoiling for a fight, and Collins and Lapierre in Freedom at Midnight (1975) refer to them as “most vicious killers of all.”

The barbaric experience of Partition results into Lala Kanshi Ram in Azadi ceasing to hate. Here the same experience does not affect Dalipjit at that level. Instead induced by a sense of revenge he shoots Leila's father, which he had failed to do in the case of Jalal, his Muslim friend. There is an essential goodness in him. So he takes Leila to his house not as a keep, as others in the village do to the Muslim women, but as a member of his family. After the reunion with the family Leila is accepted in the house but with a difference. For Dalipjit's father she is "a house-help" and "the rest of the village hated her" (219) since she belonged to the other community.

During this course, the love story of Dalipjit takes a new turn. Jasmit suspects Leila's stay in Dalipjit's house. But that does not
complicate the situation. Jasmit's brother Santokh comes in their way. Love marriage within the Sikh community is not accepted. When Dalipjit is in Amritsar for his studies Santokh kills his father in a street fight. Dalipjit is shocked and feels a cold wave running down his spine when he hears the news. The more shocking news for him is the loss of Jasmit, his love. The climax of the novel comes when Dalipjit hears from Leila that his father had raped her. Thus, the family vendetta and crisis within a community bring about the loss of Jasmit, and Partition brings on the loss of Leila who adored Dalipjit like a god. The novel ends with Dalipjit's concluding statement "The world is sick, (...)" (298). What happens to Dalipjit and Leila is left to the imagination of the readers. Raj Gill's *The Rape* adds yet another dark shade to the dismal picture of the Partition.

As stated in the beginning, the two major themes of the novel are love and rape. Dalipjit and Jasmit are ideal lovers. Dalipjit loves Jasmit, so much so that he writes a love letter in his blood. Dalipjit connects everything to his love affair. When he realizes that love marriage within a community is not accepted and his love is going to be foiled he finds hopes in changing his way of life during the Partition. Always he tries to see things from the viewpoint of his love. When he thinks of killing Jalal, he connects it to his love. He thinks that the taste of blood may prompt him to kill even his love:

Would not that have given him a taste for blood?

(...) Would he not have one day in a bad temper killed even Jasmit for one thing far the other (...). (135)

When he finds a drastic change in life due to the effects of the Partition, he fears "if his love for Jasmit would also undergo such a change" (168). Thus, Dalipjit is immersed in love all the time. He is
more committed to his love than to his family and community. Both Dalipjit and Jasmit are true lovers. They are ready to sacrifice their lives for the sake of love. But their love ends up as a tragedy as their affair gives rise to a vendetta, and Jasmit dies a victim. The novel holds the mirror up to the failure of love marriage inside a close community like the Sikhs. It shows how love marriage within a Sikh village community is a tough task because, “marriage within the community, within the village was taboo” (108).

In many of the novels on the Partition love is contrasted with violence, and love is celebrated as a value transcending communities and communalism. Hence, in most of the Partition novels the pair consists of lovers from two different communities—a Hindu or Sikh boy falling in love with a Muslim girl or very rarely vice versa. What is distinctive about the Dalipjit-Jasmit love affair is its departure from the stereo-typed treatment of the theme of love in other Partition novels. Unlike as in other novels it is the rise and fall of love within a community. Yet the treatment of the theme of love has a romantic tinge. The novel treats the theme of love on the lines of Heer-Ranja. It is as romantic as Juggu’s love for Nooran in Train to Pakistan. Dalipjit’s frequent meeting of Jasmit at the tank, his fantasies about her, his love letter written in blood and the final departure of the lovers—all constitute the romantic strand in the novel.

Though there is a suggestion of stereo-typed treatment of love in the relationship between Leila and Dalipjit, it is cast in a different way. It is not the aim of the novelist to romanticize the love affair between the Sikh boy and the Muslim girl. Dalipjit can’t love two women at the same time. But he likes Leila as he likes the members of his family. For Leila he is almost like God. Because, he gives her
safety and shelter after her father’s death. She adores him as much as she adores God. It is love with a difference. It goes beyond the physical plane on which love normally exists between a man and a woman. Their relationship culminates into a spiritual love which stands the test of time. Leila explains about her love:

Your love’s Jassi and not me. I love you in a different way, the way one loves God. The love of God though, of course, is as strong as the carnal love and does crave for a complete consummation as in the other love. The only difference is it is not a demanding love. It gives. It gives without the hope of return. It’s a complete surrender, a total effacement of the ego. (224)

Thus, the novel treats the theme of love in a different manner from other novels on the Partition.

As a Partition tale, the theme of rape is as important as that of love in the novel. “(...) the history of Partition,” as Gyanedra Pandey writes, “is the history of rape and abduction and killing.”6 Naturally one might say that every Partition story—imaginative, oral interview, or historical narration—usually refers to rape. One of the positions of the feminist’s definition of rape is that it “is violence not sex.”7 The most traumatic type of violence on women during the Partition was rape. Many of the fictionists treat the theme of rape. As Saros Cowasajee aptly points out, “Though Partition offered a variety of subject matter, the majority of the writers chose to deal with violence of one kind or another—abduction and rape.”8

In the present novel the focal point of the Partition theme is the event of rape. Hence, the title ‘The Rape’. During the Partition many
abducted women were forced into prostitution and they were ill-treated as keeps by the rapists. Leila in the novel is not an abducted girl. Dalipjit gives her protection. He treats her as one of the members of his family. But for the rest of the village and his father she is a girl belonging to another community—enemy community. As Gyanendra Pande opines, "Partition produced new congealed and highly exclusive senses of Hindu/Sikh and Muslim communities in India and Pakistan." When Dalipjit is away Leila is raped by Dalipjit's father. He rapes her not to fulfill his lust for sex but for the petty reason that she belongs to the Muslim community. So, "The father raping his son's girl could have been a singularly poignant moment in the novel." It sounds more bewildering and shocking when it is disclosed by the victim herself:

"I'm not the same Leila," she stammered. "He had me, your father, Wednesday night it was. I told him about you being the first. But he wouldn't listen. He was not even drunk. He hit me when I said no. He hit me again and again till I don't know where I was. When I came to know he had done it. Right there on the floor." (296)

Leila, as a Partition victim stands the test of time after being raped by the father of the youth she continues to love. What a critic (whom Saros Cowasjee quotes) says, with reference to Manto's short story 'The Reunion', another powerful tale of rape, is also true with regard to The Rape, "The story is (...) not about guilt but it is powerful enough to make a whole generation feel guilty." Both the warring communities have to feel guilty, because, it was time when values changed. Principles disappeared. Regard for life vanished. Difference to age went. Women were not the
respected weaker sex. Children were no more innocent little angels. A general attrition of social obligations, neighbourly feelings, conventions and traditions was in process. Honest toil was replaced by boisterous living, and diligence gave way to recklessness, grace to boozing, and good manners to churlishness. (62-63)

And what Amro says to Dalipjit in chapter 17 holds the mirror up to the general degeneration of life:

"Dipu," she started in a sobered voice. "Don't have any expectation from these people; not even from your own father or sisters. I say that even if I sound so shamefaced. Things have changed, Dipu, so have values, considerations and standards. The future is not for these people, for us. The future is deception, a lie, a trap. Promises don't hold any more even as momentary palliatives to the uneasy minds. We are the betrayed generation. We are the ones who paid the price and still are paying for the so called freedom for which the credit must go to others, (...)

Human beings degenerated to the level of animals at that time. When it is a question of survival, 'kill to live' becomes the philosophy of life. The novel is explicit in making this point clear through the protagonist:

One killed to live, strange it was but true. People killed to live. Muslims killed the non-Muslims and Hindus and Sikhs killed the Muslims all in a bid to live, not to die. And how Santokh killed his own sister to live himself and
his father almost killed Leila egged by the same motive force. (296)

Through these lines the novelist shows the existential predicament of people living through those extraordinary times. Perhaps this is the vision that the novelist projects through this story of the Partition.

According to Saros Cowasjee, "(...) the most heart-wrenching stories ever written on the theme of rape are Kartar Singh Duggal’s ‘Kulsum’, Khwaja Ahamad Abbas’ ‘Revenge’ and Saadat Hasan Manto’s ‘The Reunion’." No doubt, Raj Gill’s *The Rape* too is as ‘heart-wrenching’ as the above cited stories. It is successful partly because directly there is no graphic description of the event— the rape of Leila is unfolded by herself, which gives it an intensity and pathos. Partly its intensity is heightened since it is reported through the victim. This avoids the novel being a nauseating tale.

Basically a Sikh novel, *The Rape* highlights the Sikh point of view. The protagonist of the novel is a Sikh boy. Almost all the characters are Sikhs. The community painted in the novel is the Jat Sikh community. The novelist does not depict as such the pre-Partition social relationship between the Sikhs and Muslims. The novel also narrates the story of Partition from the Sikh point of view. The novelist, himself being a Sikh, sees things as an insider. He depicts the atrocities done to the Sikhs, and refers to the failure of the Sikh leaders— Giani Kartar Singh and Master Tara Singh— to provide effective leadership during those troubled times. Above all what is about Dalipjit is typical of a Sikh boy:

He had fulfilled the five commandments, namely, wear full hair, a steel bangle, kneelength shorts, a comb
and a sword. He went in and performed obeisance to the Holy scripture- Granth that was being recited continuously and then came out into the compound. (11)

The novel is remarkable for its realistic portrayal of the socio-cultural aspects of the community. In the very beginning there is a description of the initiation ceremony in the Sikh congregation, which encourages Sikh faith. Here the Sikhs take an oath against the tyrants of their sect. As Kirpal Singh writes, "The Sikhs had bitter memories of religious persecution during the 18th century under the Muslim rule. In their daily prayer they remembered all those martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the sake of their religion." One might say that the novel is true to history so far as the depiction of the above said aspect of the Sikh community is concerned:

The gurdwara started filling towards evening. The initiation ceremony that evening had a special significance. It was a call to rise in faith and fight the Muslim tyrants and fanatics who were perpetrating the massacre of the non-Muslims. The Sikhs had arisen against the perpetuation of Mughal tyranny over the Hindus in the past. The communal riots in Noakhali and Rawalpindi were reminiscent of the terror of Aurangzeb and the wrath of Nadir Shah.(11)

According to the novelist the Sikhs were losers in the politics of the Partition. The authorial voice is very much conspicuous in the comment:

The Sikhs were steadily losing the game. Their only leader— representative at the centre, Baldev Singh, that
large, lethargic Sikh of colourless personality, was a complete failure in safeguarding their interests. He did not even grasp the situation and was completely blank about what was happening around him. The Sikhs committed the greatest blunder in nominating him to the centre. (70)

The novel also depicts the culture of the Sikh community convincingly. The dismissal of "love or romance as a legitimate emotional expression" (141) in the social system, drastic death to unmarried mothers, practice of adultery within the family, social disapproval of sexual gratification with a lower caste woman—all throw light upon the way of life and Sikh code of conduct. The failure of Dalipjit's love affair is a typical example to show how the Sikh community's views on love and marriage are inflexible and relentless.

The most important aspect of Sikh mentality that came out during the Partition was their exhibition of their code of honour. And other qualities such as their commitment to the Sikh faith and their pride as a martial race are expressed in Niranjan Singh in Chaman Nahal's *Azadi*. Till today the Sikh community boasts of its code of honour as much as its martial status. During the Partition many Sikh women were put to death and they willingly committed mass-suicide to avert the disgrace of rape and to maintain their purity. Gyanendra Pande refers to "the collective suicide of 90 or more women (and children) who drowned themselves in a well in Thoakhalsa, Rawalpindi district in March 1947, in order to save their honour and their religion." In the novel there is a depiction of Sikh women jumping into the well. Dalipjit himself is entrusted with the job of pushing the unwitting women into the well. As one of the characters puts it; this act is:
"(...) not the horror or the cruelty involved in the job, son, that you've to think of. It's the honour of our martial race. We can't surrender our women or children, that's the thought for you. It needs a man of guts, the man who can be cool in the face of death." (186)

Thus, the novel records life in the Sikh community in a realistic manner. But the picture of Sikh peasant life is not as complete and effective as that which is presented in Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*. Of course, *The Rape* gives more information about the Sikh community than any other novel, but it lacks the lively picture of the Gurdwar and living Sikh characters like Imamchacha, Meet Singh and Juggut Singh in *Train to Pakistan*. Also the transformation of the Sikh community due to the Partition is not as haunting as it is in *Train to Pakistan*.

Like *Azadi*, *The Rape* too dramatizes the impact of the Partition on the individual psyche. The character of Dalipjit undergoes a psychological change. Just as *Azadi* traces the growth of Arun from his boyhood to manhood, *The Rape* also records the growth of Dalipjit—his whims and fancies, aims and hopes, rise and fall, and finally, his psychological transformation. He is always disturbed by outer forces. His thoughts are tangled and he suffers from the Hamletian dilemma.

The transformation of the character of Dalipjit takes place at two levels. First, the loss of Jasmit, his love, which is the result of the crisis within the community, brings about some change in him. Second, the loss of Leila, who is the only hope after the death of Jasmit, is raped by his own father. This is the result of the moral crisis unfolding in the context of the national tragedy. The overall impact of
the tragedy of the Partition on Dalipjit is illustrated when he kills Gandhi in his hallucination before Gandhi is literally killed:

"Gandhi has been shot dead at his prayer meeting."
He laughed to himself amused at the sentence. How could Gandhi be shot dead? He was not living. He had shot Gandhi long back, years ago. They could not shoot a dead Gandhi. It was nonsense. (288)

But Leila is altogether a different character. She stands the test of time. Being a direct victim of the Partition and raped by the father of the son whom she loves so much, she bears the pangs of the Partition. Jasmit and Amro are not direct victims of the Partition. Jasmit, though a major character, remains unattractive before the character of Leila who makes her appearance at the end and holds the sympathy of the readers as a Partition victim.

The novel chronicles various aspects of the Partition. Victim consciousness, transformation of the Sikh community, killing, rape and the refugee problem—all find their place in the novel. The most moving account of the experience of the Partition in the novel, after Leila's rape, is the story of Lakh Singh. This is an embedded story narrated by Dalipjit to Jasmit. Lakh Singh is a village priest. He carries his eighty-year-old mother on his back in convoy. Finding that his mother is in a state of coma he lowers her into a canal. Revived by the cool water the old woman cries, "May you live long, son, for cooling my soul" (199). Then he drags her and carries her on his back. But unable to carry her further he kills her with opium. Thus, the novel shows the horrors of the Partition through these incidents of a father raping his son's beloved and a son killing his own mother.
HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

To begin with G.P. Sharma's statement that the purpose of The Rape is "to describe the political aspect of Partition"15 is quite pertinent. The novel discusses the role of 'divide and rule' policy of the Britishers, and the failure of Indian leadership in the drama of Independence politics. Through one of the minor characters Raj Gill exposes the British policy:

"Cripps is a fox who was specially sent to India to perpetrate the policy of divide and rule," he began."First it was only divide the sects, communities and regions. But now it's to divide the nation, the country, to cripple the economy and to cause fissures in the national integrity." (27)

The author's direct comment on the politics of the time indicts the Indian leaders equally:

The fanaticism of Jinnah, the idealism of Nehru, the pragmatism of Patel, the spiritualism of Gandhi, the confusion and haste of the Viceroy, the political- shortsightedness of the Sikhs were to be melted into witches' brew, so revoltingly unpalatable, yet to be rammed down the gullets of the innocent people who did not ask for Partition. (129)

As far as its views on the political leaders are concerned, The Rape is a rare novel which gives a positive picture of Nehru and a sort of negative picture of Gandhi. Perhaps this is the only novel to present the brighter side of Nehru's politics in the Partition. The novelist presents this through Dalipjit's consciousness:
The person who was still hesitant about the partition formula was Nehru. Nehru wanted independence for an undivided India, at least, an India which was not divided on religious grounds. (...) Dalipjit knew Nehru was feared by his colleagues. He was feared by the British also, especially by Lord Mountbatten, (...). He could, in fact, be said to be the only leader in India whom the masses liked, loved, and adored. (57-59)

It is interesting to note that many novels on the Partition do not present Nehru like this. He is always blamed. For example, in *Azadi*, Niranjan Singh wants to "hack Nehru to pieces." 16 In the present novel the protagonist is influenced by the personality of Nehru, whereas in *Azadi* Lala Kanshi Ram and Chaudri Barkat Ali are influenced by Gandhi’s personality. But the novel views Gandhi in an unfavourable light. Dalipjit wants to kill Gandhi. The following paragraph contrasts the two figures:

The fear from Nehru was a positive fear for the British Government while the fear from Gandhi was a negative one. However, it was much more difficult to understand Gandhi. The little puritan, barely clad saint, with his eccentric and often devious reactions, was completely unpredictable. (59)

However, different writers hold different views about Gandhi. The present novel portrays Gandhi as an anti-Sikh. The novel refers to Gandhi’s statement accusing the Sikhs by saying, “Koi Sikh hoga” (it must be a Sikh) (273), after the explosion of a bomb at the prayer meeting.
Apart from these what adds to the political theme of the novel is Dalipjit's involvement in politics at the time of the Partition. He is actively involved in the cause of his community. During the Partition riot he is committed to the politics of Partition. He voluntarily joins the guard of command under the leadership of the INA Bal. He keenly reads the newspapers scanning for political news. He is always disturbed by the political situation around him. He "was aware of a greater rumbling besides the political unrest and distrust" (28).

By and large, *The Rape*, like Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* and Chaman Nahal's *Azadi*, is not a political novel of the highest order. It does not reveal any insights into the political history of the Partition. Mere dry discussion of political ideas does not make the novel a successful political novel. Here politics has not been transformed into an art form successfully. What makes it a less successful political novel is its dry filling up of political news, direct reproduction of the material from newspapers, the author's direct comments, speech verbatim of leaders. On the whole it narrates the political side of the Partition in the mode of documentary realism. Raj Gill himself is a journalist. The journalist and the novelist in him seem to have clashed and the former has obviously dominated the latter. The novelist directly quotes from the newspapers. Examples can be seen on pages 57, 64, 193, and 194; the original speeches of the leaders are quoted verbatim on pages 193 and 194. And the novel degenerates into polemical writing when the author makes his own comments on the Partition explicitly. In this regard Saros Cowasjee aptly remarks:

> The human story is lost in a welter of editorializing on the Partition. Names of politicians are strewn across the pages, newspaper reports are quoted in abundance,
(...) and several speeches of Gandhi, Nehru and the Muslim leader Jinnah are reproduced verbatim.\textsuperscript{17}

Also the novel treats the theme of Partition as melodramatic material and the material is utilized for a romantic purpose. Violent scenes, not narrated but depicted, dominate the novel. The very title 'The Rape', the attack on Anup Singh, the death of Jasmit and Isher Singh in the family vendetta strike the melodramatic note. The following passage shows the author's intent to melodramatize the events of the Partition:

> Heads would roll, throats would be slit open, bodies maimed, buildings burnt to ashes, the winds would stink from putrefying human flesh, the earth run red from the freely split blood, the sky be clouded by the thick smoke from burning cities and villages. (129)

No doubt. \textit{The Rape} is a tragic story. The hero meets with a tragic end. But the pictures of the Sikh way of life, and the effects of Partition are true to history and hence authentic.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


3 Chaman Nahal, Azadi (Delhi: Orient Paperbacks, 1988) 338.


11 Saros Cowasjee, Introduction, Orphans of the Storm xiv.

12 Saros Cowasjee, Introduction, Orphans of the Storm xiii.


16 Chaman Nahal, Azadi 66.

III CHAMAN NAHAL'S AZADI: BIOGRAPHY OF A VICTIMISED HINDU FAMILY

Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* (1975), the most important and successful Partition novel after *Train to Pakistan*, uses a wider canvas and takes a closer look at the impact of Partition on human lives. If the focus of *Train to Pakistan* and *The Rape* is on the Sikh community, and that of *Sunlight on a Broken Column* on a Muslim family, *Azadi* focuses on a Hindu family affected by the ordeal. What Chaman Nahal creates out of the baptism of Partition is a spiritually robust man searching for an identity and the affirmative vision.

Chaman Nahal has joined the front rank of Indian writers of fiction in English with eight novels and a short-story collection. In his *The New Literatures in English* (1985) Nahal classifies the first generation of Indian fiction in English into two types— the 'Political Novel' and the 'Nowhere Novel'. He places Mulk Raj Anand in the first type, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao in the second type. He praises Mulk Raj Anand for his social commitment and Babhani Battacharya for his treatment of the "traumatic movements of our history." Belonging as he does to the generation next to Mulk Raj Anand, Chaman Nahal seems to have continued the literary heritage of Mulk Raj Anand and Battacharya. Like them his thematic concerns too are historical, political and social. What makes him different from others is his affirmative vision. He "upholds values of life and shows that life is worth living with all its vicissitudes and challenges."2

According to M.K. Naik "Chaman Nahal is a novelist of painful odysseys presented in different contexts."3 In *Azadi*, which has won the Sahitya Akademi award, the context is the Partition of India. The novel has been variously described as a "regional classic,"4 an epic
and psychological delineation of the Partition theme, a study of search for identity, a novel deploying "multiple points of view—Lala Kanshi Ram and Arun as centres of consciousness," a study of the theme of "human kindness", "a more effective novel on Partition". Although the novel could be analysed from different angles, basically it chronicles, artistically the saga of a suffering Hindu family during the holocaust. Along with other Sikh and Hindu families, Lala Kanshi Ram's family becomes a two-time victim of the Partition.

Azadi meticulously depicts the impact of the Partition on Lala Kahshi Ram's family at two stages; first, the family undergoes traumatic experiences from the immediate effects of the Partition in newly created Pakistan; second, the aftermath of the Partition in free India. The fear of Muslims in Pakistan; loss of property, friends and blood relations; and psychological trauma—being refugees in their own land—are the problems that the family faces in Pakistan. It encounters the problems of displacement, rehabilitation, disillusionment and the question of identity in free India. Hence the novel deals with two major themes of the Partition— the theme of exile and the theme of a search for identity. What is striking is "within the limited world of the novel, Nahal is able to create an illusion of completeness."

The novel is divided into three parts— 'The Lull,' 'The Storm' and 'The Aftermath.'. The setting of the novel is Sialkot, a place now in Pakistan where Nahal himself was born. The scene of action in the novel shifts from Sialkot through different places across the border— Narowal, Dera Baba Nanak, Amritsar, Ambala and Kurukshetra to Delhi. In the novel the private sufferings of a family hold the mirror up to the public mourning. Through the changing fortunes of different families—the tenants of Bibi Amaravati, which
includes the Hindu family of Lala Kanshi Ram, the Sikh family of Sardar Jodha Singh, Charwoman Padmavati with her daughter Chandani and Mukunda's mother, Nahal depicts the social tragedy arising out of the Partition.

The focal point in the depiction of domestic suffering of different families is the family of Lala Kanshi Ram. Unlike the family in *Sunlight on a Broken Column*, it is a nuclear family, consisting of Lala Kanshi Ram, a rich merchant, his wife Prabharani and siblings – Madhu and Arun. The family has “almost everything as things go.”

The novel begins with the historical remark referring to 3 June, 1947. It was the day Lord Mountbatten had announced the division of the Indian sub-continent. Historically speaking, it was a crucial year in the political history of India. The date of India's Independence was fixed. But the idea of the creation of Pakistan was still fluid. This created tension and anxiety among the people. In the beginning all the tenants of Bibi Amaravati show this anxiety and tension; “In each home, on each street corner this was the only subject discussed that day” (47). Most of the characters, especially Lala Kanshi Ram, are full of hopes that there would be no division of the country. For them the only ray of hope is Gandhi “who would never agree to a division of the country”(39). But their dreams are shattered when Arun on hearing the broadcast exclaims ‘Partition!’. All the tenants are bewildered. Their hope of an undivided India proves false.

After they had absorbed the shock of the division of India, Lala Kanshi Ram and his family can only hope that they would not be forced to leave Sialkot, because they see “every hope Sialkot might never go to Pakistan”(91). The inadequacies of the Partition plan and Boundary Commission leave them in total confusion as to which
place goes to which country. The news that Sialkot goes to Pakistan shakes the confidence of Lala Kanshi Ram. And the Muslims in the city celebrate the occasion by taking out a procession. The Sikhs and Hindus are haunted by the forthcoming Muslim Raj. Most of the historical narratives in India emphasize the ghost of Hindu Raj haunting the Muslim psyche. As they show, many Muslims, especially in north India, left for Pakistan for two reasons—fear of future Hindu rule and a bright future in the newly created Pakistan. What is important in Azadi is the political psychology of the Sikhs and Hindus in a newly created nation for the Muslims. They begin to feel the social insecurity there. Lala Kanshi Ram says to his wife:

If Pakistan is created, we'll have to leave. That is, if the Muslims spare our lives! 'There will be much killing, you think?' 'Don't you know the Muslims? There has been much killing going on for the past many months. Imagine what will happen once they're in power!' (41)

Azadi is perhaps the only novel to map the political psychology of fear unleashed on the Hindus and Sikhs in the nascent Muslim Pakistan.

After they have celebrated the creation of a new homeland for Muslims, the Sialkot Muslims are roused to mass-hysteria when they hear atrocities committed against their community in the eastern part of Punjab. They also start attacking the Hindus and Sikhs in Sialkot. Each day hundreds of Hindus and Sikhs leave Sialkot for refugee camps. The family of Lala Kanshi Ram also begins to suffer from fear psychosis. But, in spite of an impending threat to the minority community, Lala Kanshi Ram is not ready to leave the soil of Sialkot. He wants to continue to live in Sialkot. But a great loss
is inflicted on the family. They hear the news that their shop has been looted. It was their only source of livelihood. Now they prepare themselves to leave for a refugee camp for protection. But Lala Kanshi Ram is so much attached to the soil in which he was born and brought up that he still hopes to return to Sialkot:

Secretly Lala Kanshi Ram was glad they were only going up to the refugee camp. It dried his inside up to think of going too far away—like to Amritsar! What a nasty sound it had, compared to S-i-a-l-k-o-t, the finest city in the world. If they stayed at the refugee camp, there was always the hope of returning home one day. (142)

The irony is that the family becomes a refugee in its own land. As Nahal himself calls it, it is "forced exile." The exiled family, eking out their days in a refugee camp shows the paradox of Indian history that the victims of the Partition became refugees in their own homeland.

Part II is called 'The storm.' Here Nahal depicts the socio-political disturbance and the bad effects of the ordeal. It deals with the sad plight of the refugees—atrocious crimes being made against them. The news of Madhu's death comes as a bolt from the blue to the family. Madhu and her husband are killed in the train during their journey from Wazirabad to Sialkot. This incident crushes Lala Kanshi Ram's spirit and it is "the last blow to his shattered psyche" (212). Arun and Suraj Prakash go to identify the dead bodies, but fail to identify them, though Barkat Ali tries sincerely to enable them to do so with the help of a police officer. Now the family gives up all hopes of staying in Sialkot and decides to leave for India in search of security from all angles—physical, economic and mental. Thus,
the family loses its blood relations, Sialkot friends and the soil in which it had its deep roots. Then, Lala Kanshi Ram prefers the convoy to the train journey to reach the Indian border as a means of safe migration. The Indian officers make preparations to organise the convoy. Their destiny is to reach Dera Baba Nanak, the border town on the Indian side, which is forty-seven miles from Sialkot.

Before the convoy sets out for India, the men in the Sikh community are asked to cut their hair so as to hide their identity for the sake of their safety. But Niranjan Singh, whose extreme sense of Sikh identity prevents him from doing so, refuses to cut his hair. The people in the camp try to persuade him to cut his hair. Instead of cutting his hair Niranjan Singh sets fire to himself. This brings another loss—loss of a neighbour— to the family. In the characterization of Niranjan Singh the novelist depicts the role of extreme, even suicidal, sacrificial religious identity. The Partition of India was made on the basis of religious differences. For people like Niranjan Singh commitment to one's faith and belief became more important than their survival during the Partition.

In contrast to this, there is Gangu Mull, Bibi Amaravati's husband, who converts himself to Islam and becomes Ghulam Muhammad to save his life. Even as religious faith played an important role, the economic benefits also played no lesser role. As Asghar Ali Engineer puts it, "the process of economic development, social change and political perceptions (...) are far more important than the religious factor in determining inter-communal relationships."¹³ If Niranjan is guided by his fidelity to his faith in the Sikh identity, Gangu Mull converts himself not only to survive but in addition he is guided by the economic benefits that he retains
by changing his religion. When he is asked why he turned to Islam, Gangu Says:

'Why not? What would India have given me?' 'And now?' 'Now I own our two buildings in Fort-street.' 'You don't say!' 'Well, they were my property, and I have decided to stay on here as a Muslim. They will continue to remain my property.' (270)

"The horror accompanying the transfer of population," writes Saros Cowasjee in his introduction to Orphans of the Storm, "has been a major theme with fiction writers."14 Nahal treats this theme realistically in all its intensity. The transfer of the population was, historically speaking, a great problem that the governments of both Pakistan and India faced during the Partition. It reminds one of the foolishness and impracticality of Mohammed-Bin-Tughlaq. Certainly it represents the nonsense and folly of the political decision of the time. Though governments made arrangements for a peaceful transfer of population it resulted in mass-murder, rape and violent activities of the worst type. The novel unfolds these effects of an unplanned transfer of population in all its poignancy.

The third massive attack at Narowal brings a lot of change in the family. In this attack Suraj Prakash is killed, Chandani is abducted and Arun kills Rahamat-Ullah-Khan who tries to molest Sunanda. Rahamat-Ullah-Khan is a typical corrupt officer of the time. In delineating this character Nahal exposes the atrocities committed by the government officials, who were supposed to save the victims. The third attack is "so savage" that "every single body had been mutilated" (317). The abduction of Chandani, Sunanda’s rape, Madhu’s death, and the naked parade of the women along the street...
hold the mirror up to what the Partition did to Indian women— either Muslims or Sikhs or Hindus.

What is interesting about Azadi is that Nahal does not concede that the days were completely bad and reached the zenith of communal fanaticism. Hence, the novelist portrays an old man praying for the naked women and Muslims helping Hindu and Sikh refugees:

(...) the Muslims in Jassar only stood and stared. Even anti-Hindu or anti-Sikh slogans were not shouted by them. (...) instead of attacking the convoy, some of the inhabitants of Jassar ran inside their homes and brought water for the thirsty. Some waved and said, 'Khudahafiz'. (320)

This shows, unlike the historian's, the novelist's task is not only to chronicle the events of importance but also to be sensitive to the minor, but equally important, events. Most of the historians document only one side of the history; often they forget instances like the above quoted experiences and end up as biased observers. But the novelist tries to depict both sides of experience as far as possible.

"The act of Partition," Stephen Alter comments, "made all individuals in South Asia exiles in their own homeland and the resulting sense of alienation has been a catalyst for creative expression." One of the main thematic concerns of the present novel is the theme of exile. Being a witness to the ordeal Nahal himself writes of the alienating impact of the Partition:

One of the themes that I came to be occupied with after the partition of India was that of forced exile, I was
born in Sialkot, and after 1947 we were driven away to India. I can understand being an exile by choice. (...).
And till this day, I pine for the city in which I was born and raised. I see this as the typical yearning of all involuntary exiles. Hence, I wrote Azadi as a hymn to one’s land of birth, rather than a realistic novel of partition.16

The above quoted lines not only show his reason for writing the novel but also throw light upon the theme of exile as an integral part of the novel. In the novel both the Hindus and Sikhs are forced to leave Sialkot. Much against their choice the forces of Partition leave them in an exiled state. Lala Kanshi Ram and his family see every hope of continuing in Sialkot. But circumstances impose an ‘involuntary exile’ upon them. The irony is that they are refugees in their own land:

Lala Kanshi Ram could not sleep at all that night. It became clear to him how vulnerable the minority community was and that soon he too might have to leave. It hurt him, the thought of it, and he paced his room restively. Refugee, refugee, indeed! He shouted, when he had understood the word. ‘I was born around here, this is my— how can I be a refugee in my own home?’ (130)

The exile of Sialkot Hindus and Sikhs is of the worst kind, because, it involves the experience of brutal killings, rape and other inhuman acts, in addition to a sense of loss. The inhuman experiences leave them bewildered and the loss after loss gives them a sense of being alienated.

Another major thematic concern of the novel is the question of identity. The state of exile in Pakistan brings the family a sense of
loss of identity. In India they search for their lost identity. After the life of exile the victims encounter different problems in free India. The problem of shelter, occupation and rehabilitation which add to the theme of loss of identity. When the refugees reach the Indian border they are all excited. They kiss the land and hope for a better future, at least physical security. Lala Kanshi Ram salutes the mother land and shouts 'Vande Mataram'. But they are strangers in free India. Their relatives at Amritsar give them lukewarm welcome. They have to search for shelter, and food. Now they are "wandering gypsies" (326). In India also their dreams are shattered. The following narrative gives a description of the plight of the victims in India:

At Amritsar they spent a couple of weeks in another refugee camp—this time for the in coming refugees. If they had imagined their troubles would be over the moment they reached Indian territory, they were sadly disillusioned. (...) They weren't told where they should go, only, move on, find a town you like and settle down. Whatever practical help they did receive was from private charitable trusts. The government itself was ill-prepared and ill-equipped to handle them. Nearly two months after independence, it still had not come to grips with the situation. (326)

They are unhappy not only about their own plight but also what the Hindus and Sikhs do to the Muslims. They witness the same atrocities—rape, arson, murder, abduction and naked parade of Muslim women. In India too, the fanatics are no less guilty than their counterparts in Pakistan. Hence, Lala Kanshi Ram says, "Whatever the Muslims did to us in Pakistan, we're doing it to them
here” (338). The novel objectively depicts both sides as guilty. It is evident in the novel when Lala Kanshi Ram says, “we are all equally guilty” (339). To some extent the novelist seems to be critical of Indians when Lala Kanshi Ram sees the doom of the Golden Temple if there is any Sikh out weeping for nakedly parading women. Because in Pakistan at least there was Hakim Sahib to feel pity for the women being nakedly paraded. He prays to God, “Oh, my Allah, Oh Rabbah, protect these women” (298).

In search of rehabilitation the family along with Sunanda leave for Delhi. During their journey Isherkaur gives birth to a child, which is a symbol of hope. The family has to try hard to resettle themselves in India. What is disappointing for Lala Kanshi Ram is that he finds Indian officials too, like their counterparts in Pakistan, are corrupt. Now Lala is a tired man, naked and defenseless.

The III part— ‘Aftermath’, which is the smallest part of the novel, depicts the result of the ‘storm’. On the personal level the family loses its identity. Walls are built between them and they are unable to communicate with each other. On the political level India loses Mahatma Gandhi, who fought for Hindu-Muslim amity. But the novel ends on a note of strong optimism. Here Chaman Nahal seems to assert that in spite of all suffering and loss, life has to continue. Sunanda’s sewing machine and “its wheel turning fast and its little needle moving up and down, murmuring and sewing through the cloth” (371) is the symbol of that continuity.

In the end the theme of identity determines the tone of the novel. Discussing the impact of the Partition Stephen Alter writes, “The problem is not so much an issue of geography but a more personal question of identity. Every border makes us a foreigner,
no matter who we are."17 Stephen's observation aptly describes the state of Lala Kanshi Ram's family. The division of the subcontinent makes them foreigners in Sialkot, the land where they had stayed for many years. When they come to India they try to find new roots and a new identity. Lala wants just "a name for himself once again—not fame, just a name" (350).

Sense of security and belonging form an integral part of one's psyche. One must have one's homeland and location. When one loses his/her homeland and one's life is dislocated, it results in alienation and raises the question of identity. The two world wars and the impact of the machine on modern life have accentuated the problem of identity and made it a significant theme in world literature today. By treating this theme of world-wide dimensions Azadi achieves universality and there by surpasses the other Partition novels. The novel is not just about Partition, but about the existential predicament of man—his dislocation, alienation and search for identity. When Lala Kanshi Ram comes to India he is like O'Neill's 'Hairy Ape' searching for his identity. However, the quest for identity in Azadi reminds us of that of Saadat Hasan Manto's short-story 'Toba Tek Singh', where the principal character Bishan Singh cannot decide where he belongs to and he chooses neither India nor Pakistan. The remarkable thing about Manto is that within the genre of the short story he has been successful in blending humour and the serious—the theme of identity.

"The author of Azadi presents therefore," writes Ramamurti, "a great historical event in terms of its full human implications seen and felt through the lives of a few individuals. The greater focus is on one particular family, the family of Lala Kanshi Ram. Here again
the author singles out two characters— father and son for acting as the centres of consciousness. They are Lala Kanshi Ram and Arun.18 As aptly noticed by Ramamurti, Chaman Nahal's Focus, while depicting the various aspects of the Partition, is Lala's family and the other companions. In depicting the effects of the Partition on private lives, Arun and Lala Kanshi Ram stand out as the most important individual characters in the novel. These are the two points of view in the novel.

Lala Kanshi Ram, a wholesale grain merchant in Sialkot, is an ardent member of the district 'Arya Samaj'. He is keenly aware of the political situation around him. He has a liking for Gandhian principles also. As an Aryasamajist he is neither a Hindu fanatic nor an extreme nationalist. He upholds the view that India must win freedom without the division of the subcontinent. His attitude towards India's Independence represents that of a sensible Indian influenced by the Gandhian heritage. His friendship with Chaudhri Barkat Ali is a symbol of Hindu-Muslim amity. These two characters are drawn from the Gandhian point of view. They are Gandhian men. They believe in Purna Swaraj— full freedom. They also believe that Indians need "self discipline and self-sacrifice" (105) to gain freedom. It is Gandhi's speech in the new resolution passed by the INC at Lahore that influences them:

As a basis for self-discipline Gandhi spoke of Hindu-Muslim unity, and as a basis for self-sacrifice he spoke of non-violence. (...) From today, he said, let each Muslim accept one Hindu as his 'brother', and the Hindu that Muslim as his brother. (...)
Immediately after the speech, and before the renewed shouts of ‘Mahatma Gandhi ki jai’ had died down, Chaudhri Barkat Ali turned towards Lala Kanshi Ram and said seriously: “You’re my brother from today.” (106-107)

The most important trait of Lala is his strong optimism. Although his hopes are shattered one after another due to the holocaust, he remains hopeful through out. He loses his shop in Sialkot, daughter, friends etc, but he never gives an “external expression to his grief” (212). But the impact of the Partition brings about a transformation in Lala Kanshi Ram. He both gains and loses. Psychologically he loses “the ability to communicate with his family” (369) and also physical dignity. The result of this is his ability to cease to hate. What he gains is a new spiritual identity.

The role of Arun is no less than that of Lala Kanshi Ram. If Lala is optimistic, Arun is neither optimistic nor pessimistic but realistic. Nahal seems to pay much attention to the character of Arun, though the principal character is Lala Kanshi Ram. In a way the novel traces the growth of Arun’s personality from boyhood to manhood. Three women play an important role in Arun’s life. They are his sister Madhu, his first love Nur and second love Chandani. According to Arun the Partition is a betrayal. It brings loss after loss in his life. It changes his personality. It affects his education, and his love. Arun loses his sister, who has “put him on the threshold of adult life” (188). Madhu’s death during the Partition riots comes as a shock to him. It is through Arun’s consciousness that the character of Madhu is portrayed. She does not come through independently. She is painted through the memory of Arun and her father. Her death at
the hands of fanatics is also reported through Dr. Chander Bhan and his wife. This technique avoids the novel ending up as a mere journalistic report of the violence.

The Partition separates Arun from his beloved Nur. Their love affair is of a typical romantic pattern that characterises the Partition novels. In this respect M.K. Naik raises a question, "Why must Hindu heroes of Partition novels fall, with monotonous regularity, in love with Muslim girls alone?" Chaman Nahal is a Hindu novelist. His hero, a Hindu, falls in love with a Muslim girl. Khushwant Singh is a Sikh novelist. He glorifies a Sikh hero who falls in love with a Muslim girl. What is more important is the novelist's intention to show how love lasts across two different faiths. The reason behind the portrayal of stereotyped love is that the novelist, as a humanist celebrates the value of love as against the communal barrier. Hence, in many Partition novels there is a cryptic contrast between love and violence. But Azadi treats the theme of love with a difference. The love affair between Arun and Nur is not glorified as it is in many of the Partition novels. There is no romantic implication behind this love. On the other hand it is realistically portrayed. Like Juggut in Train to Pakistan, Arun is not a romantic lover. He neither sacrifices his life for his beloved nor betrays his parents to stay in Sialkot. There is no shadow overhanging of either Romeo and Juliet or Heer Ranja. Arun and Nur are ordinary persons caught up in the virtex of a turmoil.

Arun does not see anything worthwhile in embracing Islam for the sake of Nur. He thinks that converting himself to Islam for Nur's sake is "a small price for the ecstasy of living" (96). When the country is divided, Arun is caught between his love towards his parents and
his love towards Nur. As a responsible son he prefers the former.
Arun says to Nur:

'You know I love you and will do anything for you. But soon it will cease to be a question of personal love. My parents are old, and they'll be hard hit if they are obliged to leave. I'll have to go with them to help resettle them somewhere.' (97)

As a consequence, they, knowing full well the necessity of their separation, part. It is plain beyond doubt that Arun never intended to deceive Nur. His love is genuine:

There was no essential lie in this, thought Arun. He did miss Nur and was unlikely to forget her ever. The loves of a man come and go, but the memory of the first love is always a little more tender than that of the other passions. And then the thought that the moment Munir left, it would be the end of whatever link he still possessed with Nur, saddened Arun considerably. (276)

As Arun loses his sister Madhu and Nur during the Partition, his love towards Chandani, a charwoman, blooms in the refugee camp. It is interesting to note that it happens in a state of chaos. According to M.K. Naik, in this relationship "the author appears to be aiming at killing with one stone the two birds of sex-interest and social reform." In the beginning Arun's proposal seems to be a manifestation of mere lust, because during the holocaust when Madhu's death has taken place in his family, and their whole mode of life has been changed, Arun looks at Chandani with desire. Later when he makes up his mind to marry Chandani in spite of her
poverty and caste the readers come to know that Arun's love towards Chandani is genuine and strong. What makes Arun fall in love with Chandani at that time is his pragmatic approach to life. Arun is a practical boy. He finds some meaning in suffering. He seems to believe that order has no meaning without chaos and *vice versa*. Moreover, he believes "in the continuity of life" and "continuity of the will in the being of things" (207). Thus, Nahal depicts inter-communal love as between Nur and Arun, and inter-caste/class love as between Chandani and Arun.

Unfortunately the Partition takes Chandani too away from Arun. The Muslims abduct her in the third attack on the convoy. Arun misses Chandani so much that the real loss for him is neither Sialkot, as it is for his father, nor his first love Nur, but Chandani. It becomes very clear when the novelist describes Arun's mental state:

> He felt extremely agitated and fidgety. Communal or mass destiny ceased to worry him. Where was he heading— he, Arun? Nur and Chandani he was leaving behind. Nur was only the beginning, he had walked only the foothills with her. But Chandani had taken him up the slopes to the summit. What would he be without her, without his hamrahi? (322)

In a way Arun is an extension of his father. In spite of misery and loss he restores himself to the rhythm of early life. It brings so much misery upon him that it disturbs his education. He loses his sister and lovers. His journey from Sialkot to Delhi is fraught with suffering. Any ordinary boy of the time would have turned a disillusioned man or a rebel against the system or a lunatic. None of that sort of change happens to him. Instead he continues his education in Delhi and thus finds a new identity:
He had found a new identity for himself, an identity which had partly been thrust on him by the surge of events, and which partly he had worked out for himself metaphysically. He did not want to give that identity up. (233)

That he finds a new identity when he emerges from the fire of Partition, and that he does not turn out hostile towards the Muslim community or end up a disillusioned boy may raise some doubts as far as the character portrayal of Arun is concerned. The philosophic mien and maturity of thinking ascribed to him are beyond his age. But in a work of art it becomes probable if it is made plausible. If Thomas Hardy in his Jude the Obscure (1986) can make Little Father Time credible, why should Arun in Azadi seem incredible? By and large, it is Arun’s character which makes the novel a poignant and moving narrative. It saves the novel from being just a saga of human suffering during the Partition. It gives strength to the fictional virtues of the novel. And thus takes the novel beyond a mere journalistic report of the Partition.

Due to the impact of the Partition the whole mode of family life undergoes a seachange. As G.S. Amur says, “The theme of the transformation of character by political events is shared by (...) Chaman Nahal’s Azadi (1975)”21 The characters undergo transformation— Lala Kanshi Ram loses his physical dignity and gains spiritual identity. So he ceases to hate. For him the Partition is a failure of man. On the other hand Prabharani develops a hatred towards the Muslim community. But Arun neither ceases to love nor begins to hate. He simply continues to live with reality and restores himself to the rhythm of life by joining a school in Delhi.
The transformation that the Partition brings on in the family is their inability to communicate with each other. Here the configuration of Lala Kanshi Ram and Arun as central characters in the novel to demonstrate the effects of the Partition is interesting and important. Lala represents the middle class and a middle aged man of the time. He is a link between the pre-Partition days and the post-Partition days. Arun is a young man, who is beginning to expose himself to the world. He represents the younger generation of the time deeply and disturbingly affected by the Partition.

In spite of their suffering these two characters do not express a pessimistic view of life. As a novelist of affirmation Nahal depicts them in a positive light without distorting the credibility of the historical truth.

THE IMPACT OF PARTITION ON PUBLIC LIFE: TREATMENT OF COMMUNAL RELATIONSHIP

One of the important aspects of the Partition novels is the portrayal of the impact of Partition on public life—how the heterogeneous Indian society has been divided and how the Hindus and Muslims lived together amicably during pre-Partition days and how this relationship was put to an abrupt end during the Partition days.

*Azadi* is one of the few novels to treat this aspect of the Partition, though its main pre-occupation is the individual world of Lala Kanshi Ram and his family. Nahal himself says, “the impetus behind” his work “is societal rather than metaphysical,” and in this respect he is “greatly touched by the works of Munshi Premchand.” The local issue in *Azadi* is the communal problem. The Hindu-Muslim
relationship in Indian society of the time has been represented through Lala's family relationship with Chaudhri Barkat Ali and Ghani.

Before the announcement of the Partition plan, life as depicted in the novel is so smooth that different communities drank water from the same pond and they exchanged things “always with smiles on both sides” (53). But the Partition poisons their relationship. The following narration shows how the relationship existed before the Partition:

So there was utter harmony among them, and the fact that Ghani was a Muslim and Lala Kanshi Ram a high-caste Hindu never entered their heads. They spoke a common tongue, wore identical clothes, and responded to the weather, to the heat and the first rains, in an identical manner. If they worshipped different gods, it was in the privacy of their homes, except when Ghani made a spectacle of himself by joining Tazia marches at the time of Muharram once a year and beating his breast in public. But then, didn’t Lala Kanshi Ram make a spectacle of himself too, when he joined other lalas of the bazaar in throwing colour on others during Holi? No, thought Lala Kanshi Ram, they were not Muslims or Hindus, they were Punjabis— or at least they were till the other day. (54)

But after the Partition the entire situation changes. This is represented through Ghani’s relationship with Lala Kanshi Ram. Compare the following narration with the above quoted one:

Those days had passed and Abdul Ghani was no longer friendly with the Hindu businessmen of the bazaar.
(...)

But the Muslim League had slowly made him aware of the threat to him in a free Hindu India. It was not a question of his personal views; the League or Jinnah Sahib knew better. They said, view your Hindu neighbour with suspicion, and he did that. They said there should be a Pakistan, and he shouted for Pakistan.

Thus, the political events corrode the communal relationship. Here Nahal objectively depicts the socioeconomic and political psychology of the time. Economically the Hindus were strong, and they dominated the trade. In the novel Lala is economically better off than Ghani, who has a small business. To this cleavage politicians added by injecting the bad idea into the minds of the Muslims that their liberty and rights were being snatched away by the Hindus.

If Ghani represents the darker side of the communal relationship, Chaudhri Barkat Ali's relationship with Lala's family represents a progressive and ideal harmony between the two communities. They are like brothers. The Partition does not corrupt their relationship. Nahal depicts Chaudhri as an ideal Muslim:

More than anything else, he (Barkat Ali) regarded himself and his family as good Muslims because they believed in the unity of all religions. There was not a single ayat, a single verse, in the Quran which preached otherwise God is great and Muhammad is his prophet. But the same God is the God of the Hindus as well, and if they preferred to worship him in another form that was their business. It was not for Barkat Ali to go around correcting the world. His job was to live the life God had given him in friendship and love. And the Hindu next door
was as much his brother, more his brother than an unknown Muslim living elsewhere. (102-103)

This must be the ideal attitude of a Muslim. In his approach Chaudhri Barkat Ali reminds us of professor Mohammed Sarwar in Shashi Tharoor's *Riot* (2001). Were most of the Muslims like Chaudhri Barkat Ali and Mohammed Sarwar, there would not have been chaos during the Partition.

Nahal does not depict socio-communal life as if there had been a complete collapse or rupture. Chaudhri's help to Lala's family, Hakim Sahib's praying for the Hindu women and the help offered by the Jassar Muslims to the Hindu and Sikh refugees—all these represent the positive side of the communal relations. However, Nahal does not idealize the Hindu-Muslim unity. He shows the other side of it also in Ghani's relationship. Ghani and Rahmat-Ullah-Khan represent the negative side of the communal relationship. According to Nahal, it seems, neither of the communities is wholly responsible for the breach of relationship. Both share the guilt equally. In this way Nahal's treatment of the communal relationship is unbiased, fair and objective.

**HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS**

Nahal has a sense of historicity, which is evident in the novel. The novel was published in the year 1975. Almost three decades give him a vantage point of view and sufficient time to do historical research on the event. Perhaps this distance seems to have helped him to achieve objectivity. Being historically conscious, he traces the historical reasons for the Partition. Also he refers to historical incidents—the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857; Quit India Resolution (1942);
the Second World War of 1939-45; Jinnah's role before 1944; Gandhi's release from prison (1944); the Simla Conference (1945); the British Cabinet Mission plan (1946); the Third of June plan of 1947; time limit for India's independence (1948); the Viceroy's advancement of date of India's freedom from 1948 to 1947 etc. The novel refers to the major historical events of the 40s. The suffering the family undergoes during the Partition is representative of the agony of hundreds of Hindu, Sikh and Muslim families of the time. Historically the novel gives us a feel of being authentic.

_Azadi_ occupies an important place as an outstanding political novel in the history of Indian literature in English. In fact, Nahal's novels are in the forefront of the tradition of the Indian political novel in English. Almost all his novels borrow material from politics. They are written against the backdrop of pre-Independence, Independence and post-Independence phases. As Nahal himself says one of his concerns is "the political theme of our freedom movement."²³

_Azadi_ could not be other than a political novel, because, as K.C. Belliappa says, "politics cannot be kept out of a novel that deals with partition."²⁴ The novel discusses the high political drama of the Partition, which involved the roles of the British Raj, the Congress and the Muslim League.

As a Partition novel _Azadi_ is one of the few novels to give a picture of the British role. The readers come to know about the British through Lala Kanshi Ram's views and through the character of Bill Davidson. Lala Kanshi Ram's opinion about the British also form an important part of the political aspect of the novel. In the opinion of K. Radha, Lala's attitude towards the Britishers is
ambivalent.\textsuperscript{25} Rather, he has mixed feelings towards the British Raj. As a sensible man he looks at things from both sides. He admires some of the qualities of colonial rule but at the same time he is highly critical of their drawbacks. The following paragraph shows Lala’s balanced attitude towards the British:

His finest moments of elation came when the news pertained to the British royal family. Like any other Indian he had a prejudice against the British (...) . He hated them for what they had done to his country and wanted Azadi (...) .

But deeper down, he also admired the British— in any case he enjoyed the safety of the British Raj and hugged it lovingly. (17-18)

Lala fairly admires safety and peace under the British Raj while condemning their colonial politics. He is neither an anglophile nor an enemy of the British. Lala Kanshi Ram's views on the British are mixed. They throw light upon both sides of the colonial rule in India. Like any other Indian he too hates them for, "it is the English who were the biggest hand in this butchery"(148) and they are" the real villains"(141). At the same time he appreciates peace and security provided by British rule and enjoys Hurrah parade. The novel points an accusing finger at the British role in the Partition. Thus, Lala's views serve to show the double-edged role of the British in India.

In most of the Partition novels British characters hardly make an appearance. Because it was a time (end of colonial rule) when almost all British officials had left India. In Azadi, the character of Bill Davidson, who is “against imperialism” and “foreign possessions”
(117), is objectively portrayed. Bill Davidson without hesitation accuses the viceroys of his country. According to him “Wavell mismanaged things; or at least didn’t quite handle”(123) the situation. Through this character the novelist gives the British point of view about India’s freedom:

According to the British the Indians must arrive at their freedom slowly. They must get there by stages. They must first educate themselves to be free. He knew that line of reasoning smacked of hypocrisy. All the handicaps were nothing compared to the exhilaration of freedom. To be free, to be left alone to sort out their problems, to breathe, exist and function not in fear but in joy- what preparation was necessary for that? And the British used all these arguments only to prolong their stay here- not in the interest of India, but in their own interest. (119)

Nahal condemns the political logic behind the Partition-plan and the mismanagement of it by both the governments, which resulted in a holocaust. According to Nahal “historically, politically, ethically and morally Partition was wrong.”26 The novel very rightly questions the relevance of the Two-nation-theory as the basis of Pakistan, and the absurdity behind the question of minority.

How do you cut a country in two, where at every level the communities were so deeply mixed? There was a Muslim in every corner of India where there was a Hindu. And then so soon, at such short notice? The broadcast had said nothing at all about the fate of the minorities in the two new countries. If the logic behind the creation of Pakistan was accepted, there was no place
for a minority, anywhere. Pakistan wouldn't solve the problem of a minority, it was going to create new minorities—minorities which would be hounded out with a vengeance. And what of the civil service to which they belonged? And what of the army? How were they going to cut up the machinery of the government? There were Hindus and Muslims at every level of that machinery! (85)

What is important about the novel is that it not only questions the wisdom of the Partition plan but also seems to suggest that the Cabinet Mission Plan of 1946 was a better alternative which could have saved the unity of India. As Mr. Bill Davidson says, “The Cabinet Mission plan of the last year was the best plan that could have been devised for the future of India”(122).

The novel is critical of the Congress and the Muslim League leaders. Implicitly it throws light upon how the Congress, in fact Gandhi, gave undue importance to Jinnah and how the vague idea of Pakistan became a reality:

(...) And the Congress leaders—what trust could you put in them? Didn’t Gandhiji and Rajaji themselves as much as offer Pakistan to Jinnah in 1944? They were the ones who put the idea in his head, if you ask me. Take a section in the East of India and a section in the west, they said. Only let’s have a common defence and foreign policy. Until then Jinnah had talked of Pakistan, but he did not quite know what he meant by it. Gandhi, by going to him, not only gave Pakistan a name, he gave Jinnah a name too. (...) If the Congress would give this much, why not go for complete separation? (40)
The most important characteristic feature of *Azadi* as a political novel is its representation of political figures of the time— Jinnah, Nehru and Gandhi. The fictional characters in the novel build the picture of leaders. They do not appear as individual characters in flesh and blood. Even Lala Kanshi Ram tries to meet Nehru in Delhi, but the meeting never takes place. According to Lala Kanshi Ram "Jinnah and Nehru were villains enough" (211). Sardar Niranjan Singh, a Sikh extremist, wants to “hack Nehru to pieces”(66). There is a description of Nehru’s leadership, his success and failure on pages 63 and 64.

But the novel pays more attention to the portrayal of Gandhi than others. It is done mainly through the dialogues of different characters. From beginning to end Gandhi is discussed as much as the issue of Partition. The novel presents two types of opinions about Gandhi. First, Gandhi’s failure to avoid the Partition. Second, Gandhi as a messenger of Hindu-Muslim unity. As every Indian of the time expected, the characters in the novel too expect that Gandhi would never accept the Partition plan. After the Partition Bibi Amarvati blames Gandhi as the person responsible for the Partition. Even British historians like Penderel Moon target Gandhi. However, in *Azadi* this is the opinion of a minor character like Bibi Amarvati. Her understanding of politics is superficial. She has no political insight like Lala and Arun. Certainly accusing Gandhi is a historical fallacy, because, “Gandhi was the most helpless man in the whole sordid drama (Partition), never a party to it, yet victim to the charges that he did not assert himself to avoid it. While the prime responsibility of Partition rested with Jinnah, part responsibility of it lay with the British and the Congress high command for their collective inability in finding an alternative solution to division.”
According to Lala Kanshi Ram Gandhi is not only a politician but "a saint" (48). He himself is a Gandhian hero. Under the influence of Gandhi he and Chaudhuri Barkat Ali become friends and continue almost as brothers. Their relationship is a symbol of the Gandhian idea of Hindu-Muslim harmony. Even Munir and Arun get angry when Bill Davidson calls Gandhi, "bloody Gandhi" (117). As the novel shows, for Gandhi 'Azadi' means "self-discipline and "self-sacrifice" (105), which can be achieved through Hindu-Muslim unity. Here Gandhi is depicted as a harbinger of Hindu-Muslim unity. The novel pays so much attention to Gandhi that it can be called a Gandhian novel. In the novel, pages 104 to 107 are wholly devoted to Gandhi. Lala and Ali can be looked upon as Gandhian characters. Here and there many characters refer to Gandhi. In the very beginning the novel refers to Gandhi and it ends with the assassination of Gandhi. The ending of the novel, which marks the murder of Gandhi, depicts the irony of Indian political history of the time. The irony is that the man who advocated Hindu-Muslim amity was killed by a Hindu fanatic during communal disturbances. Gandhi was a much misunderstood figure. "He was miss-understood by both parties," writes Padma Ramkrishnan, "Muslims resented his so-called partiality to the Hindus while the latter charged him of appeasement of the Muslims." 29

However, the novel does not romanticize Gandhi's personality. Instead, it gives a realistic picture of Gandhi. As Nahal himself acknowledges 'Gandhi is a major influence" on him. His trilogy about Gandhi— "The Crown and the Loincloth (1981), The Salt of life (1991), The Triumph of Tricolour (1993)— is the best testimony.

_Azadi_ is a Partition novel of the highest order. It not only deals with various aspects of the Partition— refugee problem, theme of exile
and loss of identity, but also renders the political events as they occurred during the Partition with a sense of history and objectivity.

While writing *Azadi* Nahal seems to have the implication of the achievement of Independence in his mind. He has entitled the novel *Azadi*—'independence', instead of a Hindi word like, 'Vibhajan'—Partition. India's Partition and Independence are coincidences. The title throws light upon the ironical overtones of the novel. On being asked if he sees any irony in the title 'Azadi', Nahal says, "yes, I do. I firmly believe that until we respect the lowest of low, we can never be really free. Freedom has no meaning until we have learnt to respect the humble and the downtrodden. Lala Kanshi Ram in my novel is a symbol of that dignity and respect for human beings that I demand of every free man."³¹ By this title the novelist expresses his venom and fire over the achievement of India's political freedom at the expense of Partition. There is a sense of achievement in Independence but it ended up in the tragedy of Partition. Nahal is of the opinion that political freedom should be endowed with dignity and self-respect. But India achieved this political freedom at the cost of Partition. The consequence of this political freedom is a holocaust of an unprecedented scale and unfold human suffering. Nahal in an interview said, "One of the things in my mind was to convey the meaning of freedom in the larger context. To me political freedom is meaningful only when it brings with it the freedom of the spirit and mind, the freedom of happiness."³²

Apart from the title, the epigraph chosen from Rabindranath Tagore sets the ironical tone of the novel.
Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;

where knowledge is free;

where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;

where words come out from the depth of truth...

Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit...

Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake. (epigraph)

But the irony is that the country awoke into that heaven of freedom where the world had been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls (emphasis added). This was not the kind of ‘freedom’ our poets did sing about, nor our people expected.

Azadi stands out as one of the best fictional representations of the Partition in the history of Indian literature, because of its universality and its successful transformation of the politico-historical material into a work of art. As a novelist of affirmation Nahal tries to see order out of chaos. Accordingly, he ends the novel on a note of strong optimism. The novel is also remarkable as an intensely moving human saga of suffering caused by displacement and loss of identity. It presents an artistic tale of how man is but a victim of the forces of history.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


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19 M.K. Naik, History of Indian English Literature 232.

20 M.K. Naik, History of Indian English Literature 232.


23 Chaman Nahal, "Interview with Chaman Nahal" 42.


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IV. SHARF MUKADDAM'S *WHEN FREEDOM CAME*: COMMUNAL VIRUS CORRUPTS RURAL RELATIONS

Sharf Mukaddam's *When Freedom Came* (1982) is one of the Partition novels neglected by most of the critics, though it is worth a serious look. It is remarkable for its compactness, its emphasis on communal politics and the realistic picture of the disintegration of social relationships in urban and rural India of the time.

The novel, one of the belated responses to the Partition, neither deals with the refugee problem, border crossing, exile, alienation and rehabilitation, nor does it depict gory incidents of the Partition—killing and rape. Its focus is on the 40s—how life in India during the pre-Partition days underwent a change—especially, how the city experience charged with communalism corrupted the rural experience, where smooth communal relations existed among different communities. The novel gives a contrastive picture of a city and a village. Historically what happened was that communal frenzy was started in cities like Delhi, Bombay and Calcutta and then spread to villages. To articulate this aspect of the Partition, the novelist confines his canvas from the pre-Partition days to the official division of the subcontinent in August 1947. And he has chosen Bombay as a typical city to exemplify the communal experience in cities and Devnagar, as a typical village in the Konkan region of Maharashtra which becomes a victim of the communal divide due to the coming of the city people, to represent the rural experience. The human thread is provided by the character of Fakir, and Shankar; the former, a Muslim boy who is transformed into a narrow minded fanatic during his stay in Bombay, is as fine a fictional creation as Mulk Raj Anand's
Bhaka and Munnu, and the latter, a Hindu boy, is a secular nationalist, and a foil to the former.

At the personal level, *When Freedom Came*, narrates the story of Fakir— the development of his mind and character from boyhood to manhood, his political participation, and his homecoming with some urban people due to the communalistic climate of Bombay.

As a small boy Fakir, who leaves Devnagar with his uncle Jaffer for Bombay "to earn his living, to be his own master, dependent on no one," is employed as a servant in the house of Seth Rajab Ali Lakdiwalla, a Khoja and a Shia Muslim, according to the recommendation of uncle Jaffer. In this family Fakir for the first time hears the name of Jinnah and begins to attend the night school where Islamic theology is taught. In the meantime Fakir is found guilty of misusing the master's money to present a gift to his lover Nargis, one of the daughters of the Seth, and is caught by the family while kissing her.

Then Jaffer fobs him on to the Collector's house, where also Fakir is dismissed for hitting the collector's son. Then he finds his job at the restaurant of Behram Seth, a homosexual, who wants to use Fakir for his purpose one night. About this very time uncle Jaffer passes away and Fakir is left alone.

Then circumstances— the influence of communal Muslims like Inquilab Murdabadi, a poet; Vakil sahib, a lawyer; night school teacher and the fear of Behram Seth— compel him to join the MNG (Muslim National Guard). The Bombay climate slowly fosters an extreme fanatic in him and he begins to find his identity with fundamentalist or
extremist Islamic ideals. He becomes “a volunteer in the Muslim League, a worker in the cause of Islam, a defender of its glory and way of life, a repository of its honour” (26). At this time Shankar, Fakir’s village friend, too comes to Bombay and stays with his uncle Kesho Appa, an RSS worker. Shankar, a secular nationalist, condemns the activities of the Hindu and Muslim organizations and tries to convince Fakir about the unhealthy development that is taking place in him.

In the days of his fanatical attachment to the political organization Fakir tries to earn his livelihood again by working as a waiter in the restaurant of Murad Seth, whose wife Gulbadan attracts him and their illicit relationship ends up in her pregnancy. Being afraid of Murad Seth, Fakir leaves for his village. When he went to Bombay Fakir was an innocent village boy, but when he returns to his native village now he carries the virus of communal fanaticism— the legacy of Bombay. When Fakir comes to Devanagar he is forced into a marriage. As a Muslim leaguer Fakir and his Bombay men corrupt the village atmosphere which gets electrified with the coming of RSS volunteers, like Kesho Appa from Bombay. These city men disturb the village atmosphere during the staging of a play based on the Ramayan and during the Moharum procession. The atmosphere charged with communalism gives rise to riots. All the persons involved including Fakir are jailed. While in jail, Fakir fancies himself going to Karachi, though he is not happy with Jinnah’s leadership, because, he tries to find a:

(... logical answer to the queries posed by the political turmoil. Were not the Hindus and Muslims each
a separate nation? Jinnah Sahib had said so. There why
were the Muslims left behind in India being asked to stay
on as loyal Indian citizens? (239)

At the end Shankar persuade Fakir to stay with his mother
and wife in India. The novel ends on a note of reconciliation and
optimism.

The novelist employs the mode of comparison and contrast.
Bombay, a representative of Indian cities of the time, is compared
and contrasted with Devnagar village. The novel is explicit in showing
that villages in India were less communal during the Partition and
the impact of the Partition reached villages rather late. That is what
happens to Khushwant Singh's Mano Mazra in *Train to Pakistan*. The
journey of Fakir from Devnagar to Bombay is a journey from rusticity,
innocence and righteousness to urbanity, exploitation, fanaticism and
immorality. When Fakir goes to Bombay, the city atmosphere breeds
evil in him. There all seem to be communal. The atmosphere is so
charged with communalism that in the very beginning Sethji asks
Fakir to drop his father's name and his last name— Bhikoo Ultay—
since they sound Hindu. Fakir is so innocent a boy that, like every
Indian villager of the time, he has heard only of Gandhi's name, not
of Jinnah. His initiation into communal politics and acquaintance
with Jinnah's name take place in Lakadiwala's house where the
educated daughters of the family teach him about Islamic ideals.

The epigram quoted in the beginning of the novel itself shows
that the author is critical of cities:

What we get in the city is not life, but what someone
else tells us about life— David Grayson.
The people with whom Fakir comes into contact in Bombay influence him and leave a deep impact on his personality. Night school teacher Habib master, Inquilab Moradabadi, Vakil Sahib, Mehmood—all city men corrupt Fakir's personality. Organizations like the MNG and the RSS also are city products. The novel throws light on inter-communal relations—Shia and Sunni. Fakir in his letter to his mother writes:

"The Khojas simply love eating. In fact I suspect that's why they have so many religious festivals—they invariably develop into banquets and fairs and community eating bouts. They are of the Shia sect of Muslims, and although they inwardly hate all Sunnis like me, they're a very shrewd and cultured people, devoted and dedicated to the cause of their own communal interests." (48)

The city atmosphere is so much depraved that the elites communalize languages too. Inquilab Mordabad thinks that Urdu is the language of Muslims. He believes that the future of the urdu language lies "in the realization of a homeland for Muslims" (65). And Nargis thinks that regional languages like Marathi are the languages of Hindus:

Once Nargis actually chided him (Fakir) for knowing Marathi. "How can you, a Muslim, learn the Hindu language and still claim to be a Muslim?" (45)

So the novel can be read as the story of conversion of a simple village boy into a communal fanatic in a city. Having noticed the transformation in Fakir, Shanker wonders and says: 'Oh, Lord Shiva,' (...) 'how this great city changes people!'

(142) There is an element of
mild satire, when Jaffer says that the philosophy one has to practise in the city is “tell the truth only if it helps you”(26). Thus, Sharf Mukaddam exposes the canker in a city atmosphere which makes a village boy not only a thief and a baddie but also a narrow minded fanatic.

As against life in the city, the novel depicts village life as peaceful and harmonious where people of different communities share activities in their routine life. When Shankar’s mother passes away in childbirth it is Fakir’s mother who offers to suckle him. A Muslim mother feeding a Hindu boy illustrates the communal harmony and co-operation prevailing between different communities in the village. The novel also gives the example how the different castes in the village historically participated in each other’s religious ceremonies. The novel narrates a small anecdote:

Legend had it that when the Brahmins started constructing the rambling temple of Dev Bappa, a few furlongs away across the river, the walls collapsed every night, to the exasperation of the Hindus. Finally Dev Bappa, the deity of Devnagar, told the head priest in a dream that the temple walls would stand only after the Muslim saint Abdullah’s shrine was built. The Hindus promptly constructed the Muslim saint’s durgah. Due perhaps to this fable, the Hindus too when passing by joined their palms in reverence to this saint. (212)

This event holds the mirror up to the Hindu-Muslim amity. The collapsing of the walls of the temple is symbolic of the collapse of Indian unity without this kind of communal harmony.
The novelist gives a contrastive picture of village and city celebrations of festivals through Shankar's eyes:

It was his first Ganesh Chaturthi away from home. In Devnagar, his father would buy a small Ganesh and everyone in the neighbourhood would visit to admire it; Hindus, Muslims, Brahmins, fisher folk; even untouchables were invited to have a 'darshan,' albeit from a distance. Here, in the city which boasted itself to be cosmopolitan, secular, a melting pot of varying faiths, castes and creeds, it was all a purely Hindu affair. Here, life was strictly communal. Each caste and sub-caste had its own exclusive locality which was closed to others. (167)

After having gone to Bombay Shankar is fed up with the city atmosphere. So he wishes to be in the village;

(...) instead of being exposed to and absorbed by the trappings of the city. He longed for the simple, uncomplicated life of the village, where a Hindu was a good Hindu, a Muslim a good Muslim, each a good human being with fellow-feeling, sensitive to the pain he might cause to another, careful not to show any unkindness. A good Hindu. A good Muslim. Good neighbours (...). (168)

The coming of the city people disturbs the goodness of Devnagar. The presence of Bombay men— the R.S.S. workers and the M.N.G. volunteers— corrupts the village atmosphere. The Muslims along with Fakir disturb the staging of a play based on The Ramayana and the Hindus disturb the Moharum procession in the village. The socio-religious activities give rise to the riot in the village. Thus, the novelist
is impartial in giving both sides of the picture—both urban and rural, objectively. He does not attempt to idealize the picture of the village. There is a realistic portrayal of public life in the novel. All the characters in the city and village seem historically authentic as their manners and attitudes are typical of the time.

Also, the novel can be read as the story of a village boy's initiation to communal politics. The fictional creation of Fakir is as fine as that of Mulk Raj Anand's Baka and Munnu. Like Anand's heroes, Fakir is a subaltern character who is exposed to a different world that is remote from his early background. The protagonist of the novel is Fakir and the three parts of the novel are named after him—book one is entitled 'Fakir Bhikoo Ultay'; book two, 'Fakieh Devnagari'; book three, 'Brother Fakir'. Each book gives different accounts of Fakir's personality. When Fakir leaves Devnagar he is an innocent village boy, unaware of the political and communal situation of the country. At that time he represents his village. When he goes to Bombay he acquires city vices where one of the fashions is to change one's rustic name. Fakir becomes Fakieh. Gulbadan, his illicit companion, gives him this name. It symbolically suggests that the rural boy is transformed into an urbanized man. The third book portrays Fakieh becoming the same old Fakir. The relationship between Shankar and Fakir ends up in brotherhood. Here the novelist suggests that brotherhood can be achieved between Hindus and Muslims in the country.

All the people with whom Fakir comes into contact in Bombay influence him. The Khoja family is communal; the night school teacher Habib master teaches him lessons of fanaticism rather than secular brotherhood; poet Inquilab Moradabadi and Vakil Saheeb currupt
his mind. Finally, he takes part in politics by becoming a member of the M.N.G. He becomes “a volunteer of Muslim League, a worker in the cause of Islam, a defender of its glory and way of life, a repository of its honour” (126). Fakir has every reason to support his cause of Islam and a separate state for Muslims. He firmly believes that the MNG protects Muslims from the RSS. He has rosy ideas about the dawn of a new state exclusively for Muslims:

“The British can leave after the Muslims have carved out their own free land,” Fakir retorted heatedly, “A land where Muslims can pray in the mosque without Hindus playing music and making a racket outside. A land where the Hindu won’t slaughter a pig just to annoy the Muslims, whose religion prohibits eating pork; where tinselly idols will not be worshipped; where the Muslims will not be dominated by the Hindus, and treated like untouchables by the caste Hindus, (...). (140)

Thus, Bombay city corrupts his mind completely. When he comes to Devnagar Fakir brings the communal virus with him and tries to change the Muslim way of life in his village. He is held responsible for communal disturbances in the village. The village Mutawalli accuses Fakir:

“You there, Bhikoo Ultay’s son. You... you poisoned the village tranquillity. You alone must bear the responsibility for befouling the peace of our community. You started the trouble with the Hindus. You alone are responsible for the Muharram unrest (...). (233)

But in the end Fakir gets disappointed. Because the Two-nation theory of Jinnah neglected the state of the Muslims remaining in India:
The realization of Pakistan not only held no benefit for the Muslims in India, it was threatening to cause them endless tragedy. And this was the cause he, Fakir, and millions of other Muslims had championed, pledged their lives for, given their allegiance to, without hesitation. Now Jinnah Sahib was asking them all to remain where they were and be slaughtered like teeming flocks of sacrificial goats to satiate the thirst of a vengeful majority. (239)

Like Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column*, this novel shows the limitation of Jinnah's proposal for a separate homeland for the Muslims on the basis of religion.

Thus, the novel realistically depicts the journey of Fakir from village to city and from city back to village and the vissitudes he encounters. Through the character of Fakir the novelist emphasises that the city atmosphere is harmful. His adventures in Bombay and Devnagar resemble those of the picaresque hero of Fielding. The creation of Shankar offers an interesting contrast to Fakir. He is a virtuous boy, a loyal and secular nationalist, though he goes to the city and is forced to be an R.S.S. member by his uncle Kesho Appa. Shankar and Fakir had been bosom friends in Devnagar. When Fakir is introduced to the urban way of life in Bombay, his attitude towards Shankar undergoes a change, whereas Shankar tries to continue the same old friendship with him. Shankar is a sensible boy who knows what the real heritage of India is— a mosaic of different cultures, unity in diversity. When the great Sanghachalak of the R.S.S. tries to arouse the feelings of the Hindus, Shankar's comments about Indian history and culture throws light upon his mind and Character:
"I don't think the Mughals conquered the Hindus. They may have conquered India, but not the Hindus. I think we Hindus conquered them; with our capacity to absorb other cultures and civilizations (...). Their monuments, their architecture, their poetry are shining examples of what a willing mixture of two cultures can achieve. (...) We Hindus cannot absorb their (Britishers) culture, nor can we influence it. (...) Our real enemies, Guruji, are not the Muslims, but our own stupidity and ignorance in failing to recognize how we have been duped and divided by our present overlords". (131)

And Shankar's views on religion, especially Islam, are equally sensible though he is a Hindu: "(...) Islam means 'peace', Fakir." Shankar, who had found his voice, tells his friend "Perhaps no other religion teaches peaceful intercourse among different communities as Islam does (...)” (139). If Fakir believes in fanaticism, Shankar does in tolerance and co-operation. For Fakir “A Muslim is born to rule” (140). Hence, he thinks of a separate nation. Fakir does not feel that he missed the village, which is a symbol of peace and unity, whereas Shankar is nostalgic about his native place. According to Shankar the task before Indians— both Hindus and Muslims— is “to face the British as one nation and get them out of India”(140). For Fakir every non-Muslim is a Kafir. But according to Shankar “Kafirs are those who unwittingly usurp their own faith: the fanatics who try to impose the supremacy of their own religion on others (...)” (141). Throughout the novel it is evident that the novelist uses the character of Shankar as his mouth-piece to celebrate secular values, co-operation, brotherhood, unity, and humanistic vision. For instance,
Shankar's plea to fellow Hindus and Muslim brethren very much sounds like the novelist's message to both the communities:

However, while we may well advise the Muslims to be more discreet, we the Hindus cannot escape the greater responsibility. We are the majority community, and like elder brothers must act with more broad-mindedness towards our younger brothers, the Muslims. We have been tolerant, I know, but tolerance is not enough. We must understand their problems, their doubts and suspicions, (...).

"As for the Muslims, I have this to say. Don't ever forget that you are sons of this soil. No matter what dreams you may have about a land of milk and honey elsewhere, it will still be an alien land, not your home". (226)

Thus, the novel gives a universal message of brotherhood and Hindu-Muslim amity.

HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

The novelist has shown a keen awareness of politics and history. The period of almost three and a half decades has provided a proper historical perspective and distance. It can be read as a political novel because of the protagonist's involvement in the politics of the 40's; the objective portrayal of the political climate and the role of the RSS and the MNG in molding the communal atmosphere.

As a political novel on the Partition the most important feature of *When Freedom Came* is the portrayal of Jinnah. He does not figure in the novel as a character with flesh and blood. But his presence is felt nevertheless. The novel meticulously traces the development of
the Two-nation theory and the role of Jinnah in making his dream of a separate state for Muslims a reality:

The novel theory of 'Muslims are a Nation' was denounced by the Congresswallas as fascist mouthings–but Jinnah was now acknowledged by all Muslims, be they Sunni or Shia, (...) the uncrowned king of the Mussalmans of the land. The malicious Congress papers wrote many unkind things about the dynamic Quaid-e-Azam. They not only attacked his unique policies but his person too; but now he had the destiny of millions in his hand; and their unquestioned loyalty. His adversaries argued that he was not a man of the masses– but now he had an almost unanimous Muslim mandate for Pakistan. (148)

The picture of Jinnah that the novel gives is implicitly negative. He is portrayed as a leader misguiding the Indian Muslims. In doing so the novel condemns the logic of the Two-nation-theory of Jinnah. The novel projects him as a leader who has deceived the Muslims living in India for his political power.

(...) Jinnah Sahib's parting massage to the Muslims left behind in India was they should remain where they were and become loyal citizens of India. There was no guarantee as to their safety and security, nor any suggestion of what their fate was going to be. A minority scattered all over the land among the masses of Hindus and Sikhs thirsting for vengeance? What a travesty of justice! what a cruel political paradox. (238-239)

This exposes the hollowness of the Two-nation-theory put forward by Jinnah, which ignored the state of the Muslims remaining in India. It is one of the bitter ironies of the political history of India.
A close reading of the novel reveals that the political game played by Jinnah was the dangerous mixing of religion with politics which resulted in a communal holocaust. The advocate of a separate Islamic nation had never been an ideal Muslim. Religion was used by him as a weapon to achieve political power. It was a weapon used to exploit the mind of the common man like Fakir. It is evident when Shankar says to Fakir: "(...) you can't help feeling that today's Muslim in our country is being misguided. You can't help feeling that perhaps religion could have been better used than is being done now. The extremist Hindu leaders, too, are shamefully exploiting their followers" (139).

The most important aspect of the political side of Partition that, as in Bhisham Sahni's *Tamas* (1974), the novel portrays is the mischievous role of organizations like the R.S.S. and the M.N.G. In the novel the treatment of both the organizations is objective. The novel does not support either of these. Both are portrayed as corrupting agencies. The members of the R.S.S.– Kesho Appa, Baburao, and the members of the M.N.G.– Fakir, Mahamod and others are portrayed as villains disturbing the social atmosphere. But the novel lacks the intensity of religious fundamentalism that is portrayed in *Tamas*. However, the novel does realistically evoke the historical atmosphere of the 40's. All the characters are representatives of the time, each with his/her own way of life. For example, the supply of 'white tea,' 'pink tea', 'cream tea' etc to different communities is a historical reality.

Since the novel employs the third person narrative technique the author's comment is transparent. By means of a few characters sketched in the novelist has been able to give a faithful picture of the
society of the time. By and large, *When Freedom Came* is an important Partition novel for giving a realistic picture of the pre-Partition days—how the communal climate shaped the psyche of the Indian sub-continent and how the urban communal virus corrupted the village tranquillity. The novel may lack the romantic tinge of *Train to Pakistan*, and the comprehensiveness of *Azadi*, but it has achieved the secular vision of the Partition novels.

NOTES AND REFERENCES


2 According to Jinnah’s theory the Muslims are a different nation. Hence, they need a separate nation. See Rajendra Prasad, *India Divided* (Bombay: Hind Kitabs Ltd., 1947) 1.
SHIV K. KUMAR’ S  A RIVER WITH THREE BANKS : CROSSING THE COMMUNAL BARRIER

There is a long gap after Azadi and When Freedom Came in the matter of a comprehensive treatment of the Partition until we come to *A River with Three Banks: Agony and Ecstacy* (1998)¹ by Shiv K. Kumar. But the Partition of India has been still haunting the Indian and Pakistani psyche, though the event has receded 50 years in memory. It is as old as the end of colonial rule. Still it has been a subject of discussion, partly because of its complex nature and partly because of its trailing clouds that cast their shadow on contemporary life. Hence, even after five decades of its happening new historiography, polemical writing, subaltern study, and creative literature have been interpreting the Partition from different points of view. Shiv K.Kumar’s *A River with Three Banks* has been one of the recent creative responses towards the Partition.

Primarily hailed as a poet, Shiv.K.Kumar has penned novels and short stories also. Apart from his distinguished career as a creative writer, he has been an academic, a literary critic and a translator. Like Khushwant Singh, indeed, like every other creative writer who has reflected on the historical event, Kumar too has tried to fictionalise the theme of Partition in order to drive out the pangs of Partition. In an interview to Sachidananda Mohanty, the author himself accounts for his fictional articulation of the Partition:

I myself am a migrant from Pakistan. I was born in Lahore and migrated to Delhi in 1947 when the communal holocaust was at its worst. You know every Punjabi writer has to get the trauma of the Partition out of his system sooner or later.²
To begin with Mulk Raj Anand's observation from the blurb of the novel, "Although the novel is placed against the backdrop of partition, it is essentially a story of marriage and divorce, love and hate, forgiveness and revenge." Basically the novel narrates two stories: the story of Gautam Mehta—his conversion to Christianity for the sake of divorce and again conversion to Islam for the sake of marrying a Muslim girl; it is also a story of Haseena—her ups and downs as a victim of the Partition. Both the stories are interwoven with the theme of love and hate. The personal drama of Gautam and Haseena is enacted against the background of the Partition.

In the novel, unlike Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, city experience during the Partition finds its expression. Accordingly, the novel is set in Delhi and Allahabad. It depicts the streets of Delhi and Allahabad during the Partition in vivid colours. The characters inhabit the cultural ethos of urbanity. In fact, "like most of the modern poets, Kumar is a poet of the city." Another urban experience is the theme of divorce, which is one of the major thematic concerns of Kumar's works and it is "a common phenomenon in contemporary Indian urban life." The novel begins with Gautam's proceedings to get divorce from his wife. Gautam Mehta, a journalist working for *The challenge*, goes to Father Jones, a Bishop, to convert himself to Christianity and manipulates the Bishop about his conversion by saying that this is a matter of the spirit and heart and says that he was influenced by Cardinal Newman, and Catholic writers like Francois Mauriac, Evelyn Waugh, Graham Greene, etc. Actually his desire to embrace Christianity is motivated not by a realization of the greatness of the Christian religion but to get a divorce from his wife Sarita. "The certificate of baptism was all that he wanted to grab."
That was his passport to freedom” (8). What impels Gautam to get away from his wife is her illicit relationship with Mohinder, a fellow journalist of Gautam. The Partition is at two levels—division of the family and division of the country. Gautam’s parents are immigrants from Lahore to Delhi due to the Partition of the country. They suffer not only from division of the country but also from division of the family:

His (Gautam) parents had arrived in Delhi after many harrowing experiences on the way from Lahore. Though they were fatigued and their nerves were frazzled, Gautam could not keep them with him for more than a few days. They had been looking forward to seeing their grandson, but soon they felt unhoused— their second partition ... (31)

There is an attempt to weave the domestic division as well as the political division of the country into the texture of the novel. The domestic drama of divorce takes place during a Partition riot. When Gautam goes to the church to meet the Bishop he witnesses the murder of a Muslim, called Abdul, by Hindu fanatics. Gautam discovers a letter in the dead man’s pocket which reads that Abdul was in search of his abducted daughter Haseena.

For Gautam divorce is a means of obtaining release from the shackles of family. Now he feels relieved. After having got divorce Gautam and his friend Berry go to Neelkamal, a hotel which “offers its patrons everything—wine, woman and song— to use an apt cliché” (16), to celebrate the occasion. Though Gautam is a gentleman, he is forced to visit the brothel by his friend Berry, who is after wine and woman. In the hotel both of them happen to meet a pimp called
Pannalal. Coincidentally Gautam meets Abdul's daughter Haseena who had been abducted by Pannalal during the Partition riot. Here begins the story of Haseena as a Partition victim. Exploiting the situation of communal frenzy Pannalal had taken her away when she was an undergraduate student and forced her into prostitution. Historically speaking, many underworld dons found the chaos of the Partition congenial for the abduction of women. They exploited the situation for their selfish business. The story of Chandani in Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* and Haseena in this novel represent this aspect of the Partition. When Gautam learns that Haseena is the very daughter of Abdul who was put to death before the church, he decides to help her instead of using her for his sexual pleasure. He wants to release Haseena from the clutches of Pannalal. Out of the crisis what evolves is a romantic love tale. Gautam falls passionately in love with Haseena. Here, Shiva K. Kumar has followed the stereotype love affair repeatedly found in many Partition novels. Both Gautam and Haseena plan to run away from Delhi. Finally they are helped by Berry to escape from the shackles of Pannalal. Gautam's elopement with Haseena and Pannalal chasing the lovers provide a romantic tinge to the love story.

If the Gautam-Sarita relationship represents divorce and hate, the Gautam-Haseena relationship represents union and love. In spite of the fact that Haseena is "a defiled thing, a fallen woman (...)" (115), Gautam falls in love with her and puts the proposal of intending to marry Haseena before her mother. When he is asked to convert himself to Islam, without hesitation Gautam embraces Islam by swearing 'Kalma' and assumes the name Saleem. Thus, Gautam crosses religious barriers to serve his convenience. Though born a
Hindu, he converts himself to Christianity for the sake of divorce and again to Islam for the sake of marriage.

Pannalal too comes to Allahabad in search of Haseena and he happens to meet Gautam. Pannalal threatens to kill Gautam if he does not disclose Haseena's whereabouts. In this encounter Gautam kills Pannalal, which unfortunately takes on the communal colour that "a member of the majority community was brutally killed last evening by a member of the minority community" (163).

After Haseena's marriage with Gautam, her family decides to move to Pakistan. Gautam helps them to get their migration certificate from Delhi. The couple goes as far as Amritsar to bid farewell to the migrant family. Both Haseena and Gautam "Start a new race—sans caste, sans religion, sans nationality" (214). Now they are neither Hindus nor Muslims but just two human beings—Gautam-Haseena. Thus, the novel advocates liberal humanism and cosmopolitanism. At the end of the novel the description of clouds which sail across the borders and a flock of birds winging away symbolize the message of a universal religion which Kumar seems to convey out of the story of the Partition:

The sky was now covered with mountains, clouds—white, inky blue and grey. They assumed all sorts of fantastic shapes—of giant dinosaurs, their long necks craning forward, of the skeletal remains of some primordial mammals, of an army of soldiers on the route. Ceaselessly, they sailed across the bridge from India to Pakistan casting fugitive reflections in the tawny waters of the river (214)
Thus, like other novels on the Partition, this too ends on a strong note of optimism, advocating that we should cross the religious and communal barriers for a better future.

Gautam and Haseena are the two characters portrayed with a little flesh and blood in the novel. The private impact of the Partition is pronounced more on Haseena and her family than Gautam. She is abducted, her father is killed and her family migrates to Pakistan due to the Partition. Haseena represents the hundreds of unfortunate women abducted during the Partition. "The history of partition," writes Urvasi Butalia "was a history of deep violation— physical and mental— for women." 6 The most suffered victims of the Partition were neither Muslims, nor Hindus nor Sikhs but women of all these communities. Women were put to death, nakedly paraded in public, raped, abducted and forced to prostitution. According to Saros Cowasjee, "Though partition offered a variety of subject matter, the majority of the writers chose to deal with violence of one kind or another— abduction and rape being particular favorite."7 In this novel also Haseena is abducted, but her anguish and suffering do not find adequate expression. She never expresses her anger about the Partition, which has put her life under moments of crisis and extreme emotional stress, except doubting her acceptability by her family:

She was now returning to a fatherless home, with a Hindu— no, Christian— she corrected herself. She could not foresee how she would be received by her family. Would she be discarded as a defiled thing, a fallen woman? (115)

The theme of woman's exploitation and forced prostitution has been depicted effectively in the short stories by Saadat Hasan Manto.
Manto’s world of prostitutes goes beyond the boundaries of the commercial market and pornography, and the “signs of motherhood and domesticity appear, uncannily,” as Aamir K. Mufti remarks, “within the world of the brothel.” Commenting upon Saugandhi, a prostitute in Manto’s ‘Hatak’ (Insult) Mufti observes that in Manto’s fiction the prostitute figures as “a person with an almost infinite capacity for loving, quite capable of willing herself into believing that each encounter with a client is a falling in love.” 8 Haseena in the present novel is not a Manto woman. Kumar does not allow her to be corrupted by the institution of prostitution. Even though she is abducted and kept in a brothel, she remains unprostituted. Her first encounter with Gautam turns into love. Unlike Manto’s Sehai, an honest pimp in Manto’s story ‘A Tale of 1947’, Pannala in the novel is a selfish man. He is portrayed as a villain and his getting killed at the hands of Gautam fulfils the requirement of poetic justice. An important point to be noted here is that Pannalal and Sulieman, another man connected with red-light district business, work together in their business. At this level there is no scope for communal animosity. Hence, the superintendent of police comments, “Here is a real intercommunal home, with Pannalal and Suleiman Gani as its heads” (181). This is a shaft of savage irony that points to the communal hatred only among politicians, who are after power. But the picture of Pannalal and his world is superficial. It is not as effective as given in Manto’s short stories, because, Manto himself had first-hand experience of the red-light areas in Bombay. Other references to the Partition in the novel are confined to the public rape of a woman and stabbing of her brother, and Haseena’s father dying before the church, which are melodramatic episodes witnessed by Gautam.
Another aspect of the Partition portrayed in the novel is the role of the press during the Partition. The novel depicts how the press whips up communal passions. There are references to the newspapers— *The Pioneer*, Gautam himself working for *The Challenge* and the pro-Hindu paper *Our Land*. *The Pioneer* gives a communal colour to Gautam killing Pannalal. Gautam kills Pannalal to save a Muslim girl. But it is an irony that a born Hindu killing a Hindu to save a Muslim girl takes a communal turn. The press gives the communal colour by reporting that "A member of the majority community was brutally killed last evening, by a member of the minority community" (163). So it is an illustration of how any killing was mistaken for communal rivalry without seeing justice or injustice in it during the Partition. This kind of communal politics is even more forcefully depicted in Bhisham Sahni’s *Tamas*.

The Partition was a multi-dimensional phenomenon. It had many aspects— historical, political, economical, psychological, religious etc. As a Partition novel a noted feature of *A River with Three Banks* is its engagement with the religious dimension. There is an attempt in the novel to show the underlying unity among different religions. Kumar uses Gautam and Shamalal as his mouthpieces in order to forge unity between Islam and Hinduism. The following discussion between father and son reveals this. Gautam quotes from the *Koran*:

\[
\text{All human beings are created as a family} \\
\text{A single community} \\
\text{Then God sends His Prophets} \\
\text{Bearer of glad tidings,} \\
\text{Who guide those who believe in Him} \\
\text{And punish the evil.}
\]
As soon as he finished reading, his father asked:
"Now isn't that lord Krishna also says in the Bhagavadgita?
"Whenever righteousness declines and evil prospers, I assume a visible shape and move as man with man, guiding the virtuous, punishing the wicked....' Don't you have here two Prophets saying the same thing?"(191)

The unity is shown not only between Hinduism and Islam but also between Christianity and Hinduism. According to Shamalal, Gautam's father, Christ is a Yogi. What Gautam reads in English translation of the famous edict engraved in Pali on the Ashok pillar, which evokes memories of Ashok the Great, who was a champion of non-violence, seems to be the message of the novel:

True religion does not recognise any barriers
Between one human being and the other. It embraces all living creatures—man, animal and bird.
Compassion, endurance, understanding and love are man's greatest treasures. (157)

Kumar seems to counterpoint the universal religion of humanism as against religious fanaticism and communalism and also seems to enforce the message of a universal religion through the character of Gautam. Commenting upon Gautam's article in the newspaper, its editor says, ".... You seem to be moving towards Gandhi, as you understand him—towards a sort of universal religion" (195). Gautam, the protagonist of the novel and an ideal hero of Kumar's creation, is a symbol of this universal religion. He is an instrument of Kumar's vision of liberal humanism. Being a member of the educated elite, Gautam is a cosmopolitan hero, who rises above all religious barriers. He does not bother about outward
rituals and religious practices. He takes his conversion to Christianity, the ritual in 'Triveni' with 'Panda,' and swearing 'Kalma' for Haseena, very lightly. Religious rituals and identity are meaningless to him. About the killing of a cow, Gautam says:

"What satanic butchery!" He said. "Strange, how even the animals have been branded Hindu."

"Is it the aggrieved heart of a Hindu?" asked Gopinath.

"No," replied Gautam. "It has nothing to do with my being a Hindu or a Christian. The sight of any killing, of man or animal, sickens me." (58)

This shows his secular outlook. Hence, Gautam is "a liberal humanist; a man with creative sensibility sees no barriers whatsoever." But Kumar's articulation of liberal humanism has not been as effective as Khushwant Singh's in *Train to Pakistan*. Gautam's growth is not natural on its own. His much-too liberal humanism seems to be superimposed, for it is not a product of any suffering. Nor does the Partition affect him at all. He does not undergo any intense suffering to find a new identity, as it is convincingly motivated in the case of Lala Kanshi Ram in Chaman Nahal's *Azadi*. Like Juggat Singh's love for Noor in Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, Gautam's love towards Haseena is not earthy, crude and blind. Because he is an elite; rustic love does not happen to him. Immediately after his betrayal due to divorce he emerges as a romantic hero to save Haseena. In the beginning he seems meek and docile. After meeting Haseena he turns a romantic hero. Moreover, his conversion to Christianity for the sake of divorce is
absurd. Gautam's conversions are prompted by sheer personal interests. It may be said that he embraces Christianity to free himself from his first wife, and Islam to enter into matrimony with Haseena, a paragon of beauty. Both conversions are pretexts to cover his selfishness. It does not involve sacrifice. Thus, the development of the character of Gautam seems unconvincing. However, in spite of his flawed nature, Gautam remains a centre of attraction in the novel, because, the plot of the novel is built around him and he is an eye witness to all the events that happen during the Partition in the novel.

The title of the novel 'A River with three Banks' has religious interpretation. Kumar himself justifies the title as follows:

What I had in mind three religions. The relationship between Gautam and Haseena was consummated through three religions. Gautam, a Hindu becomes a Christian in order to get his divorce and then accepts Islam to marry Haseena. So these three religions in a sense are three banks of the rivers- a sort of confluence that brings Gautam and Haseena together.10

The image of the river is a recurrent symbol in the novel. The protagonist himself says, "In any case, rivers fascinate me- any river any where" (122). Obviously, in the novel references to the Jordan river of the Bible, Triveni- the confluence of the Ganga, the Jamuna and the Saraswati- all have symbolic significance in the novel.

The most important aspect of the Partition in the novel is the portrayal of Mahatma Gandhi. Again Gandhi is sketched in relation to religion. The novelist records what pro-Hindu papers like Our land wrote about Gandhi. According to this paper Gandhi's protest against imperialism is too mild because he loves the Englishman as
an individual. It raises the doubt if Gandhi is truly the father of the nation, "When he has dedicated himself exclusively to the welfare of Muslims" (87). The paper thinks that Gandhi's recital from the Koran is an affront to Hindu Dharma. It also raises the doubt if Gandhi "is itching for martyrdom, so that he may be ranked with Jesus Christ, Thomas Beckett and Buddha" (87). In Contrast to the attitude of Our Land, The Challenge reflects a different view of Gandhi. It describes him "a radical socialist" (194). The impact of Gandhi on Gautam is obvious. Like Gandhi he too believes in "a sort of universal religion" (195). When Gautam and his father attend Gandhi's prayer meeting, Gandhi recites the same lines from the Koran, which were quoted by Gautam to his father. In fact, Gautam finds justification for his conversions in Gandhi's preaching:

Gautam felt as if the Mahatma had spoken to him exclusively. If only he'd known about Haseena's suffering at the hands of Delhi pimps! But as for "forced conversion," in his case it was a voluntary act, though used as a subterfuge to secure his release. Pardonable, therefore. (198-199)

It is the impact of Gandhi that keeps Gautam close to Haseena. By and large, the portrayal of Gandhi is limited to providing ideological ballast to Gautam's idea of 'sans religion'—universal religion. However, the novel does not throw much light upon Gandhi's role in the Partition as Nahal's Azadi does.

"Politics," says K.C. Belliappa, "cannot be kept out of a novel that deals with partition." But Kumar's novel does keep the politics of Partition away from its canvas. Hence, in the opinion of M.K. Naik, the novel "can hardly be called a political novel proper," because "the political colouring is only so much veneer hiding the finality of a stock tale of marital infidelity."
In his interview to Mohanty, Kumar accounts for his belated response as follows:

I believe in what Wordsworth said that, "A poem is emotion recollected in tranquillity." An emotion has to be recollected and recaptured after a passage in time so that you have a better understanding of your experience. If you are too close to the canvas of your painting you can't see it in proper perspective. You have to stand back a little from the canvas. I had to stand fifty years back from 1947.

Though Kumar had been a victim of the Partition, the fact is not strongly reflected in the novel. The representation of the Partition is facile. After fifty years the novel provides neither proper historical perspective nor new insights into the issue of the Partition. It may sound harsh to say that it lacks the sense of historicity. As rightly pointed out by Shyamala. A Narayan, the novel "is quite disappointing." She further comments that "the language lacks distinction, the characters are poorly realized, and the plot is just a sentimental love story." The love story of Gautam-Haseena can as well be enacted against any other background, as it is done here against the backdrop of the Partition. There is a wide gap between private lives and public events. In the novel representation of the Partition is confined to a few episodes- the holocaust providing an occasion for abduction of Haseena, a street murder, a rape and sensationalization of press reports etc. But one should regard Kumar, as G.S. Amur does, as a poet first and as a novelist next: "fiction is the second string to Shiv K. Kumar's creative blow. He is better known as a poet."
However, the novel is a welcome addition to the literary response to the Partition. It is different from the earlier novels about the Partition in its treatment of the role of the press during the holocaust and the religious aspect of it.

VI. CONCLUSION

The novels discussed in this chapter viz., Raj Gill's *The Rape*, Chaman Nahal's *Azadi*, Sharf Mukaddam's *When Freedom Came* and Shiv K. Kumar's *A River with Three Banks* are later responses to the Partition. Raj Gill's *The Rape* deals with the barbaric experiences of the Partition. By telling the story of a father raping the beloved of his own son for sheer retaliation, the novel shows the degeneration of human values during the Partition. Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* depicts the impact of the Partition on a Hindu family. In its treatment of the national holocaust the novel deals with universal themes of exile, loss of identity and the existential predicament of mankind. It is unique because the novel transcends the theme of Partition. With its affirmative vision *Azadi* philosophizes that life is worth living in spite of all misery. There is a search for order out of chaos. Sharf Mukaddam's *When Freedom Came* shows how village tranquillity was disturbed due to the communal virus of urbanity during the Partition. After 50 years Shiv K. Kumar's *A River with Three Banks* makes use of the Partition merely as a backdrop to give the message of brotherhood by creating Gautam, an ideal hero embodying liberal humanism. Among these novels Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* stands out as the best work on the Partition, as it transforms the material of Partition into a successful work of art and achieves universality in the treatment of its subject matter.
NOTES AND REFERENCES

1 Shiv K. Kumar, *A River with Three Banks* (New Delhi: UBSPD, 1998)
Further textual references are to this edition.


9 Shiv K. Kumar, "Partition Revisited," *The Hindu* xvi.

10 Shiv K. Kumar, "Partition Revisited," *The Hindu* xvi.


13 Shiv K. Kumar, "Partition Revisited," *The Hindu* xvi.
