CHAPTER - I
INTRODUCTION

The division of the Indian subcontinent in 1947 on the basis of the Two-nation-theory gave birth to two nations—India and Pakistan. The emergence of these two nations at the end of colonial rule, celebrated as the crowning achievement of the Freedom Movement, was nevertheless accompanied by horrendous tragic events because of the unplanned way the leaders proceeded to partition the country.

Alok Bhalla, in his 'Introduction' to Stories about the Partition of India writes, "The partition of the Indian subcontinent was the single most traumatic experience in our recent history." In her The Other Side of Silence, research work based on oral interview, Urvashi Butalia remarks, "The political partition of India caused one of the great human convulsions of history." Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin think of it as "a metaphor for irreparable loss." V.P Menon, an official eyewitness to the event, admits that while it was true that the situation was full of fear and foreboding. We had not expected to be so quickly and so thoroughly disillusioned." M.K. Gandhi had said "If the Congress wishes to accept partition, it will be over my dead body." But he had to yield to the force of circumstances. M.A.Jinnah, the proponent of the Two-nation-theory and architect of Pakistan, himself then regretted, "The creation of Pakistan was the greatest mistake of my life." All these opinions hold the mirror up to what the Partition was in the annals of Indian history. But it
is now very difficult to imagine the impact of the tragedy on human life. Politically, the country was divided; socially, communal relationships were disturbed; domestically, families underwent traumas; psychologically, individuals were torn apart, and lost their identity. As S. Settar and Indira Baptista Gupta conclude, “One will never know exactly how many people died in the riots which accompanied it, but around seventeen million people had to relocate themselves across the newly drawn boundaries.”

Now the Partition is a fait accompli; what was done cannot be undone. We can not afford to be amnesiac about that bloody chapter of history. What is important is the two nations have to learn from the effects of the event. Survir Kaul thinks, “We seem to have learnt the wrong lessons from the horrors and the real politick of partition (...)” Bhisham Sahni, the witness turned writer also says, “The partition of the country should have put an end to the riots, but it hadn’t.” Now it seems that there is a felt need to understand the complexity of the Partition, as many of the contemporary problems have their roots in the rumblings of Partition. The communal politics, which guided the road to Partition, has been not only a present day problem before India but also a global worry. Hindu/Sikh-Muslim conflict often came out in the open. Take for example the recent Godhra massacre. Communal riots have been disturbing the Indian social, political and economic stability time and time again. The border dispute between India and Pakistan has given rise to cross-border terrorism and has been a hindrance to the growth of both the countries. The very idea of Partition has become an on-going process in India since the colonial rule. Still the echoes of further fragmentation are being heard. The following observation of
Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin underscores how the issues related to the Partition are very much with us:

The partition of India in 1947 was an undeclared civil war, and since then we have had disputed borders in every country of South Asia. The religion-based division of the country anticipated many of the questions that trouble us now across the subcontinent: ethnicity, communalism, the rise of religious fundamentalism and cultural nationalism. Sharply but poignantly, partition posed the question of "belonging" in a way that polarized choice and allegiance, aggravating old, and new, antagonisms.\textsuperscript{10}

Hence, Partition has not remained a one-time event of history. It is not something that can be ignored. It has to occupy a significant place in the cultural and historical discourse of our country; because it "functions as a touchstone of our culture and polity (...)."\textsuperscript{11} Therefore, studies related to the Partition are very relevant. Commenting upon the importance of the Partition again Survir Kaul writes, "The destructive legacies and nightmarish memories of partition— its after life— still guide our public policy and inhabit our 'progress' from a colonial state to post-colonial democracies." And he further says, "Yet partition and its known and unknown legacies have played, and continue to play, important roles in the construction of collective identity and thinking in India."\textsuperscript{12} It is evident that discussions on the Partition, which generally address communal fanaticism, colonial chicanery, results of wrong decisions, futility of violence, loss of human life, contest over power sharing, conflict between India and Pakistan etc, may help us to solve some of the contemporary problems and pave the way for a better future.
Naturally, there have been lots of discussions about the Partition over the past fifty-five years. In fact, some studies, for example, B.R. Ambedkar’s *Thoughts on Pakistan* (1940), K.L. Gauba’s *Consequences of Pakistan* (1946) and Rajendra Prasad’s *India Divided* (1947), were published some time before and in 1947. But still it remains an inexhaustible issue because of its inherent complexity. Therefore attempts are also being made now to reconstruct and interpret the historical experience of the Partition. Besides documentation, oral narratives and biographical narratives, historical writings, mainly in the form of non-fiction, are more abundant than fictional narratives of the Partition. Among non-fictional accounts the historical writings stand out in quantity. As the historiography on the Partition shows, it is one of the subjects much debated by different schools of historians, especially, Imperial historians, Pakistani and Indian historians.

But the main concern of the non-fictional, particularly historical, writings is that they are committed to facts. As Gulab Pandit, a social worker says, “Itihas mein sirf naam aur tarikh sahi hoti hai, baaqi nahin” (In history books, only the names and dates are correct, not the rest). Historical narratives try to trace reasons and effects of the Partition. Being preoccupied with politics they try to explore hypothetical alternatives to the catastrophe. Alok Bhalla tends to think that histories are “concerned with the metaphysical identities of different communities and their collective fate (...) rather than with the everyday selves of people and their acts in profane time.” In their attempt to reconstruct the forces leading to the event and its causes the histories give a partial picture of the Partition. They neglect its human dimension and sometimes end up as biased
studies. As Urvashi Butalia writes, "it was not only a division of properties, of assets and liabilities. It was also (...) a division of hearts(...) And these aspects of the partition— how people coped with the trauma, how they rebuilt their lives, what resources, both physical and mental, they drew upon, how their experience of dislocation and trauma shaped their lives and indeed the cities and towns and villages they settled in find little reflection in written history."\textsuperscript{18} But these find their expression in fictional writings. In fact, the other side of it— the human experience and the bewilderment caused by the tragedy— occupies a central place in creative literature, especially in fiction— the novel and the short story. But the Partition was not merely a political problem but a human problem as well. Fictional narratives trace the impact of the Partition on human life, because as Milan Kundera thinks, "Fiction does not write the history of a society, but the history of the individual, indeed, it only articulates the existential situation of the individual."\textsuperscript{19} Hence, a study of the fictional narratives of the Partition seems more important than historical narratives. In this connection Alok Bhalla observes "Contrary to the communal histories, the stories (fiction) about the partition have more to do with the actualities of human experience in barbaric times than with ideologies, (...)\textsuperscript{20}

However it does not mean that fictional narratives neglect politico-historical aspect. They recreate both the human and political problems. Sometimes they act as critiques of the political history and give insights into the reality of political history. As aptly pointed out by M.Asaduddin, "Fiction also provides us with competing versions of truth, multiple points of view and thus leads us to richer and more nuanced understanding of events and people."\textsuperscript{21} Thus,
unlike historical narratives, they give a holistic picture of the Partition, because the genre of fiction has larger space to accommodate. As George Lukács writes, "the novel (fiction) seeks, by giving form, to uncover and construct the concealed totality of life."\textsuperscript{22} Also a genuine fictional narrative not only tries to give a holistic picture but remains primarily a work of art. It gives an artistic form to history and politics. In this sense it transcends political history. Thus, a study of fiction adds to our understanding of the polemics besides fulfilling our aesthetic concern. Therefore the present thesis premises that the study of fictional representation of the Partition is more rewarding.

Hence, the present thesis intends to undertake a study of the theme of Partition in Indian literature in English with special reference to fiction. The area chosen here is Indian literature in English. Studies in this discipline are formidable. It is "presently in excellent shape"\textsuperscript{23} and however destined to reach the global readership, a "part of the literature of India, in the same way as the literature written in various regional languages are or ought to be."\textsuperscript{24} Also it has had a significant role to play in the pluralist tradition of multi-cultural and multi-lingual India. As a branch of 'Commonwealth literature', the discipline has a prestigious place. The area has been seriously chosen for study in almost all Indian universities and courses are being offered abroad, too. And again as Salman Rushdie remarks, it "represents perhaps the most valuable contribution India has yet made to the world of books."\textsuperscript{25} Thanks to many great Indian writers in English, who have achieved international reputation and bagged the Booker, Pulitzer and Commonwealth awards abroad and the Central Sahitya Akademi award in India, and the critics who have
worked on them. U.M. Nanavati and Prafulla C. Kar, in their ‘Introduction’ to *Rethinking Indian English Literature*, aptly comment upon the place and achievement of the discipline:

After a series of uncertain beginnings in mid-nineteenth century Indian English literature seems to have finally arrived at its destination. It has found a proper articulation, a true identity and an appropriate cultural context for expression (...). Finally it has acquired a distinctive generic identity of its own.\(^26\)

In this distinctive genre the study of fiction is more fascinating as the *forte* of Indian literature in English. Though it was late to appear in the arena of Indian literature in English, its development in later years, as M.K. Naik notes, “far exceeded that of most other forms.”\(^27\) One of its important characteristic features is the treatment of national history—remote or contemporary. In the treatment of contemporary history the commitment of fictionists is towards the representation of political events. The reason is obvious: “The rise of the Indian novel in English coincided with the rise of a new political consciousness, and the first half of the twentieth century was marked by intense political activity.”\(^28\) Accordingly, Indian politics has been a major theme here. Again as M.K. Naik observes, “In novel after novel, therefore, the political theme is at the centre of the work.”\(^29\) Thus, a considerable measure of fictional treatment of national politics has established the tradition of political fiction in Indian literature in English.

"From the large mass of material available in history," writes Asha Kaushik in her *Politics, Aesthetics and Culture*, "a political novelist has a big range of choices extending from studying a single individual,
such as Gandhi, to an entire epoch.\textsuperscript{30} Naturally, the events of national importance, besides Gandhi, have provided sufficient material for fiction. The colonial themes, the theme of the Freedom Movement, the holocaust of Partition, Wars and Emergency etc have been some of the important thematic preoccupations of many great Indian novelists in English. It is interesting to note that the theme of the Partition seems to be the most sought-after theme next only to the Freedom Movement. It appears either comprehensively or marginally or very subtly in more than twenty-five novels. The theme hardly appears in drama and poetry. Perhaps the volatile experience of the Partition is more congenial to novelistic representation, as the novel form \textquotedblleft is the art-form of virile maturity,\textquotedblright\textsuperscript{31} and as it \textquotedblleft reflects more deeply, more essentially, more sensitively and rapidly, reality, it self in the process of its unfolding.\textquotedblright\textsuperscript{32} Hence, the focus of the present study is on the Indian novel in English dealing with the theme of Partition.

However, the novels dealing with the Partition have been subjects of critical inquiry in the history of Indian literature in English. Whenever Post-Independence fiction is being discussed, the Partition fiction is considered a major category and also the studies on the Indian political novel in English consider it as one of the major political themes. But major studies exclusively on the Partition novels are very few; some critics like Shyam Asnani,\textsuperscript{33} Saros Cowasajee,\textsuperscript{34} Sudha Sundarm\textsuperscript{35} and R.P.Chadda\textsuperscript{36} have written critical articles in this direction, but they are not full-length studies. The only major study is the one undertaken by K.K. Sharma and B.K. Johri in their \textit{The Partition in Indian-English Novels}.\textsuperscript{37} But this book lacks the politico-historical perspective in its interpretation of
these novels and, moreover, it is not a research oriented work. All these studies neglect one or the other work of art in their discussion.

An in-depth and systematic assessment of the Partition novels has not so far received the measure of serious critical attention they deserve. The present analysis is an effort in this direction, and it differs from the earlier studies in many respects. It proposes to update the survey by covering the recent novels and hitherto neglected novels that treat the Partition either comprehensively or marginally, besides making a systematic and an in-depth analysis of important novels against the backdrop of the political history of Partition. The objectives of the present thesis are also different from those of the earlier studies. The analysis here aims at exploring what aspects of Partition are the thematic concerns of these novels, and how far these novels are successful in translating these aspects into works of art. The study also intends to undertake an analysis of the fictional technique of these novels—structure, the art of characterization, narrative technique, literary modes, and the language. Finally an attempt has been made to place these novels in the distinctive tradition of the Indian novel in English.

Another important thing has to be mentioned here. It has been seen that no major novel on the theme of Partition is left out from the scope of the thesis. But the novels, which deal with the theme either marginally or very subtly are not discussed in detail. Eight novels (important from the point of view of quality and seriousness of the treatment of the theme), each throwing light upon different aspects, and highlighting different perspectives, are chosen for detailed analysis here. These novels are: Khushwant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan* (1956), B.Rajan’s *The Dark Dancer* (1959), Attia Hosain’s

Instead of cutting across the thematic aspects of these novels, which would result in a sociological study, each novel is taken for discussion to identify thematic concerns and to evaluate, at the same time, their literary merit. The discussion of each novel includes an attempt to show the comparative placement among the novels; the place of the author and the novels under study in the history of Indian literature in English; a synoptic view of the plot; the different aspects of the Partition depicted in the novel; its distinctiveness; historical and political consciousness, and finally its literary merit.

In this thesis the 'endnotes' method of referencing is followed. The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (2000) has been adhered to. Whenever there is confusion in the handbook regarding documentation, a uniform and sensible method is followed.

CHAPTERIZATION

The thesis has been divided into seven chapters. The first chapter is 'Introduction'. It deals with the aim, nature, scope and relevance of the study of Partition novels and also gives an account of the studies already undertaken and the need to take up the present study.

It is rather unfair to assess the fictional representation of the Partition ignoring its politico-historical background. Hence, the second chapter traces the forces leading to the Partition, besides attempting to explore the three complex issues involved in it — Communalism,
Nationalism and Imperialism. Moreover, this chapter purports to show that what historical narratives give us is a partial picture—they neglect the tragic aspect of the Partition as human experience; it also points up the need for the study of fictional narratives as they portray the impact of Partition on human life.

In the third chapter, a brief survey of the Partition novels is undertaken. The chapter is divided into three parts; (1) The Indian novels in English, (2) The Indian Regional novels in English translation, (3) The Pakistani novel. The chapter shows that Partition is one of the most favourite themes in the history of Indian literature in English. Then three novels from regional languages are briefly discussed: Quratulain Hyder’s *Aag ka Darya* (1959) (*The River of Fire*) (1998) from Urdu; Amrita Pritam’s *Pinjar* (1970) (*Skeleton*) (1987) from Punjabi; and Bhisham Sahni’s *Tamas* (1974) from Hindi are briefly discussed. Finally, Bapsi Sidhwa’s *Ice-Candy Man* (1988), the most famous novel on the Partition from Pakistan, is discussed.

The next two chapters are devoted to a thematic analysis of the novels selected for study. The novels on Partition are divided into two types—early novels and later novels—for the convenience of the study. The fourth chapter discusses the early novels—Khushwant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan*, as a novel depicting the impact of the Partition on a village community; B. Rajan’s *The Dark Dancer* as a novel presenting the south-Indian response to the Partition; Attia Hosain’s *Sunlight on a Broken Column*, as a novel unfolding the Muslim point of view of the Partition, and Manohar Malgonkar’s *A Bend in the Ganges*, a novel depicting the Partition as an irony of Indian history.
The fifth chapter takes up the later novels for analysis. It discusses Raj Gill's *The Rape* as a novel unfolding the loss of human values during the Partition; Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* as a novel tracing the impact of the tragedy on a Hindu family; Sharf Mukaddam's *When Freedom Came* as a novel giving a contrasting picture of communal life in urban and village India during the Partition; Shiv K. Kumar's *A River with Three Banks* as a novel interpreting the religious dimension of Partition.

The sixth chapter purports to analyse the technique of all these novels—structure, art of characterization, narrative technique, literary modes, and the handling of the English language.

The seventh and final chapter, while summing up the study, drives home the point that the fictional narratives dealing with Partition prove complementary to the historical narratives which present only half the truth. Also it highlights the major thematic concerns of these novels and mentions which are the successful novels on Partition, besides placing them in the proper context of Indian literature in English.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


