Chapter V:

**Objects as Postcolonial constructs**

The partition novels that are being dealt with show the nation state of India in a flux through various stages of negotiation with the Western colonial power dominating over it. Nationalism enables the people of India to reposition themselves, as Ania Loomba makes us aware that “nationalism is a cultural construct which enables the colonized to posit their autonomy” (159). Through a detailed analysis of these novels we can contest the official version of nationalism that leads to the ouster of the British. Partha Chatterjee draws our attention to this problem. The official histories posit the birth of nationalism after or along with the establishment of the Indian National Congress in 1885 which makes it a construct that is created by Western colonial forces. Chatterjee contests this version and opines that anticolonial movements are generated much before they are recognized as a threat to colonialism by creating a space for itself within the periphery of colonialism. In doing so the world is divided into *ghar* and *bahir* to which reference has already been made. The outer domain (bahir) is material, constituted of science and technology, statecraft and matters concerning economy whereas the inner world (ghar) is essentially spiritual concerning itself with the family, religion and customs of the communities constituting the nation. As the colonized people get increasingly influenced by the West and give in to changes in the outer sphere, the more protective they become of the inner world that has to be shielded against any intrusion. As Chatterjee comments: “[i]f the nation is an imagined community, then this is where it is brought into being. In this, its true and essential domain, the nation is already
sovereign, even when the state is in the hands of the colonial power” (6-7). The three partition novels that have been chosen also show this state of continuity. Through the analysis of certain objects in the novels it can be shown that these objects can be treated as postcolonial constructs that bear testimony to the changing equations between the colonizer and the colonized.

Postcolonialism, as Ania Loomba suggests, can be thought, “not just as coming literally after colonialism and signifying its demise, but as the contestation of colonial domination and the legacies of colonialism” (16). She draws upon Jorge de Alva to show that the postcolonial is often not only a linear progression from the colonial but also an amalgamation of many histories that exist side by side within the colonial set up. These multiple narratives embedded in the partition fiction can be unearthed through the several objects that throng these novels. The partition novels represent a unique moment in the history of India, a time when the decolonization process is in full swing and the nation is proceeding towards a postcolonial existence. Mapping this process the novels show that a sort of participation is present on the part of the colonized as they accept the repressive British rule to some extent. The colonial power administers with a divide and rule policy trying to avail the consent of some communities while excluding others from this process. Thus we see that the British try to incorporate the Indians into the dialogue for independence, not by just imposing the decision to grant them independence but through a long and complicated political process generating a situation that would force the parties involved to ask for partition, thereby making use of the Gramscian notions of hegemony that stress on “incorporation and transformation of ideas and practices belonging to those who are dominated, rather than simple imposition from
above” (Loomba 32). In this respect the colonized are made to believe in the absolute necessity of their subjecthood and certain ideological concepts that would ensure a continuation of their domination by the colonizers. However, dominant concepts of culture, history and also literary texts come to be contested as people come to realize that power operates through these various forms of knowledge that are made available to the masses. Edward Said, in *Orientalism*, draws our attention to the consolidation of Western power by circulation of a certain kind of knowledge in Europe supported by various fields such as history, philosophy, anthropology, literature and so on. Thus the Orient is produced sociologically and politically through various processes and Said gives an idea about a consolidation of the European identity in turn as he informs us that “European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self” (Said 3). The concept of Europe as ‘self’ and the Orient as the ‘Other’ is at use here; European identity is thought to be superior to the non-European cultures and civilizations that supposedly lag far behind and is a subject of enquiry though under the surveillance of Western hegemony. Said proceeds to define Orientalism as “a certain will or intention to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is a manifestly different (or alternative and novel) world; it is . . . produced and exists in an uneven exchange with various kinds of power” (12). Said specifies that such powers are political, cultural, intellectual and moral in nature and contribute not only towards the concept of the Oriental but more towards the consolidation of the identity of the Western colonizer. Thus the ‘Oriental’ is created by an understanding between knowledge and power and its existence as a human being is negated. It is this negation of the subjectivity of the colonized that is voiced through the
decision of partitioning India, and a counter voice rises in the fiction dealing with the
after-effects that go beyond the official histories and make us aware of the impact of
colonialism on this decolonized country, partitioned into two halves, bleeding, as
innumerable people try to shore up their lives from the scattered pieces.

Said, therefore, considers Orientalism to be a conglomeration of ideas and
concepts about the east, ideas that become unfailingly associated with the Orient, “its
sensuality, its tendency to despotism, its aberrant mentality, its habits of inaccuracy, its
backwardness”; attributes which posit the Orient in an inferior status to the Occident
(205). Thus all the Orientals are considered as equivalent to people thought of as
backward in the western world, people such as the uncivilized and the retarded,
“delinquents, the insane, women, the poor”, people who are not considered to be citizens
or even people but as aliens to be dealt with (207). Thus the “relationship between the
Occident and the Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a
complex hegemony” (Bill Ashcroft et al 168). It also involves the attitude that the
feelings and reactions of the colonized do not matter. The partition is an outcome of this
attitude and it is this notion that the partition novels attempt to challenge. They are a way
of writing back at the colonial attempt to negate the existence of the colonized and their
views. While appropriating the tools offered by the colonizers the Indians challenge the
views of the Western powers. In doing so, the most important tool they avail is the
language of the colonizer; particularly in the partition novels that are being dealt with as
English has been used as a medium to voice the other side of the story. The novels
contest colonial narratives such as histories and official documents that pay attention only
to the process of transfer of power and not to the sufferings of the colonized whose
opinions are considered to be of little importance as the leaders of the various political parties decide on their behalf. It is interesting to note that here the dominant colonial power retains its hold on the Indians through their leaders and it is through their writing back in the form of fiction and through oral accounts do the oppressed give voice to their postcolonial identity. There have been many debates regarding the use of the native language or the colonizer’s language and if the postcolonial writers choose “the language of the colonizer they are working with words and syntax which express the perception and characteristic modes of thinking of a culture which scorned their own” (Innes 98). It has been further argued that only through the mother tongue can one give proper expression to the various shades of emotion and connotations that characterize literature. However, the choice of language can be closely connected to the readers whom the author wishes to target. Here we must pay attention to the fact that Salman Rushdie has argued that English has enabled him to reach out to all the corners of India, breaking the barriers between several ethnicities within the country as it s a common language. We must keep in mind that Indian English is unique as it “takes much of its energy and distinctive speech rhythms, idioms and cultural contexts that they bring to English” (102). Thus the postcolonial Indian English acquires an identity of its own as the writers show the courage to mould the language and use it to voice their positions by appropriating that which was not originally their own, just as their country had been appropriated by the colonizers. They follow what Bakhtin suggests as he makes us aware that “language . . . exists in other peoples mouths, in other people’s contexts, serving other people’s intentions” and “it is from there that one must take the word and make it one’s own”. It is precisely this path that partition literature follows, and it is this faith in the ability to
use the colonizer’s language in a postcolonial situation that prompts Chaman Nahal to be
defiantly unapologetic in his Introduction to Azadi: “I shall not offer an explanation or
justification for writing in English” (xv).

While Said had formulated his theory of ‘Orientalism’ regarding the European
way of looking at the East, Frantz Fanon dealt with the effects on the people colonized
and the ways in which these people dealt with the imposition. He shows us that there are
two stages in this process; in the first the colonized civilizations try to internalize the
European attitude towards their civilization and mimic the white people in order to
replicate them. In the second stage they become aware of the discrimination against them
and voice their protest against this colonization itself by raising the questions of justice
and equality, qualities which are upheld by the colonizers, particularly the British as
hallmarks of their civilization. It is out of this awareness that the demand for
independence arises in India. Fanon, however, had the foresight to predict that once these
colonized countries attain nationhood the middle class that would emerge would bring
ruin to the newly formed country through their laziness and unpreparedness for the
responsibility the changed situation would thrust upon them. As the native is conditioned
into admitting the supremacy of the white master, he feels himself incapable of mastering
the situation as seen during the partition of India when all law and order break down in
certain parts of the country. When the British relinquish their hold on India many people
feel like abandoned children: “[t]he colonizer thus becomes the father and the colonized
the child who has to obey the ‘law of the father’” (Nayar 22). In Azadi Lala Kanshi Ram
exhibits this despair and anger when he has to accept the partition of India: “the English
have let us down. . . . . It was their job, their obligation, to see that freedom came
smoothly. If today the man in the street feels insecure and if the government is powerless to protect his life and property, I hold the English responsible for that crime” (Nahal 118). This is a response to the stereotype developed about the Orient that necessitates “Western presence as the masculine, strong, and rational protector in various guises and roles – of the protector (police, army), educator (teacher), administrator (bureaucracy and political presence), and saviour (missionary)” (Nayar 24). When after many years of subjugation the colonized find themselves on their own they are confused with this status and often the violence that had been directed towards the British is channelized towards the fellow countrymen to give vent to their anger and hatred as “the development of violence among the colonized people will be proportionate to the violence exercised by the colonialists” (22-23). It is this attitude that is exhibited through Inayat-Ullah-Khan, the Sub-Inspector of Police in *Azadi* who after many years of oppression under the British administration targets his anger towards the Hindus and Sikhs and also whom he considers to be Congress Muslims. During the British rule he had been coerced into atrocities on his fellow Muslims which he resented wholeheartedly but could not challenge due to his colonized state: “For years he had ordered lathi charges on Muslim processions at the command of the British government. He hated doing it, they were his brethren, but orders were orders” (Nahal 62 italics mine). With the proclamation of partition his allegiance to the British can be compromised. During his existence as a colonized subject it had been impossible for him to question the British command but the process of decolonization enables him to have a postcolonial existence that is not afraid to question the validity of the British dictates. On the contrary he himself assumes the position of final authority and the lathi in this case becomes a postcolonial construct as it
signifies the changed responses. The “lathi charge” that had cost him “a heavy burden of his conscience” can now be targeted at other communities whom he considers to be a threat to the security of Pakistan (62). The beam brought by the Muslims belonging to the procession that demand a passage through a Hindu mohalla becomes an object of aggression not only against the communities other than the Muslims but also an open defiance of the neutrality maintained by the British administration.

Thus there develops a peculiar relation between the colonizer and the colonized that can be termed as ‘ambivalent’ in nature. Homi K. Bhabha has identified the fact that the colonizer wishes to transform the colonized into a copy of his own identity though not quite the same. Thus the “colonial discourse encourages the colonized subject to ‘mimic’ the colonizer, by adopting the colonizer’s cultural habits, assumptions, institutions and values” and “the result is never a simple reproduction of those traits” (Ashcroft et al 139). It is to establish the colonial hegemony that the colonial powers established the concept of mimicry by creating a group of men that would satisfy “the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite” (Bhabha 122). We must remember that the colonized is always supposed to be a little inferior to the colonizer and therefore not a perfect copy of the latter. This prompts Bhabha to construe that the whole discourse of mimicry is formulated around what he calls ‘ambivalence’. There emerges, therefore, a rupture in the determinacy of colonial dominance, as “in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference” (122). Mimicry is hence characterized by a sort of ‘indeterminacy’ as it is a representation of certain differences and is an indicator of a ‘double articulation’ as through the strategies of regulation, reform and discipline the
‘Other’ is appropriated. It is also a process through which the colonial power, while trying to establish an uncontested hegemony is confronted with opposition as it resorts to double standards by creating certain rules for their own society and subverting those rules when they are applied to the colonized thereby generating an ambivalence. Thus the colonial masters feel the need to “‘civilize’ its ‘others’” and at the same time “fix them into perpetual ‘otherness’” (Loomba 145). This was done so that the Indians would be able to mimic but never exactly replicate English values and the difference between their state and the ‘real’ Englishness would lead to undisturbed subjection to the colonizers. But it is precisely this appropriation and copying of the manners, customs and behaviour of the colonizer that leads to a subversion and mimicry becomes at once a ‘resemblance and menace’ as the irreducibility of the colonizer’s identity becomes a mockery in the colonized. Thus the outcome of the endeavour to create mimic men rests on the premise that “to be Anglicized is emphatically not to be English” and there must be forever remain a gap between the main subject and the mimic (Bhabha 125).

What is interesting is the subversion of domination in this case as the colonized too assumes a position of power by virtue of mimicry as it threatens the uncontested supremacy of colonial power: “[t]he menace of mimicry is its double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority” (Bhabha 126). It is the narcissistic demands of the colonial authority that are threatened through the colonized as they offer an image that is not exactly a replica but is characterized by many differences and it is through this image that the ‘observer becomes the observed’ and a reconstruction of the colonizer’s identity takes place through a partial representation in the mimic colonized. Mimicry becomes a double-edged sword for both
the colonizer and the colonized as it is sanctioned and forbidden at the same time and are problematic for both the parties concerned. Bhabha draws on Lacan to remind us the true nature of mimicry:

mimicry is like camouflage, not a harmonization of repression of difference, but a form of resemblance, that differs from or defends presence by displaying it in part, metonymically. Its threat . . . comes from the prodigious and strategic production of conflictual, fantastic, discriminatory ‘identity effects’ in the play of a power that is elusive because it hides no essence, no ‘itself’ (Bhabha 128-129 italics mine).

We can relate the nature of mimicry to the performativity of gender where stereotypical roles are ascribed that has to be followed. However, through its very ‘otherness’ mimicry establishes the colonized by the deauthorisation of the colonizer as through the various anomalies and slippages between the colonizer and the colonized narcissistic authority is destroyed. Colonial discourse is split into two trajectories – that of the colonizer deals with reality whereas that of the colonized repositions reality as mimicry. It is in this context that the postcolonial, in order to negotiate the crisis about own cultural identity, places certain objects contributed by the colonial masters in a new context that often subverts their initial position and this analysis proposes to look at these layered meanings.

What was introduced by the colonial masters as a form of control over the colonized has mostly been taken and moulded in such a way that a hybridized form has emerged in which the Western concepts have been placed along indigenous concepts and the colonized has read it “through their own interpretative lens, and . . . [used] it to assert cultural alterity or insist on an unbridgeable difference between colonizer and colonized”
(Loomba 146). The most important tool used for this purpose is postcolonial writing employing the colonizer’s own language and utilizing the ambivalence to disrupt the authoritative position of the colonizer. The partition novels mirror the colonial world in a phase of transition when the colonial powers are no longer sure about the consequences of the actions undertaken as they lose their grip over the colonial subjects “because what is being set in motion in their behaviour is something that may ultimately be beyond the control of colonial authority” (Ashcroft et al 141). This is what happens during the partition of India as the process of transfer of power, once set in motion, cannot foresee the immense loss of life and property accompanying the process.

Colonialism imposes itself through various objects introduced by the system. One such object is the train which acquires changed connotations as the decolonization process gains momentum. In *Train to Pakistan* they act as clocks to which the people of Mano Majra refer to for their daily acts making the village acutely conscious of trains:

Before daybreak, the mail train rushes through on its way to Lahore, and as it approaches the bridge, the driver invariably blows two long blasts of the whistle. In an instant, all Mano Majra becomes awake. Crows begin to caw in the keekar trees. Bats fly back in long silent relays and begin to quarrel for their perches in the peepul. The mullah at the mosque knows that it is time for the morning prayer. . . . The priest at the Sikh temple . . . too gets up . . . and intones his prayer in monotonous singsong. . . . (Singh 13).

Thus colonialism alters not only the human beings but also natural time that readjusts itself according to the dictates of modern industrial society. The village attends
to its “dull daily routine” in accordance with the “10.30 morning passenger train from Delhi and “stops to rest” as “the midday express goes by” (13). The end of the working day is signaled by the “evening passenger from Lahore” whereas their good night is uttered through the chugging in of the goods train as “[l]ittle bats go flitting about in the dusk and large ones soar with slow graceful sweeps” (14). The goods train takes up a considerable amount of time at the siding and by “the time it leaves, the children are asleep. The older people wait for its rumble over the bridge to lull them to slumber. Then life in Mano Majra is stilled” (14). It is noteworthy that the train can be equated in some respect to the clock towers established by the British in almost all the major cities. These towers were established to make the native aware of time and to chart “the route the native might take to the realms of modernity; they represented the march of progress, man’s control over the natural environment and, ultimately, the management of human destiny itself” (Srivastava 47). The trains too, act as a colonial presence in villages like Mano Majra which are otherwise not touched by the colonial world. Thus they act as “the symbol of the ‘rational’ West” in “an environment perceived to be characterized by excessive spirituality and otherworldliness” (47). Thus the natives try to adhere to the concept or myth of punctuality associated with the British, they wish to alter their image to that of a punctual native who can shrug off the habit of unpunctuality to be “comfortable in the new, ‘modern’ temporality” (47).

Trains symbolize not only the punctuality of the British but also adherence to rules and the prevalence of law and order that often characterized the British administration in the minds of the natives. This concept persists even as the freedom of
India becomes almost certain and the tension in the cities gradually start spreading to the villages; for example in *Ice-Candy-Man* Lenny’s mother gives her “hesitant permission” for accompanying Imam Din to his village Pir Pindo only if they avail a train to cover a part of their journey (Sidhwa 104). With the possibility of an end to English rule this colonial artifact is used as a tool by the colonized as we see Imam Din informing his village kin about the methods used by the anti colonial protestors: “The Congress-wallahs have started a new stunt . . . they sit down on the rail tracks – women and children, too” (56). But there is still a fear of the colonizer and the consciousness that they may be punished mercilessly for their audacity: “once aroused the English are savages” (56). Mention may be made in this regard to the princely states that held the government to ransom regarding the train lines that passed through their territories. Thus trains become an instrument in the hands of postcolonial India where they are used as an answer to the arbitrary decision of the English to divide the country; as if through the identification of trains with the religions and communities travelling in them the Indians want to challenge the uniform way of clubbing the natives together by the British. This upheaval has a great effect on Mano Majra:

[early in September the time schedule in Mano Majra started going wrong. Trains became less punctual than ever before and many more started to run through at night. Some days it seemed though the alarm clock had been set for the wrong hour. On others, it was as if no one had remembered to wind it. . . . People stayed in bed late without realizing that times had changed and the mail train might not run through at all. Children did not know when to be hungry, and clamoured for food all the time. In
the evenings, everyone was indoors before sunset and in bed before the express came by – if it did come by. Goods trains had stopped running altogether, so there was no lullaby to lull them to sleep. Instead, ghost trains went past at odd hours between midnight and dawn, disturbing the dreams of Mano Majra (Singh 93).

Almost as an answer to the construct of the punctual British and the punctual native created by the British, Indians come back to their own rhythm of time which does not synchronize with western time anymore. Along with the defiance of imposed time the Indians resort to the denial of the adherence to laws imposed by the British and resort to a wave of destruction that ruptures the fabric of Indian society forever and though time secures a certain semblance of stability the tears can never be mended completely. This pseudo peacefulness can be compared to the ghost train that enters Mano Majra station which at first glance has “the look of the trains in the days of peace” as “[n]o one sat on the roof. No one clung between the bogies. No one was balanced on the footboards” (93). But actually it is a train full of massacred dead bodies that alter the lives of the villagers: they forget to adhere to their daily duties such as the preparation of the mid-day meal or giving fodder to the cattle. It is the same reaction that the Ice-candy-man shows when faced with the train full of mutilated bodies from Gurdaspur, including his relatives. Thus the trains act as instruments of change in the personalities of people and the mayhem that follows is often a sort of ‘writing back’ at the authorities, British or not, that symbolizes the native’s endeavour to deal with the whole process of partition. Though introduced by the British it becomes a weapon in hands of the natives as the administration loses all control over this mode of communication and becomes a postcolonial construct that
challenges the very ideals propagated through it by the British – safe transportation, punctuality and connectivity to the remotest parts of this country.

Said shows us that Europe spread its power over vast areas thriving on the binary of the familiar (itself) and the strange (the East). Thus it is on opposition that the identity of the European with respect to the Oriental is created, as Ania Loomba comments that “if colonized people are irrational, Europeans are rational; if the former are barbaric, sensual and lazy, Europe is civilization itself . . . if the Orient is static, Europe can be seen as developing and marching ahead; the Orient has to be feminine so that Europe can be masculine (Loomba 45 italics mine). It is this glory that is reflected in the various parades by the British mentioned in Azadi, the chief of them being the New Year’s Day Parade which mesmerizes the natives as the British march past the Union Jack and the “Tommies” display “their regimental flags and scarlet uniforms” (Nahal 15). These objects are unrelated to the Indian culture but nevertheless the mimic men try to assimilate them and show their admiration for the colonial insignia just as they participate in the New Year Day celebrations though their New Year begins “in April, on the Baisakhi Day” (15). But it is unwarranted violence that holds the attention of the natives more than anything else as stray dogs are not only mercilessly shot by the Sahibs with their guns that reminds the Indians present of the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh, but also their tails cut off and taken away perhaps to show the natives the fate of the twisted tail of the dog that defies all endeavours to set it straight when alive. The same fate awaits the native. Thus the use of arms becomes an important method to establish colonial rule: “violence [is] readily resorted to wherever necessary and the enormous differences of strategy in different places indicate the flexibility of colonial ideologies and practices”
(Loomba 98). This can perhaps explain the extensive use of guns and other weapons by various communities during partition against one another for it enables them to attain the hitherto unattainable status of the colonizer or the master. The English viewed the colonized Indian males as effeminate and weak and aggression against members of other communities comes as an answer to this prototype. Thus the gun or the knife becomes a postcolonial construct through which the native retaliates; the mutilation of the penis can be compared to the severance of the tail of the dog where an animate object becomes a marker of power or the lack of it. Thus we can say that through the violence generated by the use of various weapons an ‘emasculated nation’ finds back its ‘masculinity’. The violent model of masculinity adopted during the partition is hegemonic in nature and the various weapons used in this process serve as a tool as well as a symbol for the exposition and the enforcement of this hegemony against people of other religions and communities, particularly to reinstate the ‘masculinity’ lost under colonial rule.

Just as the denial of masculinity to the natives initiated a spurt in so-called masculine acts during the partition, attempts were also made by the colonizers to impose masculinity on the “hijra community, a group of (usually) male-born castrated persons who wore female clothing and usually adopted feminine names” (Hinchy 45). The hijras were considered a threat by the British authorities as they “radically subverted normative masculinity, were ‘addicted’ to ‘unnatural’ sex, lacked male genitals, and had a subversive, feminine appearance” and were consequently registered under Part II of the Criminal Tribes Act (CTA) of 1871 (45). Registration under this act entailed that certain civil rights such as writing a will or being the guardian of a child were denied to them as was public performance and as has already been mentioned in Chapter III, “wearing
female clothing in public” which was considered to be a “key marker of hijra . . . identity” (46). Thus through the prohibition of performance the British attempted to erase the hijras’ “bodily difference and visibility as a socio-cultural category” and “restore the binary concept of gender which they challenged” (46, 49). The British introduced a prohibition on cross dressing so that the bodies of the hijras could be inscribed with normative masculinity and for this purpose they had often been stripped of their “female attire and ornaments” and dressed in men’s clothes.³ It is precisely this dictate that the hijras referred to in Train to Pakistan defy, they wear ‘skirts’ that establishes their defiance and becomes an object that reflects postcolonial retaliation and frustrates the colonizers “in their attempts to classify and therefore control them” (48).

The newspaper is another object that acquires changed implications along with the changes in the political scenario of India. Introduced by the British in 1780 by James Augustus Hicky in the form of a weekly paper Bengal Gazette, the newspaper positions itself as a “political and commercial paper, open to all parties, but influenced by none”.⁴ The British use the papers to report the various incidents taking place in the Anglo-Indian community though there are many allegations against the several newspapers published during this period within the British community itself. With the regional press comes a shift in the subject of the newspapers as they take a nationalistic turn that prompts the British to establish The Vernacular Press Act of 1878 according to which “the printer and the publisher of any paper in an Indian language could be called upon to enter into a bond not to publish anything likely to excite feelings of disaffection against Government or antipathy between persons of different races, castes and religions among His Majesty’s subjects.”⁵ The Indian newspapers subvert these dictates and give free expression to their
views regarding the British rule in both the regional languages as well as the language of the colonizer as we see Lala Kanshi Ram moulding himself according to the exhortations of Baljit Raizada, the ‘nationalist editor’ of the Urdu daily Inqalab. An ambivalence is created in Lala Kanshi Ram as his love for British pageantry, “their bands and their parades and the colour of their uniforms” is challenged by the fiery columns of the Urdu daily which try to expose the true nature of the British: “The British, . . . were not as just as they were made out to be. . . . The British in India were paid their wages not in paper money but in gold. Each year tons of that gold were shipped back to the bunder motherland, where ruled those bunder kings and queens” (Nahal 8-9). Thus the newspaper acts as a postcolonial object that reverses Lala Kanshi Ram’s attitude towards the British as he conditions himself in believing that “they’re kutai, they’re dogs – these Angrez” though he cannot accept the theory that the show of pomp and grandeur by the British was done solely for fooling the Indians. Thus though “realist narratives of novels and newspapers help to (re)produce an imagined community”, in this case a solidarity with innumerable unknown Indians befooled by the British, “they also exhibit contradictions that produce slippages in that same narrative structure” (Didur 40).

Newspapers, therefore, serve to mirror the colonized society going through a change as we see Ice-candy-man applying himself to Urdu newspapers and the Urdu Digest as well as to the English daily Civil and Military Gazette that enables him to disseminate information about Subhash Chandra Bose and the Germans. Thus by mimicry of the British newspapers the Indians create a space of their own as “the bilingual intelligentsia [come] to think of its own language as belonging to that inner domain of cultural identity, from which the colonial intruder had to be kept out; languages . . . [become] a zone over
which the nation first declare[s] its sovereignty and then . . . transform[s] in order to make it adequate for the modern world” (Chatterjee 7). The newspaper becomes an instrument that aids in the spread of the nationalistic spirit and we agree with Franz-Stefan Gady when he writes that by introducing the newspaper the British “did a great service to Indian democracy and a disservice to imperialism.”

The partition novels thus capture unfailingly the change sweeping the nation during the process of partition. Several objects mirror these changes as well as the changing responses of the people involved. The position of reverence allotted to the British government is gradually compromised as we see that in the Chandunnugger police station “an old framed picture of King George VI” is placed alongside a “coloured portrait of Gandhi” signifying a hybridity in the response of the Indians as they negotiate their colonial past to make way for a decolonized future (Singh 86). This change is also evident in the statues of Queen Victoria that elicit a kind of ambivalent response from the Indians as Lenny’s reactions signify: “Queen Victoria, cast in gunmetal is majestic, massive, overpowering, ugly. Her statue imposes the English Raj in the park” (Sidhwa 18). The same sentiment is echoed by Lala Kanshi Ram who is ready to pay obeisance to the English King just because he is the “direct descendant of the great Malika Victoria, on the sight of whose fat statues [he] had grown into manhood” (Nahal 20). The native displays the ambivalent responses of derision and scorn along with admiration at these visual markers of the British Raj that are about to disappear from their lives though Lenny’s surprise at the actual incident mirrors the disbelief that Indians experience during the tumultuous process of partition: “I cannot believe my eyes. The Queen has gone! The space between the marble canopy and the marble platform is empty. A group of children,
playing knuckles, squat where the gunmetal Queen sat enthroned. Bereft of her presence, the structure looks unwomaned” (Sidhwa 236). The colonizer becomes trapped in the symbol and is shorn of individual traits. Thus the process of colonization alters not only the colonized but also the colonizer and several objects serve to delineate the postcolonial world the Indians continue to live in.

Notes:


2. Dominique Lapierre and Larry Collins refer to the bargain of various princes regarding posts, telegraphs and railways that ran through their territories (240).

3. Reference by Jessica Hinchy to the comments by one Deputy Inspector General of Police: UPSA/A/COV/B119/SN12: Hobart to IG Police, NWP, 21 June1876. (50)


5. Same source as above