

Review

## Political Turbulence in Kushwant Singh and ChamanNahal Selected Novels

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The first chapter is an introductory chapter. It traces the origin and the growth of Indian English novels. The two writers Kushwant Singh and Chaman Nahal contributed considerably to the growth of Indian English fiction. The consequences of Partition that created a severe of political consciousness in these writers have been introduced. The second chapter delineates the consequences of religious animosity that resulted from Partition as represented in Kushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*. These are explored through the characters such as Hukum Chand, Juggut Singh and Mano Majra. The third chapter deals with the aftermath of Partition that resulted in an exodus of refugees in Chaman Nahal's *Azadi*. The fourth chapter is sums up the findings enshrined in the previous chapters.

**Keywords:** Political consciousness, the consequences of Partition, religious animosity

### INTRODUCTION

Fiction, being the most powerful form of literary expression today, has acquired a prestigious position in Indian English literature. It is generally agreed that the novel is the most suitable literary form for the exploration of experiences and ideas in the context of our time, and Indian English fiction occupies its proper place in the field of literature. There are critics and commentators in England and America who appreciate Indian English novels. Prof. M. K. Naik remarks (Naik, 1985):

“One of the most notable gifts of English education to India is prose fiction for though India was probably a fountain head of story-telling; the novel as we know today was an importation from the West”. (99)

Indian writing in English is a voice in which India speaks. Indian writing in English is greatly influenced by the writing in England. In its own way indo-Anglican literature

has contributed to the common pool of world writing in English-the major partners in the enterprise being British literature and American literature. Indian writing in English has emerged as a distinctive literature (Hudson, 1976; Iyengar, 1961; Nicholson, 1972; Purohit, 2009; Pyarelal, 1956; Ramamurti, 1985; Ram, 1978; Ricks, 1977; Rushdie, 1982; Singh, 2005; Singh, 1964; Singh, 1985; Walsh, 1973).

It was in Bengal that a literary renaissance first manifested itself, but almost immediately afterwards its traces could be seen in Madras, Bombay and other parts of India. The first Indian English novel was Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Raj Mohan's Wife* (1864). It is different from his Bengali novels such as *Durgesh Nandini* or *Kopal Kandla*. In fact, it paved the way for *Anand Math* (1884), Indian's first political novel which

gave the Indians their national anthem, "Vande Mataram". Then came Manoj Basu's *Jaljangal* in the form of English translation as *The Forest Goddess* by Barindra Nath Bose (Dhari, 1973; Nahal, 2001).

The novels published from the eighteen sixties up to the end of the nineteenth century were written by writers belonging to the presidencies of Bengal and Madras. Most of these novels are on social and few on historical issues, and for their models they drew upon eighteenth and nineteenth century British fiction, especially that of Daniel Defoe, Henry Fielding and Walter Scott.

Novels published between 1864 and 1900 include Ram Krishna Punt's *The Bay of Bengal* (1866), Anand Prasad Dutt's *The Indolence* (1878), Shoshee Chunder Dutt's *The Young Zamindar* (1883), Trailokya Das's *Hirimba's Wedding* (1884), Krupabai Sathianandan's *Kamala: A Story of Hindu Child Wife* (1894) and *Saguna: A Story of Native Christian Life* (1895), Michael Madhusudan Dutt's *Bijoy Chand: An Indian Tale* (1888) and Lt. Suresh Biswas: *His Life and Adventures* (1900) and Yogendra Nath Chattopadhyaya's *The Girl and Her Tutor* (1891).

The twentieth century began with novelists of more substantial output. Romesh Chandra Dutt translated two of his own Bengali novels into English: *The Lake of Palms: A Study of Indian Domestic Life* (1902) and *The Slave Girl of Agra, an Indian Historical Romance* (1909). The first, a realistic novel, seems to have been written with the aim of social reform with its theme being widow remarriage, while the latter is set in the Mughal period.

Khushwant Singh's first novel *Train to Pakistan* (Adkins, 197; Harish, 1988), originally entitled *Mano Majra*, and is one of the finest realistic novels of post-World War-II Indo-Anglian fiction. The Plot and the narrative sequence of the novel are divided into four parts : (i) "Dacoity", (ii) "Kalyug", (iii) "Mano Majra" and (iv) "Karma". *Mano Majra*, a tiny village in the Punjab, serves as the fictional setting of *Train to Pakistan*. It is situated on the Indian border, half a mile away from the river Sutlej. In spite of bloodshed and rioting in the frontier area, life in *Mano Majra* remains to be peaceful. The Sikhs, Muslims and Hindus are living in harmony and amity. Partition has not touched *Mano Majra*... "no one in *Mano Majra* even knows that the British have left and the country is divided into Pakistan and Hindustan." Life here is regulated by trains with their arrival and departure. The villagers are not acquainted with the progress of science and ignorance of scientific progress is bliss to them (Kaul, 2001).

The novel begins with a reference to the summer of 1947 which was noted for its scorching heat and rainless period and marked for hot and dusty atmosphere. The summer before, communal riots, precipitated by reports of the proposed division of the country into a Hindu India and a Muslim Pakistan, had broken out in Calcutta and several thousand had been killed. The Muslims said that the Hindus had planned and started the killing. The

Hindus, on the other hand, put the whole blame on the Muslims. The truth was that both sides had killed. People belonging to both sides were shot, stabbed, speared, tortured and raped.

From Calcutta the riots had spread north and east and west. In Noak hali in East Bengal, Muslims massacred Hindus and in Bihar Hindus massacred Muslims. Mullahs were reported to have roamed the Punjab and the Frontier Province with boxes of human skulls said to be those of Muslims killed in Bihar. The Hindus and Sikhs who had lived for centuries on the Northwest Frontier were made to abandon their homes and flee toward the Sikh and Hindu communities in the east. They had to travel on foot, in bullock carts, cram into Lorries, cling to the sides and roofs of trains.

*Mano Majra* is the place of the action of the novel. It is a tiny village situated on the Indian border, half a mile away from the river Sutlej. The Sikhs, Muslims and Hindus lived in perfect harmony in this village and there was a time when no one in the village knew that The British had left the country and the country was divided into Pakistan and Hindustan. The only thing that made an impact on them was the arrival and departure of trains. But soon things began to change. Partition began to take its toll in this tiny village also.

There were only about seventy families in *Mano Majra*, and Ram Lal's was the only Hindu family. The others were Sikhs or Muslims who were about equal in member. The railway station occupied an important position and a small colony of shopkeepers and hawkers grew up around it to supply travelers with food, betel leaves, cigarettes, tea, biscuits and sweetmeats (Nath, 1982).

The Peaceful life in *Mano Majra* comes to a jolt when on an August night 1947 the village money-lender Ram Lal's house is raided by Malli, a dreaded dacoit. On the roof of his house, the money lender was beaten with butts of guns and spear handles and kicked and punched. He sat on his haunches, crying and spitting blood. Two of his teeth were smashed. When Ram Lal, the moneylender failed to hand over the key of his safe, one of the dacoits lunged at the crouching figure with his spear. Ram Lal collapsed on the floor uttering a loud yell with blood spurting from his belly.

The dacoity had its evil effects on Juggut Singh who was a resident of the village. The dacoits dropped bangles in his house and later he was arrested as the suspect of murder and dacoity. He was in love with Nooran which in a sense cut across religious barriers. After his release from police custody, he came to know that Nooran had visited his mother before leaving for the refugee camp carrying his child in her womb. Nooran was a Muslim weaver's daughter. His father and grandfather were also dacoits and were hanged for murder. But they were reported not to have robbed own village-Folk. According to Meet Singh, Juggut had disgraced his family through his acts. Hukum Chand plays an important role in the

novel.

Hukum Chand is perhaps one of the best drawn characters in the novel. Married to an unattractive and illiterate woman, he looked for love and sex elsewhere, but he was not exactly immoral. Hukum Chand considered Hindu women to be unlike other women. When it was reported that the Muslim mobs had tried to molest Hindu women, they had killed their own children and jumped into wells that filled to the brim with corpses. He wanted the Muslims to go out peacefully if possible. He was of the view that bloodshed would not benefit anyone. According to him bad characters would get all the loot and the government would blame people like him for the killing. For the same reason he was against killing or destruction of property. But at the same time he gave instruction to the inspector to be careful not to allow the Muslims to take too much with them. "Hindus from Pakistan were stripped of all their belongings before they were allowed to leave. Pakistani magistrates have become millionaires overnight. Some on our side have not done too badly either. Only where there was killing or burning the government suspended or transferred them. There must be no killing; just peaceful evacuation". (32)

Iqbal was one who created a mild sensation in the village. He approached Bhai Meet Singh with a request for shelter and he took it for granted that he was Iqbal Singh! In fact he did not have to say what Iqbal was. He was a social worker. He had come to that village as he knew that something should be done to stop the bloodshed going on as a result of partition. His party had sent him there, since this place was a vital point for refugee movements. He had a strong feeling that trouble would be disastrous. He belonged to district Jhelum and had been in foreign countries a long time. He had his own views on morality and a host of other things.

Iqbal was well aware that criminals were not born and were made by hunger, want and justice. He always thought that if the fear of the gallows or the cell had stopped people from killing or stealing, there would be no murder or theft. Even though a man was hanged every day, ten go murdered every twenty-four hours in the particular province he was in. The population explosion also was causing great concern to Iqbal. It might appear strange that independence meant little or nothing to the people in Mano Majra. They never realized that it was a step forward and that what they needed to do was to take the next step and turn 'the make-believe political freedom into a real economic one.' They were not quite sure why the English had left them. Iqbal tried to enlighten them as to what it all meant.

But as far as the villagers concerned, view differed. There were some among them who liked English soldiers. Meet Singh told Iqbal that his brother who was a havaladar was of the view that all sepoys were happier with English officers than with Indian. Iqbal in turn asked whether he would like to continue to remain slaves all

their lives. But Meet Singh had his own argument. Freedom was for the educated people who fought for it.

He was sure that people like him were going to be slaves of the educated Indians or the Pakistanis. The lambardar was of the view that the only ones who enjoyed freedom were thieves, and robbers. Iqbal found himself in a predicament and was not in a position to do anything to save the situation.

In an unexpected move, the police arrested Iqbal. It was extremely foolish for the police to have done that and they knew that they had made a mistake, or rather, two mistakes as they had arrested Juggut Singh also. Iqbal's pride had been injured. He was under arrest in connection with the murder of Ram Lal. Everyone knew that he had come to Mano Majra after the murder. He had taken the same train that the policemen had taken and they could be witness of his alibi. The situation was ludicrous but Punjabi policemen were not the sort who admitted making mistakes. He tried to convince Juggut Singh who was arrested along with him that he was not a villager and had come from Delhi and was sent to organize peasants.

When the truth was revealed the sub-inspector was irritated. When the fellow policemen told him that Iqbal was a stranger staying at the Sikh temple, he burst out. The police were doubly wrong as Jugga was out of his house on the night of the dacoity. Even Hukum Chand was angry and was surprised to see the police arresting people without finding out their names, parentage or caste.

Police who were always known for their cruelty asked Iqbal to remove his dress. Iqbal loosened the knot in the cord. They pyjamas fell in a heap around his ankles. He was naked save for the handcuffs on his wrists. He stepped out of the pyjamas to let the policemen examine them. The inspector thus ensured that he was a Muslim. When he said that he was sent by the Peoples' Party of India, the inspector asked him whether he was sure it was not the Muslim League. Mob attacks were a common phenomenon in those days and when they attacked they never waited to find out whether the persons concerned were Hindus or Muslims. The other day four Sikh Sardars in a jeep drove alongside a mile-long column of Muslim refugees waking on the road. Without warning they opened fire with their stenguns. Four sten-guns! Good alone knows how many they killed.

A lot of women were abducted and sold cheap. Police stations were concentration camps and third degree methods were adopted to extricate 'truth' from those who were caught. Hindus were pinned under legs of charpoys with half a dozen policemen sitting on them. Testicles twisted and squeezed till one became senseless with pain. Powdered red chillies thrust up the rectum by rough hands, and the sensation of having the tail on fire for several days. All this, and no food or water, or hot spicy food with a bowl of shimmering cool water put outside the

cell just beyond one's reach.

Some succumbed to hunger and others to the inconvenience of having to defecate in front of the policemen. The arrival of the ghost train is another important 'event' in the novel which makes the reader flabbergasted. The arrival of the train in broad daylight created a commotion in Mano Majra. People stood on their roofs to see what was happening and all they could see was the black top of the train stretching from one end of the platform to the other. Later the villagers were asked to get all the wood there was in their houses and all the kerosene oil they could spare. They were asked to bring them to the motor trucks on the station side for which they would be paid. The villagers soon 'smelt' something wrong:

The northern horizon which had turned a bluish grey, showed orange again. The orange turned into copper and then into a luminous russet. Red tongues of flame leaped into the black sky. A soft breeze began to blow towards the village. It brought the smell of burning kerosene, then of wood. And then—a faint acrid smells of searing flesh. (100) (French, 1998)

There was a deathly silence in the village. The train had come from Pakistan and everybody knew what had happened. Even Hukum Chand felt feverish to see a thousand charred corpses sizzling and smoking while the train put out the fire.

The Sikh officer said there were more than a thousand. I think he just calculated how many people could get into a bogie and multiplied it by the number of bogies. He said that another four or five hundred must have been killed on the roofs, on the footboards and between buffers. In fact fifteen hundred innocent people getting killed were only part of the story. Similar things were happening at other places also.

rs are concerned with is that 'it is Mahatma Gandhi's government in Delhi' and that 'people sing his praise in the four corners of the earth'. The effect of the change, however, was significant and as Singh has shown, frighteningly, social, as religious groups rearranged and clashed violently. He does not focus on the political realities and the predicament of the victims of the Partition in the form of loot, arson, rape, abduction, mutations, murders and displacement.

Rather, he chooses to narrate the disturbing and agonizing impact that this event has on those who have not been the direct victims of the Partition and yet been affected deep at the psychological and social levels. He makes it clear that many people played a part in this chaos and everyone was equally worthy of blame, all the while integrating examples of the sheer moral confusion which arises from trying to make sense of an event as momentous as the Partition. The broader implications of the novel are also emphasized by "Khushwant Singh has written a compelling story of people in turmoil, far broader in its implications than its length might suggest. This is

not the story of one man. It is the tale of a village led to a moral action through its own indifference". (6)

Khushwant Singh best illustrates the tragedy of Partition and indirectly suggests the shortsightedness of Indian leadership who failed to foresee the consequences of division and to handle the situation ever after Churchill's forecast of blood-bath. Communal discord was not a future of Indian rural scene but it was engineered first by the British Government under the policy of divide and rule and then by the nationalist leaders, with attitude tinge, though unintentionally.

The novel *Azadi* deals with the theme of partition of Indian subcontinent into India and Pakistan. As Chaman Nahal himself was a refugee, he writes with remarkable penetration and realism. The novelist recreates in flamboyant detail the consequences of the Partition with reference to a Hindu family as they journey from Sialkot in Pakistan to Delhi, the capital of India. The novel comprises three parts- The Lull, the Storm and the Aftermath - that represent correspondingly the beginning, the middle and the end of the great event. The focus of the novel is on the demarcation of the psychosomatic consequences of the Partition on the individual and universal planes (Belliappa, 1980; Lapping, 1985; Mathur, 1982).

The story opens on June 3, 1947 with an announcement by the Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten declaring the division of the country into two parts –India and Pakistan. It ends with the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi on January 30, 1948. *Azadi* thus deals with eight tumultuous months in the history of the Indian Subcontinent. *Azadi* is not merely a historical document. Though Mountbatten, Rajaji, Jinnah, Gandhiji and Nehru and a host of other leaders are all present, none of them appears in person in the novel. They are all described through the reactions of the people. The Punjabis are still buoyant that the leaders – and particularly Gandhiji – would never allow the division of the country. That day they accumulate in the house of Bibi Amar Vatiand are shocked to listen with gulp of air the announcement made by the Viceroy and agreed to by the Indian leaders without compassionate for the Hindus and Sikhs living in west Punjab that is going to Pakistan (Bhatia, 1976).

*Azadi* is the story of millions of people uprooted from their homes for no fault of their own, and is symbolised in the person of Lala Kanshi Ram and his family in the searing pain they undergo in the process of their upheaval and alienation from their home-land. Lala Kanshi Ram, a wholesale dealer in grain, is an Arya Samajist. He has lived and proposed for many years in Sialkot and is unwilling to leave even after the Partition is pronounced. He has always been friends with the Muslims and his dearest friend is a Muslim, Chaudhari Barkat Ali. Lala Kanshi Ram could never have imagined that he would be unwanted in his birthplace and that he would finally have to leave like many other Hindus and

Sikhs. Yet his daughter became victim of communal riots – there is no family that has not lost some one. Like millions of other Punjabis, he travels on foot to India with his wife Prabha Rani and son Arun, moves from city to city – Amritsar, Jullundur, and Ambala and finally arrives in Delhi, to suffer more humiliation. His story represents the story of a whole nation, of millions who were forced to leave their homes and to whom Azadi brings only untold misery and an uncertain future.

The Muslims, nevertheless, commemorate their predictable freedom very victoriously. Being anxious with joy, they run amuck and kill Hindus and Sikhs and plunder their property, abduct and rape their women, disfigure their children, burn their houses – and what not. The uprooted inhabitants of the land of the five rivers commence their demonstration in the direction of India as they do not have any place now in the land of the pure. Millions of refugees migrate to India and vice versa.

*Azadi* is the story of Lala Kanshi Ram and his family living in Sialkot, and on the universal plane, of the people exaggerated by the Partition. Lala Kanshi Ram, the protagonist. A wholesale grain merchant in Sialkot has earned name, fame and destiny by working very hard. His son Arun a college student and his beloved wife, Prabha Rani make his familial life quite happy. The first four chapters of the first part the lull very closely accustom us with Lala Kanshi Ram who is a distinctive Indian of the time and whose idol is Mahatma Gandhi. Through statement of belief he is a nationalist Hindu living in the Muslim – majority Sialkot. He loves his land and it is at this juncture in Sialkot that his father and forefather lived. The British, according to him be obliged to quit India and give Azadi to the Indians he writes: “Like any other Indian, he had a prejudice against the British. He hated them for what they had done to his country and wanted Azadi”. (Nahal, 18) (Jha, 1985).

However, the political atmosphere in the country is in utterly chaos the Punjabis are kept under perpetual tension and the Muslims as well as the Sikhs fail to guess anything about the Partition. The selfish leaders play their role very shrewdly, only few men sitting and deciding the fate of the millions. The Arya samajist Lala hopes to achieve freedom with an undivided India.

The Lala speaks in Panjabi and writes in Urdu. For him Urdu is not the language solely of Muslim. In his mind there is no grudge against the Muslim, but he is aware of their attitude towards Hindus and Sikhs. He has firm faith in Gandhi and is sure that he will never agree to a division of the country. However, he is deeply worried that, “everything will be ruined if Pakistan is created”. (39)

Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims have been living together in peace and harmony for many decades in the Punjab city of Sialkot. Kanshi Ram’s world is shaken by the creation of Pakistan and he stands as a shattered individual, his cherished beliefs and values not giving him support. Events are presented through the consciousness of Lala

Kanshi Ram, who becomes a spokesman of the Hindus, who are deeply disturbed by the unprecedented political event. Lala’s experiences symbolize the pain and sufferings of the millions affected by the Partition. Thus “*Azadi* is not only the story of Lala Kanshi Ram but millions of people like him”. Lala has brought a few acres of land in his native village and prospered there. He tries to education his illiterate wife Prabha Rani, who takes it indulgently as one of her husband’s whims. He leads a quiet life with his wife and children at Sialkot. He has a daughter, Madhubala, married off to Rajiv and a college going son, Arun. He lives in a rented house belonging to Bibi Amar Vati along with Sikh families which enhances the atmosphere of communal harmony and also maintains healthy relationships with his neighbors and friends irrespective of religion. He has no interest in politics but is deeply influenced by Arya Samaj.

Lala, along with his family and his neighboring families, listens to the radio announcement, and is shocked and disturbed to listen to Lord Mountbatten, the Viceroy of India announcing the government decision on Partition of the country into India and Pakistan. Lala does not go to India soon after the declaration of Partition. He continues to live in Sialkot only because he has a deep attachment with the land of the five rivers. Resembling a real Congress leader, he believes in living with the Muslims looking upon them as brothers. The young generation of Sikhs and Hindus on the contrary, ready to pay the Muslim in the same coin, but the Lala like the Mahatma, tries to maintain peace through non-violence in his locality. The Muslims, still, are very happy to get their long-cherished dream fulfilled and celebrate their victory by talking out huge processions. One such procession enters the Trunk Bazaar of the Lala, after some negotiations with the Deputy Commissioner and the Superintendent of police. Here the reactions of different characters are clearly discerned and their attitudes defined. The Police Inspector, Inayat-Ullah Khan, takes side with the Muslims and threatens the Hindus. But

The Deputy Commissioner, who is a Hindu, is disoriented on listening to the Viceroy’s announcement of the Partition.

The Viceroy’s pronouncement, as a result, changes the entire schedule of the Punjabis. On the individual level, it creates difficulties even in the love-affair of Arun and Nur. Lala son Arun, “a shy, pimply youth of twenty” loves a Muslim girl Nurul-Nisar, the sister of his friend Munir Ahmad. In the flush of youthful romance Arun could have preferred Nur to his parents, but the communal holocaust suddenly makes “a man” of him, and chooses to share the joys and sorrows of life with his parents. The love affair of a Hindu youth and a Muslim girl though, seems to be only an idealised one as it was not practically reasonable in those times because of communal and political overtones, the irritated and enraged Arun, too, blames and leaders like Jinnah and Nehru, who rush into

azadi hurriedly. As a result, Arunand Nur, and also Barkat Ali and Lala curse the hastily achieved freedom and the instantaneous Partition.

The delineation of authentic massacre, nevertheless, begins from the last chapter of the first part. Till then there are portrayals of only intermittent killings and molestations. It is on the 24th June, that the Muslim friends of the Lalakill a number of Hindus, and then it becomes a daily ritual. It is reported that Muslim refugees from India come to Sialkot in a heartbroken condition, telling the stories of molestations and massacre by Hindus and Sikhs. This provokes the Muslim to kill the Hindus who began to go to the refugee camps and then to India.

Whatever the Muslims did to us in Pakistan, we're doing it to them here!" (298-99) He feels miserable and repentant and seeks to apologise all the Muslims on behalf of all the Hindus when he says "we have sinned as much. We need their forgiveness!" (300) the novelist, however, demonstrates that even after Partition, some Muslims stand for communal harmony. Chaudari Barkat Ali is one such large hearted person who does not support any anti-Hindu violence. O.P. Mathur opines that Lala:

Takes a stance which clearly demonstrates his freedom from commitment to anything except love, compassion, tolerance and forgiveness, in a word 'freedom of spirit and mind' which alone makes political freedom meaningful. The superficial differences of religion peel off and reveal the essential humanity of man and the idiocy of the evil that seeks to raise artificial walls of hatred between one human being and another". (90)

Thus Lala realizes that forgiveness is the only way to recover one's sanity, one's humanity and to live in peace with oneself. It is not only story of Lala but millions of people like him. "...Nahal stresses through the protagonist LalaKanshi Ram the necessity of human forgiveness, lying due emphasis on the "affirmation of life" to which he is committed". (Prasad, 215) J.M. Purohit endorses this view when he says, "All most all his novels end with optimistic vision". (Purohit, 130; Dobree, 1942)

Partition resulted in the monstrous holocaust ever witnessed. There was wholesale destruction due to communal frenzy and the whole balance of human relationships is upset. Yet the novel reveals a ray of hope and regeneration before it closes. This prompts Asha Kaushik to remark that "...although beginning on a note of ambivalence and uncertainties of national integrity in the face of religious fanaticism, moral degradation and political fragmentation. Azadi closes with the affirmation that a nation out lives even annihilating tragedies." (Kaushik, 1988: 69).

The Partition of the sub-continent in 1947 was the most auspicious incident in the history of Indian freedom struggle. Tens of thousands of people were killed and an equal number of people were rendered homeless and injured. The extraordinary migration that took place during those days has no parallel in history.

Whereas taking a brief assessment of the Partition it becomes clear that it was the Muslim communiqué launched by the Muslim League's Two – Nation theory that gave birth to Partition. In advance the Congress was not ready for any kind of division of the sub-continent. Nevertheless finally the leaders of Congress party were also circumstanced to accept it as it became an 'inevitable Alternative'. Thus the genuine responsibility of the Partition goes to Jinnah and his Muslim League, of course, Jinnah was not the first person to sow the seeds of separatist tendencies. It was smooth before 1867 that Muslims like Sir Sayed Ahmad, Choudhary Rahmat Ali and MuhmadIqbal, tried hard to create a separate Muslim nation. The Congress, on the other hand, tried to maintain synchronization between the two communities. But unfortunately the Indian leaders failed to keep the Hindus and the Muslims together and in 1947 the vast Indian sub-continent was partitioned.

The events in history have encouraged the novelists throughout the world to pen them down in fiction. For instance, Leo Tolstoy dealt with the Napoleonic wars in his world famous work *War and Peace* and Dickens wrote his *A Tale of Two Cities* on the background of French Revolution. Similarly, the 1857 Indian Mutiny has also been a theme of several English novelists. The Partition being an event of such an enormity, it is also dealt with by some Indian novelists writing in English and other regional languages.

On the other hand, though there are nearly fifteen novels on the theme of Partition. The Indo – Anglian novelists have given stress depicting only on the human anguish and sufferings rather than inquisitive deeply into the historical and psychological causes that led to a schism in the human psyche. All novelists uneventfully depict the massacre, rape, bloodshed, arsoning and other inhuman atrocities committed by both the Hindus and Muslims. They are almost interchangeable from one Partition novel to another.

Khushwant Singh, Chaman Nahal deal with India's independence and the holocaust that followed in the wake of the Partition of country. However, they do not merely give us historical document. Their purpose is to describe the impact of this national tragedy of the Partition on ordinary people.

The first published novel on Partition, *Train to Pakistan*, emerges out of the trauma of Partition. It opens with a reference to the severe summer of 1947 signifying the process of the world of man turning into a human wasteland. The scene is laid in India on the eve of Partition in 1947 when about ten million people are in

flight – Hindus from Pakistan and Muslims from India. Nearly a million are killed in the large scale communal disturbances. Only Mano Majra, a small village, a microcosm of rural India, remains unaffected by the communal frenzy. But events move fast and the fate of the people in Mano Majra is affected by the catastrophic events of the Partition. Muslims of the village are evacuated to a refugee camp, later to be transported to Pakistan by a train. Hindu fanatics hatch a plot to blow up the train which was averted by Jugga and in the process he gets killed. His Muslim lover is saved and so do the Muslim passengers on the train symbolizing hope and light in the cruel world of darkness and despair.

In *Azadi*, Nahal's purpose is to describe the impact of the Partition on ordinary people. He portrays the pain Lala Kanshi Ram and his family of Sialkot, now in Pakistan, goes through due to Partition and their alienation from their own homeland. This reflects the suffering of the millions of people who are uprooted and forced to migrate to India. People sadly realize that they are unwanted in their own native places and that *Azadi* brings only untold misery and an uncertain future. Nahal describes the excruciating experiences of the uprooted people in refugee camps and on their way to India, travelling on foot, in convoys and submitting themselves helplessly to violence of all sorts – arson, murder, abduction and rape. After arriving in India, much suffering awaits them, in their own free country, at the hands of an indifferent and callous bureaucracy. He does not take sides and blames both Hindu and Muslim communities for their sadistic animalism. However, what can be perceived underlying these harrowing experiences is the projection of the novelist's optimism. Punjabis grieve more for loss of identity than the loss of life and property. Nahal understands this crisis of identity and portrays it profoundly than other Partition writers who either treat it superficially or ignore it totally.

Like Khushwant Singh, Nahal also witnessed the atrocities committed on the minorities after the announcement of the Partition. As the practising lawyer of High Court in Lahore (Pakistan), Khushwant Singh and being the native of Sialkot, (Pakistan) Nahal – both of them have firsthand experience and knowledge of the horrors of the Partition. In a way these two novels (*Train to Pakistan* and *Azadi*) can also be read as twin novels on Partition. The anger, bitterness and hatred found in *Train to Pakistan* and *Azadi* in spite of the fact that an individual family is concentrated to show the effect of Partition on it. This factor any way shows that the loss is personal and deep. One is touched but not involved. Surprisingly, in *Azadi*, despite a feeling of intimate involvement, all bitterness and hatred seemed to have been mellowed with the healing passage of more than a quarter century after the Partition riots. So in *Azadi* published in 1975, Nahal is able to invest his theme with a rare humanistic insight and objectivity.

The two novelists on Partition – Khushwant Singh and Chaman Nahal – discussed Gandhian theory of non violence. If Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* depicts brutality of the Partition, it also reveals humanity and compassion. Nahal, like Khushwant Singh, watched the violence from close quarters and hence realized that violence cannot be an answer to violence. Through Lala Kanshi Ram (*Azadi*), he stresses the necessity of human forgiveness, laying due emphasis in "affirmation of life". Nahal provides solution to victims of Partition (*Azadi*), while *Train to Pakistan* has only discussed the problem. Nahal accepts the Partition as a fact and talks about the problem of rehabilitation rather than going into the political details.

Every part of the novelist finds an uncertain solution to the Partition of communities and conflicts. It is a fictional or idealistic solution- love affair between a Hindu or Sikh boy and a Muslim girl. In *Train to Pakistan* we have the love- affair between *Juggat Singh*, to execute the heroic act of rescuing the train to Pakistan. In *Azadi*, the novelist has portrayed the love-affair between *Arun*, a Hindu youth and *Nur*, a Muslim girl. These lovers are represented to bring about unity and organization among the militaristic communities. Consequently all the novelists have tried to prove that 'love' has the supreme value which can save the world and not abhorrence. This is their fictional solution.

The wide-ranging predisposition of the majority of the novelists seems to deliberate on the physical vivisection of India. In these novels we observe the historic migration of millions of people across the new border which provides the novelists with bits and pieces to describe the violent scenes in a melodramatic manner.

While these novels depict only the tribulations of Partition and are loaded with the scenes of atrocities, there is scarcely an endeavor at analyzing the ideological clash which encouraged people to hate one another. But in *Train to Pakistan*, and *Azadi* novelists have attempted to discuss the historical and philosophical causes which were responsible for Partition. Chaman Nahal has shown that Gandhi's way of fighting were not understood by typical Indians and hence the movement was an utter failure. Though, novelist does not sustain terrorism as an answer to the Gandhian philosophy of *Ahimsa*. Chaman Nahal has very objectively dealt with the psyche of Muslim of India who had no alternative but to reconcile them with the situation. Except these two, the other Partition novelists seem to be contented with the description of violent scenes of killings and rapes.

The novel *Train to Pakistan* does not depict heroic characters nor does it use a human protagonist as the mouthpiece of the writer's own philosophy. The focus of attention is a realistic portrayal of the social, communal and cultural life of the people which is doomed to devastation by a sudden political decision to Partition the country.

Commencing among the translations from Indian languages into English the novels *Twice Born Twice Dead* by K.S. Duggal, *The Skeleton* by Amrita Pritam and *Kites Will Fly* by Bhisham Sahani also deal with the Partition issue originally in Indian languages. Amrita Pritam's novels are noteworthy for they provide not only a female angle to the Partition issue, but it deals with the predicament and the complex fate of the abducted women across the Pakistani border. Unfortunately, translation situation as it is in India, today not many translation of such novels deal with the Partition issue.

One more striking feature of these novels is the use of the symbol of train. All the novelists have used the train as the symbol of destruction and death. In fact the train as it symbolises a continuous activity and it brings two places and people together. But in the novel on Partition, the train becomes the mass of carrying corpses of thousands of men, women and children from this side to that and vice versa. Thus, in the normal course of time the train symbolizes hope and safety, but dissimilar to the anticipation the train here symbolises death and destruction.

During the days of Partition trains were the only available means of transfer of population between the newly created Pakistan and what remained of the Indian sub-continent? Thus, when the historic migration occurred it was the train which played a very significant role. The very title of Khushwant Singh's novel is ample testimony to this. Similarly, Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* and other novels in which we find the trains crossing the borders of the two nations, taking masses of people to safety only to be attached by the enemy to murder abduct and rape. Thus, the train provides the novelists with an opportunity to highlight the gruesome tragedy of Partition.

In *Train to Pakistan* and *Azadi* and some other novels we come across several trains bringing dead bodies of Muslim to Pakistan. In the course of time the train is recognized as the 'ghost train'. The train is the predominant metaphor throughout the novel. It brings in an atmosphere of terror. It is also the symbol of industrialization and the materialistic age which has led to the destruction of humanistic values.

The novels under discussion are repetitive in their descriptions of violent scenes of atrocities have almost become exchangeable from one novel to another. *Train to Pakistan* and *Azadi* read like a film story. However a deal with the idea of logical clash between violence and non-violence, *Azadi* is stuffed with the scenes of in human atrocities. But all these novelists deal with the theme of Partition on a surface level and in a somewhat unsophisticated manner. To sum up, these novels have not been able to improve upon the Dickensian formula of the historical romance.

A significant consideration of the Partition novels reveals that the Partition of the Indian subcontinent was an unprecedented political event in the history of India

and that the Partition novels are authentic portrayals of the contemporary political relation as literature consistently records human life. The historical event of the atrocious tragedy of the Partition in 1947 in the wake of freedom is unsurprisingly reflected in the novel, the most seismographic form of creative literature.

From the epigrammatic appraisal of the history of the Partition it becomes clear that mainly it was the Muslim separatism mannered by the communal Muslim League's *Two Nation Theory* and the *divide and rule* policy of the British that resulted in the Partition. Originally, though the Congress was not ready for any kind of division of India, finally the leaders were constrained to accept it as an 'inevitable alternative' though the humiliation of the Partition goes mainly to Jinnah and his Muslim League, he was not the first man to sow the seeds of separatist tendencies. It was even before 1867 that some Muslim leaders visualized a separate Muslim nation. Later on the antagonistic tendencies of Hindus and Muslims on the grounds of religion and the increasing dominance of Hindus and Sikhs in politics, administration, education and economic affairs widened the emotional rift between them. Unfortunately, the Indian leaders failed to keep the Hindus, Sikhs and Muslim together and resultantly it was in 1947 that India was partitioned.

Though the Partition novel (which is a political novel) is a species of historical novel, it is realistic to the core and has in it a very little scope for the passionate element. However, it need not necessarily be a dry and drab political chronicles but can be a creative work of fiction. And since the historical novel is in part mainly a product of the *Romantic Movement*, it is difficult for a writer to evoke stark political realism through the medium of fiction. Fictionizing realism is perhaps the most difficult task for a creative writer. Again, for those witness-turned-writers, the writing is all the more difficult and challenging.

Our study of the novels shows the most of the novelists are from North India and comparatively a few from the south on the basis of community. The novelists fall into three groups-Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims and that a majority of the novels are by Sikhs. Of all Attia Hosain is so far the solitary woman novelist, and that a Muslim. Amrita Pritam is of course another great woman novelist in Hindi and Panjabi communities. Parsees and Christians rarely find a place in the novels as authors or characters.

## CONCLUSION

As regards the approach of the writers, it is clearly seen that they show noteworthy neutrality and legitimacy in the treatment of the sensitive theme. The reason for this is perhaps the novelists have inherently and instinctively imbibed the spirit of objectivity. And though, some of them are the 'witness-turned-writers', they depict the



tragedy with restraint and impartiality. They admit that all communities are equally guilty of the holocaust and all have an inherent evil element in them. Here it must also be noted that all novelists irrespective of their religion or community condemn the British rulers for their divisive politics and their inherent egocentricity and judiciousness. They do not fail in exposing the routine corruption on the part of government machinery - the officers, police and even the military personnel. They also blame the selfish leaders for their act of betrayal of the people and bring to light the real nature of the various political parties. At the same time an optimistic note of the predominance of healthy human relations is sounded through episodes of love, sympathy and companionship, notwithstanding chaotic conditions of violence bloodshed and deterioration of human values (Dhawan, 1985).

The recent communal riots following the demolition of the Babri Masjid which led to wide-spread bloodshed in both the communities is a glaring example of this fact. What have we done to prevent the recurrence of such gory events in the future? We cannot rest in peace until we tame the monster of communal frenzy by creating mutual trust and fellow feeling among the people of all communities residing in India. The agony of the author of *Train to Pakistan* must be removed and his disturbed soul must be set at ease by our avowed mission to stay together in peace as one nation, one community despite divergent religious faiths and beliefs. India is a garden with variegated flowers of different hues and fragrances; all the more beautiful because it is so. Our hope lies in Iqbal's immortal humanistic and patriotic lines: Religion does not preach hostility among people we are all Indians and India is our home. "Majham Nahin Sikhata Apas Mein bair Rakhana Hindi Hai ham, Watanhai, Hindostan Hamara." Thus the two novels under study end on an optimistic note and they certainly enlarge the vision of the readers.

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