CHAPTER – V

Conclusion

One is responsible to life. It is the small beacon in that terrifying darkness from which we come and to which we shall return. We must negotiate this passage as nobly as possible for the sake of those who are coming after us.

James Baldwin
In a speech to the nation in the night of August 14th, Nehru, the first Prime Minister of independent India said

A moment comes which comes but rarely in history, when we step from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation long suppressed, finds utterance.¹

Yet India paid a heavy price for her Independence. The partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947 is perhaps the most tragic of all political events to effect India in its long political history. Many factors emerge as responsible for the partition of India and creation of Pakistan. After the end of the Second World War, Britain was economically crippled and was not in a position to retain her overseas empire. The uneven development of the Hindu-Muslim section of the Indian bourgeois and the disparity in the economic life of the two communities was an important factor. The British government was interested in accentuating rather than softening the communal conflicts. British imperialism found it convenient to exploit the fears and passions of the Muslim community for the fulfilment of its political ends. The British policy of “divide and rule” created a schism between the Hindus and Muslims resulting in the development of the two-nation theory. The political stand of leaders like J.L. Nehru, Gandhi and Jinnah also drew the nation into the whirlpool of a great divide. Nehru’s yearning for supremacy, the inability of Gandhi to convince the Congress leaders and Jinnah’s insecurity regarding the future of the Muslim community led India towards Partition.

The partition divided Hindus and Muslims who had lived together for hundreds of years. It led to endless boundary disputes, three wars between the two neighbors, a nuclear powered arms race, and state sponsored terrorism. The Partition was followed by one of the cruelest and bloodiest migrations and religious and ethnic cleansings in history and resulted in the forced transfer of an estimated 14 to 18 million people between the two countries. The ensuing religious animosity and communal strife resulted in the deaths of some two million Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs and the abduction, rape and killing of countless women and children. It was indeed one of the most inhuman manifestations of religious and communal intolerance with few parallels in history. Unfortunately, women were among the greatest victims of this religious and cultural persecution. Countless women and girls all over the world suffer the trauma of tragedies - as widows or orphans, perhaps displaced from their homes. They are often separated from loved ones and become victims of violence and intimidation. For those women who have been raped and brutalized in other ways as a result of these tragedies, there is no long-term help: no access to psychotherapy, sedatives nor tranquilizers that would be instrumental in helping them put their lives back together.

Those who survived were brutalized and traumatized and still carry the scars of their suffering. The trauma of that time has been the subject of many a poignant work of prose and poetry in South Asian literature and more recently of some touching and sensitive films. The agony and horrors of partition also gave rise to a new genre of art and literature in India and Pakistan.

The effect of the Partition on Indian – English novelists varies; with each one of them seeing and treating it according to his or her own experience and understanding. But all of them analyze the reason of this terrible tragedy and show
considerable impartiality in their assessment of the situation. The trauma of Partition and its aftermath were experienced by different sections of society at multiple levels, and no single narrative can claim to represent the reality of Partition in totality. Reality can be defined only as a subjective entity – it is a question of perspective. However, the horror accompanying the transfer of population during partition and the chaos and bloodshed caused by it, have become major themes in the works of some writers. Many Indian writers have captured the sordid reality of partition and focused on the holocaust that followed the independence of India. Indian authors who were witness to this holocaust have expressed their anguish through their works. Khushwant Singh’s *A Train to Pakistan* (1956), Bhishm Sahni’s *Tamas*, Chaman Nahal’s *Azadi* (1975) Manohar Malgonkar’s *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964) and Sadat Hasan Manto’s *Mottled Dawn: Fifty Sketches and Stories of Partition* stand out prominently among the fiction written on partition by male writers. The writers depict rape, abduction and dishonour of women in a graphic manner. However, these writers rarely analyze the psychological and emotional impact of the brutal and violent acts of Partition on women; women are not depicted as central to the narrative. They show women in the traditional roles of a wife, mother, sister and beloved. Their female characters submit themselves very easily to the dictates of destiny. They are ignorant and so they do not have an understanding of the socio-political happenings and events of the time and nor do they contribute to the political activities. Exceptions can be said to be Khwaja Ahmad Abbas and Sadat Hasan Manto whose stories give us painful and touching pictures of the suffering of women.

The historical experiences of women are not necessarily the same as that of men. The impact of the significant turning points in history may not be the same for women as for men and therefore, their experiences cannot always be studied/ examined with the
common history of a mankind. There are crucial gaps which need to be filled. Women writers have tried to give voice especially to the chief sufferer of Partition—woman. They endeavor to give space to women and to the other silent sufferers of Partition. Their bodies were the territories to be occupied by the rival men as the violation of their body was an expression of triumph of one community over the other. Their physical mutilation, disfigurement, and their abduction were acts of appropriation that not only snatched away the femininity of the victimized women but also conveyed the intended message to the rival community. Women were made the victims of slaughter and torment not only by their opponents but also by their defenders. In the fiction written by women novelists dealing with the theme of partition, the focus of the novelists is on the realistic portrayal of women.

These novels are so structured that the female protagonists are not perceived in labelled terms and are not confined only to the role of being mere victims. They are portrayed as acutely perceptive intellectuals at par with their male counterparts. They are actively involved in political affairs, bold enough to take an individual or independent stance and capable of debating on politics and other crucial issues. In the fiction written by female writers, it is the female protagonists, who govern the plot and are presented as central and powerful figures. They are intelligent, politically aware and actively involved. The female protagonists are not portrayed within the traditional ideal concept of self-sacrificing womanhood. Most of the Partition fiction written by female writers ends on a utopian note though the trauma that women suffered was often beyond repair. Their losses were much more than material losses that could be compensated. Women writers visualize partition as a continual process where memory serves to keep the wound raw. There is a strong plea to see the woman as a human being, as an individual having an identity of her own and not merely as a
sex object. Thus, women writers foreground the marginal by placing women at the centre rather than at the periphery. On the basis of the texts chosen for the study it can thus be concluded that women writers fictionalize the whole process of partition through the coordinates of: rupture, protest, repair.

In *Sunlight on a Broken Column* Attia Hosain explores the finer sophisticated texture of Lucknow and the Muslim societal rules while maintaining a subtle balance with the reverberating turmoil of Partition. She could never get over the sense of personal loss in leaving Lucknow. This profound sense of displacement and the theme of Partition develop with autobiographical overtones in the novel. The novel is overtly political in tone. Although it portrays the upper strata of society, it sustains a sensitive approach towards the weaker section, especially from a woman-centered point of view. Being a Muslim belonging to a feudal family rooted in Lucknow Hosain’s novel presents the Muslim perspective of Partition. Hosain is able to discuss issues like brutality, socio-political upheavals, physical and psychological ordeal, feeling of loss, identity crisis, disintegration, refugee crisis, forced evacuation, abolition of feudalism, violence, mass killing, feeling of separation, uprootedness and most importantly the perspective of women. The novel is narrated in the first person by Laila who narrates the story through her reminiscences, in flashback. It is divided into three parts and explores themes of family, rebellion and social and political change. The novel shows how in all the political upheaval, Laila’s family members have been effectively isolated from one another for many years, unable to move back and forth across the borders between the two countries. Laila looks back on what their life was and feels nostalgia for a lost world. The middle of the novel deals with India’s struggle for independence along with the fateful partition of the subcontinent. Hossain depicts the frenzy of communalism and the division of the main communities on the basis of
religion which occurred even before the departure of the British from India. Laila’s family witnesses the disintegration during and due to the partition of India. The novel also throws light on the fact that a vast majority of Muslims believed in the principles of Gandhi -- such as communal harmony and brotherhood. But unfortunately for India the united struggle for freedom degenerated into a deadly civil war between the major communities of the country.

Attia Hosain reflects the changing psyche of the Indian Muslims and the growing hatred which ultimately results in large-scale violence. She every now and then asserts that it is the induction of religion into politics that brought about the fateful partition. According to her, the Congress, the Muslim League, the Hindu Mahasabha and all other parties and communal organizations were responsible for the partition of India. She finds both the Hindus and the Muslims equally responsible for the Partition of the Indian subcontinent and does not hesitate to speak out against her own community for the demand for Partition and the resulting harrowing violence.

The tremendous change caused by the Partition, the new terms like ‘refugee’ and ‘evacuee’, the air of hatred and violence – all these find emphatic expression in the novel. The writer also shows the positive side of this tragedy as Laila observes that Nadira becomes a selfless social worker in Pakistan and attends to the refugee women who are victims of abduction, rape and assault.

The novel ends with a message of hope. After the death of her husband Amir, Laila marries Asad and begins a new life just as it is a new beginning for the nation. Attia minglesthis new beginning of Laila’s life with the dawn of a new age.

Through Laila and other women characters like Aunt Saira, Nandi, Saliman, Zahra and Aunt Abida the novelist touches issues like women’s education, marriage and her journey towards liberation from the so-called binding roles of womanhood.
Laila’s quest for identity is accentuated by the tensions, social change and violence of the times. The author, from the beginning emphasizes in Laila the qualities of non-conformity, confidence beyond her years, and ability to judge things for herself that have always been the hallmark of a true self-hood. Laila’s resistance to the practice of arranged marriages on the basis of its denial of ‘human’ emotions is developed in the novel through her response to her cousin Zahra’s wedding. She asserts her independence with her involvement with Ameer Husain, lower in status and class than her Taluqdar family. Hence the secret love-affair is not just an act of rebellion. It is a quest for self-identity for Laila. It is her answer to the claustrophobic rules of her family. Attia Hosain allows Nandi, to emerge in triumph, with her strong sense of individuality and self esteem. Nandi is not ashamed of her vibrant sexuality; on the contrary she flaunts it by being fearless and bold.

Attia Hosain has not shown violence against woman in the cataclysmic situation of Partition. All the women characters are shown to be safe inside the protective walls of Ashiana. Nandi and Saliman are tortured but not in connection to the communal vehemence or revenge. They are made the targets of male tyranny inside their apparently safe and homely world.

*Difficult Daughters* is the story of a freedom struggle at two levels: Virmati’s struggle to achieve her own independence through education and a teaching career and India’s tumultuous course towards freedom. It is a tale of struggle against traditional/ conventional repression, a women’s quest for independence and revolt against superstition and strong social structures. The author very intelligently depicts the Indian scenario through the characters. The pain and horrible experience of partition is not the central focus of this novel. But along with the individual tale of the protagonist, Kapur has given a keen insight into the socio-political milieu of the
pre-partition time to the post partition crisis. The backdrop of the story is set in the real world of 1947. It provides a fascinating insight into history, into a distant culture, but, most importantly, into human hearts and minds. Kapur has explored the causes as well as consequences of Partition. The novelist shows religious communalism, based exclusively on religion and nationalistic grounds. At a larger societal level, Kapur uses the novel to criticize the politics of Partition. She assertively criticizes the politics of that time by blaming the Britishers, religious politics and power hungry leaders. The novel shows the pre partition era of struggle and the graphic description of the aftermath of partition such as violence, arson, massacre, mass migration, refugee crisis and the quandary common people were in, regarding their business and livelihood. Kapur gives us a poignant picture of the victimization of the common man during the riots, through Virmati’s father Suraj Prakash. She describes the riots, which took place in mid-August close to the date of Partition. Soon after independence, the large-scale migration of Hindus and Muslims on both sides of the borders, people carrying their earthly belongings, undergoing untold miseries are given an important place in the narrative.

Virmati, as the name of the protagonist implies, is the quintessence of courage. It is through her character that the writer presents the issues of identity crisis, women’s predicament, and the typical Hindu socio-cultural milieu of that time. The novel also throws light on the dilemma of the women at a time where she had very few opportunities. While India fights for freedom from the British Raj, Virmati fights for the freedom to live life on her terms. Virmati’s entire life is a battle against tradition, against her parents and against the inevitable end of a girl’s life—marriage. Having had no childhood herself, Virmati finds herself mothering an endless number of brothers and sisters. She wants to study but hardly finds the time and it is assumed
that very soon she must marry and resign herself to a fate very similar to that of her mother's. However, Virmati meets and comes under the influence of her cousin Shakuntala who is working in Lahore and who has already rejected the idea of marriage as her only destiny. Through Shakuntala, Virmati is made aware of a new world — of conferences, meetings, travel, living and enjoying life. Caught in an illicit love affair with the married professor, she breaks off her engagement, attempts suicide and finally seeks refuge in further studies for which she goes to Lahore. Her roommate Swarnalata introduces her to a new world of Women’s Conferences and the most revolutionary and progressive ideas. She is pulled towards these new experiences yet the memories of the time spent with the Professor do not leave her. Through the life of Virmati, Kapur proves that breaking the walls of old prisons is not easy. Virmati breaks the shackles of an arranged marriage, only to fall into a troubled and fugitive relationship which holds her slave for almost all her life. Yet one cannot undermine the role of the two main factors which can give a woman some resemblance of freedom and the ability to assert herself — education and economic independence.

Bapsi Sidhwa witnessed first-hand the bloody Partition of 1947 as a young child. Sidhwa remembers that as a child, “the ominous roar of distant mobs was a constant of my awareness, alerting me, even at age seven, to a palpable sense of the evil that was taking place in various parts of Lahore.”

Sidhwa was a victim of Polio and deprived of proper education because of her crippled foot. As a writer she has brought out her own experiences of childhood in her novel *Ice-Candy-Man*. The novel reveals the impact of Partition on Sidhwa’s childhood through Lenny.

Ice-Candy-Man is a novel of upheaval, which includes a cast of characters from all communities - Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs and Parsis. However what really distinguishes Bapsi Sidhwa's Ice-Candy-Man is the prism of Parsi sensitivity through which the cataclysmic event is depicted. According to Sidhwa herself, the Parsi perspective adds an interesting view to the issue of Partition. She says in an interview:

As a Parsi I can see things objectively. I see the common people suffering while politicians on either side are having all the fun. ³

It is the only novel written by a Parsi on the theme of Partition. The fears, the insecurity, and the hatred that were bred in people by the politicians of that time for their own vested interests are clearly depicted in the novel. The changing loyalties of the circle of friends who in the end become enemies bring forth the true horror of Partition when friends became traitors. The description of the massacre of Ranna's village shows how humans behaved like savages, killing their own countrymen. The Ice-Candy-Man sees these chaotic times as a perfect opportunity to claim what he thinks is his. The Partition also psychologically affects the Ice-Candy-Man as his family is murdered brutally on one of the trains coming to Lahore from Punjab. What Sidhwa asserts is that the Partition brought out the savage instincts of men. Ice-Candy-Man has always desired Ayah. Now he uses the violence in the air to get what he wants. He joins in the fray and kills Hindus; some who had been his friends. The Ice-Candy-Man uses violence as a means to claim Ayah but his plan backfires because he could not break her spirit or win her love. The partition and its ramifications had its direct and adverse effects not only on women but also on men.

³ The College Street Journal, November 18, 1999.
Through Lenny’s mother the compulsion to live by pre defined gender roles and obedience and conformity to dictates of men is brought out. In Hamida’s suffering we see the plight of raped and rejected women and the unsettling and devastating days of partition. Hamida is fortunate to find employment as Lenny’s new Ayah. Papoo, married off to a much older men at a young age by her own mother shows the helplessness of the girl child in India and unjust social practices. These characters expose the patriarchal social perceptions. Lenny, the child protagonist, recognizes these social patterns and even at a young age she knows they have to be rejected. The narration of the story by a girl-child ensures that the surrounding world would be seen through feminine and objective eyes. The novel successfully integrates the poor status of women with the violence of the times. As Pier Paolo Piciucco opines that the novel presents women as a, “twice oppressed category on stage: firstly, as human beings suffocated by violence and secondly, as women burdened by the bonds and impositions of a patriarchal society.”

Bapsi Sidhwa says in an interview to emphasize the fact that women are always targeted as far as the socio-political upheavals are concerned:

It is the women who bear the brunt of violence that accompanies these disputes. They are the ones who are rooted in the soil; they are not interested in politics. But suddenly they find their bodies are being brutalized. Victories are celebrated on the bodies of women.

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So, it is not surprising that women became the targets of brutality during the Partition also.\(^5\)

The brutal realities of the Partition depicted in the novel with a candor, do not overshadow the resilience of spirit exhibited by several characters in the novel. Rodabai, the Godmother arranges free education for Ranna. Lenny’s mother and Electric-Aunt store petrol in order to facilitate the escape of their friends. Hamida is rehabilitated. Dormant possibilities of the resurgence of human spirit can be sensed in Ayah as, taking a bold decision she determines to go back to her family. She rejects the constricting present and decisively tries to face the future in all its tentative probabilities. The resilience of these women saves the novel from being a heart-rending, depressing rendition of women’s predicament.

The novel ends on a note of positivism, as after much suffering, Ayah is rescued by Godmother and sent to her relatives, so that she can forget her haunted past and begin her life anew. Jasodhra Bagchi and Dasgupta in the *Introduction to the Trauma and the Triumph* observe:

> In a situation of such mass scale displacement, the categories that inevitably get silenced are the ways in which women retrieve the daily requirements of social reproduction. Since this is the aspect that gets least spoken about, what gets elided is the agency of women who start up the family routine in changed circumstances, re-build the rhythms of daily substances, if not the actual search, at least the

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organization of shelter. The caring, nurturing role of women hounds them in these moments of public rupture.  

Shauna Singh Baldwin’s *What the Body Remembers* written on the large scale and colorful canvas of undivided India begins in 1928 and traces the layered history of colonial India right up to independence and Partition in 1947. Vayu is the link between the historical and personal events. Echoes of Jinnah, Gandhiji, Tara Singh and Nehru texture the lives of Sardarji and his family and those at Pari Darvaza with a latent, national tension, imbuing their personal lives with intimations of the great convulsion that is to come. Readers are introduced to the British perspective through the character of Cunningham, who represents the British voice of Sardarji. Baldwin uses Cunningham as a medium to project the point of view of the Britishers. Shauna Singh Baldwin gives us a very detailed perspective of the Sikh community in her novel. Baldwin depicts the dilemma of the Sikh community at the time of the partition. When the British pulled out of India, the Sikh community in Punjab province was minority and in the fight for resources their problems were ignored by the other two communities. The Sikhs had lived with Muslims for hundreds of years almost like brothers. Baldwin however asserts that some gaps can never be filled. For instance in Pari Darwaza, Roop’s father would never offer water to Abu Ibrahim and Gujri is very upset if Huma enters her kitchen as now everything would have to be purified. A certain distance was always maintained. Thus the Sikhs know very well that if their ‘quom’ is at stake they can turn to the sword. Neighbours, close friends and men who had done businesss with each other for years are transformed into religious fanatics. Baldwin traces the causes of Partition in the selfish role played by

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the Britishers as well as the complete lack of control and madness that engulfed the towns and villages of Punjab. The novel also graphically describes the aftermath and depicts violence, migration, refugee crisis, train massacres and the psychological effects like alienation, uprootedness etc. that occurred during this time. Baldwin shows the volcanic passion that was evoked during partition and pointedly portrays the searing quality of the lava of hatred which largely engulfed innocent children and women. The novel depicts the slaughtering and butchering of people travelling in trains in order to reach their country. The perilous journey of people walking to India in caravans is described. Even Sardarji who had always been in control and had been a pillar of strength to his family is now shattered. The feeling of loss, uprootedness and the effort to find the will to begin life anew is heartrendingly depicted. Sardarji’s huge business empire is left behind he now has nothing but his will power, Roop and his children. But the novelist asserts that Sardarji is still more fortunate than many others who had lost most of their families along with their belongings.

Most importantly the novel tries to depict the female perspective as far as the Partition tragedy is concerned. The frenzy during partition had a strong sexual overtone. The constraints imposed upon the beast within man were suddenly removed and there was an outburst of suppressed instincts. Baldwin projects the vulnerability of woman as mother, daughter and daughter-in-law. The physical mutilation and disfigurement conveyed the intended message to the rival community. Through Kusum, Bachan Singh’s daughter-in-law, Baldwin presents the helplessness of a woman who is murdered by her own kinsman. Baldwin here tries to show the psychological dilemma of Bachan Singh who is helpless and does not have any other option left but to kill Kusum with his own hands to save her honour. Through Roop the novel reveals, realistically, the predicament of the Indian middle class woman.
against the backdrop of Partition – her inner conflicts, her exploitation and disillusionment, her dilemmas, her efforts to understand herself and to preserve her identity as wife, mother and above all, as a human being in the tradition bound, male dominated Indian society.

Baldwin very clearly shows that though women were traumatized by their Partition experience they did not succumb to it. They were shattered but they survived, drawing upon their inner strength. Gathering her strength when Roop sees Sardarji at the station, she says, “We must all keep our strength, keep our tears for bigger losses, go, get Sardarji a Tonga. This is only the beginning.”

Baldwin ends this novel on an optimistic note. In What the Body Remembers Sardarji and Roop feel the pain of losing what Sardarji had built with great effort in Pakistan but they find the courage to begin a new life in a new India. Roop emerges stronger and more whole than even Sardarji. We find her in the position of not receiving but giving strength at the end of the novel. “Fear lifts, rises above the gulmohar trees, leaves Roop light, translucent as sky.”

Shadows of Time is a saga of three families of different communities spanning almost three generations. Mehr Nigar Masroor tries to present the Muslim predicament from a different angle. The writer shows how Independence and Partition resulted in the formation of Pakistan and the impact of Islamic Fundamentalism on life and politics.

Masroor ties in historical events with her narrative. She presents the historical narrative without being partial to any community. The impartial attitude of the writer enhances the comprehensive understanding of the socio-political experience of the

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8 Ibid. pg. 536.
Partition holocaust. The novel presents a very realistic picture of social and political intricacies prevailing from the pre-independence till the post-independence era. The story moves along parallel lines— one on the political level and the other on the personal. Through the characters of the first generation Masroor throws light on the dark and dismal future of India as they witnessed the time of the British Raj also. These characters also show the gradual decline that seeped into the Hindu-Muslim relations due to the follies of the power hungry political leaders that were inevitably heading the nation towards the Partition. Through Sisir, Manilal and Keshab the negative impact of Bengal Partition on Bengalis and the fears of the Muslim community are brought out. Gradually a vicious atmosphere of suspicion is created by the Britishers. Through Kauna and Amlok Masroor throws light on the growth of Hindu fundamentalism. This she suggests is the beginning of the growth of a vast poison tree which will vitiate the atmosphere of free India. Sarla and Farhan’s relationship shows the conflicting political and religious loyalties and their relationship is suggestive of the love–hate relationship of the Hindus and Muslims. The novel is set in Calcutta, Delhi, Lucknow and Lahore.

_Shadows of Time_ gives us a detailed picture of political leaders and also throws new light on the role of Jinnah in the Partition of India. All the communities are given voice in an impartial and unbiased manner. The causes and effects of Partition are delineated clearly. Masroor blames the impatience of the Congress leaders and their refusal to honour the terms and conditions of the Simon Pact. Differences had already come into play but this was the last nail on the coffin of a free united India. Now Partition was imminent. Through discussions between Sarla and Farhan, both Hindu and Muslim viewpoints are projected. Some major historical events like Partition of Bengal, Swadeshi Movement, Lucknow Pact and the
formation of League etc. are also referred to in the novel but with full authenticity. What makes *Shadows of time* one of the effective works on Partition is the larger span of time, which it covers. Masroor has also shown the socio-political condition of Pakistan in the post-Partition period. By August 1948, the position in Pakistan had stabilized and life was returning to normal. But the feelings of uprootedness, departure and separation can be seen through Maheen and Farhan. Masroor shows the early years of Pakistan with the youth struggling to get jobs and training; businessmen striving hard to settle their business etc.

Masroor projects strong feminist rendering through the characters of Gulrukh, Sarla and Maheen. Masroor does not present women characters as stereotyped victims, drawing on the pathos resultant of helpless suffering. She communicates their resilience and determined courage to prevail against hardships. In the character of Sarla we find an emancipated woman, conscious of her desires and having no fear to express them. In her involvement with Farhan she breaks the social norms. She is intelligent and actively involved in the political movements of the time. A member of the Indian National Congress she fiercely defends its cause. Sarla’s character is modelled on that of many Hindu women who had been fortunate to have an education and were not wasting it. Gulrukh though submissive in the beginning changes in the course of the novel into an assertive strong woman, who bargains for her son’s life even resorting to blackmail. Shanti is raped but instead of committing suicide she plunges into work becomes a practicing lawyer. She adopts two children, a Muslim boy orphaned in the communal riots and a girl who had lost her mother to cholera in the aftermath of Partition. Mehnaz goes to Medical College which proves that better educational opportunities were available to the new generation of girls. Their lives would be better than those of their mothers. Nuzhat suffers the beatings of her
husband but finally leaves him to join the rehabilitation movement lead by Miss Jinnah. Maheen too represents the spirit of independence and strong individuality of the new woman. Seema Malik comments on the women characters in *Shadows of Time* as:

They display exemplary resilience, fortitude, patience and invincible spirit. They emerge victorious against the combined nightmare of assault, exodus, displacement, grinding poverty and broken psyche.\(^9\)

Anita Kumar’s *The Night of the Seven Dawns* is an exceptional case in Partition Fiction as it throws little light on the socio-political milieu of the time. This is a powerfully psychological novel which depicts the more subtle workings of emotional violence and its impact on a young mother. Lalita and her husband are trying to flee to Lahore during the Partition and are surrounded by the fear of death. Both mother and child are suffering from typhoid. Though never openly voiced but it is understood that their friends, the Muneers will help them only if they leave behind their child, Arun a small baby. The Muneers being childless use the situation to fill the emptiness in their lives. No one can be blamed but Lalita bears the emotional scars of guilt and remorse for the rest of her life. As she regrets, “Nobody demanded her baby at the gun point. No one threatened or coerced. But it had happened. Just happened. How does one explain this? Or even accept it? Where does one begin? Was there a weakness in her? Had she turned a coward? Did she value her life more than her motherhood?”\(^10\)

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The novel does not have a strong community angle but very successfully depicts the agony of a woman caught in a web of male dominance. The decision to leave the child is made not only because as a mother the life of her child is most precious but also because of her husband.

Later when Arun blames her for deserting him, Lalita has no words to defend herself. She now suffers the agony of a second rejection but cannot tell her son of the role played by his father or how she missed him her first born child, all her life. The novel also depicts Shubhra Mahadevan as a woman, with strong views and confidence to express her desires and fulfill them.

In taking history into the realm of art the techniques used by a writer are significant in bringing out the desired effect. A historical novelist is also a creator and must raise history to the level of art. These novelists seem to have succeeded in communicating to the readers a hint of the ghastliness and total insanity of Partition with total commendable objectivity and without letting their novels degenerate into melodramas or sentimentalism. These novels have transcended sensationalism to a great extent and achieved the discipline of art.

The use of the techniques like double narrative, use of sub plots and digressions has made these novels comprehensive and exhaustive. Ranna and Papoo's story in *Ice-candy-Man*, Kusum's story in *What the Body Remembers* etc. are the examples of such digressions. Techniques like interior monologue, stream of consciousness, dreams and flashback has made these novels psychologically powerful. Hossain, Manju Kapur and Anita Kumar have used these techniques for tracing the inner thoughts of the characters. Most of the time readers come to know the feelings, thoughts, conflict and anguish of the characters through interior monologue used by the raconteur. Attia Hossain, Manju Kapur and Anita Kumar use
flashback technique in narrating the events of Partition. Laila, Ida and Lalita go into the past to reconstruct the Partition trauma. Shauna Singh Baldwin, Anita Kumar and Mehr Nigar Masroor narrate the events of Partition through the stream of consciousness of characters like Sardarji, Roop, Lalita, Maheen, Nuzhat etc. Bapsi Sidhwa and Attia Hossain have also used autobiographical accounts in their novels. Many events in Laila and Lenny’s lives directly correspond with those of the writers. Hossain and Sidhwa’s novels are in the form of “Bildungsroman” tracing the growth of Laila and Lenny from childhood to adulthood.

The novelists have used the words of Hindi, Punjabi and Urdu language to give authentic feel of the community and background in which the novel is set. Hossain, Baldwin, Sidhwa, Kapur and Masroor use suggestive images, symbols and figures and metaphorical dreams to create the desired atmosphere. Laila’s Ashiana in the novel *Sunlight on a Broken Column* presents the image of an abandoned nest. *Vayu* in the novel *What the Body Remembers* presents the link between the past and the present. Lenny’s dreams serve the purpose of depicting the atmosphere of horror and terror. They are figurative of the impending cruelty that would engulf the innocent. Not only the characters or situations are symbolic but also the titles of the novels are suggestive and symbolic.

Indian English Women novelists advocate a gendered perception in their accounts. Their Partition discourses are parallel strategies to depict the diversity of women’s experiences of Partition. They underline those aspects of the gendered perspective of Partition that before them have been either exaggerated or ignored. They write about the reactions of women, of the still hovering shadows of Partition, which they alone as women writers can recognize, and the torment and ache which they can sense and share through their feminine awareness. Besides analyzing the
aftermath of Partition, they also expose the relation between gender and socio-
historical milieu of the time.

It is the women protagonists who govern the plot and are presented as central
and powerful. Roop (What the Body Remembers), Maheen, Shanti and Sarla
(Shadows of Time), Laila (Sunlight on a Broken Column), Virmati (Difficult
Daughters) take the central roles. In these novels, many of the characters are not only
women but women who are not confined to the traditional roles of wife, mother, sister
and lover in the society. They are intelligent and politically aware.

Anita Kumar, Baldwin and Masroor try to stress the psychological impact of
violence as traumatic. They show the long term effects of acts of violence on women
like Lalita (The Night of the Seven Dawns), Roop (What the Body Remembers) and
Shanti (Shadows of Time). The love relationships portrayed by women writers show
women as bold, intelligent and dignified companions having self esteem, who
maintain their individuality and draw the respect and admiration of their lovers. In
their treatment of the issue of female chastity women writers not only portray the
victimization of women but also their resilience. Instead of emphasizing sexual
violence against women they focus more on the psychological and emotional aspects.
The women protagonists like Shubhra Mahadevan (Shadows of Time), Sarla
(Shadows of Time) and Laila (Sunlight on a Broken Column) are not only on an equal
footing with their lovers but also have an edge over them.

Attia Hossain and Masroor have set their women characters free from the fake
and hollow terms of shame, honor, and modesty. They establish an order through
defiance and pay back the man in their own terms. Nandi and Sarla (Sunlight on a
Broken Column, Shadows of Time) are not scared or hesitant in raising their voice
against exploitation and injustice.
Hossain, Sidhwa, Baldwin and Manju Kapur present the perspective of the community to which they belong. Through Hossain we get a comprehensive and broader view of the traditional Muslim household. Masroor’s novel has the widest framework and intersperses many political events with the lives of the characters. Hossain creates the atmosphere of the Taluqdar culture, customs and traditions. She also uses various urdu expressions like *zenana, mardana, nikah* etc. Baldwin presents a Sikh viewpoint and the condition of the Sikh community at the time of partition. Sidhwa throws light on the Parsi community and its neutral stance during the event of partition.

Partition fiction by women writers is a corresponding approach to vanguard the marginalized. These writers prioritize women’s issues, experiences, helplessness and relationships during the time of Partition. But no perspective can emerge in isolation as a separate category. According to Lakshmi Holmstrom “The Indian English Women novelists look at women not in a ghettoized, particular space but within the broad, all-inclusive gamut of events that occurred during Partition. But a stronger binding force in the novels is the omniscient, gritty, feminine spirit that lingers over the novel and engages through many languages of women’s body, its memories and desires; its anguish and its ecstasies, through death, despair and the understanding and incomprehension that rage through it.”