Conclusion:

One is thus brought to the conclusion of this research work. In order to draw an inference from the findings a summation of the various aspects of objects and how they contribute to the creation and consolidation of several identities is necessary.

Objects, an integral part of literature, have been explored by various theorists for the contribution they make towards the unveiling of various layers of meanings. T.S. Eliot has been the first to chart out a course for this process by formulating the theory of ‘objective correlative’ where he mentions that objects represent a concrete external to several emotions as they appeal to our senses and poetry acquires permanence only when the thoughts and feelings are externalized through either corresponding human actions or objects which can be related to those emotions.

Just as Eliot has expressed his opinion about the importance of objects in the creative process Barthes has provided an insight into the very nature of objects using the tool of semiology. The object is perceived as ‘non-human’ and defines the human through this very aspect. The object also becomes a ‘sign’ like language as apart from the apparent meaning other connotations may be unearthed from its surroundings which exist with reference to the context in which it is positioned. Therefore objects are pregnant with possibilities and meanings overflow their use: they are ‘polysemous’ – they offer several readings of various meanings that may vary not only from one reader to another but also within the same reader according to changing situations. Much of the opinions of Barthes about objects remind us of what Marx opines on the same issue: he identifies objects as commodities that lend themselves to fetishism. A commodity is apparently an
insignificant and trivial thing though in actuality it abounds in theological and metaphysical connotations. They acquire a certain mystical character that does not generate from their usage value. Humans transfer the social relation existing between themselves to an assumed relation between objects. This is how the red star or the hammer and sickle gathers its specific connotations.

What Marx theorizes finds reiteration in Claude Lévi-Strauss as he says that in order to maintain the social order the solidarity within the clans must be maintained. The individual sentiments that ensure the proper continuation of the legacies of several clans have to be fixed on certain objects which represent the group. These and certain other objects act as totems as there develops a ‘ritual relation’ between these objects and humans. The chosen totem is characterized by a belief in the existence of an inviolable kinship between the object and the members of the group and an unconditional respect for the object. Foucault makes us aware of the situation where objects are confined within their ‘ironic identity’. To establish the identity of the object Foucault recommends an analysis that proceeds from similarities to differences. The concept of sign undergoes a change through ages and it comes to be established as an insertion that represents the thing signified but is also distinct from the latter. Thus an idea or object becomes a sign of another object or idea as it is possible to establish a bond of representation between them.

The role played by objects in our lives has been further enumerated by Jean Baudrillard as he draws our attention to the fact that in the modern age humans are surrounded more by objects than by other humans. These objects become a source of passion in human beings as they can be wholly possessed without any opposition.
Through our control over these objects we consider ourselves to be the masters of the spatial and temporal world. It is in this context that the body plays an important role as it is instrumental in selling various commodities and itself becomes an object that is consumed. Baudrillard, in fact, identifies the body as one of the finest objects explored by humans in this world. Martha Nussbaum shares Baudrillard’s concept of the body as an object as she draws our attention to the concept of sexual objectification. In various social functions women are often considered to be dehumanized beings and are treated as sexual commodities. Affected by the way in which society views her, the woman grasps her identity as a thing thereby compromising her humanity. Nussbaum identifies the seven notions involved in treating the human being as an object: instrumentality, denial of autonomy, inertness, fungibility, violability, ownership and denial of subjectivity. Thus in objectification a human being is treated as an object and denied autonomy. Nussbaum theorizes that objectification of other human beings is attractive because it enables a person to experience absolute power over those objectified.

We must also remember to analyze the observations made by American psychologist William James about human behaviour that is dependent on first formed preferences. When an animal is confronted with an object for the first time it fixates its attention on this particular thing and no other object ever acquires this importance hereafter. Again objects are deemed important at particular stages of the development of instincts in animals as well as human beings. If this stage passes away then those objects may not acquire the importance they would have acquired at opportune moments. Konrad Lorenz has identified this process of bond formation as ‘imprinting’ and perhaps this plays an important role in the way in which humans too view various objects. Objects
and their valence thus, have been the focus of attention in several critical theories. In all cases objects acquire certain connotations that go beyond their spatial and temporal identities. It is this overflowing meaning that is used to delineate the various roles played by several objects in partition fiction.

The partition of India in 1947 brought about a sudden change in the equation between the several communities living side by side till date. There had been instances of unrest and hostilities but with the partition the differences became pronounced in such a way that led to massive destruction of property and lives. It is interesting to note in this context the role played by objects as they become markers of certain communities and prompt people to kill members of other communities or sacrifice their own lives for the preservation of the sanctity of these markers.

The community signifies a group of people having some particular characteristic in common and living together. The German sociologist Ferdinand Tonnies says that the community is usually formed by people having the same root reflected in their subconscious who remain together through a sense of attachment or due to some necessity and also due to some common interest. Tonnies informs us that the relationship between the mother and her children is instinctive. The father, on the other hand, acts as a guide who shares his own experiences to provide the children with knowledge so that they can take on the various responsibilities when required. This arrangement is patriarchal in nature as several specific roles are ascribed to the male and female members of the community. Through these ascribed duties the spirit of sharing and fellow feeling is inculcated among the members. It is in this way that the formation of the community of place is made. According to Tonnies ‘kinship’, ‘neighbourhood’ and
‘friendship’ are the three basic types of communities on which other forms of communities develop. The man of authority in the community is equivalent to the father figure; often priests who exhibit the authority born of wisdom. It is for this reason the exhortations of the religious leaders are followed during any social turmoil such as the partition of India. Language plays an important role in generating a sense of solidarity as it helps in the generation of spiritual and mental closeness. As the basic communities are dependant on nature for their sustenance the natural objects become intricately linked to the identity of the members of the community.

Emile Durkheim, while examining the relationship of the individual with society or community opines that individuals are placed beyond their choice in a society or community and they have to conform to the norms imposed by the community failing which they are censured or ridiculed. Thus in many cases the choice of the individual is shaped by the social currents of the moment though it may counter the past inclinations of the individual. During the partition of India people start viewing the religious objects of the other community differently perceiving threat in those very objects part of their existence a few days ago. This results in a rupture in the social fabric leading to distrust and disruption. This also results in a fragmentation of self that is reflected through an individual’s response towards certain objects. Thus certain current trends are followed blindly by the community members though it is the personality of the individual that is extremely important as some accept the dictates of the society unquestioningly whereas some challenge these trends despite being threatened by the community.

Partition literature documents communities that are religious in nature being pitted against one another by the changed political situation. It is noteworthy that often
the target of the Muslims and the Sikhs are the Hindus who are better established and usually prosperous than the other two communities. The *granthi* in *Ice-Candy-Man* exhibits this uneasiness as he is intimidated by the blue turbans of the Akalis who talk of changing the situation. The long swords and *kirpans*, used by both Muslims and Sikhs, now convey hostility and fear as they start representing the belligerent identity of the Sikhs to the Muslims. The *lathi* or the Bhangra dance are common to both the communities and this draws our attention to the fact that it is the ethnic Punjabi identity that is predominant among these people though the religious and political leaders contribute to the surfacing of the religious identity among the people of several communities living together in harmony for decades.

Difference of opinion often leads to a break in the communities and creation of sub-groups such as that of Congress Muslims and Muslim League Muslims. Chaudhri Barkat Ali represents the first type in *Azadi* and his khadi dress becomes an indicator of his allegiance. He shares this dress with his Hindu friend Lala Kanshi Ram and they together show the awareness that the British can only be driven away from India if the different communities act together. The boycott of foreign articles and the manufacture and use of indigenous articles becomes a weapon against the British. Thus their khadi pyjamas and shirts become a marker of defiance against the colonial authority as well as a rise above communal considerations.

The Hindu is commonly identified by his dhoti and is often a target for easygoing banter in pre-partition days as we see Ice-candy-man impersonating a timid Hindu while pretending to wear a dhoti. With the advent of partition this becomes banal as we, along with Lenny and her Ayah, witness the violence inflicted on a Hindu banya wearing a
dhoti as he is tied to a jeep and torn apart. Hindus on the other hand, never consider Muslims worthy of entering their inner world, the core of which is represented by the household deity and the woman. It is for this reason that Hindu shrines are desecrated and women are used as bodies to imprint the triumph of one community over another. This often prompts the patriarchy to treat women as objects who are immolated or sacrificed to preserve the sanctity of the community. Thus with partition people pay attention only to the communal component of their identity and negate all other aspects. This leads to the turmoil witnessed during this phase of history and the despair of the affected people trying to make sense of this inexplicable situation.

Just as certain objects become markers of communities so do certain others become markers of gender. Gender becomes very important as the partition of the country takes on a gendered aspect; the country being partitioned is identified as the motherland being severed. In order to analyze objects as markers of gender we must first understand the concept of gender. Gender has been defined as the state of being female or male, particularly in social or cultural contexts. It is considered to be different from ‘sex’ which refers to biological differences. According to her gender becomes that cultural process which enables the construction of natural sex as a surface that is politically neutral and on which culture works. It is taken as an indication of several differences such as cultural, biological or linguistic. Beauvoir, however, believes that the masculine is considered to be universal and consequently the only gender that is identified is feminine thereby imprisoning women in their body. Irigaray further problematizes this as she considers the phallocentric language unworthy of representing women as it is masculinity itself that has created the concept of the feminine as the Other. She shows
that the binary of male/female conceals the masculinist hegemony that condemns the
feminine to silence by negating it as subversion. Through discussions of the various
aspects of the concept of gender Butler arrives at the conclusion that gender is created
and controlled by the legitimizing practices of gender consolidation. She deduces that
gender is performative in nature as it constitutes the identity it is thought to be. Gender,
thus, constitutes of certain acts and established behaviours in which the performers
themselves start believing in and perform accordingly. In partition fiction too, genders act
according to certain norms that are imposed on them as they cannot go beyond the acts
expected of them.

It is often thought that the female body is the site of cultural markings and
politically constructed. This concept finds expression during the partition when the
country considered as Bharatmata is thought to be mutilated by her children. The
consequence of this is that women have to bear the brunt as men direct their anger
towards women considered to be representatives of their religion and property of
patriarchy. They are considered to be no more than objects, having no personality or
agency of their own. The women are identified with the home, the *ghar* and the men with
the outer world, the *bahir* as Partha Chatterjee demarcates them. Thus household objects
such as utensils, beddings etc. define their identities. They are closely related to the
hearth, the essence of the home, where they find their fulfillment. It is noteworthy that the
women often consider themselves to be second class citizens in their own homes as they
have the consciousness that they belong to the male members and hence a sort of
identification with the inanimate objects inhabiting their world.
One object that defines the identity of the woman is the headcover or the veil, also known as the *dupatta* or *chunni*. The veiled female body is distantiated from the male body and only in the inner recesses of the house in the absence of the male members can the women let go of this veiling practice as we see Isher Kaur and Prabha Rani doing so in *Azadi*. Interesting is the fact that women who are strong willed seldom resort to veiling as Nooran, the weaver’s daughter, in *Train to Pakistan* or Ayah in *Ice-Candy-Man*. Fallen women such as the dancer Haseena in *Train to Pakistan* also does not veil herself as the society has decided to deny her the secrecy and protection offered by the *dupatta*. The turban occupies a similar position in the case of the male members. While in the women the sense of shame is predominant due to her lack of status, it is the excess status in the men that is compromised by the removal of the turban, for example, Lala Kanshi Ram in *Azadi* can never again wear a turban after the partition as his status is diminished from that of a wealthy grain merchant of Sialkot to a small makeshift storeowner in a refugee camp in Delhi.

Clothes too play important roles with respect to different genders. Denial of clothes to women represents their lack of agency and this finds culmination in the parade of naked women in *Azadi*. Denudation has its effect on men too as we see that Iqbal, in *Train to Pakistan*, is stripped of his city-bred confidence and nonchalant composure when he is ordered to take off his clothes by the police. This becomes a process of disempowerment as Hari is forced to face in *Ice-Candy-Man* when challenged by the Muslim mob. Men, however, also use clothes to satisfy their mental aberrations through exhibitionism as seen during the parade of naked women at Narowal. The women here, as in other instances too, are equated to inanimate objects that are bartered and kept for
personal consumption by the men, as they become barren entities. One is thus brought to
the concept of the third gender referred to in *Train to Pakistan*. The *hijras* referred to by
Haseena, the prostitute, enjoy a kind of autonomy as they cannot be slotted according to
normative heterosexuality and thus become immune to the violence targeted against
women though they wear skirts, often in defiance of the administration. Their clothes
thus become markers of their singular position though we must not forget that they are
marginalized too. It is this marginalization that is questioned as we shall see women
gradually coming out of their homes and shouldering the responsibilities of their families
though forced more by circumstances than by their inner volition and this is reflected in
the sewing machine used by Sunanda at the end of *Azadi*.

It must be remembered that the partition of the country was done along religious
lines and this gave birth to what Durkheim called anomie, that is, according to the
Concise Oxford Dictionary ‘a lack of the usual social or ethical standards’ leading to a
breakdown at the level of the entire society. Society formulates certain religious symbols
and they are attributed to a certain esteem that differentiates them from ordinary objects.
Religion acquires a kind of moral superiority as it reflects the desires of collective
representations and only the religion of humanity can survive the test of time. Thus
religion, as Durkheim defines it, comprises “a set of symbolic beliefs – beliefs related to
‘sacred’ things” (*Elementary Forms* 24 italics mine). These objects have an impact on
members of different religions who relate their religious identity to these objects. The
objects become totemized and are revered for the beliefs associated with them.

One thing that is common in all religions is the fact that a certain number of
people share certain intensely held beliefs. Thus religion always has a definite group as
its foundation. The shared ideas of this common group established certain objects as sacred (religious) and profane (commonplace). The individual conceives his identity based on a sense of self-importance that thrives on the concept of *pseudospeciation* as Erikson calls it; the stress on the belief that each group constitutes the ‘one chosen species’ (Erikson *Dimensions* 28). During the partition of India all ethical or logical attitude is sacrificed to this sense of supremacy when one religious community tries to wipe out the other. In order to consolidate itself any religious identity requires two opposites: ‘intimacy’ and ‘distantiation’; whereas familiar objects are totemized due to their intimacy, objects belonging to other religions are distanced due to their unfamiliarity. However, there are certain objects which survive generations of believers, such as the sandstone slab mentioned in *Train to Pakistan* to which members of all religions pay obeisance, as it is a representative of an impersonal god and a metareligious society.

Thus certain objects that are commonplace are termed as profane and certain others are metamorphosed by our religious imagination into ‘sacred’ objects. The five sacred objects revered by the Sikhs acquire their designated meanings in this way. Niranjan Singh in *Azadi* reflects the passion associated with such external markers. His religious identity gains precedence over all other components of his identity as he makes repeated use of religious objects like the *kara* or the *kirpan*. Repeated handling of such objects helps in the consolidation of his identity as a Sikh. When this identity is challenged he prefers death to dishonour. A totally opposite attitude is shown by the Sikhs who come to attack Pir Pindo in *Ice-Candy-Man*. Though displaying all the markers of their religion they actually negate the teachings of religion by inflicting
violence on members of other religious communities and by raping their women and desecrating mosques. The same attitude is reflected in the behaviour of the militant Sikhs who barge into Mano Majra in *Train to Pakistan*; they want to establish their Sikh identity through excessive use of weapons. Thus common peace loving villagers are transformed into murderers who do not shy away from using their domestic weapons like swords and spears to inflict violence on members of other communities.

Generally religious objects threaten the existence of people but in the case of Iqbal in *Train to Pakistan* the *kara*, a religious object, saves his life. An irreligious man, he considers himself to be above the petty divisions initiated by religion. But when he returns back to the religiously charged atmosphere of Mano Majra after his brief stay in the prison, he cannot remain religiously effaced any more. He has to take recourse to his *kara* to prove his Sikh identity in this predominantly Sikh village in order to save his life. Thus, these situations give rise not only to the problem of self-identity but also of how others perceive us as during these troubled times as one’s religious identity becomes the most important co-ordinate to define any person.

Religious identity becomes fluid too, as in the case of Gangu Mull in *Azadi* who becomes Ghulam Muhammad to keep his hold on his wife’s property. His changed identity is proclaimed by the ‘fez’ cap he wears and his changed religion is all the more welcome as it assures him of the possibility of the ‘purchase’ of a new wife thereby establishing the position of a woman as an object. What is a matter of choice in Gangu Mull is forced upon Hari in *Ice-Candy-Man* who has to convert to Islam to survive the tide of violence. He has to let go of specific religious markers like the *bodhi* or the dhoti and is forced to circumcise his penis and recite the *kalma* in the manner of Hindu chants.
Thus clothes become definite markers of several religions as people negate their plural identities and give importance only to their religious identities.

Weapons such as kirpans, swords and daggers attain certain religiosity when they help in the destruction of others as they are raised in stature by virtue of establishing the superiority of one religion over another. Similarly bodies or body parts are considered profane when belonging to members of other religion but signify a sense of achievement once they are mutilated objects on which one’s religion has been imprinted. The partition, thus, disrupts the social stability and also the integrity of human beings as religious identities become markers of individuals and societies and it is through the various objects that we can understand this process.

The three partition novels dealt with in this research work shows the nation state of India in a flux through various stages of negotiation with the Western colonial power. A detailed analysis of these novels, however, contests the official version of nationalism and one agrees with Partha Chatterjee when he says that anticolonial movements are generated much before they are recognized as a threat to colonialism by creating a space of its own within the periphery of colonialism. It is through various objects in the three novels the effect of this desire and the postcolonial responses towards the colonial domination can be delineated.

Postcolonialism, as Ania Loomba says, is the “contestation of colonial domination and the legacies of colonialism” (16). It is, therefore, an amalgamation of several histories existing simultaneously and these multiple narratives embedded in the partition fiction can be discovered through the various objects in these novels as they mirror that time when India is progressing towards a postcolonial existence. Edward Said in his
Orientalism draws our attention to the fact that European culture set itself off against the Orient as Europe is considered to be ‘us’ and the Orient as ‘Other’ where the former is superior and the latter inevitably inferior. The ‘Oriental’, therefore, is created by an understanding between power and knowledge and his existence as a human being is negated. This negation of the status of the colonized is reflected in the decision of partitioning India and partition fiction presents a countervoice to this decision. The Orient is placed in an inferior status to the Occident and the partition novels challenge these notions as they ‘write back’ in the colonizer’s language, that is, English to contest colonial narratives such as official documents and histories that pay attention only to the process of transfer of power and not to the opinions of the common people. Though arguments have been made against the use of English on the ground that only through the mother tongue can one give proper expression to one’s thoughts and emotions, authors writing in English stress on its efficacy to reach out to all parts of India. In this respect one must not forget Fanon’s prediction that the middle class would substitute the colonial power in the decolonized prove to be true as we see Inayat-Ullah-Khan, the Sub-Inspector of police in Azadi venting his anger on the Hindus and Sikhs and also the Congress Muslims. For years he had been forced by the British administration to order lathi charges on Muslim processions but now with the change in circumstances he assumes the position of final authority and targets the lathi charge towards members of other communities. Thus the lathi and the beam which he orders to be brought to break open the gates of Hindu mohallas become objects of aggression as well as postcolonial constructs.
A peculiar relation is developed between the colonizer and the colonized that may be termed as ‘ambivalent’ as Homi K. Bhabha shows us. The colonizer encourages the colonized to ‘mimic’ them though there has to be a gap between the copied and the copy. Mimicry is thus characterized by a sort of ‘indeterminacy’; it becomes a double edged sword for both the colonizer and the colonized as it is sanctioned and forbidden at the same time. Thus mimicry can be related to the performativity of gender where stereotypical roles have to be followed. It is in this context that the postcolonial tries to negotiate with the crisis about their own cultural identity by placing certain objects contributed by the colonial masters in a new context. This has led to the emergence of a hybridized form which the colonized have used to stress on their cultural alterity.

It is noteworthy that colonialism imposed itself through various objects introduced by the system, the train being one such object which acquires changed implications with the progress of the decolonization process. In the colonial India they appear as clocks and regulate the daily activities of the people and are comparable to the clock towers established by the British during their reign in India, edifices established to make the native aware of time. They represent punctuality and the establishment of colonial law and order. With the possibility of an end to the British rule trains are used as tool against the colonizers as the followers of the Congress use the rail tracks to protest against several atrocities by sitting on them. With the disruption in the railways the Indians come back to their own rhythm of time as trains no longer run on appointed hours. Identification of trains along communal lines and their massacres also symbolize the postcolonial response of negating the rules and laws imposed by the British.
Europe, as Said shows us, takes pride in its superiority over the Orient and it is this glory that is reflected in the several parades by the British as mentioned in Azadi. The pomp and the glory mesmerize the natives but it is unwarranted violence on stray dogs that fascinates them more. As the use of arms becomes an important method to establish colonial rule the Indians too take recourse to violence, often on their fellow Indians to regain the lost authority. Thus an emasculated nation finds back its masculinity through the use of weapons like the gun, knife or the kirpan. This denial of masculinity to the natives can be contrasted with the imposition of masculinity on the hijra community who are prohibited from wearing female clothes as the British want to erase their bodily difference which they defy by wearing skirts.

The newspaper may also be compared to the train in that despite being introduced by the British the Indians subvert their use and employ them to fulfill their own ends. Lala Kanshi Ram in Azadi moulds himself according to the teachings of the Urdu daily Inqilab which creates ambivalence in him as his love for British pageantry is questioned. These newspapers mirror the colonized society going through a change and become an instrument that aids in the spread of nationalistic spirit. Objects reflect the society in transition as the removal of the statues signifies the entrapment of the colonizer in the symbol.

Objects, therefore, justly reflect the postcolonial world the Indians live in. The various experiences encountered during the partition finds voice as the different objects serve to delineate the various facades of such experiences. It is noteworthy that these experiences vary according to class, age, religion, community and gender so much so that the same object bears different connotations for different people. It is this overflowing of
meaning that has been analyzed in this research work. In doing so certain views and
theories have been adopted on which further findings have been grounded. But this does
not negate the existence of other views that may differ or even contradict the propositions
accepted while formulating this work. One such example is the counterview offered by
Benita Parry who questions the universality of the hybridized colonial subject as it fails to
focus on the bitter relations between the colonized and the colonizer. However, the
concept of the hybridized colonial subject has been adopted as it is more suitable to the
scope of the present work. Similarly there is the acceptance that many lacunae are present
in the research work as the scope is limited to only three texts. Future additions to this
work can be done if more texts are brought under the purview and analyses are made
keeping the Bengal partition in perspective as well. It is intriguing that though many
social practices find mention in these texts and help us in turn to identify the role played
by objects in the social phenomena such as the mutilation and denudation of women as
well as men, there is no reference to sexual assaults on men or sodomy though castration
is a common reoccurrence to signify the supremacy of one community or religion over
the other; here the penis takes the role of an animate object to delineate social equations.
Again, there is little mention of the third sex and the extent to which objects gather
specific connotations when perceived from this particular point of view.

Objects successfully capture the changing times and this change is in many cases
reflected in their changing meanings, for example, the turban of a Sikh is so common to
the social milieu in pre-partition Punjab that it deserves no special attention. But as
partition translates into a reality the turban becomes an object of hatred for the Muslims
who consider it to be the primary marker of Sikh identity and an easy way to identify and
torture them. Again the response is gender specific as for the Muslim women the turbans of militant Sikhs signify fear and often a threat to their dignity and life. The novels chosen make us aware of the changing times as gradually the shared space among several communities and religions diminish and the existence of the barbed wire becomes a reality. The barbed wire, introduced to contain cattle and other animals initially, is eventually used to enclose human beings in their divided and diminished spaces.\(^2\) Taslima Nasreen captures this division in her poetry:

Two parts of the land stretch out their thirsty hands

Towards each other. And in between the hands

Stands the manmade filth of religion, barbed wire.\(^3\)

Thus the barbed wire becomes a reality which cannot be negated in any way and it is this object that posits us before the question of our identity and inspires us to rethink our decisions so that the world can be a better place to live in.

Notes:

