CHAPTER - III

THE PARTITION NOVELS : AN OVER-VIEW

I. INTRODUCTION

There have been various attempts to reconstruct the experience of the Partition in different forms. Historiographical attempts such as historical writings (mostly non-fiction), narratives of interviews, polemical writings, memoirs and research works constitute one group. Artistic attempts, such as creative literature (mostly in the form of fiction), motion pictures, paintings etc, form another group. The overall corpus of creative literature is abundantly vast. It is very difficult to bring in all the literature within the scope of the present thesis. However, the present chapter takes an over-view of the novels about the Partition available in the English language either originally or through translation. This chapter is divided into three parts. The first part deals with the Indian Novels in English, the second with Indian novels in English translation and the third with the Pakistani novel in English.

II. THE INDIAN NOVEL IN ENGLISH

The hallmark of the Indian Novel in English is its engagement with recent political history. 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.” It is very important to note that, next to the Freedom Movement, the tragedy of the Partition has stirred more
number of writers than any other event in recent political history of India. Even after fifty years of its happening, its memory has not faded and every year new novels are being written about the Partition. So far more than twenty-five novels dealing with one or the other aspect of the tragedy have been written. It is not surprising if the potentiality of the Partition invites more and more writers to explore the inexhaustible experience of the Partition, since some victims of the holocaust being still alive preserve its memory intact. The presentation of the Partition differs, of course, in form and manner from novel to novel. In some novels, such as Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (1956), Raj Gill's *The Rape* (1974), Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* (1975), Shiv Kumar's *A River with three Banks* (1998) etc., the Partition is the central theme. In some other novels, such as B. Rajan's *The Dark Dancer* (1959), Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961) Manohar Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964), the Partition is not the main theme but one of the significant themes. The Partition appears also in an oblique manner in Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day* (1980), and peripherally in Gurucharan Das' *A Fine Family* (1990), K.A. Abbas' *The World is My Village* (1984) etc and in some of the post-modernist novels like Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981) Amitav Ghosh's *Shadow Lines* (1988), and Shashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel* (1989).

R.K. Narayan's *Waiting for the Mahatma* (1955) seems to be the first novel to refer to the Partition in the history of Indian literature in English. It is indeed a matter of surprise that the holocaust appears in Narayan at all. His fictional world of Malgudi hardly accommodates politics. But *Waiting for the Mahatma* is an exception. It is basically a novel about Gandhi and his impact on Sriram and Bharati, protagonists of the novel. The novel, as William Walsh puts it, "gives
us an impression of Gandhi and a certain truth about him which no amount of social or historical reporting can do." In its attempt to portray Gandhi the novel documents the political events such as the Non-Co-Operation Movement, the Civil Disobedience Movement and the Quit India Movement. With them the Partition too appears inevitably. The novel delineates Gandhi's role during the Partition:

'On the 15th of August when the whole country was jubilant, and gathered here to take part in the Independence Day festivities, do you know where Bapu was? In Culcutta where fresh riots had started. Bapu said his place was where people were suffering and not where they were celebrating. (...) He spoke kindly to those who had perpetrated crimes--he wept for them, and they swore never to do such things again. I have seen with my own eyes aggressive rowdy-looking men taking a vow of non-violence and a vow to protect the opposite faction--don't ask what community they were: what one community did in one part of the country brought suffering on the same community in another part of the country.'

The main characters in the novel are not affected by the Partition directly. The episodes of the trauma are partly reported through letters and newspapers. Sriram during his train journey witnesses Hindu fanatics searching for Muslims. And Bharati feels unhappy at the sight of the refugees. She describes the plight of the women:

'(...) so many of them (women) have been ruined, so many of them have lost their honour, their home, their children, and the number of women who are missing cannot be counted. They have been abducted, carried
away by ruffians, ravished or killed, or perhaps have even destroyed themselves.‘(243)

Narayan may not have been a direct victim of the holocaust but his treatment of the Partition in the novel shows his sensitiveness as an Indian writer and also the intensity of the political winds blowing at the time.

The next novel to portray the experience of the Partition is Khushwant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan* (1956). If R.K. Narayan was one far removed from the scene of the ordeal, Khushwant Singh is one who was in the midst of the holocaust. His *Train to Pakistan*, the first comprehensive treatment of the Partition in Indian literature in English, portrays the impact of the Partition on a village community—how the Partition, to use Alok Bhalla’s words, “brought to an abrupt end a long communally shared history.” 4 Under the shadow of Partition Khushwant Singh creates a fine story of love and adventure. Juggat Singh, a ruffian, sacrifices his life in saving the refugee train to Pakistan, which is carrying his beloved also. In his fiction the writer strikes a strong note of humanism— it demonstrates how love transcends communal prejudice and hatred. The novel is historically plausible and artistically satisfying.

Again the theme of Partition appears in a South-Indian expatriate— B. Rajan’s *The Dark Dancer* (1959). Basically it is a story of the love and marriage of a western educated Indian called Krishnan. Obviously there is an east-west encounter. The Partition is not the central theme here, but it gives a significant climax to the main theme. The tragedy of the Partition appears in the end, where Kamala, the protagonist’s Indian wife, sacrifices her life by saving a Muslim girl during the communal riots. Rajan seems to have shared Khushwant
Singh's vision of humanism. Kamala is a female counterpart of Khushwant Singh's Juggat Singh. This novel also presents the Sikh point of view of the Partition. A Sikh character, whom Krishnan meets during his train journey, provides this view.

Then Manohar Malgonkar's *Distant Drum* (1960) deals with the theme of the Partition peripherally. And in his *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964) the theme forms the backdrop as well as the touchstone on which human relations and the communal equation are tested out. Malgonkar's intellectual moorings are in history. He naturally documents different phases of Indian history. *Distant Drum* is basically a novel about army life. Some of the episodes in the novel give an account of the Partition experience nostalgically. The division of the nation brought with it many divisions. The defence unit was also divided. The Partition offered a choice before the military officers to opt for either of the two nations. The army men who had worked together began to work against each other. This aspect is presented in *Distant Drum*. In this sense the novel can be read as a story of separation of two military men. Kiran and Abdul Jamal, who were at the military academy at Dehradun, and work together to combat the communal riots during the Partition. After the Partition of the country Abdul Jamal opts for Pakistan. The two friends meet on the Kashmir border. Now they belong to two opposing units. The consequences of the Partition bring about a clash between an old friendship and new realities:

It had left a new emptiness, it had given a raw edge to old memories, it had brought on a painful awareness of new realities. A soldier could not remain friendly with someone who had now become an enemy.
His relationship had to be subjected to new values, confined to narrow and contorted limitations. The very essence of friendship, frankness, had been completely drained off. 5

The novel narrates an episode in which Kiran and Abdul go to a mosque to see refugees during the Partition. The revengeful Muslim refugees attack Kiran since he is a Hindu. But Abdul rescues Kiran. The situation is entirely different in the post-Partition context. Here, Malgonkar traces the irony of soured communal relations against the backdrop of defence life. Meenakshi Mukherjee rightly comments that Distant Drum presents, “A more satisfactory, if less ambitious, treatment of Hindu-Muslim relationship.”6

The next novel about the Partition is Attia Hosain’s Sunlight on a Broken Column (1961). Though the Partition is a peripheral theme here, the novel is one of the most significant novels about Partition. For the first time a woman-writer narrates the tragic story of Partition, and she is the first Muslim writer to write about it. More importantly the novel is extremely well written. As William Walsh points out “the two principal ones (themes) are politics and a woman’s struggle for independence.”7 The politics of the Partition affects private lives. It disintegrates the Lucknow Muslim Zamindar family. During the division of the nation some members of the family opt for Pakistan. The novel depicts the crisis among Muslims at the time of Partition.

Again Padmini Sengupta is a woman-writer. Her debutant novel Red Hibiscus (1962) deals with the Partition of the Bengal province. The novel is essentially a story of two women— Sita, a romantic girl searching for a suitable life partner, and Rasmi, a harijan woman, who is almost a female counterpart of Mulk Raj Anand’s Bakha. The
Partition appears as a backdrop in the novel. The letters in the novel sketch in a picture of the Partition. For instance, a letter addressed to Sita reads as follows:

The streets of the ancient city, once the capital of British India, were now red with blood and the tales of horror seemed unbelievable. For the first two days the attack seemed to have been by the Muslims on the Hindus. The killings on the street were appalling. Nor were the police or the authorities able to do so much. All at once the tide turned. The bearded Sikhs (...) and the Bengali students took the law into their hands and sought their vengeance.8

There is another episode in the novel where sita saves her husband from the communal fanatics. The rest is the story of the passions and conflicts of women.

After a couple of years, Manohar Malgonkar again attempts to weave a novel around the Partition at considerable length in his *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964). The novel is one of the most important narratives of the Partition. This is the only novel in which the genesis of communalism is traced conspicuously. The novel portrays the Partition in the context of the Gandhian creed of non-violence. Through the character of Shafi, the novelist traces how nationalist Muslims turned communal fanatics. The story of Debi and his family exhibits the trauma of the Partition, whereas Gian's story is one of failures of the Gandhian ideology as far as the common man was concerned. Malgonkar looks at the Partition as an irony of Indian history.
After *A Bend in the Ganges*, the Indian novel in English has to wait almost a decade for another Partition novel to appear viz. Raj Gill's *The Rape* (1974). Like Khushwant Singh, Raj Gill is another Sikh novelist. *The Rape* portrays the impact of the Partition on the Sikh community. One of the most important aspects of Partition that the novel portrays is the negation of values— how man lost the human touch. The protagonist— Dalipjit's father— rapes the beloved of his own son. The protagonist's final statement is worth noting “The world is sick (...)”\(^9\) The novel is, artistically speaking, not so successful as *Train to Pakistan* and *Azadi* are.

The very next year after *The Rape*, Chaman Nahal’s *Azadi* (1975) was published. It is a well-written novel about the Partition. In Nahal’s hand the theme of Partition assumes epic dimensions. Through the moving saga of Lala Kanshi Ram’s family, the victim of the Partition, Nahal gives an authentic picture of the Partition, which makes it an unbiased document in history as well as a successful novel. The merit of the novel lies in the fact that the novel transcends the pangs of Partition. Lala Kanshi Ram, the protagonist, achieves dignity and a tall spiritual stature through the traumatic experience, which he gains at the cost of physical loss. In a way the novel educates the reader through its protagonist who is also educated. Thereby the novel achieves a distinctive tone.

H.S.Gill is the third Sikh novelist to deal with Partition. His *Ashes and Petals* (1978) is a story of revenge and reconciliation. The novel depicts the conflict between the generation which survived the Partition and the post-Partition generation. Santa Singh belongs to the former and his grandson Ajit to the latter. Santa Singh is a refugee and a live witness to the atrocities inflicted on his family during the
Partition. He kills his own grand daughter instead of yielding her to the attack of ruffians. Memories of the ordeal haunt his psyche and the psychosis of vengeance continues even during the post-Partition period.

There grows a conflict between Santa Singh and his grandson Ajit when the latter wants to marry a Muslim girl called Salma. For Santa Singh, who has witnessed the Partition, marrying a Muslim is not a sensible choice. He says:

What have you come down to, my grandson? Have you forgotten Baljeeto, your sister? Your poor sister I had to shoot dead in the train? Have you forgotten the Partition and the Musalmans?10

But what is important about the novel is that there is reconciliation in the end. Ajit marries Salma, but dies. Finally Santa Singh accepts Salma, which indicates that the novelist hopes a sort of understanding between the two warring communities.

It is interesting to note that Anita Desai also deals with the Partition in her *Clear Light of Day* (1980). The novel is set in Delhi during the time of the political upheaval. The domestic drama of the Das family is enacted against the backdrop of the 1946 riots, and the assassination of Gandhi. And the novel narrates the tale of disintegration of the Das family. The younger members of the family—Bim, Tara and Raja—drift apart. The novel is divided into four parts. It is the second part which deals with the Partition. As Rajeswari Mohan writes, “the novel interweaves the tales of three women as they contend with adulthood and its responsibilities with oblique accounts of the traumatic events of India’s independence and
Partition*11 There is a parallel between the disintegration of the family and the disintegration of the nation. The first section refers to Mortimer Wheeler's *Early India and Pakistan*, which strikes a parallelism between the family and the title of the book. However, Desai's theme is not politics, but woman—her alienation. As she herself acknowledges: “My novels are not reflection of Indian society, polities (...).”12 Like Virginia Woolf she explores the inner world of individuals.

If the novels noted so far are in the realistic mode, there are some that may be called novels of magic realism which also give expression to the traumatic experience of the Partition. Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981), Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* (1988), Shashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel* (1989) and Mukul Kesavan's *Looking Through Glass* (1995) deal with the Partition. But the Partition in these novels is not a central theme. Perhaps, the reason is that most of these novels are interested more in presenting a panoramic view of the nation's political history than a single event. They allegorise the political history of modern India as a whole.

Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, which owes much to G.V. Desani's *All About H. Hatter* (1948), marks the beginning of a new chapter in the history of the Indian novel in English. The hallmark of Salman Rushdie's fictional art is its finding parallels between public life and private life—national political events and incidents in the life of individual characters. The narration of a particular event gains significance on account of the symbolic overtones and allegorical allusions associated with it. Rushdie's fiction often centres around India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, which owe their birth to the Partition.
In the opinion of M.K. Naik, "If the political allegory in *Midnight's Children* concerns India, its sister nation, Pakistan, born at the same time, is the subject of *Shame* (1983)." Midnight's Children, besides chronicling three generations of the Sinai family, records the political history of India from the Jallianwala bag massacre to the Emergency. The novel can be read as an Indian political critique. The very birth of Saleem Sinai on the midnight of 15th August 1947 obliquely refers to India's Independence and Partition. The novel is in three parts. Part I covers the events from 1915 to 1947, part II the childhood of Saleem Sinai, and part III deals with the Emergency. There is a close relationship between the human story and the politico-historical story. Hence, the protagonist says, "I had been mysteriously handcuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country." The novel also covers the emergence of the Muslim League, which played a significant role in shaping the idea of Pakistan, and the communal riots in Delhi following the division of India. Part II traces the migration of the Sinai family to Pakistan (Rushdie's family too opted for Karachi after the Partition). Rushdie's fiction does not deal with the Partition directly. But as a writer he never upholds communalism and the Two-nation-theory. As O.P. Mathur notes, Rushdie's "political stance is unmistakably anti-partition," and "he is firmly against the Partition which was a culmination of what he hates most—communalism."

Along with the mode of magic realism, the mode of social realism also enriches the Indian novel in English. Sharf Mukaddam's *When Freedom Came* (1982) is a realistic novel, where the central theme is the Partition. Its main concern is to show how the communal virus in urban India corrupted communal relations in Indian villages. The
novelist chooses Bombay as a typical example of urban communal experience, which is contrasted with Devanagar, a village in the Konkan region in Maharashtra. The protagonist of the novel Fakir, a secular and innocent boy when he was in his village, turns a communal fanatic when he migrates to Bombay. The making of Fakir takes place in Bombay. Shankar, a Hindu boy who is meant to be a foil to him, remains in the village. Fakir disturbs the tranquillity of village life. The Hindus disturb Moharrum and the Muslims disturb the performance of the Ramayana. The disturbance affecting the socio-religious activities gives rise to rioting in the village. The novel objectively delineates communal politics and the corrupting nature of urban life.

K.A. Abbas was a writer very much committed to the ‘progressive movement’. His The World is My Village (1984), a sequel to Inquilab (1955), deals with the Partition marginally. Anwar, the progressive protagonist, goes on a journey through India and abroad. Through his journeys what Abbas purports to unfold is the issues related to the politics of the time. The Partition figures as one of them towards the end of the novel. As far as the Partition is concerned Abbas’ stand is very clear. Being a Progressive writer he condemns it. He seems to question the very idea of Partition on the basis of religion by creating a hero who is the son of Hindu-Muslim parenthood. His (the hero’s) identity shows the absurdity of Partition. Here Anwar is a vehicle of Abbas’ progressivism. What Anwar says about Islam holds the mirror to it:

Islam never preached that innocent Hindus should be killed. In fact it has said that the murder of one innocent man is equal to the massacre of the whole humanity.\textsuperscript{16}
The novel also gives a graphic description of the communal riots that took place during Partition. The mode of narration in the novel, as is usual with Abbas, is that of documentary realism.

There are two novels—Manoj Das’ *Cyclone* and N.N. Saxena’s *Ties Thick and Thin*—published in the same year 1987. They deal with the Partition marginally. In Manoj Das’ *Cyclone* (1987) the Partition appears at the fag end of the novel. The novel realistically depicts the Hindu-Muslim hostility prevalent in Kusumpur. The communal cyclone sweeps away the peace of the place. The novel describes how mob psychology works and communal riots are generated. Sudhir, the central character, protects a Muslim man called Haru Mia, who is later killed by Hindu fanatics.

Saxena’s *Ties Thick and Thin* (1987) is set in Delhi. It is a story of Ajay—his ups and downs. There is a sub story in the novel, which is important from the viewpoint of the Partition, and that is the love affair between a Hindu boy and a Muslim girl. As in H.S. Gill’s *Ashes and Petals* here also there is a clash between generations. The elders oppose the marriage, because the after effects of Partition haunt them.

Amitav Ghosh’s *Shadow Lines* (1988) deals with the Partition from a different perspective. The novel, divided into two parts, ‘Going Away’ and ‘Home coming,’ chronicles the history of three generations of a Bengali family in Dhaka. The anonymous narrator, who lives in Calcutta, takes both an imaginary and a real journey to England, Pakistan and India. The novel covers the historical period from 1939 to 1980. The first part of the novel deals with Tridib’s parents’ visit to London and ends with the narrator’s own journey to England in 1980. The second part gives a nostalgic account of the days spent by the narrator’s grandmother in Dhaka, a place that belonged to India before and became a part of East Pakistan after the Partition.
The second part deals with Tridib's death in the 1964 riot at Dhaka, which was a recrudescence of the communal riots of Partition days. The novel includes many stories within its texture and deals with many divisions. The merit of the novel lies in condemning the very idea of division. The novel depicts the fissures in public life and private life as well. The joint family of Dhaka is divided; so are nationalities, national boundaries, and identities too. As rightly pointed out by Silvia Albertazzi, "there are innumerable borders which divide peoples from others and from themselves, borders separating the coloniser and colonised (...), mental lines separating past and present, memory and reality, identity and masks, (...) historiographic borders marking the territories of literature, the different genres, (...) separating the central canon and peripheral productions, British writers and post-colonial authors." These borders, though unreal like shadows, exert horrible influences on human life. They bring about violence, which is often repeated. Hence, the shadow lines created by the Second World War, the Partition of India, and Bangladesh war have created untold miseries. The most important aspect that the novel depicts is that of communal tension. Tridib, one of the major characters, dies in a communal riot. As Novy Kapadia opines, the novel stresses "the need for a symnetic civilization to avoid a communal holocaust."

Shashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel* (1989) deals with the Partition mainly from the political point of view. The novelist tries to find parallels between the archetypal characters in the great Indian myth the *Mahabharat*, and the great Indian political leaders of the twentieth century. The author himself says that the novel is "an attempt to tell the political history of 20th century India, through a
fictional recasting of events, episodes and characters from the *Mahabharat,*" The parallels are interesting to note; Gangadatta-Gandhi; Dhritarastra-Nehru; Pandu-Subhash Chandra Bose; Karna-Jinnah; Priya Dhuryodhani-Indira Gandhi. Not only are mythological characters identified with contemporary personalities, but also the ideology of democracy is equated with Draupadi, and Pakistan becomes Karnistan. The tearing of the mythical Jarasandha is contrasted with the division of the Indian subcontinent. The novel can be read as a post-colonial response to history. It is an attempt to resist the grand narratives of history. In fact, history is being re-written today. The novel decentres the earlier notions of history. What is important from the viewpoint of the Partition is an entirely different portraiture of M.A. Jinnah that it depicts. The historiography of the Partition so far represented Jinnah as a villain in the drama of Partition. But Tharoor decentres these notions and represents Jinnah from a different perspective. What Dhritarashtra (Nehru) says about Jinnah explains why Jinnah became the spokesman of Karnistan (Pakistan):

'I can't say I ever liked the man very much,' he said at last. 'With his overweening ambition, the glaring pseudo-religious chip on his highly un-Islamic shoulder, his willingness to destroy a country in order to have his own way, he wasn't exactly what you would call likeable. And yet...I wonder sometimes; if we had given him his due in the Kaurava party, might he not today be remembered as one of the finest Indians of us all?" 20

Thus, the novel deals with the Partition in this distanced manner. As O.P. Mathur opines, "any detailed description of the horrors of
the Partition would have had a contrary tonality, and they are therefore only referred to.\textsuperscript{21}

Gurcharan Das's \textit{A Fine Family} (1990), an autobiographical novel, deals with the Partition peripherally again. It records the ups and downs of a middle class Punjabi family from 1942 to 1980. One of the crises the family faces is the trauma of the Partition. Bauji is a lawyer in Lyallpur. The violence of the Partition forces him to flee to India. The family loses everything in the ordeal. Though the suffering part of the family saga is not as moving as Lala Kanshi Ram's family in \textit{Azadi}, Bauji finds it difficult to leave the earlier house and find a new identity in new surroundings. But the novel is a "well-researched piece of life in the pre-Partition times."\textsuperscript{22}

Mahatma Gandhi has been a favourite theme for the Indian novelists in English. Here is a novel about Gandhi at the time of the Partition. Mukund Rao's \textit{The Mahatma} (1992) can be read as a literary biography of Gandhi during his last days. The novel depicts the two aspects of Gandhi— the personal and the public. If the personal story is about his experiment with sexuality, the public story is about his sincere attempts to soothe the wounded souls of Partition victims. He goes to riot-torn Noakhali in 1946 when the whole of India waits for the moment of birth of Independence. The Partition provides a test for Mahatma's stubborn belief in non-violence. The novel is an exercise in documentary realism. And M.K. Naik is right when he says, "Rao certainly gives us a feel of both the Noakhali "milieu" and the "moment", with painstaking attention to detail."\textsuperscript{23}

Mukul Kesavan, himself a historian, has tried his hand at writing history in the fictional mode in his \textit{Looking Though Glass} (1995). Being a historian Kesavan has chosen the technique of magical realism to
re-write the political history of Modern India. The narrator is a contemporary photographer. Once travelling by train he peeps down into the river while the train is moving over the bridge. No sooner does he peep down than he finds himself at the bottom of the river, and with that he falls in 1942. Thus begins the history of India. The narrator is introduced to a foster family and makes friends with persons in history. There is a chapter—"Waiting on Jinnah" where he meets Jinnah and asks, "Mr. Jinnah, Sir, do you really want the country Partitioned?" Jinnah’s reply is "Barristers do not have opinions—they have briefs." The narrator is not worried about the consequences of the Partition, because the Partition is "an unchangeable part of my (his) future. Nothing could change that, not even an assurance from the Quaid"(178). Like other post-modernist novels the focus of Looking Through Glass is not the Partition itself but narrating the nation’s history.

Like Attia Hosain’s Sunlight on a Broken Column, Manju Kapoor’s Difficult Daughter (1998) is a bildungsroman. As in Hosain’s novel the private turmoil is enacted against the socio-political turmoil. The Partition serves as a backdrop, but then it is not a major event in the novel. It is a story of four generations of daughters in the Punjab. The focus of the novel is Virmiti, the eldest of nine children from a Hindu Arya Samaj family. Like Hosain’s Leila, Virmiti struggles for her independence. She revolts against her family by marrying a professor as his second wife. Her struggle continues even after her marriage with a man of her choice. The rest is domestic conflict and woman's search for self-identity.

In the same year (1998) Shiv K. Kumar, a well-known Indian poet in English, came out with a Partition novel in the form of his
A River with Three Banks (1998). The central theme of the novel is the Partition. Being a victim of the Partition, Kumar waited for fifty years to give an outlet to the pangs of the Partition. The novel narrates the romantic story of Gautam, a born Hindu converting himself first to Christianity and then to Islam, for the sake of Haseena, a victim of the Partition. The novel is remarkable in respect of its treatment of the religious dimension of the event and its portrayal of the role of the press during a crisis period like the Partition. The novel occupies a unique place among the Partition novels on account of the message it holds up— the religion that we practise has to be a sort of universal religion- “sans caste, sans religion, sans nationality.”

Again, we have Sauna Singh Baldwin, a woman writer. Being an expatriate she remembers Indian history from 1937 to 1947 in her What the Body Remembers (1999). The choice of narrating history in the fictional mode seems to be deliberate. She thinks that forgetting history is a folly. As the novelist declares in her ‘Prologue’ to the novel:

And if you do not learn what you were meant to learn from
Your past lives, you are condemned to repeat them.

In this novel the story of two Sikh women and their husband Sardarji provides a human dimension to history. Satya, the first wife of Sardarji is a barren woman. Hence, he goes in for a second wife, Roop. As her name itself indicates, she is a paragon of beauty. Human themes are welded with the political theme. The novel tries to find a parallel between the politics of polygamy—struggle for power-sharing, question of woman’s identity etc— and the politics of the Partition. Though the Partition comes as a backdrop at the end of the novel, the most significant aspect of the novel is its attempt to allegorise the
story of Satya and Roop to suggest the crisis of the Partition. As the novelist herself points out:

I didn't set out to write a Partition novel at first but the allegory between the personal story of Satya and Roop, the two Sikh women in the polygamous marriage, and their rivalry for the children grew naturally into political. Sardarji (...) is like the British in that for most of the novel, he gets off scot-free as the women battle it out, never blaming him for what he causes. At the end of this novel, no one is a winner, just as in Partition– each community compromised its humanity, and so each community lost. 27

Apart from oblique references to the Partition, the characters directly comment about the Partition and hold to their respective point of view. For example, in chapter 33, entitled 'Simla, May 1944' there are three characters– Saradarji, Rai Alam Khan and Cunningham– representing the Sikh, the Muslim and the British point of view respectively. For example, Sardarji Says:

(...) yes the Sikhs do need their concern. If Gandhi gets his Hindustan and you Muslims get Jinnah's “Pakistan,” will Master Tara Singh and his Akali party get us a “Sikhistan ?" (390)

The novel is significant in so far as it gives a clarion call to look back seriously at the calamity and learn from the blunders of the great that have gone unrecorded in history books but are revealed in the fictional recreations of the event.

Thus, the Indian novel in English has given considerable attention to the treatment of the theme of Partition. A large number
of novels represent the event from different angles with different
degrees of involvement.

### III THE INDIAN REGIONAL NOVELS IN ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Indian literature in regional languages on the subject of Partition
is rich both in quality and quantity. It is available in Urdu, Punjabi,
Hindi and Bengali as these regions underwent the cataclysmic
experience of the holocaust. In this section some of the novels
available in English translation are taken into consideration. The
novels discussed are Qurratulain Hyder's *River of Fire*, Amrita Pritam's
*Pinjar (Skeleton)*, Bhisham Sahni's *Tamas*.

The most eminent Urdu writers who have responded to the
Partition trauma are Saadat Hasan Manto, Ismat Chughai,
Qurratulain Hyder and others. Saadat Hasan Manto's Partition stories
are in a class by themselves. They are perhaps the best artistic
representations of the theme. In the opinion of Muhammad Umar
Menon, Manto is the only writer who has said enough about the
Partition. His 'Toba Tek Singh', 'Thanda Gosh', 'Shahae' are classics
of the Partition literature. Qurratulain Hyder's *Aag ka Darya* (1959),
translated by the writer herself as *River of Fire* (1998), partly deals
with the Partition. Hyder occupies an important place in the history
of the Urdu novel. She has the distinction of having "lifted it (Urdu
novel) out of its stagnation, divested it of its obsession with fantasy,
romance and facile realism. She offered it extraordinary range and
depth and brought to its ambit, hitherto unexplored terrains of human
thought and sensibility."

*River of Fire* is an attempt to narrate the making of Indian culture
and civilization over the ages. The time covered in the novel is from
the 4th century B.C. to the 20th century A.D. Accordingly the novel covers the classical, medieval, colonial and the post-colonial periods. The novel depicts the Partition as one of the important events in Indian history and its dehumanizing effects. The four important characters—Gautam, Champa, Kamal and Cyril—appear in each period. As M. Asaduddin opines, "The appearance of the four central characters in every epoch and their predicament underscore the recurring patterns of human experiences which are universal and timeless and contribute to the unity and centrality of the vision projected by the novel."³⁰

The novel begins with Gautam Nilambar and Hari Shankar discussing religion, philosophy, art, birth and death. Then the novel introduces Abdul Mansoor Kamaluddin, a Muslim, whose advent corresponds to the arrival of Muslim culture and its assimilation in the Indian soil. This is followed by Cyril's arrival representing the British advent after the Muslims. In the end we meet close friends like Kamal and Hari Shankar, Kamal's sisters-Talat and Appi, Hari-Shankar's sisters—Laj and Nirmal. These characters symbolize how Hindus and Muslims lived with communal harmony before the Partition. All these persons part company as the communal virus leading to the Partition erupts. Some Muslims like Ameer Raza leave for Pakistan, some Muslims opt for India. Kamal is frustrated by the communal conflict, which poses a threat to his identity as an Indian Muslim. Being an Indian-born Muslim he firmly believes that his roots are in India. The novel is divided into 73 chapters. Chapter 66 entitled 'Letter from Karachi', a letter by Kamal, throws light on the politics of the Partition and other allied issues:

Islam has become useful for politicians. It is being presented to the world as an aggressive, militant, even
anti culture religion. Its promoters are not concerned with Islamic humanism or the liberalism of medieval Arab scholars or Iranian and Indian poets and Sufis, (…).

In the demand for Pakistan, Urdu was most thoughtlessly declared to be the language of a "separate Muslim nation," so now it is also paying the price for the creation of the "homeland." In India it has almost become a non-language. The word 'Urdu' is now associated with Pakistan and creates an emotional and psychological block for most Hindus."31

The novel is Hyder's *tour de force*. It brings the crippling effects of the Partition to the forefront and holds up a mirror to the ups and downs of Indian culture and civilization over the ages.

The most noted figures in Punjabi literature for the literary articulation of the Partition experience are Kartar Singh Duggal and Amrita Pritam. Amrita Pritam's *Pinjar* (1970), translated into English as *Skeleton* (1987), is a very short novel. Like most women writers Amrita Pritam looks at the Partition from a woman's point of view. Her novel presents the existential predicament of women during the Partition. Rasheed, a Muslim boy, abducts Pooro, a Hindu girl, who is about to marry Ram Chand. Pooru's brother is also about to marry Ram Chand's sister Laajo. What makes Rasheed to abduct Pooro is the generations'- old family feud. One of the daughters of Rasheed's family had been raped by Pooro's grandfather. To take revenge upon Pooro's family, Rasheed's uncles force him to kidnap Pooro. After the abduction, however, Rasheed, a tender-hearted man, never touches her, nor ill-treats her. One night Pooro escapes and returns to her family. But she is rejected as the members of her family think that
since she had been kidnapped, she had stayed in a Muslim family. Then she is forced to go back to Rasheed, who willingly marries her. Pooro becomes Hamida. Though married to Rasheed, she hates Rasheed so much so that she even hates her own son born to him. Gradually love blossoms and Hamida (Pooro) reconciles herself with Rasheed’s family. This is all a Pre-Partition story.

After the Partition of the country, Pooro’s brothers join the caravan to India in the process of mass migration. At that time the Muslims abduct Laajo, Pooro’s brother’s wife. Both Hamida (Pooro) and Rasheed locate her and she stays with them for six months. When both the governments make an arrangement for the rehabilitation of abducted women, again the question of acceptability arises. But Laajo is accepted, as attitudes in society have changed over the time. When Pooro (Hamida) meets her brother, the most moving moment of the novel, he asks her to go with him. But Pooro (Hamida) refuses and acknowledges Rasheed’s abiding love for her. She says, “When Laajo is welcomed, take it that Pooro has also returned to you. My home is now in Pakistan.”

As a Partition novel the merit of Pinjar (Skeleton) lies in portraying the complexities of communal relations. Amrita Pritam never idealises the Hindu-Muslim relations before Partition. In the novel the Partition subjects both individuals and communities to an acid test. It is interesting to note that before Partition the Hindu family does not accept its own daughter abducted by a Muslim family. But when communal frenzy breaks out Laajo is accepted and Pooro too is welcomed. Communities change their attitudes. At the individual level Hamida (Poor) opts for Pakistan as her home. The focus of the novel is women—Pooro and Laajo. Both are victims of the tragic event. But
love solves all their problems. Rasheed’s love for Pooro restores her to a happy life. Love transcends hatred and bitterness.

Bhisham Sahni’s *Tamas* (1974), originally written in Hindi and translated into English by Jai Ratan as *Tamas* (Darkness) (1981), is one of the best novels ever written about the Partition. The writer himself had undergone the trauma of that ordeal. Govind Nihalani, the director who filmed it, says; “*Tamas* is more than just a mini series or a film, it is an act of faith. As a novel *Tamas* is more than a work of literature. It is a grim reminder of the immense tragedy that results whenever the religious sentiments of communities are manipulated to achieve political objectives. It is a prophetic warning against the use of religion as a weapon to gain and perpetuate political power.”

From the thematic point of view the novel can be divided into two parts. The first part deals with communal politics—how upper-class people whip up communal frenzy, the mischief of both Hindus and Muslims. The second part deals with the impact of the Partition on individuals—the story of Harnam Singh as a Partition victim. This brings out the nature of the horrendous tragedy. Both these aspects of the Partition are reconstructed with remarkable artistic probity.

The novel begins with the most gripping scene where Nathu, a Harijan, toil to kill a pig. Nathu is hired by Murad Ali to do the act. Nathu is innocent of Murad Ali’s mischief. Ali being himself a Muslim throws the carcass of the pig in front of the mosque to ignite religious and communal sentiments. However, the novel shows the Hindus being equally fanatical. Vanaprasthaji is the counterpart of Murad Ali. Killing of animals like the pig and cow whips up communal frenzy
which erupts in a communal riot and innocent people become its victims. The most important aspect of the Partition that the novel unfolds is the mischief behind communal riots.

The second part is concerned with the story of a Sikh family—Harnam Singh, his wife Banto and their son Iqbal Singh. When the Muslims attack Harnam Singh's shop, he takes refuge with his wife in Ehsan Ali's house. Muslims giving shelter to a Sikh at a time when anti-Sikh sentiments were running high among Muslims shows the complexities of communal relations. Iqbal Singh's picture is very pathetic as he is converted under coercion to Islam and becomes Iqbal Ahmed.

Richard, a British officer and his wife Liza provide the British point of view. The novelist seems to hint at the British chicanery in the character of Richard. His total apathy towards the administration, but his desire to win the appreciation that "he handled the situation with finesse and tact, that the people's discontent did not go to the extent of throwing his government off its balance," suggests a parallel to that of Mountbatten's position during the Partition.

*Tamas* is remarkable for its unbiased portrayal of communal fanaticism, and crippling effects of the Partition on individuals. As has been pointed out, "The progressive, secular, and national perspective of the writer is reflected in all his works in general, but it finds its best expression in *Tamas.*"35

**IV. THE PAKISTANI NOVEL ON THE PARTITION: BAPSI SIDHWA'S ICE-CANDY-MAN**

Naturally the Partition has also been a dominant theme in many Pakistani works of literature. Many Urdu novels such as *Angan* treat
the theme of Partition. The most famous and widely referred to novel about the Partition from the Pakistani side is Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man* (1988). Deepa Mehta has adapted the novel to celluloid medium titled *The Earth 1947*.

The novel is unique among the Partition works of fiction mainly for three reasons. First, it is an outsider's view of the Partition; Sidhwa is neither a Muslim, nor a Hindu nor a Sikh. But she was an-eye-witness to the ordeal. Secondly, the novel offers a feminist perspective. And thirdly, it is remarkable for the narrative technique it employs. Lenny, a girl who is modelled on Sidhwa herself, narrates the events in the first person and in the present tense. Like Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column*, *Ice-Candy-Man* is a *bildungsroman*. It narrates the story of a Parsee girl called Lenny. The novel is set in and around Lahore during the Partition. Lenny is a polio affected lame girl. Her lovable companion is Ayah. Ayah is a voluptuous girl of 18 years. In fact, she has friends in all communities—"Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Parsee, as always, unified around her." Persons from different communities—Imam Din, Yousaf, the Ice-candy-man, Hari and Moti—all are her admirers. Every day they meet and chat at Queen's park. But what disturbs their peace and unity is the whirlwind of the Partition. The news of Hindus killing Muslims ignites the fire of revenge among the Lahore Muslims. The company of Ayah falls apart. In the communal riot the Muslims of Lahore start attacking the Sikhs and Hindus. Hari, the gardener of Lenny's house, converts himself to Islam and becomes Himat Ali. Even Ayah is not spared. She is abducted. Once her passionate admirer, the Ice-candy-man himself deceives her. Finally, he marries her and makes her a dancing girl. Ayah leaves Pakistan for India. What is remarkable about the Ice-candy-man is his transformation. He repents and goes to India in search of Ayah, indeed, in search of love.
The story of Ayah and the Ice-candy-man is important for the angle from which it looks at the Partition. Because, it is invested with symbolic mode. As Jagdev Singh notices, “That the Ice-candy-man is willing to leave the land that he so much cherishes, for the sake of his Hindu beloved, is not only an example of self-sacrifice but also symbolic of a future rapprochement between the two warring communities— the Muslims and Hindus.”37

The violence of the Partition on both sides of the dividing line between India and Pakistan comes from the story of Ranna, Lenny’s friend. The novel is intended as a political critique of the Partition. It does not spare the Congress, the Muslim League, Nehru and Jinnah. What is important is that it demonstrates the dilemma of an uninvolved community. Saros Cowasjee in his analysis of the ‘Indo-English Partition novels’ in the year 1982 raised question about “the emotional trauma of the religious minorities such as Christians, Parsees and the Jews? Though uninfected by the communal frenzy, these too were victims of the Partition of a country on a purely religious basis.”38 Bapsi Sidhwa’s Ice-Candy-Man (1988) seems to have answered Cowasjee’s question partly after six years. The novel brings out graphically the dilemma of the Parsee community. For instance note what Mr. Bankwall says:

‘There may be not one but two— or even three— new nations! And the Parsees might find themselves championing the wrong side if they don’t look before they leap!’ ‘Does it matter where they look or where they leap?’ enquires the impatient voice. ‘If we’re stuck with the Hindus they’ll swipe our business from under our noses and sell our grandfathers in the bargain: if we’re stuck
with the Muslims they'll convert us by the sword! And God help us if we're stuck with the Sikhs. (37)

Thus, Ice-Candy-Man is one of the few best novels about the Partition. It is remarkable at once for its viewpoint, which is totally an outsider's viewpoint, and for its artistic representation of the tragedy.

\section*{Conclusion}

If the earlier chapter discussed the Partition as seen in historical narratives, the aim of the present chapter has been to make a brief survey of the novelistic narratives of the Partition. The foregoing survey of the Partition novels shows that the theme of the Partition has received considerable fictional attention. As far as the Indian Novel in English is concerned, the Partition seems to be the most sought-after theme, coming only next to the theme of the Freedom Struggle. More than twenty-five novels deal with the Partition. There are two types of novels. In some novels the Partition is the central theme. Here the choice of the theme seems to have been deliberate. And in some other novel the Partition appears peripherally. It is also important to note that in no post-modernist novel the theme of the Partition occupies a central place. But some of them throw light too upon various aspects of the Partition. Many women writers have responded to the Partition in their own way. Their main concern is the human aspect of the event. They focus more on the problems of women in society. Here the Partition is subordinated to the domestic theme.

The other novels— in regional languages and the novel from Pakistan— have added a further dimension to the growing body of fiction on the Partition. The next chapter takes up an in-depth study of the major Indian novels in English on Partition.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


7 William Walsh, Indian Literature in English 103.


21 O.P. Mathur, *Indian Political Novels and Other Essays* 12.


34 Bhisham Sahni, *Tamas* 212.


