

**Tribhuvan University**

**Re-writing the History of Partition in Chaman Nahal's *Azadi***

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English in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
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**By**

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**Letter of Recommendation**

Mr. Raju Sharma Ghimire has completed his thesis entitled “Re-writing the History of Partition in Chaman Nahal’s *Azadi*” under my supervision. He carried out his research from September 2009 (A.D.) to December 2009 (A.D.). I hereby, recommend this thesis be submitted for viva-voce.

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**Letter of Approval**

This thesis entitled “Re-writing the History of Partition in Chaman Nahal’s *Azadi*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Mr. Raju Sharma Ghimire has been approved by the undersigned members of the research committee.

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## **Abstract**

Chaman Nahal in *Azadi* rewrites the history of partition by focusing on those ugly aspects such as –rape, abduction, massacre, naked marches of women, very pathetic condition of refugees, merciless killing of women and children, looting, and destruction of lives, homes and properties and so on which were overlooked by traditional history. By bringing into fore the consciousness of sufferers, as witness, survivors and victims, Nahal critiques the meta-narrative of partition.

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## **I. Chaman Nahal's Critique of Partition**

In *Azadi*, Chaman Nahal deals with the political, social, economic, religious, psychological and cultural implication of freedom that India achieved in 1947. The partition of India is a signal event in world history, not merely in the history of the Indian subcontinent. The British rule was established in eastern India around the mid-eighteenth century, and by the early part of the nineteenth century, the British had tightened their grip over considerable portions of the country. The suppression of the Indian revolt of 1857-58 ushered in a period, which would last ninety years, when India was directly under British Crown rule. Communal tensions heightened in this period, especially with the rise of nationalism in the early twentieth century which finally led the nation to partition. Bhagat Goyal narrates Indian partition as:

The unpalatable and cruel truth that India's independence was achieved at the terrible cost of its unnatural dismemberment and tremendous human sufferings. It points to the political unwisdom of partition which was a great betrayal of people who were directly affected by it. This political theme of novel is reinforced by social-economic consequences of the partition which uprooted the simple hardworking, honest and upright people from their homeland and turned them into unwilling beggars. In terms of religion, partition resulted in the most monstrous holocaust ever witnessed in India. Religion is supposed to be an embodiment of human and spiritual values became an instrument of hatred, evil, exploitation, sadism, torture, murder, rape, and mass destruction. Psychologically, the partition upset the whole balance of human relationships, shaping the ties of love and communication and making people strangers to their

fellow relatives as well as to themselves. Culturally, the whole rhythm of life was disturbed. All the aesthetic beauty that lay in one's environment and institutions and cultural vigor that sprang from the fragrance of the soil. (13)

Taking the event of Indian partition as for the welfare of common people of India and newly independent nation-Pakistan, both states commemorate those people who lost their life in the violence of colonial rule. Mushirul Hasan says:

In the traditional history, few aspects of partition are glorified by limiting the partition event only within the division of territories and the division of people in accordance of these territories. While doing so, multiple aspects of Indian partition such as mass killing, looting, destruction of lives, homes and properties, rape, abducting and merciless killing of children and women, miserable condition of old, disables, and weak people are ignored. (25)

This division directly or indirectly affected the live of those common people there. Many innocent people were captured and killed by giving excessive physical and mental torture in the name of conspiracy while going in search of their lost family members. Such disastrous mass killing of thousand of people was out of count and record, and those ugly events of partition are ignored and only some attractive aspects are glorified in the history of both India and Pakistan. In these othered aspects of partition, we can find different examples of mass killing of train passengers, naked marches of women, very pathetic condition of refugees and death of these poor people because of the lack of food and medicine.

Similarly Ayesha Jalal says; "Early nationalist histories focused almost upon the actions, struggles and ideologies of important congress leaders suggesting that



they led the masses towards freedom. But they totally neglect the peasant, labor, tribal and Dalit resistance against British rule” (681). Similarly no positions were given to those casts like Harijan, Christian and other people of the minority groups; there was no provision of life of poor people and lower caste people. They were never taken in the center of representation and the so-called superior people of Hindu community always exploited the poor and lower caste people. Though there was the government’s decision of distribution of land and property to the refugees in the form of exchange program, no poor people got the piece of land and property. Only the landlords and powerful people of India and Pakistan were benefited but the official history of partition overlooked all these facts of discrimination and exploitation.

The history of partition is not a simple story of a divided nation but of the partition of families and local communities whereby Million of people were torn from ancestral homes, fields and fortunes, life-long friends and childhood memories, relatives and loved ones, the knowledge of the familiar and the comfort of the known. History of partition was infact the history of violence, rape, abduction and killing and of the state-sponsored drive that followed to evict aliens and recover nationals. However, in the master narratives of partitions its essence, i.e. violence is either avoided as non narrative or given a very short shrift as an aberration or an accident or a mistake. It is either cosigned to the ‘other’ side of history or ignored as no history at all. Thus, Chaman Nahal in “*Azadi*” valorizes violence by assimilating the truth that the history of partition constitutes the history of violence and through the consciousness of sufferers as witness, survivors, and victims, critiques the meta narratives of partition.

Chaman Nahal’s *Azadi* deals with the socio economic and political aspects of freedom that India had achieved in 1947. Since its publication many critics have

valorized *Azadi* as an objective and honest account of partition of India. In his review of *Azadi*, Bhagat Goyal writes:

Chaman Nahal displays great powers of perception in dealing with such a wide- ranging theme in his novel. His understanding and treatment of the characters and situations is truly remarkable. The formidable theme of India's partition and its tragic and devastating consequences in such a fiery stuff that it can easily be used one into adopting an intensely partisan attitude. But Nahal is able to retrain an astonishing aesthetic objectivity which enables him to view the disastrous human drama with muted narrative energy and a cool, consciously controlled stylistic exuberance. A theme that constantly offers the possibility of ontological and semantic explosion is captured by Nahal in an unadorned starkly bare prose which nevertheless retains an artistic resilience and intellectual thoughtness. Nahal, with the added advantage of mellowing of all bitterness and hatred with the healing passage of quarter century, is able to invest his theme with a rare humanistic insight and objectivity. Nahal's characters declination is authentic and his characters are obviously based on real men and women who underwent the shattering experience of an extraordinary fluid and tense situation. (125)

R.P. Chaddah appreciates '*Azadi*' as a historical novel that deal with the partition of India in 1947 where the author recreates the agony with comparison which everyone (at least the refugees from West Pakistan) will wish to forget for ever" (57). He further comments:

All the events unfold themselves vividly in front of our eyes like scenes in a sequence on the silver screen. The scenes of desolation in the refugee camp, the scenes of departure of the refugee from the towns of their birth for destinations unknown, the ghostly attacks on refugee caravans, the lurid and shameless parading of raped and naked women in the streets of Narrowed (west Pakistan) the pangs of labor pains of a child birth in a moving train, the self immolation of a Sikh neighbors who never wanted to cut off his long hair for safety-all these scenes are described in such stark detail that sometimes thing became too poignant to be forgotten. (53)

The story is built around the trials and tribulations of Lala Kashi Ram, his flight from Sialkot along with his family in a convey, his reaching Delhi for resettlement and starting new life in independent India.

Chaman Nahal in a way accepts the partition as a fact and he talks about the rehabilitation of the refugees in the free and independent India. In the same vein Paul love appreciates *Azadi* as:

*Azadi* is to be considered primarily a narrative of migration, secondarily perhaps it could be regarded as a Bildungsroman. If it brings defeat and frustration to the old father, it brings also to Arun a self image, a discovery of a role he can fulfill even in the midst of illusion and despair. In this manner the story of Arun does take over and usurp the novel from the story of Lala Kanshi Ram. Chaman Nahal deliberately allows this to happen, for increasingly as the narrative develops, it seems to be told from Arun's point of view, from

the stance of how Arun is affected by and reacting to the somber of those post-partition days. (65)

The shift in point of view is perhaps material for another study. We can say that *Azadi* fits comfortably into the paradigm, but also transcends that paradigm. In this dual role lies a part of novel's strength. Similarly Jack Talty in his commentary says:

Chaman Nahal's novel *Azadi* is set in the India of 1947, the year Britain granted its former dominion independence and partitioned it into Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan. The event if that chaotic period are presented through the experience of the family of Lala Kanshi Ram, a Hindu grain merchant of sialkit, a small city in Punjab where the majority is Muslim. When the Vicerory, Mountbattens announcement of partition becomes a signal for riot, murder, and the seizure of the property of minority groups. Lala Kanshi and his family join the thousands of refugees in perilous search for an new home within a new boarder. (65)

Jai Dev in "Form in the Novels of Chaman Nahal" writes:

*Azadi* (1975) deals with a tragedy which is rational rather than mere private. LaLa Kashi Ram and his families are an appropriate metaphor for the victims of that historic "failure of man" which led to the division of India in 1947. And the tragedy, in the scene where a stunned Kashi Ram witnessed what the Hindus have done to the Muslims in Kurushetra and realizes that "I can't hate the Muslims any more," brilliantly transcends its communal dimension and embraces all human tragedy. Chaman Nahal tries to maintain objectivity by standing

the boarder line of both Hindu and Muslim community; he does not charge Muslims as the only one cause of violence and riots but also shows the communal violence caused by the Hindus in Indian side. He neither convicts the Britisher, nor the national leaders for this cataclysm and carnage. "He accepts man murder, plunder, revolting brutality as the celebration of the baptism of freedom though with restraint and reservations." (25)

In this regard, it becomes clear that people could not fully celebrate their independence because as soon the partition took place.

Though many critics have analyzed Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* from different perspectives in these readings Nahal's objectivity and subaltern's perspective have been overlooked. This present research claims that relatively greater degree of objectivity can be found in *Azadi* which enables Nahal to view the disastrous drama with a muted narrative energy and a cool, consciously controlled stylistic exuberance.

## II. Historiography

Historiography is the aspect of history and of semiotics that is the study of how knowledge of the past, recent or distant, is obtained and transmitted. In simple language historiography is the history of history. Broadly speaking, historiography examines the writing of history and the use of historical methods. It draws up on such elements as authorship, sourcing, interpretation, style, bias, and audience. The word historiography can also refer to a body of historical work. As the tool of historical investigation have changed over time and space. The term itself bears multiple meanings and it is not readily associated with a single all-encompassing definition. E. Sreedharan defines historiography as:

Historiography literally means the art of writing history, or the history of historical writings. Historiography tells the story of the successive stages or the evolution or development of historical writings. It has come to include the evolution of the ideas and techniques associated with the writing of history and the changing attitudes towards the nature of history itself. Ultimately it comprises the study of the development of man's sense for the past. (2)

There have been differences in the nature and quality as well as the quantity of historical literature in different ages and among different peoples. These differences have generally reflected changes in social life and beliefs and the presence or absence of a sense of history.

The reaction reached its climax in the historians of the enlightenment like Voltaire, Hume, Robinson, and Gibbon. Historiography as a special branch of history traces these changes through the centuries. Arthur Marwick says:

While history proper is the historian's reconstruction of the past, historiography is really the history of historical thought –it is not only the theory or practice of history. It began with the early compositions of advanced literate peoples like the Greeks and the Chinese of ancient times. When, however, the absence of a system of chronology and method of criticism made the historian's task extremely difficult and uncertain. (15)

Marwick further writes that “A unique branch of history, the study of historiography is of particular value to researchers and professionals, a preliminary to any important historical endeavor, but of only remote concern to the general reader”(18).

Historiography studies the process by which historical knowledge is obtained and transmitted. In the broader sense, historiography examines the writing of history and use of historical methods, drawing upon such elements such as authorship, sourcing, interpretation, style, biases, and audience. The word historiography can also refer to a body of historical work. As the tool of historical investigation have changed over time and space, the term itself bears multiple meaning and is not readily associated with a single all encompassing definition.

Marwick says “the study of historiography is a particular value to researchers and professionals, a preliminary to any important historical endeavor, but only remote concern to the general reader” (21). Historiography by holding up models of how history has been written through the centuries, guides the research scholars and the professional historian. There are two basic issues involved in historiography. First, the study of the development of history as an academic discipline over time, as well as its development in different cultures and epochs. Second, the study of the academic

tools, methods and approaches those have been and are being used, including the historical method.

The term "historiography" can also be used to refer to a specific body of historical writing that was written during a specific time concerning a specific issue. For instance, a statement about "medieval historiography" would refer to some issue in the academic discipline of Medieval History, and not to the actual history of the Middle Ages or to historical works written in that time (e.g., during the last century, medieval historiography changed its focus from the study of political events to social and mental structures, or medieval historiography has largely benefited from the recognition of the importance of parish records: that is, the discipline underwent some change).

Similarly Chris Lorenz in *Comparative Historiography: Problems and Perspectives History and Theory* writes Just like history, historiography is usually written and analyzed within one spatio-temporal setting, traditionally that of a particular nation-state. As a consequence, "historiography tends to localize explanations for historiographical developments within national contexts and to neglect international dimensions" (38). As long as that is the case, it is impossible to assess the general and specific aspects of historiographical case studies. This forum, therefore, represents a sustained argument for comparative approaches to historiography.

### **Indian Nationalist Historiography**

After an initial phase of shallow imitation of western life in manners and costumes, an urge began to develop among the educated Indians to make India more Indian and less English. They did not want western civilization to displace their own they only wanted the west to revitalize Indian culture. They set out to reform their age



old religion and society and rejuvenate their ancient culture. The trend attained proportions of a rejuvenate creating among the Indians a sense of self reliance self respect and self confidence which had been blown out in the western wind. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee asserted that as a means of creating a sense of unity, national pride and desire for freedom, there was nothing more fundamental than the study and writing of history. India was a subject country because Indian history had not been describe and interpreted by Indian historians. Chatterjee says:

There is no Hindu history. Who will praise our noble qualities if we do not praise them ourselves? When has the glory of any nation ever been proclaimed by another nation? The proof of the warlike proves of the Romans is to be found in Roman histories the story of the heroism of the Greeks is constrained in great writings. (Sreedharan 40)

The search for national identity in Indian nationalist historiography has been clearly seen in Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. The deficiency identified by Chatterjee was soon to be addressed by Indian historians who wrote in the first half of the twentieth century when the “spirit of nationalism provided the ideology for historical investigation and interpretation” (Sreedharan 427).

The very first task of the modern Indian historians was to defend their civilization and culture from the British imperialist attack. One method of understanding Indian culture and degenerating the Hindu religion and society was to select and treat only their weak points. Christian missionaries in their writhing tool special care-to highlight the religious superstitious and social abuses of the Hindus. Indian nationalist historiography growing partly in reaction to the pretension and prejudices of British imperialist historiography on India, was at root concerned with national identity in the pre-colonial period: “The search of national identity took

various forms and covered a wide range of attitudes” (429). The Hindu religion and its sacred literature which were the first target of imperialist attack were the first to be defended. That defense was voiced more by reformers than by historians. “Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Sasadhar Tarkachudamani and Rajnarain Bose and others defended Hinduism in all its forms including religious superstitions and social evils claiming that, taken in all the aspects of its development, it formed highly spiritual force, superior to others faiths” (430) Caste practice was specially explained as a kind of vision of labor.

Historical study in India received its greatest impetus from the sentiment of nationalism. This was because the nationalist spirit disclosed, as in Europe in nineteenth century. One of the practical uses of history by supplying a powerful motive for historical interrogations, the national spirit quickened the work of historical research. Sreedharan further says; “To meet the imperialist challenge, the Indian savants plunged they into a study of the sources, and India was rich in raw historical materials, monuments, epigraphy, counts and a variety of literary sources” (435). Filled with the zeal of crusaders to refute the western charges against their nation. Their researches opened India’s past and filled the mind of the Indians with national pride enriched nationalism itself and quickened the struggle for freedom. Many historical works of the nationalist category occupy a high place in the world of scholarship. They wrote in conscious opposition to imperialist historiography. Once the study of the past was found to have relevance for the present.

Historiography soon ceased to be the antiquarian’s collection of mere facts and became narration and interpretation. Though most of the historical writing was confined to dynastic history, the debate on ancient political and cultural life necessitated the study of social and economic history as well.

Nationalist historiography had unearthed so vast a corpus of information relating to the multifarious facts of Indian life and culture as to suggest a new approach to the study of India's past. If the material for a continuous narration of ancient Indian political history is lacking that for the cultural history of the subcontinent is abundant. The essence of the cultural approach has perhaps been brought out by Sardar K. M. Panikkar, a nationalist historian. In his introduction to *Survey of Indian History* he writes:

Ever since India became conscious of her national hood [...]. there was growing demand for a history of India which would try and reconstruct the past in a way that would give us an idea of our heritage. Brought upon these books written by foreigners whose one object would seem to have been to prove that there was no such thing as "India", we had each to "discover India for ourselves. (18)

Under the multifarious influences set in motion by the direct British Conquest and governance of the country, the Indians themselves made, by the end of the nineteenth century, beginnings in writing the history of their country. Valuable preliminary work had been done by scholars like Bhagawanlal Indraji, Bhaudhaji and Rajendralal Mitra in exploring and editing the core material for history. The historians those who wrote till about the 1900s can be said to have been more or less nationalist in character. They were mostly political, dynastic and cultural in nature.

In the years following independence, a central question for the historiography of Indian nationalism has concerned the relationship between elites and masses in anti-colonial struggle. Early nationalist's histories focused almost exclusively on the actions and ideologies of important congress leaders, suggesting that they led the masses towards freedom. A contrary view has been developed by historians

associated with the 'Cambridge' school, who have emphasized the role of colonial administrative machinery in shaping the Indian politics. However, the nationalist and Cambridge interpretations have been dismissed as elitist by historians of the subaltern studies school, who focuses on the autonomous quality of subaltern resistance.

Rejecting the notion that the history of elite can adequately explain anti-colonial struggle, subaltern studies draws the attention to peasant, labors, tribal and Dalit resistance. The masses were not passively led to freedom, as nationalist historiography would suggest, but propelled the movement forward, resulting in both victory (ending colonializations) and failure (limited socio-economic transformation).

A series titled subaltern studies appearing in the last two decades of the twentieth century has introduced an almost new genre of history writing on modern India. Sreedharan further comments:

Ending the first of the series, Ranjeet Guha professed that the historiography of Indian nationalism is beset with a prejudiced elitism of two kinds, both sharing the view that the development of the national consciousness and the making of the Indian nation were elite achievements. The first of this colonial historiography-based on a narrow behaviorist approach, looks upon Indian nationalism as the responses of the Indian bourgeois elite to the stimulus provided by the British ideas, institutions, opportunities and resources. The second kind-Indian nationalist historiography on the other hand pictures Indian nationalism as primarily an idealist Nature in which the indigenous elite led the people from subjection to freedom.( 492)

According to Guha, elitist historiography can not explain such instance of popular initiative asserting itself as the anit-rowlatt upsurge of 1919, or the 'Quit India'

movement of 1942. Guha asserts that “parallel to elites politics in which the principal actors were the subaltern classes and groups constituting the mass of the population” (Qtd. in Sreedharan 492).

One theme of subaltern studies is to highlight the insurgency of the lower classes and bring in to fore the lower section of the Indian people neglected by historiography. They are addressed to a range of topics extending in time from the Mughal period to the nineteenth seventies, in theme from communalism to industrial labor, and in manner from the descriptive to the conceptual.

### **Partition and Historiography**

Partition had long been used as a tool of resolving ethnic and communal problems. It got wide acceptance after the Second World War and more particularly during the Cold War regime. The partition of Germany, Korea, and Vietnam are some of the instances of territorial partition. The partition of the British Indian Empire followed the same tradition. The partition theorists have argued that physical separation of warring ethnic groups may be the only possible solution to civil war. However this argument has recently been severely criticized by a group of scholars particularly after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the resurgence of ethnic violence in different parts of the world.

On the question of partition, Indian historiography occupies a paradoxical position. On the one hand, partition has dominated the consciousness of nationalist and professional historians in a remarkable way while on the other hand, the history of partition is effectively suppressed by the focus on India’s freedom struggle--- the unity of India and the nationalist enterprise continued almost unaffected by partition and all that accompanied it. The history of Partition (sometimes called the history of ‘communalism’) is presented separately, or at best as a subordinate and apparently (in

the long run) inconsequential motif in the larger drama on India's struggle for independence. Tan & Kudaisya in "The Aftermath of Partition in South Asia" comment on partition historiography as:

There is the entry of professional historians from the 1960s and the subsequent availability of the vast array of documentation and archives. These works were located firmly within the discourse of decolonization and nationalism and in their narratives partition was a marginal theme, early historiography centered around examining why the process of constitutional devolution was accompanied by communal discord. The end game of Raj and the strategy of the key players was the major preoccupation with the "orthodox historiography" represented by the writings of Robin Moore, Stanley Wolpert, David Page, Anita Indersingh as classified by Assim Roy the chronicler of high politics. Ayesha Jalal (1985) is the principal advocate of the revisionist position about the role of Jinnah and the Muslim League challenging canonical history. She establishes to the level of academic credibility that Jinnah deployed the demand for Pakistan to place himself on par with Congress spokesman and so achieve equal status for Muslims in the governance of India. (15)

As the official partition of India in 1947 was negotiated by nationalist leaders on all sides large segment of the population underwent evident dislocations across what was to become the Indo-Pakistani border. The journey of Hindus to India and Muslims to Pakistan left in their wake a series of horrific mutilations, suffered by people in cities, small towns and villages in their homes and on their bodies.

Women's bodies often became the markers on which the painful spirit contending nationalism (Hindu, Muslim or Sikh) were inscribed. In response to the mass rapes and abductions on both sides of the border, and in order to legislate a 'fair' exchange of adducted women across borders, the government of India and Pakistan signed the inter-domination treaty in 1947 (later to become the abducted persons act in 1949) among the first agreements between the otherwise hostile nations.

Urvasi Butalia sketches the ironies and presumptions behind these exchanges. She observes that "such legislation, which set out to rescue women and restore them into the bosom of the nation to which they 'naturally' belonged was crucial to the very consolidation and definition of the fledgling nation states" (37). For the post colonial, deeply contested, fragile and vulnerable state the rescue operation was an exercise in establishing legitimacy. Despite Indian definition of itself a secular state, Hindu and Sikh women were to be returned to India and Muslim women to Pakistan. It was decided that children born as a consequence of abductions and rapes would be considered war babies and were to be left behind in the countries where they were born. For ten years after independence, the "fates of those women remained an issues of debate between the two countries"(Butalia 39).

Actually, women became the victim of partition violence on familial, social, and communal ground. They became the main target of attack in all forms of violence during the period of partition due to the patriarchal nature of the national independence struggle and its aftermath. In this context Meen and Bhasin write: "the patriarchy treated the women's body as territory either to be conquered by the men of the other communities or to be perfected by the men of their own families" (42). It shows the miserable condition of women being tortured everywhere. The males in the name of saving their prestige slaughtered those women. Besides this, women were

forced to make their suicidal death in order to avoid captivity of the opposite community. Paul R. Brass in “The Partition of India and retributive genocide in the Punjab” Comments, “In this and other families also, women marched to the village wells one by one and threw themselves in to avoid the capture by suicide” (89). In this regard we can say that women were sacrificing their lives in order to save the honor of their lives from the males. Brass further writes, “Moreover, the women were often twice or thrice victimized: first, by their abduction; second, by their recovery after partition against their will in many cases; and third, by their rejection and loss of their children born after their abduction but before their recovery by their original families” (94). Thus, during fraction violence, women became the main target of attack by the men of both communities.

Indian partition was mainly associated with the freedom and the relief of the people. This event of partition was taken as an appropriate action, which was supposed to bring happiness in people’s life. But the reality was far bitter and terrible for the people to bear. Gynendra Pandey in “Defense of the Fragment” comments:

On 15 august 1947, India celebrated with joy its first day of freedom. The sacrifice of generation of patriots and the blood of countless martyrs had borne fruit [...]. But the sense of joy[...] was mixed with pain and sadness [...] for even at the very moment of freedom a communal orgy, accompanied by indescribable brutalities, was causing thousands of lives in India and Pakistan. (30)

In this context, we can find the dark and ugly aspects of Indian partition which are ignored by highlighting only few positive aspects of independence and victory of people.



Similarly, the history of partition is not simply a story of divided nations but of the partition of families and local communities. Infact, partition of India had actually brought many things into the division. The history of partition is marked by the violence, loot, mass killing, rape, abduction and other ugly aspects. Such ugly aspects of partition were ignored by glorifying only the attractive aspects of partition as independence and brevity in the official history of modern India. Such official history of partition othered multiple things of margin by accounting each and every thing from the center. Gynendra Pandey in “Prose of Otherness” writes:

The history of violence has been treated in the historiography of modern India as aberration in the sense that violence is seen as something removed from the general run of Indian history; a distorted from, an exceptional movement, not the real history of India at all. Violence also appears as an absence because historical discourse has not been able to capture and represent the movement almost always about context- about everything that happens around violence. (198)

In the master narratives of partition, violence is either avoided as non narratable or given a very short shrift as an aberration or accident or mistake. It is either consigned to the other side of history or ignored as no history at all. Pandey further comments:

To treat the violence that marks the history of the ‘modern’ period as but a part of the process of building new social, economic, and ideological structures (capitalism, nationalism, nation-state) or hiccups in that process (Luddism, Plague riots, partition massacres) is to appropriate all these drivers struggles so that biography of the modern state, reason, progress, organization, discipline, (history itself?) ,

belong to the state and the ruling classes; violence belongs to the other those left behind by history. (193)

It shows that the historian's history is only that collection of selective and filtered events related to the state and the ruling class while othering the marginal like peasant, labor, tribes and daits.

People of lower class and caste are also at the marginal level, and are not mentioned in the history of modern India. None of them was chosen as the representative and taken at the center during the partition violence. Their condition was very miserable because they have to do lower kinds of activities and have no status in the society. In this context, Urvasi Butalia writes, "Their importance lay squarely but differently in the material realm scheduled caste people were essential because of their location in both the production and sanitation systems and indeed in the realms of rituals and custom" (29). It shows how people of lower class and caste were marginalized within the boundary of untouchable. In such a way, partition became the event of victory and independence only to some handful of people whereby huge masses of people had the feelings of sorrow, pain, sadness, and anguish. Because of the partition, friends became enemies, relatives became strangers, homes became strange places, strange place, had to be claimed as homes, and so the mind of the people also got partitioned.

In the similar way, Teidib Santapa Kundu writes:

Partition was not only a division of properties, of assets and liabilities. It was also, to use a phrase that Partition victims use repeatedly, "a division of hearts". It brought untold suffering, tragedy, trauma, pain, violence to communities who had hitherto lived together in some kind of social contract. It separated families across an arbitrarily drawn

border, sometime overnight, and made it practically impossible for people to know if their parents, sisters, brothers, children were alive or dead, and these aspects of the Partition --- how people coped with the trauma, how they rebuilt their lives, what resources, both physical and mental, they drew upon, how their experience of dislocation and trauma shaped their lives, and indeed the cities and towns they settled in---find little reflection in written history. (21)

The intense revisiting and reinterpretation of partition by the academic community and in the public imagination, especially in India, is driven by the moral urgency to understand and grapple with resurgent majoritarian communalism and its capacity to capture the public sphere and regional assertion. Survir Kaur in “Partition of Memory” says:

The closing decades of 20<sup>th</sup> century exposed the weaknesses of institutions, state and civil, to deal with sectarian, caste and ethnic struggles. It exposed the democracy deficit, though for the ‘ethnics’ it underscored the lack of convergence between social identities and frontiers of the 1947 states. It pointed up as Ayesha Jalal observed “the return of the twin dialectics of centralism and religion; as well as nationalism and religious communalism”. The perennial challenge of accommodating differences, the unresolved minority question, sub national or ethno-national assertion against the hegemony of majoritarian nationalism and centralized politics, harked us back to partition discourses. (12)

In the years following independence, a central question for the history of Indian nationalism has concerned the relationship between elites and masses in anti colonial

struggle. Early nationalist histories focused almost upon the actions and ideologies of important congress leaders, suggesting that they led the masses towards freedom. A contrary view has been developed by historians associated with the Cambridge school, who have emphasized the role of colonial administrative machinery in shaping Indian politics. Both the nationalist and 'Cambridge' interpretations have been dismissed as elitist by revisionist historians who focus on the autonomous quality of subaltern *résistance*.

While making revision of official or nationalist history, creative writers and revisionist historians depicted the situation before and after partition and presented the cause and effect of the event. Rejecting the notion that the history of elites can adequately explain anti-colonial struggle, they draw attention to the contribution of these marginal people and communities. They also subverted the limited notion of partition by showing the violence at various levels such as families, social, economic, psychological as well as in the forms of gender and caste.

### III. Critique of Historiography of Partition in *Azadi*

The history of Partition is the history of rape and abduction and killing and of the subsequent state sponsored drive to evict aliens and recover nationals especially abducted women and children. The meaning of the partition is disturbingly captured in these acts. The real historical task is to investigate the causes and othered aspects of partition. It is to ask the question what led to this tragedy in case of Indian history.

Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* largely concerns with showing how the partition of India in 1947 destroyed an existing harmony which had prevailed for centuries. There was harmony that kept the various communities in Sialkot together. Lala Kanshi Ram or Chaudhari Brakat Ali and their families never make religion the basis of their day to day decision, nor does anyone else. Choices are made on the basis of economics, expedience, necessity and above all friendship. Nahal says:

There was utter harmony among them, and the fact that Ghani was a Muslim and Lala Kanshi Ram a high caste Hindu never entered their heads. They spoke a common tongue, wore identical clothes, and responded to the weather, to the heat and the first rains, in an identical manner. They were not Hindus and Muslims, they were Punjabis (40).

The greatest harm of political decision such as partition did is that it polarized ethnic groups and placed them in their own narrow confines and compartments; forcing them to act their ethnic out. To register the cultural collapse of the time, Nahal tries to show how the emotional damage caused by partition occurred within each family itself, no matter what their ethnic identity. Lala Kanshi Ram, Prabha Rani and Arun feel altogether isolated and can hardly communicate with each other when they reach Delhi towards the end of the novel. In the vast drama that unfolded after partition, thousands were on the move at any given time, thousands were living in refugee

camps, thousands were looking for new homes, thousands had turned destitute overnight. In all, millions of people were involved in the horror.

Why was the violence where people were willing to leave and migrate? There is no clear answer to this except that humanity at such moments stoops to its lowest. No religion, no sect, no mode of worship will succeed to organize aggression against the innocent. Yet, such aggression has occurred repeatedly in the history of mankind, much to its shame. Nahal criticizes the historiography of partition that only focuses upon the role of leaders ignoring the commoners. In *Azadi*, the nationalist leaders particularly Gandhi, Nehru and Jinnah are in the background. He almost focuses upon the commoners through the families of Lala Kanshi Ram and those around him - - Sardar Niranjana Singh and Bibi Amar Vati. In the historiography of partition only few aspects of partition are glorified by limiting the partition event only within the territory and the division of people according to those territories. In that, multiple aspects of Indian partition- looting, mass killing, rape, abduction, destruction of lives, homes and properties, merciless killing of children and women, miserable condition of old, poor, disabled and weak people have been deliberately ignored. Many innocent people were captured and killed by giving excessive physical and mental torture.

These othered aspects of mainstream history are highlighted by Chaman Nahal in *Azadi*. Mass killing of train passengers, naked marches of women, very sympathetic condition of refugees and death of these poor people because of the lack of food and medicines find adequate expression in Nahal. As he writes, "Trains had been as much as victims of violence as individuals. Many of them were stopped on the way and the Hindus butchered" (191). In this way, Nahal highlights those aspects of partition which were limited by the official history of India.

### ***Azadi: An Alternative Way to Look at Partition Violence***

Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* may be regarded as highly successful novel from various perspectives. India's freedom from British rule, coupled with the partition of the country, was a momentous event for the people of vast nation. The investment of a long freedom struggle in independence was a moment of glory, however, the holocaust that communal violence brought by partition of the country on religious lines was a shameful chapter in the history of human civilization. Nahal's *Azadi* underlines this aspect of independence in an empathetic manner.

*Azadi* focuses on the common man rather on historical figures of the time. It can be regarded as the challenge to the official historiography, which only focuses on the role of historical leaders. These historical figures, particularly Gandhi, Nehru and Jinnah are there in the background. But Nahal is concerned more with the terror created in the lives of the common men and women by the creation of a new nation- Pakistan than with the role played by the national leaders on this occasion. It is through the families of Lala Kanshi Ram and those around him- Sardar Teja Singh and Bibi Amar Vati that Nahal unfolds the tragedy of partition. The novel begins from Sialkot and ends in Delhi.

Once the decision of partition is officially announced, the forces of evil are seem to appear. This partition was being affected not on geographical or economical or cultural or linguistic grounds but on the grounds of religion. The incidents that took place on both the sides of newly formed borders of India and Pakistan were enough to prove that if religion could enkindle the most ennobling, the most sublime passion in man, it could also generate in him the most destructive and inhuman frenzy. If it could make a God of a man, it could also turn him into the worst kind of beast. *Azadi* presents examples of both the things, though the novel is primarily concerned with the

latter. The description of the parading of the naked Hindu women forced by Muslims at Narrowal is an example of it. Arun, who has been taken by Suraj Prakash to the market to watch this, is benumbed at the sight of this degeneration of man:

The procession arrived, Arun counted them. There were forty women, marching two breasts. Their age varied from sixteen to thirty, although, to add the grotesqueness of the display, there were two women marching right at the end of column, who must have been over sixty, they were all stark naked. Their heads were completely shaven; so were their armpits. So were their public regions. Shorn of their body hair and clothes, they looked like baby girls, or like the bald embays one sees preserved in mentholated spirit. Only the breasts and the hips gave away the age. The women walked, walked awkwardly, looking only at the ground. They were all crying, though their eyes shed no tears, their faces were formed into grimaces and they were sobbing. Their arms were free but so badly had they been used, so wholly their spirits crushed, their morale, shattered, none of them made any attempt to cover themselves with their hands. They swung their arms clumsily often out of coordinators with their legs. The bruises on their bodies showed they had been beaten and manhandled. Their masters walked beside them and if any of the women sagged or hung behind, they prodded her along with the whips they carried. At the head of the procession marched a single drummer with a flat drum, thumping heavily on it and announcing their arrival. (161)

All this was being done in the name of religion. Scenes like this was neither exceptional or the preserve of one particular community. But the communities on



their sides of the boarder were indulging in such bestiality. By showing the bestiality of both communities, Nahal tries to maintain objectivity for he also tries to show the violence perpetrated by Hindus upon minorities of Muslims in India as:

Around four in the morning the Muslim train that was derailed at Ambala passed on the other track on its way to Pakistan. All kinds of rumors were rife: Hundreds had died. The four front bodies of the train and the engine were completely destroyed. The Hindu engine driver had also been killed, not the Hindu driver had been forewarned and he had jumped off the train, seven hundred people had died. Only twenty had died. The Pakistani soldiers escorting the train had machine-gunned the Hindu station staff, the India army at the station had machine-gunned and killed all the Pakistani soldiers. The cranes had taken hours to remove the telescoped bogies from the tracks. (295)

*Azadi* captures the ethos of the times very powerfully. The violence is in the air, the fear of the minorities, the desperation, the sense of loss and the frantic effort to survive –all these have become palpable.

Nahal evokes the intensity of violence through brief scenes. The procession of the jubilant Muslims trying to make forced entry into the Hindu Mohalla, the scene at railway station where a train load of dead bodies had arrived, the attack on the caravan of Hindu refugees marching towards India - scenes like these that built up the whole atmosphere of that period. The very night when the news of the partition comes over the radio, the Muslims of Sialkot take out a procession through the market, when they reach the trunk street, they find the road closed by gates on both the sides, as per the municipal regulation. They take it as a challenge to their supremacy and try to break upon the gate “And another cry arose from the procession, louder and more

menacing than the daga –dug of drums and which could be heard clearly above their din, and which said, ‘Torah do! Torah do! ‘Break it open!’ they also shouted Pakistan, Zindabad” (60). The entire description is so graphic that it is enough to show the violence caused by partition. The dancing and shouting crowd, the apprehensive Hindu families watching the procession from their roofs, the police force which was unliking to control the crowd. The novel is full of such scenes which bit by bit create the whole ambience.

Despite depicting all the brutality, human beings can commit against fellow human beings, all horror, tool, arsons, rape and other evils that made partition of India one of the worst tragedy in human history. Gynedra Pandey in “Community and Violence” comments on the partition violence as:

It is interesting to see how this proposition is worked out in detailed recollections of partition violence, a distinction is commonly drawn between ‘our martyrdom’ and ‘their violence’; or ‘their attacks’ and ‘our revenge’. Martyrdom and revenge are examples of violence. This is a violence forced upon the victims, a violence carried out in order to prevent further and greater violence. (2037)

Infact violence was either done by a Hindu or a Muslim. However, violence has been othered by official historiography. Nahal in *Azadi* highlights violence by assimilating the fact that the history of partition is the history of violence which is marked by riots mass killing, looting, rape, abduction, destruction of propriety family members and other ugly aspects. While portraying the violence, Nahal further writes; “the first riot took place in Sialkot on-the twenty-fourth of June. Many cities of the Punjab had been flame for months; there was large scale killing and looting in labore, Gujart, Amritsar, Ambala, Juilundpur, Rawalpidi, Multan, Ludhiana, and Sargodha” (104).

After the announcement of partition, violence “became almost a daily ritual. There were four or five cases of stabbing each day, and at least four or five fires” (105). Nahal further narrates the brutality of violence as:

In no cases was the victim allowed to survive the attack and tell what happened; he was stabbed to death. The killing was invariably done with a knife. And after the knife, the large ballade driven clean through , was left in the body of the victim. Where the victim survived the first blow, he was repeatedly stabbed in the chest and the abdomen. Faces were not disfigured, but the killers had a macabre fascination furor ripping open stomachs, in each case, the intestines of the man would have spilled from the body and would be lying next to him in pool of blood (105).

The killing of people was out of count and there was no actual data how many people were killed when the riot took place the mass killing of train passengers who were moving toward safety place. The description of the death scenes further reveals the frenzy of violence. Nahals reports:

The four heaps were piled high and the fires were roaring and hissing with great force, the flames climbing many feet into the air, what they saw there was only dismembered limbs, dozens of them-legs, and arms, and hands and thighs, and feet. The fire had consumed other parts of the bodies; it was the parts which had not fully burned that stood out. (158)

The dead had been removed from the train and dumped there without sentiment or concern. It so happened many of them had their arms around each other or they were holding each other with their legs. And in the disintegration the fire brought, there

was a constraint movement in the heaps. Arms were climbing up or they were sliding down. Legs were yielding their hold or they were burying themselves deeper. And the eyes of one skull seemed to look into the eyes of another and send messages for the other skull in a way saying it, had quite understood.

Partition became the event of victory and independence only to some handful of people whereby huge masses of people had the feeling of sorrow, pain, sadness and anguish. Because of the partition, friends became enemies, relatives became strangers, homes became strange place, strange places had to be claimed as homes, moreover, mind of the people also got partitioned. Lala Kashi Ram and Abdul Ghani were good friends before partition took place. But the announcement of partition made them enemies:

"When are you leaving, Kanshi Ram"?

'Why do you want me to leave, Abdul Ghani?' said Lala Kanshi Ram:

we have been good friends-for years we have been such good friends!

I want you to leave because you are a Hindu, and you don't believe in

Allah. (112)

Given the scale of the riots and the infamous role of the local administration in encouraging the attacks and suppressing evidences, it was impossible to establish the facts of this occurrence what traditional historians would like to call, the nuts and bolts of the story.

Possibly as many as a thousand people were killed in the course of the violence, most of them Hindus, but estimates of the casualties vary greatly. During the first days of the riots, trains were stopped repeatedly as several occasion, travelers were dragged out and lynched. No one could say for certain how many were killed in this way. In the major attacks, in the rural areas as well as in the city, neither old

people nor infants, neither women nor children were spared. Women had been abducted and raped on a large scale and "Newspapers carried hair raising stories of what was happening in the Punjab and Bengal. Murder, arson, rape" (113).

As the official partition of India in 1947 was negotiated by nationalist leaders on all sides, large segment of population underwent violent dislocations across what we became the indo-Pakistani border. The journey of Hindus to India and Muslims to Pakistan left in their wake a series of horrific mutilations, suffered by people in cities, small towns and villages. In Nahal's narration the events of *Azadi* unfold themselves vividly in front of our eyes like in a sequence on the silver screen. The scene of desolation in the refugees from the towns of their birth for destinations unknown, the ghostly attacks on refugee caravans, the lurid and shameless parading of raped and naked women in the street of Narrowal, the pangs of labor pain of a child birth in moving train, the self immolating of a Sikh neighbor who ever wanted to cut off his long hair for safety-all these scenes are described in such stark detail that sometimes they become too poignant to be forgotten.

Women's bodies often became the markers on which the painful scripts of nationalism were inscribed. Traditional partition historiography totally neglected pains and sufferings of women during the partition violence. Large scale of women were raped and abducted on both sides of the boarder. Naked march of the women became one of the ugly aspects of partition, which had been overlooked by the official historiography of partition. But Chaman Nahal in *Azadi* highlights those ugly aspects of partition including pains and sufferings of women during the violence of partition. Prabha Rani lost her daughter in the attack on train passengers. Remarks like "we have heard your daughter Mahdu Bala is killed," (143), were common during these

days. Abduction and rape were the daily routines in the towns as well as villages on the both sides of border:

A number of abducted Hindu and Sikh women were in the custody. Many of the kidnapped women disappeared into private homes. A lone Muslim dragged women away and kept her for his own exclusive use. Or he took her with the consent of other Muslims, converted her to Islam, and got married to her. The rest were subjected to mass rape, at times in public places and in the presence of large gathering. The rape was followed by other, atrocities, chopping off the breasts, and even death. Many of the pregnant women had their wombs torn open. The survivors were retrained for repeated rapes and humiliations, until they were parceled out to decrepit wrecks- the aged, the left over who couldn't find a wife, or those Muslims, who wanted an additional wife. In the meantime, more women were abducted and the cycle was repeated all over again. (258)

In this way, women became the victim of partition violence at the level of familial, social and communal ground. They often became the main target of all forms of violence during the periods of partition due to the patriarchal nature of violence. Such kind of domination imposed upon women is totally overlooked by the official history of partition. In this context Menon and Bhasin comments "the patriarchy treated the women's body as a territory either to be conquered by the men of the other communities or to be protected by the men of their own families" (42). It shows the miserable condition of women being tortured everywhere. The males in the name of saving their prestige slaughtered those women. Besides this, women were forced to suicidal death in order to avoid captivity of the opposite community.

Large number of women suffered from such conditions, and Nahal tries to focus on those difficult conditions of women during the partition violence. Nahal shows the indifference of local authorities, the police and the military in such condition as “it was some of these women recently brought to Narowal that the Muslims of the town decided to parade through the streets. The local authorities, the police and the military, did not therefore when such gatherings were organized. This did not upset the leaders” (258). The violence occurred to this extent that the mass became ready to do anything in the naked march of women. Nahal narrates such sympathetic conditions of women as:

The procession moved through the bazaar, and along with the procession moved a river of obscenities—foul, abuses, crude personal gestures, spurts of sputum, odd articles like small coins, faded flowers, cigarette butts and bidis that were thrown at the women. As soon as the women comes near the section of the crowd become hysterical, "Rape them", put it inside of them 'The filthy Hindu bitches'. 'The kafir women'. Some said worse thing. Then come the shower of spittle. Almost everyone spat, and hundreds of tongues were pushed forward inside of their teeth and hundreds of uplifted faces canon-like fried the saliva. Bits of the saliva fell on the crowd ahead, but no one minded, so long as the main salvo hit the women. Many men in the front rows of the crowd lifted lunges to display their genitals to them. Others aimed small articles at them and tried to hit them, again, by some arrangement, no one threw a rock. Injury to the women would have brought the procession at an end and they wanted the women to parade. And almost to the last man, whether they spat or shouted or

threw things or just stood with their mouth open. They stared at the pubic regions of the women. But men's eyes were settled on these apertures. And the moment the women had passed ahead, the eyes were settled on the bruised buttocks. (262)

Official history, as asserted by Urvasi Butalia, says little about abduction and those helpless women, their voice are choked by male agency in the parlour of history. In the particular case of rape and abduction and often murder, the silence is even more profound. The state acted out the role of men, upheld the basic norms and terms of patriarchy, and considered women subservient to male.

The kind of familial violence instigated during the bloody partition was perpetrated, by and large by men of particular communities on their own women- in the name of so-called purity and religion. Thousands of women, Hindus, Sikh and Muslim were raped by men of the other religion in the extended array of time and events of partition. The act of abduction followed or accompanied rape, untold numbers of women into slavery and prostitution, and in many places they were humiliated by tattoos of the symbols of the other religion, the cutting of their breasts, parading them naked in streets which must have displayed the depths of humiliation for women who had neither lived in seclusion. But many of such histories remain untold in the official history.

Mostly women were picked up from large caravans of people called Kafilas. Often they were exchanged by their families for freedom for the other members. In the process of mass migration and the violence and killing during partition, the abduction and rape took place, women were usually unarmed and so unable to defend themselves. Many of them left foot conveys, or picked up from the caravan, were dragged off from the trains being pocked upon near stations. As Nahal narrates:



She was still reaping, softly and timely; her breath was choked with conclusion. 'get off me now', she said in tired voice, the man did not move. Instead, he started laughing. He laughed smugly, a high pitched, shrill laughter. The sound reverberated in the barn and the iron door rattled slightly. 'I knew I'd have you one day'. He said conceitedly. And he laughed again in triumph and satisfaction. 'You're a beauty; he was saying 'but you made me wait a long time.' (271)

Such was the pathetic story of women in general irrespective of the community they belong. The ironic decision made by India, a self defined secular nation and Pakistan not only mocked the idea of secularism but also worsened the poor and pathetic women.

Just as female victims were a complicated issue for the state, children too were a secret problem. However, children either born out of abducted women or lost in the inclusion-became problematic not only for the state but for the families also.

Abducted women could be purified after bringing them back to their respective religions but the children were born out of the blood of the otherwise hostile sects- Hindu, Sikh and Muslim. In many instances government remained ineffective to lessen the anxiety and pain of children. Rather it served the problem leaving them to die. The government shut down the camp but still there were children whose families remained unidentified. In such severity of the problem, children were abandoned in the mess. Most of the ignored children of the partition did not get complacent life, the fate turned them in otherwise hostile milieu. Many lived the life of destitute, with part time jobs. They worked in vegetable groceries drawing carts, and pulling rickshaws, from which they earned their livelihood.

These children--now grownups--did not like to remember partition since they had lived experience about the death and convulsion. They saw infant of them killing of their own parents and kids in the partition violence. Having seen the mass massacre; gushing out bloodlike stream, most of the children were often haunted by terrible dream. They had nightmares that they woke up in the middle of the night feeling intense fear rising up around them. The bloody and nostrums events surrounded them in their nightmares. For Urvasi Butalia, the abduction of children in the stereotype of being intelligent and smart is both tragic and ironic:

Just as the bodies of women became vehicles for the honor and dishonor of the race, so the bodies of children, and in this case male children, become the vehicles for the message of something nebulous as intelligence, and a testimony to the insidious way in which stereotypes can take hold of people's consciousness (207).

In this way, the official historiography of partition violence totally neglected the pain and suffering of children during the period of partition.

Nahal unfolds such events by giving excessive focus on the childbirth in the moving train. By this, he tries to show the sufferings of both mother and child as:

Her eyes again filled with tears. She had a comely face, and a skin, which sparkled like lilacs. Now the skin had gone pale and the face was disfigured. The flesh around the eyes was swollen, the nose looked thicker around the tip, the cheeks bulged and spread out as though falling over a ridge. At first she wiped the perspiration off her forehead. Then she ignored it and bathed with sweat, she sat shyly in their midst and even tried to smile through her teary eyes. At the precise moment the Delhi train passed the dead, another kind of scream

went up into the air a thin, squealing scream. Isher Kaur had delivered her child and a new life had arrived in the world. There was peace behind the curtain, but for the thin cries of the baby. (296)

It shows the pains and sufferings of women and children during the violence of partition that was overlooked by mainstream history which only shows the sufferings of people from the elite group. In this way also, Nahal revises the history by highlighting the problems faced by ordinary people.

Though there was government's decision of distribution of land and property to the refugees in the form of exchange programs, no poor people like serfs and laborer got the piece of land and property. Through that exchange mission only property owners of India and Pakistan were benefited. Mainstream history of partition ignores all these facts of discriminations and exploitations. The Hindu minorities of Pakistan came to India hoping to get proper settlement but they have to face many problems in India too. Lala Kanshi Rama and his family faced many problems when they crossed the border:

At Amritsar, they spent a couple of weeks in another refugee camp-- this time for the incoming refugees. If they had imagined their troubles would be over the moment they reached Indian Territory, they were sadly disillusioned. Not only were the arrangements of house and food for the refugees inadequate, their very presence was resented by the local people. Their number had exceeded all expectations and the food was running short. The winter was approaching and there were not sufficient blankets. There was a noisy show of sympathy but that's all there was to it. At Dera Baba Nakak, they were put into trucks and rushed to Amritsar; they were being again advised, to push ahead.

They weren't told where they should go, only move on find a town you like and settle down. Whatever practical help they did receive was from private charitable trust. The government itself was ill prepared and ill-equipped to handle them. Nearly two months after independence, it still had not come to grips with the situation. (288)

It shows the very sympathetic condition of refugees in the camps who came to India hoping to get proper resettlement. They were hoping that visit that they would get accommodation in India but the situation of India was not also controlled. There were chaos everywhere and the refugees from Pakistan could not get proper settlement, they were hoping for the homes and shops, which were left by the Muslims in India as through the following conversation between the refugees and the Indian government authority, Nahal reveals the plight of the refugees as:

Swallowing his pride, pleaded meekly; sir, I will be ruined if you don't come to my rescue. I only want a small flat and a small little shop to be allotted to me; the officer's eyes opposed out of his head. What? A shop and a flat? What shop and flat? 'why from these the Muslims let behind. Refugee properly, I mean:

'Lala Kanshi Ram had heard that much. There were three hundred thousand Muslims in Delhi and Most of them had gone.'

'we too have left property back in Pakistan. May be an adjustment could be made, he added hopefully.'

The officer leaned forward and said: 'Lala Ji, what fool's paradise are you living in? It is the middle of November. Six hundred thousand Hindus and Sikh refugees are already in the capital. Do you think there

is a house and a shop left waiting for you? They're all been allotted to refugees, or forcibly occupied by them. (303)

In this way, Nahal shows the pains and sufferings of refugees pleading for resettlement in India but there was lack of proper settlement for them.

Chaman Nahal maintains objectivity by standing in the neutral position, shows the disastrous drama of violence during the partition. Almost all characters of the novel are sufferers, survivors, witness and victims of the violence of partition. Nahal though a Hindu, doesn't blame Muslims alone as responsible for violence but for him both Hindus and Muslims are equally responsible for violence, perpetrated upon women children and the poor. "We are equally guilty," Lala Kashi Ram, A Hindu victim, says. "Each of those girls in that procession at Amritsar was some eyes Madhu, and there must have been many amongst the dead you saw at Ambala" (300). The nationalist histories written by Indians take Muslims as responsible for partition violence whereas the histories written by Muslims saw Hindus responsible for all these destructions. But Chaman Nahal by maintaining neutral position shows not only Muslims, but Hindus are also responsible for that disastrous drama of violence. On the other hand, for Nahal the Britishers are not fully responsible for partition of India as the nationalist history blames.

Nahal challenges the nationalist historiography by revisiting partition and showing multiple facets of partition violence—rape, abduction, looting, mass killing and so on. He highlights the sufferings of people both Hindus and Muslims not taking any sides. Similarly, Nahal raises the issues of women, children, dalits and other marginal casts and portrays them as real victims and sufferers. His main focus is on the problem of minority groups in both India and Pakistan who have to suffer a lot during partition. He further says, "The broadcast had said nothing all about the fate of

minorities in the two new countries,. If the logic behind the creation of Pakistan was accepted, there was no place for the minority anywhere. Pakistan would not solve the problem of minorities-minorities, which would be bounded out with a vengeance” (68). It shows the very difficult situations for minorities in both India and Pakistan, due to the announcement of partition. Hindu minorities have to migrate to India whereas Muslim minorities of India have to migrate to Pakistan.

In this way, Nahal challenges official history by highlighting multiple aspects of partition violence--rape, abduction, massacre, looting, merciless killing of children and women, naked marches of women, very pathetic condition of refugees and so on. The history of partition is not only the division of territory, but of families and local communities, whereby millions of people were torn from ancestral homes, fields and fortunes, life long friends and child hood memories, relatives and loved ones, the knowledge of the familiar and the comfort of the known, though Chaman Nahal is a Hindu, he tries to maintain certain degree of objectivity by standing the border line of both Hindus and Muslims community. He does not charge Muslims as only one cause of violence and riots but also shows the communal violence caused by the Hindus in Indian side.

#### IV. Conclusion

Chaman Nahal in *Azadi* tries to show that history of partition was infact the history of violence, rape, abduction and massacre. However, in the master narratives of partition, violence is either avoided as non narratable or given a very short shrift as an aberration or accident or mistake. It is either taken as the 'other' side of history or ignored as no history at all. Nahal revisits the partition historiography and rewrites history of partition and valorizes violence by absorbing the fact that the history of partition constitutes the history of violence, massacre, rape, abduction and so on.

In the traditional history, only the selected aspects of partition are glorified by limiting the partition event only within the division of territory and the division of people in accordance to these territories. Whereas *Azadi* explores those multiple aspects of Indian partition such as mass killing, looting, destruction of lives, homes and properties, rape and abduction, merciless killing of children and women, horrible scenes of naked marches of women by opposite community, miserable condition of refugees etc. are glorified which were ignored by the tradition history. These othered aspects of partition-- mass killing of trains passengers, naked marches of women, very sympathetic condition of refugees and death of those poor people because of the lack of food and medicines find and adequate expressions in Nahal's narrative.

Previously the event of partition was recorded through communal perspective rather biasedly. The historians from Hindu community only talked about sufferings of Hindus during partition, and blamed Muslims to be responsible for the division of nation. On the other hand, partition history written by Muslims only focused on the violence done by Hindus upon the Muslim minorities in India and blamed Hindus responsible for partition. While doing so, sufferings and pains of victims could not come out, objectivity in history could not be maintained. But Chaman Nahal

maintains a neutral position and certain degree of objectivity through the consciousness of sufferers as witness, survivors and victims irrespective of their religion, caste, class or communities, and critiques the metanarratives of partition.



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