

**Tribhuvan University**  
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**Letter of Recommendation**

Mr. Ramesh Kumar Thapa has completed his M.Phil. thesis entitled, “Revisionist History of the Partition of India: A Subaltern Study of *Cracking India* and *Tamas*” under my supervision. I hereby recommend his thesis to be submitted for viva.

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Dr. Birendra Pandey

Central Department of English

Date: August 7, 2011

**TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY**

**Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences**

**M.Phil. Program**

**Central Department of English, Kirtipur**

**Approval Letter**

This is to certify that the thesis entitled , “Revisionist History of the partition of India: A Subaltern Study of *Cracking India* and *Tamas*”by Ramesh Kumar Thapa, submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Ramesh Kumar Thapa

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**TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY**

**Revisionist History of the Partition of India: A Subaltern Study of *Cracking  
India and Tamas***

**A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of M.Phil.  
in English**

**By**

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## Abstract

There is a gap between the historians' history of the Partition and that of the survivors. This is a gap between history and memory. There are two faces of the history of the Partition; they represent the perceptions of different classes a ruling privileged class celebrating independence, and, a refugee class unable to do so. Sidhwa's novel certainly objects to the version of nationalist historiography—the one belonging to the ruling class. Writing about the freedom moment of India, Sidhwa represents the Partition in a way that focuses less on the elite leaders and celebration but more on the people and their struggle. Through a child's eyes and her innocent expression, Sidhwa portrays the horrible side of the Partition that nationalist historiography has tried to conceal. In the novel, Sidhwa reconstructs the history of the Partition and its violence, representing how people receive and survive the violence. She retrieves people's voice and allows them to relate their experience of the Partition. Rather than forgetting the painful memories of the Partition, Sidhwa chooses to represent these events so as to memorialize them. For the survivors in the Partition, the memory and trauma produced by the violence will not be buried together with the dead. In *Cracking India*, Sidhwa adopts a stance of the people—the subaltern—to re-tell the history of the Partition and includes them into her story. In this form, novels by Sidhwa and Sahani serve as an alternative to nationalist historiography. These novels reveal the silence in the history of the nationalist version, enrich the definitions of the Partition, and recuperate the voice of the subaltern. These novels thereby underline the limit of the representation of the Partition in nationalist historical discourse and destabilize it. This permits us to take *Cracking India* and *Tamas* as another form of historiography—what is termed as little histories yielding in a subalternist perspective.

## Chapter One

### Subaltern Studies Historiography of the Partition Violence of 1947

The history of the Subaltern Studies project is traceable to the appropriation of the members of the Subaltern Studies collective of Gramsci's term "subaltern" to their contribution of publishing the *Subaltern Studies* series. The Subaltern Studies collective, having "a general dissatisfaction with historical interpretations of the 'Freedom Movement' in India" (Chaturvedi vii), initiated serious debates about the history writing of the Independence and Partition of India. Led by Ranajit Guha, the Subaltern Studies collective at its inception in 1982 was composed of a group of Indian historians who began the project in an attempt to promote a systematic and informed discussion of subaltern themes in the field of South Asian studies and hence help to revise the elitist bias characteristic of much research and academic work in this particular area. In his classic essay "On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India" (1982), Guha underlined the problem of historiography, or the writing of history, in India: the historiography of Indian nationalism had long been dominated by the elite whereas the history of the subaltern had been absent. To revise the bias in the historiography of Indian nationalism, the Subaltern Studies collective contributed to produce a number of monographs and ten volumes of essays entitled *Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asian History and Society* between 1982 and 1999 by Oxford University Press in Delhi. Together, these writings investigated the subaltern in India from aspects of history, economics, politics, and sociology. The Subaltern Studies project was at the beginning confined to the debates about the making of colonial Indian history yet has now become involved in multiple perspectives associated with postcolonial and cultural studies. In 1988, the publication of *Selected Subaltern*

*Studies* by Oxford University Press in New York, edited by Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, with a foreword written by Edward Said, had brought the Subaltern Studies to global attention and has enabled it to be “articulated as a postcolonial project” (vii). An eleventh volume of the Subaltern Studies series, *Community, Gender and Violence*, edited by Partha Chatterjee and Pradeep Jeganathan, was published in 2000 by Columbia University Press and Permanent Black in New Delhi.

In 1947, India gained its independence following 350 years of British colonization and, at the same time, due to the serious communal conflicts among the Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs, it brought the Partition of India to create two newly independent nations: India and Pakistan. However, what followed Independence was less a change for the better than a “sense of failure” characteristic of a mood of “anxiety suspended between despair and expectation” (Guha xi). According to Ranajit Guha, this situation was described as a disillusionment of hope, especially for the generations who lived their adolescence and youth approximately during the last two decades of British Raj. These generations were disappointed with the failure to fulfill the possibility of creating a nation-state that promised an acceptance of difference and change after the end of colonial rule and the gaining of Independence. What they finally found out, in the years following Independence, was the fact that the expectations and passion they had toward Independence and nationalism vanished with the establishment of another statist regime. Guha poses two kinds of questions concerning what had caused the disillusionment of the 1970s as :

1. What was there in our colonial past and our engagement with nationalism



to land us in our current predicament—that is, the aggravating and seemingly insoluble difficulties of the nation-state?

2. How are the unbearable difficulties of our current condition compatible with and explained by what happened during colonial rule and our predecessors' engagement with the politics and culture of that period? (xi)

As one of the results of this disillusionment, the Subaltern Studies project was motivated by a dissatisfaction of the members of the Subaltern Studies collective with how the moment of Independence and the Partition has been represented in history. They opposed the writings of a history in which only the contribution of the elite was exalted in the making of the nation and in which the politics of people was denied. Subaltern history in literal fact, Edward Said said, "is a narrative missing from the official story of India" (7). In "On Some Aspects" Guha views this sort of historiography as failure to "acknowledge, far from interpret, the contribution made by the people on their own, that is, independently of the elite to the making and development of this nationalism" (2). Having highlighted the problem of historiography in India that the history writing of Indian nationalism had long been controlled by the dominant groups, the Subaltern Studies collective emerged as an assortment of marginalized academics, free from any fidelity to any school or party. It meant to recover and include the voices of the subaltern into the history of India and meanwhile provide, in Guha's words, "an alternative discourse based on the rejection of the spurious and unhistorical monism characteristic of its view of Indian nationalism and on the recognition of the co-existence and the interaction of the elite and subaltern domains of politics" (6).

The term “subaltern,” literally meaning “of inferior rank” in the *OED*, has been used by the Subaltern Studies collective to designate the people who are not the “elite”—the dominant groups. This term was derived from the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) in his celebrated collection *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (1971). When he discussed the rural peasants in Southern Italy, Gramsci categorized them into the non-hegemonic classes—the subaltern groups. Having emphasized the formation of the subaltern groups, their relation to the dominant groups, and their autonomy in political sphere, Gramsci listed six necessary points to study about the subaltern. Gramsci’s theories had a tremendous impact on the thinking of the members of the Subaltern Studies collective. In the preface to *Subaltern Studies I*, Ranajit Guha, the leader of the Subaltern Studies collective, writes, “It will be idle of us, of course, to hope that the range of contributions to this series [*Subaltern Studies*] may even remotely match the six-point project envisaged by Antonio Gramsci” (vii). Spivak also mentions in the editor’s note to *Selected Subaltern Studies* that almost all of the work of the Subaltern Studies collective is “an expansion and enrichment of Antonio Gramsci’s notion of the subaltern” (xii).

In addition to the influence from Gramsci, according to Vinayak Chaturvedi, the editor of *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial* (2000), there were three important factors intellectually affecting the production of the Subaltern Studies project. These intellectual influences were: the influence of Susobhan Sarkar, who introduced Gramsci’s writings into India; the influence of the Western Marxist scholars concerning Gramscian thought; and the influence of Maoism. Sarkar, who was Guha’s teacher at Presidency College in Calcutta, introduced the theories of Gramsci to his Indian students while most Western Marxist scholars were unfamiliar with Gramsci during the late 1950s. Sarkar’s publication of “The Thought of

Gramsci” and the English translation of Gramsci’s *The Modern Prince and Other Essays* had brought Gramsci exposure and generated discussion in India. Enlightened by Sarkar and his introduction to Gramsci’s theories, Guha’s first book, *A Rule of Property for Bengal* which he dedicated to Sarkar, offered wide-ranging insight in response to Gramsci’s concepts. As Gramsci’s writings began to change the culture of English Marxism in the 1960s, the British Marxist Eric Hobsbawm’s work examining peasant societies—such as *Primitive Rebels* (1959) and “For a History of Subaltern Classes” (1960), an essay published in the Italian journal *Società*—had great influence on Guha’s book *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*. In discussing peasant insurgency, Hobsbawm regarded that the peasants had not yet found a language to express their aspiration because they lacked an explicit ideology and organization. He thus gave a term to describe the nature of the peasant insurgency—“pre-political,” devoid of a political consciousness—an adjective to which Guha objected in *Elementary Aspects*. Guha argued that Hobsbawm’s notion was from his European experience and that the term “pre-political” was a “fatuous concept” that indicated the “invidious hierarchization of South Asian culture into ‘higher’ and ‘lower’ levels or into degrees of ‘backwardness’” (*Subaltern Studies Reader* xvii). Guha believed that the purpose of the peasant insurgency was to fight against the oppression and exploitation of the Raj in colonial India; it therefore suggested the consciousness of the peasant insurgency. This movement of the subaltern classes against the oppressor was in effect “a new constellation of the political” (Chakrabarty, 9). Besides Hobsbawm, Gramsci’s impact could also be traced in some other Western scholars such as Perry Anderson, Tom Nairn, Raymond Williams, and Stuart Hall. Regardless of their interest in different points that stemmed from Gramsci’s thoughts, these scholars’ writings have remained influential to the

Subaltern Studies project. Indeed, the “extraordinary effort [of the Subaltern Studies project] is not [...] an exclusively non-European phenomenon” (x), as Said emphasized in the foreword to *Selected Subaltern Studies*. Said pointed out that the Subaltern Studies collective had been influenced by “many varieties of Western Marxism” (x). Among these perspectives extended from Gramscian theories, the historiographic study of “history-from-below,” pioneered by British historians E. P. Thompson and Christopher Hill, shared views with the Subaltern Studies project. They both were aimed at proposing a revolutionist study of history in which groups that were previously considered historically inferior, such as the exploited and marginalized groups including workers and peasants, were the subject. The last of the main intellectual influences of the Subaltern Studies project was Maoism. The Subaltern Studies project surfaced in the period which Guha called “a period of disillusionment” and it was the same period which followed the Maoist peasant uprising at Naxalbari and the Emergency. These events reflected the political turbulence in the post-Independence period and directly influenced the appearance of the Subaltern Studies project. Dipesh Chakrabarty, a member of the Subaltern Studies collective, wrote in “Small History” that, “the war between India and China in 1962,[...] made official nationalism sound hollow and eventually gave rise to a fascination with Maoism among many urban, educated young people in India” (7). Some of these young people, who were disappointed with and stimulated by the new government, managed to launch the Subaltern Studies project and tried to intervene in the post-Independence situation. Affected by their contemporary political background, the Subaltern Studies collective paid great attention to the relationship between revolutionary theories and mass movements. Maoism’s spirit of focusing on the peasant rebel was correspondent in some respects with the Subaltern Studies point of

view. The influence of Maoism was reflected in not only Guha's involvement with Maoist student organizations but also his work in the early 1980s. In *Elementary Aspects*, he justified the violent nature of peasant insurgency and further affirmed peasant insurgency as a political and autonomous movement.

Ranajit Guha adopted and extended the concept of the subaltern from Antonio Gramsci in discussing the historiography of colonial India. In "On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India" (1982), the inaugural essay of the *Subaltern Studies* series, Guha rendered in a note a definition of the subaltern, which he used as synonymously with "people." For Guha, the term represented "the demographic difference between the total Indian population and all those whom we have described as the 'elite'" (7). The term "elite," Guha explained, referred to the dominant groups, foreign as well as indigenous. The dominant foreign groups included all the non-Indians who were in power over Indians or made profits from Indians, such as British officials of the colonial state, foreign industrialists, merchants, financiers, planters, landlords and missionaries. On the other hand, two levels comprised the dominant indigenous groups: the all-Indian level and the regional and local level, respectively. Guha further adds that the former contained "the biggest feudal magnates, the most important representatives of the industrial and mercantile bourgeoisie and native recruits to the uppermost levels of the bureaucracy" (7). The regional and local level was made up of the Indians who did not act in the interests corresponding truly to their own social being," either members of the all-Indian level or those who were inferior to the all-Indian level hierarchically in social strata. Guha pointed out the ambiguities in "On Some Aspects" between the elite classes and the subaltern classes—they might be "the rural gentry, impoverished landlords, rich peasants and upper-middle peasants" (7). How they were defined depended on the regional, social,

and economic conditions. The best description of the term subaltern applied by the Subaltern Studies collective might be stated as the general attribute of subordination in South Asian society, whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way.

Ranajit Guha clarified the contemporary state of the historiography of colonial India in India. He wrote in the first point among his specific and solid sixteen points in “On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India”. According to him, “The historiography of Indian nationalism has for a long time been dominated by elitism—colonialist elitism and bourgeois-nationalist elitism” (1). These two elitisms continued their ascendancy after surviving the transfer of power and were transformed into what Guha called in “On Some Aspects” as “neo-colonialist and neo-nationalist forms of discourse” (1). Both elitisms maintained the notion that the creation of the Indian nation and the formation of the consciousness of Indians—that is, Indian nationalism—were exclusively the achievements of the elite. Historiography in colonialist and neo-colonialist points of view regarded the modernization and civilization of India as the accomplishment of British rule. In “Small History”, Dipesh Chakravarty writes, “Official documents of the British government of India [...] always portrayed colonial rule as being beneficial to India and its people” (4). The benefits brought by the British, in the historiography of colonialist and neo-colonialist elitism, were “the subcontinent political unity, modern education institutions, modern industries, a sense of nationalism, the rule of law, and so on” (4). Indian nationalism was thus considered a learning process, a function of stimulus and response to the good colonial rule had done for India. It was through the imitation of British institutions that the indigenous elite could learn how to get involved in politics and govern the country. According to Guha, this historiography, the indigenous elite,

whose real expectation was nothing more than self-interest—“a share in the wealth, power and prestige created by and associated with colonial rule”—actually lacked idealism pursuing the country’s own benefits (2). Historiography in nationalist and neo-nationalist points of view, on the contrary, asserted that decolonization and the making of the nation were results of the contribution of the indigenous elite. This kind of historiography characterized Indian nationalism as primarily an idealist venture in which the indigenous elite led the people from subjugation to freedom . The indigenous elite were described as an antithesis against British colonization, promoting and mobilizing the people to fight against the British Raj. In this perspective, all the economic, social and political disorder occurred in post-Independence India resulted from the colonial regime. Considering colonialism as a regressive force that hindered India from developing and nationalism as a regenerative force that encouraged Indians to unite and struggle for their own country, Bipan Chandra, an Indian historian of 1970s and a professor at Jawaharlar Nehru University in Delhi, compared Indian history of the colonial period to “an epic battle between the forces of nationalism and those of colonialism” (Chakrabarty 5). One of the important features of this historiography was that great emphasis was put on the depiction and celebration of the elite leaders such as Gandhi, Jinnah, and Nehru, praising these leaders’ devotion to anti-imperialist movement and Indian liberation. Such history writing of Indian nationalism, in Guha’s words, was “written up as a sort of spiritual biography of the Indian elite”( 2).

In the 1970s, debates and research about these two historiographic narratives had gradually arisen; both points of view of the two historiographies had been challenged and found problematic. Before the 1970s, some scholars had already put into question whether the British actually brought benefit or harm to India; these

scholars—including Bipan Chandra and Anil Seal—discussed the nature and result of colonial rule in India. Rather than approving the constructive role of colonial rule, they argued that British colonization in fact obstructed and restrained the economic and cultural development of India. In addition, against the accusation that the indigenous elite lacked idealism, researchers found the colonialist version incorrect for that there was indeed idealism and hope for freedom from British colonization since they had themselves experienced such enthusiasm. On the other hand, while examining the nationalist version of historiography, the historians witnessed that the elite nationalists did not fulfill their promise of making a nation-state of the people's own. Guha believes they found their “hopes and ideas, which had ignited and spread so well in the heat of an embattled nationalism, died down as soon as power was grasped” (xii). The elite nationalist leaders' mobilization of the peasants and workers actually suggested a strongly reactionary side to the principal nationalist party, the Indian National Congress. The younger generation of historians began to realize that what the elite historiography was not able to do was to explain Indian nationalism. The elite historiography failed to recognize the collaboration of the people in the making of the nation and tried to create a pretension of a unitary voice of people's consent to being ruled. According to Guha, Historiography of the elite could only express “the mass articulation of this nationalism, negatively, as a law and order problem, and positively, [...] [as] a response to the charisma of certain elite leaders”(2-3). This problem of the elite historiography to represent Indian nationalism resulted from its one-sided and narrow view of politics depending on its “class outlook”. In the politics celebrating only the elite, the historiography of colonial India was blind to the history of the subaltern classes; the history of the subaltern was rejected. Thus, the actors in historiography of the elite were presumed to be



exclusively the ones who were involved in operating the country—the dominant groups and the institutions they introduced. In *Subaltern Studies Reader* Guha says the subaltern groups, however, were attributed to “a flat and undifferentiated uniformity” (ix), absent in the historiography of colonial India. The members of the Subaltern Studies collective could not accept this monism of history writing which reduced individual voices. What clearly is left out of this unhistorical historiography, Guha claimed, “is the politics of the people” (3).

Against the idea that the subaltern class was inferior, Ranajit Guha explicated in the eighth point of “On Some Aspects” that the domain of subaltern politics was the long-existing parallel of the domain of elite politics. The domain of subaltern politics had a long history which could be traced back to the pre-colonial period and, unlike the traditional elite politics, which had been destroyed by the invasion of the colonial rule, the domain of subaltern politics had survived different regimes and the British Raj. He considered the domain of subaltern politics “autonomous,” for it “neither originated from elite politics nor did its existence depend on the latter” (3). The co-existence of the politics of the elite and that of the subaltern revealed the inadequacy of elite historiography. This phenomenon, Guha declared, “was the index of an important historical truth, that is, the failure of the Indian bourgeoisie to speak for the nation” (5). Due to this failure, the Subaltern Studies project was initiated and attempted to be “the study of this historical failure of the nation to come to its own” and to investigate “this failure which constitute[s] the central problematic of the historiography of colonial India” (6) so as to amend the elite historiography and recuperate the history belonging to the subaltern. Guha points out that what the Subaltern Studies

needs to do is to offer “an alternative mode of thematization—that is, by thematizing the structural split of politics as its central concern” (xv). The purpose of this matization is to displace the question of power; it is the study of power, of what structurally distinguishes the politics of the elite from that of the subaltern to form a relationship of the dominant and the subordinated between them. By means of an analysis of the structural split of politics, “the fault line of that split” is under investigation (xvi). The question of power is hence displaced from the attention of a binary frame and functions to illuminate rather than hide the nonunitary character of that politics. The boundary that differentiates the domain of elite politics from that of subaltern politics is therefore blurred or, we can say, transformed to signify the new relationship between the two domains as being inter-constitutive and interrelated; it becomes “an articulation of the mutuality of two interacting yet autonomous domains” (xvi). Providing this alternative discourse, Guha writes:

From now on it [the study of colonialism] would have to reckon with two indigenous protagonists and not just one, that is, the elite, privileged by the dominant discourse to deal with the rules on behalf of all the colonized. In other words, it would no longer suffice to regard politics merely as the sum of all transactions between the masters themselves. For every transaction of that sort would henceforth require a reference to ‘the other domain’ for an

understanding of its implication. (xvi-xvii)

The first four volumes of the *Subaltern Studies* series mainly discuss the peasant rebel and its political subject. However, the Subaltern Studies project, while facing some internal debates and criticisms and receiving influence from new theories, had to re-orientate its goals and methodologies in reaction to its contemporary academic surroundings. According to Vinayak Chaturvedi, “by the end of *Subaltern Studies IV* signs of a shift were already present” (xi). For instance, the project has been questioned about whether the Western-imported theory—Marxism—is sufficient to apply to India. According to Chaturvedi these debates known as “arguments within Indian Marxism”(xi) were widely discussed and published between 1982 and 1988 in *Social Scientist*, a New Delhi-based journal related to the Communist Party of India. The advocate for dividing lines between Subaltern Studies and Marxism has emerged, Chaturvedi explains. With the impacts brought by Foucauldian and post-structuralist theories, the Subaltern Studies project has confronted the need of a reorientation of its future development. The reason for a reorientation lies in some limitations of the Subaltern Studies project: the tradition of using historical materialism as the resource, the search for “an essential structure of peasant consciousness” and the absence of gender issues” (xi). Among these new perspectives rethinking the Subaltern Studies project, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s concepts are the most important and insightful. By asking the question: “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” she doubts if the subaltern actually has his/her own consciousness to speak for him/herself. Moreover, she submits the term “gendered subaltern” to underline her emphasis on the long-ignored figure—women. In her essay “Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography” (1986), together with

Rosalind O'Hanlon's response in her review of this essay published in the journal *Modern Asian Studies* in 1988, Spivak points out the absence of discussion on women in the Subaltern Studies project. Spivak's critical points and further discussion of "suttee," the self-immolation of Indian women, in the essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" led the Subaltern Studies project to a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of subaltern issues.

In her essay "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography", which serves as the introduction to *Selected Subaltern Studies*, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has pointed out the problem of the work of the Subaltern Studies collective. She states that what the work of the Subaltern Studies collective offers is a theory of change, a theory that intends to rectify the general definition and theorization that colonization is a transition from feudalism to capitalism for India. In Spivak's words, the Subaltern Studies collective puts forward at least two approaches to revise this point of view: "first, that moment(s) of change be pluralized and plotted as confrontations rather than transition [...] and, secondly, that such changes are signalled or marked by a functional change in sign-systems" (3). The former, which proposes to change the reading of British colonization as a "transition" into "confrontations" of India, enables the moments of change to be interpreted in relation to "histories of domination and exploitation" instead of "within the great modes-of-production narrative" (3). The latter, which appeals to a change of sign-systems, enables a reinterpretation of the meanings of originally negatively defined terms, such as crime to insurgency and bondsman to worker. These propositions show an error within the fundamental ideas of the Subaltern Studies collective—that is, Spivak contends, "that the agency of change is located in the insurgent or the subaltern. She argues that the operation of a change entails the force of a crisis and

space for that change in the prior function of the sign system the “change in signification-function supplements the previous function” (4). She thereby indicates the Subaltern Studies collective mistakenly regards their project as “a theory of consciousness or culture,” and this would cause the effect that “the force of crisis [...] is not systematically emphasized in their work” (4). In Spivak’s eyes, the Subaltern Studies collective considers that the entire socius is “a ‘continuous sign chain’ and the possibility of subverting the position of the subaltern “lies in the dynamics of the disruption of this object, the breaking and relinking of the chain” (5). The members of the Subaltern Studies collective attempt to locate a consciousness in the subaltern by affirming the political nature of the subaltern groups’ insurgencies. The subaltern, in concepts of the Subaltern Studies collective, thus, with his/her consciousness asserted and meaning re-signified, would escape the subordinate position of the binary opposition in the sign-system. This approach, which Spivak calls “discursive displacement,” adopted by the Subaltern Studies collective, is regarded as problematic. Spivak writes:

This line of argument does not set consciousness over against the socius, but sees it as itself also constituted as and on a semiotic chain. It is thus an instrument of study which participates in the nature of the object of study.

To see consciousness thus is to place the historian in a position of irreducible compromise. (5)

Articulating her dissatisfaction with the Subaltern Studies collective’s strategy of displacing power when reading the subaltern, Spivak observes that “[a]ll of the

accounts of attempted discursive displacements provided by the group are accounts of failures” (5). According to Spivak, the search for a subaltern consciousness by the Subaltern Studies collective seems positive at first. However, this consciousness, which makes all the theories of the Subaltern Studies collective possible, is actually the consciousness “not of the being of the subaltern, but of that of the oppressors” (11). Adducing Hegel’s idea, Spivak argues that “it is always the desire for/of (the power of the Other) that produces an image of the self” (11). Ranajit Guha also writes in the second chapter of *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*, “It was they [the elite groups] who made him [the subaltern] aware of his place in society as a measure of his distance from themselves” (18). Since the subaltern cannot be mentioned without reference to the elite, the subaltern in effect serves as the model that offers the desire for the elite to produce the image of self. The so-called subaltern consciousness can be found, if possible, only in a negative sense. On this ground, the thematization of the subaltern consciousness as the Subaltern Studies collective’s methodological presupposition is “by definition incomplete” and, Spivak asserts, ‘non-originary’ (11-2). By virtue of the disavowal of the origin of subaltern consciousness, Spivak notes the Subaltern Studies collective’s failure “to find a consciousness [of the subaltern] [...] in a positive and pure state” (5).

In the last parts of “Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography” (1986), Spivak advocates an emphasis on noticing and investigating the “gendered subaltern”—women. Spivak puts forward the problems of the absence of the history of women’s involvement in insurgency in the elite historiography and the neglect of attention to the female subaltern in the Subaltern Studies project. This observation has uncovered the particularly serious marginalization of women, as Spivak writes in her famous essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” “Within the effaced itinerary of the

subaltern subject, the track of sexual difference is doubly effaced. [...] If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow” (287). Spivak specifies the predicament of women as victimized by the double-oppression of not only the class system but also patriarchy. She further adds “Male subaltern and historian are here united in the common assumption that the procreative sex is a species apart, scarcely if at all to be considered a part of civil society” (28). In “Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography,” Spivak expresses her surprise to find the discussion of “woman” as subject scarcely appears in the Subaltern Studies project; she says, “in a collective where so much attention is rightly paid to the subjectivity or subject-positioning of the subaltern, it should be surprising to encounter such indifference to the subjectivity, not to mention the indispensable presence, of the woman as crucial instrument” (27). Spivak observes that the members of the Subaltern Studies collective overlook how important the metaphor woman is to the functioning of their discourse . Spivak explains that women, who signify only “exchange-value” in the men-centered power structures—for example, in the aspects of territoriality or the communal mode of power—are represented as “instrument.” In these power structures that are based on kinship or clanship, “notions of kinship [or clanship] are anchored and consolidated by the exchange of women” (28), states Spivak. Women are instrumental in the patriarchal narrative. Spivak hence declares, “the continuity of community or history, for subaltern and historian alike, is produced on [...] the dissimulation of her discontinuity, on the repeated emptying of her meaning as instrument” (31).

In the fourth section of “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” through a critical analysis of the representation of women in the British abolition of the Hindu practice “suttee,”

Spivak investigates the instrumentality of women and their situation as having no agency to speak for themselves. “Suttee,” or “sati,” was the sacrifice of the Hindu widow who immolated herself on the funeral pyre of her deceased husband. This practice, which was considered sacred by the Indian society, was regarded as barbaric and later outlawed by the British in 1829. This action brought about a conflict between the two foreign and indigenous groups—the British took their outlawing of suttee as a case of “White men saving brown women from brown men” whereas the Indian men claimed that “The women actually wanted to die” (297). Spivak discovers that, in the two groups’ respective self-legitimizations of their views of suttee, “One never encounters the testimony of the women’s voice-consciousness” (297). The Hindu widows, protected without their saying “yes” by the British, become an instrument for the colonial power to justify colonization as a “civilizing mission” (Morton 64). On the other hand, the Hindu widows’ self-immolation, an exception in a religion that prohibits suicide, indicates the oppression of women within a patriarchal domination. Women, who are silenced, serve as the ideological battleground of the British colonizer and the Indian male colonized. From this rupture, the ‘untranslatability’ between the two groups, Spivak detects the limitation and problem of representing women in the two narratives. Women are represented rather than representing themselves; they do not have their own voice and agency. Spivak concludes, “There is no space from which the sexed subaltern subject can speak” (307). Even in the Subaltern Studies project, a project whose concern is particularly the marginalized and exploited people, the male subaltern is privileged. By investigating and opening the discussion of the gendered subaltern, Morton says, Spivak “expands and complicates the established concept of the subaltern” (59).



As already mentioned, the Subaltern Studies collective's serious debates about the history writing of the Independence and Partition of India resulted from their dissatisfaction with the elite's interpretation of the moment of decolonization. In 1947, India gained its independence from British colonization and, at the same time, the serious communal conflicts among the Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs led to the Partition of India and Pakistan. In the written historical narrative of "moment of rupture" in *Remembering* 1 of Pandey, the Subaltern Studies collective has noted that the focus of historiography has been mainly on the celebration of the Independence of India and the contribution of the elite leaders in the establishing of the nation; the violence of the Partition, together with its accompanied outcomes such as mass migration, refugeeism, and rehabilitation, has been rarely mentioned.

In his essay "In Defense of the Fragment: Writing about Hindu-Muslim Riots in India Today", Gyanendra Pandey, one of the founding members of the Subaltern Studies collective, has investigated the problem of the writing of violence in history, specifically in the history of sectarian violence in India. Pandey observes: "historical discourse has been able to capture and re-present the moment of violence only with great difficulty" (27). Pandey puts forward two problems concerning the writing of history of violence: "The history of violence has been treated in the historiography of modern India as aberration and as absence" (27). He argues that, in this discourse, violence is considered something outside normality and should not appear in Indian history; violence is commonly interpreted as "a distorted form, an exceptional moment, not the 'real' history of India at all" (27). In addition, the history of violence appears as an absence that takes little part in Indian history. It receives little description and emphasis and is merely regarded as "known," with its

“contours and character [...] simply assumed” (27). What receives attention is always the context of the violence; in Pandey’s words, “The history of ‘violence’ is, therefore, about everything that happens around violence” (27). Pandey indicates that the reason for these problems lies in the fact that modern Indian history is written in the political context in which nationalism is the center. The nationalists make nationalism represent India and shape it into an “Indian spirit,” without regarding other different groups and cultures in India. To totalize, these nationalists attribute “a ‘natural’ quality” (29) to the unity called “India” and build nationalism as the “mainstream” of Indian culture. In nationalism, in this state-centered discourse, the historiography of Indian history produces history that exalts the merits of only a small portion of the society—that is, the nationalist elite. This history is recognized as “the end of all history, ... ‘History,’ in schools, colleges, and universities in India” (29), serving as the primary source for historical reconstruction.

In commenting on such historiography, Pandey states, “This historiographical practice fails to lay sufficient stress on the provisional and changeable character” (29) of the communities in India. The “fragments”—those that do not belong to the “mainstream,” the minority groups and cultures—of Indian society are marked as “antinational” (28). They are categorized within a binary opposition as the Other of the mainstream, for example, “secular/communal, national/local, progressive (‘economic’)/reactionary (‘cultural’)” (29). In a discourse that insists on characterizing nationalism as being “secular, democratic, nonviolent, and tolerant” (30), the history of violence is elided by nationalist historiography. Pandey describes this phenomenon, “Unity in diversity is no longer the rallying cry of Indian nationalism. On the contrary, all that is challenging, singular, or local—not to say, all difference—appears threatening, intrusive, even foreign to this nationalism” (28).

In discussing the historiography of violence, Pandey in particular emphasizes the problems in representing the Partition of 1947 and the violence it generated in India. First, he opposes the simple separation between the Partition and violence in nationalist historiography. He claims, in the survivors' view, "Partition was violence" (3). The Partition and its violence is the sundering that caused the beginnings of two new nations rather than merely a political rearrangement. Pandey describes the absence of the violence of the Partition in nationalist historiography as an "erasure of memory" (31). However, this problem does not appear only in the historiographical aspect. According to Pandey, there are few works of literature or films portraying the Partition; and, even if the Partition is represented, the focus of these works is usually confined to some areas such as "the strife-torn areas of Punjab and its environs" (32). Pandey says, "As in history writing, so in films and fiction, Indian intellectuals have tended to celebrate the story of the Independence struggle rather than dwell on the agonies of Partition" (31-32).

If the agonies of Partition can be expressed by numbers, we can note the following statistical evidence presented by Urvashi Butalia in her book *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* (2000):

Estimates of the dead vary from 200,000 (the contemporary British figures) to two million (a later Indian estimate) but that somewhere around a million people died is now widely accepted. As always there was widespread sexual savagery: about 75,000 women are thought to have been abducted

and raped by men of religious different from their own (and indeed sometimes by men of their own religion). (3)

Such astounding events, nevertheless, are given little room in the written history of India. In nationalist historiography, it is the elite leaders that play crucial roles fighting for the new identity of the nation rather than the people sacrificed in the violence of the Partition. In nationalist historiography, it is Independence that is the great moment worth celebrating. Accordingly, the written history of India commemorates the history of the elite leaders and Independence but veils and degrades the history of the violence and the Partition. Pandey discusses Bipan Chandra's *Modern India* (1971) and Sumit Sarkar's *Modern India, 1885-1947* (1983), which are textbooks for undergraduates and graduate students. The two books have similar ways of representing the moment of the Independence and Partition of India—a few lines mentioning the violence of the Partition but concluding with the glorification of the political leaders. The description of the Partition, in Chandra's case, is rendered slightly and mistakenly as “senseless communal slaughter” (qtd. in Pandey, “In Defense” 30). And in Sarkar's case, he writes: “all communal divisions seemed forgotten in the absolutely united and ultimately victorious 85-day tram strike under Communist leadership which began the same day” (31). Sarkar's depiction of the Partition as a “forgotten” matter appears in a sharp contrast with his applause for the elite leaders. In response to such a representation of the history of the Partition, Pandey writes: “Partition is indeed a minor motif in this story. There is no room either, given the way in which the historiographical agenda has been drawn up, for any discussion of the trauma or meaning of sectarian violence” (212).

In his essay “The Prose of Otherness”, Pandey states that the history of the Partition in nationalist historiography is “an Other history” (213). The violence in this

“Other history” has been commonly treated as being “extraordinary” in nature and has been excluded from the everyday experience and represented “in the likeness of a natural disaster” (33). Nationalist historiography in India, for example, marks the violence of the Partition as “an accident” or “a ‘mistake’” (33). What is more, this nationalist historiography tends to provide “communalism” as the cause of the violence of the Partition. “Histories of Partition [...] are generally written up as histories of ‘communalism’” (30), Pandey points out. It is easier to attribute the violence of the Partition to communal riots; nationalist historiography considers the bloodbath of the Partition as the result of the inherent conflicts that had long existed among the communities. By internalizing “natural” and “communalist” elements within the Partition—elements that help to prove the violence of the Partition is nothing but an exception—nationalist historiography has thereby represented the Partition as irrelevant to Indian history.

Pandey, by contrast, argues that the Partition and its violence are meaningful. They mark “the termination of one regime and the inauguration of two new ones,” telling us about “the procedures of nationhood, history[,] and particular forms of sociality” (1). In the process of the struggle for nationalization, “violence too becomes a language that constitutes—and reconstitutes—the subject” (4). The violence of the Partition is a language shared by Pakistanis and Indians to re-shape the new nations of their own. After the Partition, people of the two new communities have had to adapt themselves to new settings and have had to re-make their new histories and memories. Their identities have been redefined. The purpose of Pandey’s investigation of representing the Partition is to recuperate the history of the Partition as “a renegotiation and a re-ordering, as the resolution of some old oppositions and

the construction of new ones” (17). More importantly, Pandey endeavors to recover the voices of the silenced people—the subaltern groups—in Indian history and make them involved in the process of making the nation. One important way in which the silenced voice of the subaltern victims of the Pakistan violence is through women’s subjective experience available in oral narratives which give an importance to their narratives in an event in history of the subcontinent that has been dominated by the ‘official’ history or history of those (men) who lead various political parties. In the last decade, more specifically since 1997, the fiftieth anniversary of the Partition of the Indian subcontinent, there has been a resurgence of popular as well as academic interest to unfold, disentangle and understand the events, while trying to produce new readings and positions, vis-à-vis both countries' present conditions and the process of remembering (or not forgetting). The Partition, like other national man-made catastrophes, compels the victims, perpetrators of violence and the general community to re-examine their actions and roles in what took place and demands complex answers that require individual and communal soul searching. This crucial event continues to raise questions regarding the moral and ethical dilemmas of mankind as well as the need for a more complex examination of issues such as representation, memory, violence, dis-location and their re-articulation over a passage of time. As time increases the distance between ourselves, our worlds, and the events of Partition, the national tragedy of the Indian subcontinent, many survivors, bystanders, and perpetrators, are no longer alive; only Memory remains, as well as archives and private histories which have not been integrated into the public or national discourse of history. The intensified pursuit of Memory, in its many possible forms, appears to be the ultimate way of relating to that event whose shadow

continues to arouse impassioned emotions about that period in the personal and collective consciousness of both countries.

Collective trauma finds outlet in public articulation of a community or a nation, as it seems to remember or forget a painful period in its history. Individual trauma, on the other hand, is most often suffered in silence, and whenever language is used to convey it to others' or even to self time after time, the pain somehow remains submerged, somehow imbedded within the injured self, and language fails to extricate the experience from the depths of the unconscious where it continues to reverberate, poisoning the daily existence of the survivor and thus paving the onset of victimization to the knowledge and burden of indescribable trauma. A binary relationship emerges from the memory of a traumatic event. The person who has been through it is able to feel it, though its raw nature, which continues to haunt the survivor only surfaces when language is deliberately forsaken. On the other hand, as soon as one attempts to articulate, there is an immediate distance as language falls short of communicating it not only to the outside world but also to the inner self. Hence, traumatic memory plays a double-edged game of comprehension and incoherence as far as painful reminiscence is concerned.

The sheer extent of the horror of violence during Partition seems so overwhelming that it seems to have precluded any serious discussion of the historical and literary implications of national and personal discourse surrounding this event. The events of Partition, which arouse so much immediate and potent discussion among all the communities involved are ironically the reasons for the lack of critical work other than the memory of the violence itself. Embedded in each individual narrative is a profound sense of loss, of dis-location and ultimately of violence.

Whoever experienced one or more of these emotions considers himself/herself to be a victim, and that, by implication, characterizes individuals or whole other communities as villains. Such characterization becomes inadequate because the stereotypes are simplistic and comparatively easy to peddle, achieving very little apart from strengthening the mutual distrust and hatred that the Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh communities have for one another. Such generalizations also rule out any necessary attempts to understand the need to divorce the actions of individuals from their religious affiliations. The eventual outcome of collective representation results in creating a forced deviation from holding individuals accountable for their actions as opposed to blaming a particular religious community. Partition and the questions of violence form an indestructible vice-like grip of suspicion and hatred between Muslims on one side and Hindus and Sikhs on the other. Even though these narratives are almost sixty years old, the memories of survivors continue to be haunted by the atrocities that they had witnessed. After carrying out interviews with a number of Indian women, and having worked with Pakistani survivors, one is able to claim with considerable certainty that each community continues to harbor deep and divisive opinions about the others, and it is a position that seems to have hardened with the passage of time. Another term that describes the events of the Partition is ethnic cleansing. It is a process in which one ethnic group expels civilians of other ethnic groups from towns and villages it conquers in order to create ethnically pure enclaves for their own members. The term ethnic cleansing generally entails the systematic and forced removal of members of an ethnic group from their communities to alter or 'purify' the ethnic composition of a region. In the case of the Partition of 1947, the definition stated above can also be applied with a minor difference instead of ethnic, the cleansing was based on religious identity. The expression to clean the territory is



directed against enemies and it is used mostly in the final phase of a conflict in order to take total control of a given territory. This policy can occur and have terrible consequences in all territories with mixed populations, especially in attempts to redefine frontiers and rights over given land-areas as was the case of India in 1947. There is a new logic of conflict that relies on violent action against an 'enemy's' population on a large scale. Examples of this logic and policy abound today (the extreme case being Rwanda). Ethnic cleansing has formed the basic core of a number of civil and military conflicts. This practice follows a defined method; first comes the 'terror', in which the dominant community demonstrates to those it wants to rid that there is a constant threat—real and imagined—of physical and psychological violence directed against them. There is an 'appearance' of this policy; long caravans of refugees, desecration and destruction of places of worship, and loss of economic sustenance, are some of the ways in which ethnic cleansing manifests itself on the 'surface.' Ultimately, the final purpose is to ensure— through killing, sexual assaults, kidnapping, destruction, threat and humiliation— that no return is possible. Ethnic cleansing has formed the basic core of a number of civil and military conflicts. This practice follows a defined method; first comes the 'terror', in which the dominant community demonstrates to those it wants to rid that there is a constant threat—real and imagined—of physical and psychological violence directed against them. There is an 'appearance' of this policy; long caravans of refugees, desecration and destruction of places of worship, and loss of economic sustenance, are some of the ways in which ethnic cleansing manifests itself on the 'surface.' Ultimately, the final purpose is to ensure— through killing, sexual assaults, kidnapping, destruction, threat and humiliation— that no return is possible. The massive scale on which violence and mass deportation occur during ethnic cleansing is not something that spontaneously

occurred at the eve of Partition. On the contrary, it is a practice that has been used repeatedly, and in most cases, with devastating effectiveness to create places of 'bleak ethnic homogeneity.' Roger Cohen, a journalist who covered the Balkan conflict, cites some of the examples of ethnic cleansing which are public knowledge. However, there are many more instances of such atrocities for which there is no public record. According to Cohen: "Greeks out of Turkey; Turks out of Greece; Serbs out of the Fascist Croatia of 1941 - 1945, Jews out of Hitler's Europe; ethnic Germans out of postwar Czechoslovakia; Palestinians from Occupied territories"(136). The brief definitions mentioned above provide useful insights into different approaches to the concept of violence. While it is difficult to isolate a unique definition, it is easier to recognize its numerous manifestations throughout history. In this study, rather than focus on the problematic search for a unique and satisfying definition of the term violence, specific incidents in which it has been articulated in the context of the survivors' narratives of Partition will be examined.

The brief definitions mentioned above provide useful insights into different approaches to the concept of violence. While it is difficult to isolate a unique definition, it is easier to recognize its numerous manifestations throughout history. In this study, rather than focus on the problematic search for a unique and satisfying definition of the term violence, the specific incidents in which it has been articulated in the context of the survivors' narratives of Partition will be examined.

As there were numerous cases of sexual violence towards the women of all communities during Partition, the reasons behind this particular phenomenon will also be explored. Nationalism and communalism were the two most significant ideologies during this period, and both of them placed women at the very heart of their discourses and actions. The women who suffered during this time period were later

considered to be social outcasts by their communities and, in a number of cases, by their families. It was because of such treatment of these women victims that it was deemed acceptable for women to kill themselves or to be killed off by their relatives in order to escape being abducted or sexually molested by men from the other communities.

As there are not many survivors left from that time, a significant amount of effort needs to be undertaken by individuals as well as the State to record and catalogue their narratives, which can later be included into the national discourse of Partition.. Among some of the questions raised and examined in this thesis concerning issues of memory include: How does memory retain and recall hurtful events in one's life? What are the politics of memory and its articulation? How truthful are the events being described? How is one to view the minor discrepancies? How do stories change when they are told to outsiders ? What are the factors that one needs to examine when private stories are discussed in the public domain, and how does the discourse change? Can one draw parallels on the theoretical base used to analyze other personal and collective painful events, events such as the Holocaust, the genocide in Rwanda and the ethnic cleansing in Bosnia? One is also left with questions such as: Are any two violent events ever comparable? Lastly, the most significant questions are those that are concerned with the difficulty involved in capturing the horror of violence in words. Any attempt to study the Partition of 1947, without primarily understanding how people experienced it becomes a futile exercise. It is through them that one may begin to re-imagine the impact this political event had on the individual and collective psyche of the people of the Indian subcontinent. One has to be cognizant of the fact that differences will surely emerge to reveal the complexity of this momentous event.

The severe undermining of a sense of normalcy characterizes the survivor as the psychological after-effects manifest themselves in ways that both the survivor and those around her are caught in a constant struggle of recollection and forgetting. As women have been socially discouraged to recall or rearticulate their trauma in public, such a pressure acts to inhibit the process of recovery.

A number of survivors that I read about often omitted details of brutalities and degradation of the times they had lived through. However, in the presence of other survivors, the conversations tended to be more detailed and unequivocal. Theirs were stories of lived experience of overwhelming fear, disorientation, exposure to constant humiliations, sickness, starvation and the ever-present threat of death during Partition's troubled times. Many survivors' accounts divulge the sense of personal confusion (following the rupture of an old and an established way of life) loss of identity, and increasing focus on the minutiae of life on the move, a state of alertness to the particular which alone might contribute to survival. These factors make Oral history an essential component of what might be considered to be a 'record' of an event. Dunaway points out that :

Orality has helped to democratise history, by incorporating diverse perspectives of the non-literate and of groups often excluded from traditional historical canon.... oral materials are subject to the same problems of validation as any source used for research or writing . (40)

The violence witnessed by subjects was such that it seems to have left an indelible mark on those who were unfortunate enough to have lived through it. There continues to be a general sense of complete incomprehensibility at what was happening around them. To some people, Partition's violence was a sign of an 'unnatural' time, others considered it to be some kind of a Divine punishment and yet

others justified it as something that was preordained. Dipesh Chakrabarty, who has worked extensively on the Bengali Partition, has articulated the complexities involved in re-covering the details of victims' experiences:

Memory is a complex phenomenon that reaches out to far beyond what normally constitutes a historian's archives, for memory is much more than what the mind can remember or what objects can help us document about the past. It is also about what we do not always consciously know that we remember until something actually, as the saying goes, jogs our memory. And there remains the question, so much discussed these days in the literature on the Indian partition, of what people do not even wish to remember, the forgetting that comes to our aid in dealing with pain and unpleasantness in life. Memory, then, is far more complicated than what historians can recover and it poses ethical challenges to the investigator-historian who approaches the past with one injunction: tell me all. (43)

The academics' research techniques, as Chakrabarty points out, fail to comprehend or indeed acknowledge the difficulties faced by the survivors. The stories, survivors are told, would perform the miracle of helping them to come to terms with their traumatic past. By so doing, the researchers take on the added role of a psychoanalyst, something for which they are ill-qualified. In addition to this unwelcomed responsibility, they also had to convince the subjects that their stories did matter and it was important, not just for them but for the whole nation, that they were told. Their narratives followed a variety of structures, some gave a detailed account, others were very circumspect and did not really want to talk about the experiences of their past, and if they did talk about the events they been through

during Partition, it was repeatedly articulated in a summarised version. Almost all the people interviewed became physically emotional at one point or another. Violence was defined by each subject as an act carried out by the members of the Other community whereas the brutalities they might have witnessed or participated in were relegated to ‘revenge’ for the barbarity practiced by the Muslims in West Punjab and other parts of what was in the process of becoming Pakistan. Most of the people interviewed believed that most of the vicious acts of violence occurred in the ‘public space’ outside their immediate community, thus establishing an immediate distance between themselves and the mayhem. Almost all of those who knew about such actions were quick to point out that acts of brutality carried out by their peers could not be really considered as acts of ‘violence’ [which is thought to be always carried out by the Muslims (or the Other)] and the acts always took place outside the sanctity of the community. In a few cases where the interviewees did talk about the physical violence in their villages, it was told that it was mostly carried out by the Jathas from other villages or by some ‘wayward’ members of their own community. The subjects interviewed were able to talk about the physical and quite often horrific acts of brutality towards others, but not a single individual could ‘remember’ anything about sexual violence (especially rape, which, according to official figures, there were tens of thousands cases.) This brutal and almost essential part of the communal violence seems to have been erased from individual and community’s memory, especially when the events of Partition are articulated in public.

The sheer number of refugees that Partition had created was more than any of the people interviewed had ever seen. There were almost no governmental agencies to provide aid and so these people who had been uprooted from their homes and communities had to fend for themselves in their new homelands. As more and more

people crossed into the Indian Punjab, it became obvious that it was just not possible or safe for Muslims to live in East Punjab. As the troubles escalated so did the fleeing, this in turn added to the general level of confusion on both sides, which ultimately resulted in more violence.

The violence between the Punjabis was a larger than life phenomenon; one came across several examples of the attitudes and behaviours that seem to have been socially sanctioned during the violent orgy of Partition in this very proud, headstrong, militant and comparatively prosperous region of colonial North India. A man was expected to exercise 'control' over his wife and expected to keep her in place in and out of the household, a liberty which included tacit approval of physical violence against his spouse. Such a disposition, when placed alongside the volatile conditions of the Partition was to have devastating results for all the communities involved in venting out their anger and hatred which had been fanned by inflated claims of real and imagined atrocities of the 'Others.' As a result, one has to agree with a number of issues that Andrew Major raises, despite his tendency to generalise and exaggerate his point about the whole of Punjabi community:

Yet it would seem to be quite wrong to regard the rape and abduction of Punjabi women in 1947 as a product of anomie of the times, as an abnormal occurrence in a society undergoing severe temporary dislocation, for that would ignore the fact that violence against women is embedded in everyday relationships in this society. Recent studies have confirmed that 'power rape' – the raping of women in order to demoralise and defeat rival men in a patriarchal society – is particularly common in Northern India. Abduction is also conspicuous in the history of inter-clan rivalry in the Punjab: speaking of the

turbulent Jat villages near the India-Pakistan border, a former Chief Justice [G.D. Khosla] asserted that ‘thefts, dacoities, murders and abductions have always constituted the normal spare-time activities of the inhabitants’. Referring to one Jat Sikh villager’s raping of many Muslim refugee women in 1947, the same author writes that the rapist ‘was not impelled by anger or a desire for revenge. For him it was a God-given occasion to do something he heartily enjoyed. (60-61)

As normal and daily activities were brusquely terminated, women who had been ‘allocated’ private spheres of houses were suddenly and literally thrust into the open. This emotional and physical threat of brutal violence was manifested repeatedly in the narratives of women and men who had to undertake the journey from West to East Punjab. Because women were in a new domain, their incomprehensibility may well be understood, but men still find it hard to come to terms with the fact that they, who had grown up with the beliefs that they could always ‘protect’ their women, failed, albeit against forbidding odds. These emotions of impotence seem to have been internalised or were manifested in the particularly gruesome acts of these ‘refugees’ into India, as they took ‘revenge’ on those (Muslims) who were still in East Punjab and adjoining states.

A number of subjects said that they became much more aware of their surroundings, factors like the sugar cane plantations and the direction of the wind assumed critical importance in order to escape detection. They had to be very vigilant of the water wells, for a number of them had been deliberately poisoned. The injuries that seemed to crystallize Partition's violence were mostly inflicted on women of other groups. For it was through their bodies that ‘self’ and other were defined as the diametrically opposed notions of differentiation. In this binary opposition however,



groups brutalized their own women because they thought that it was the best way of saving their honor. The most potent example of this notion manifested itself through the intensity with which women of each group were guarded from the other. There were numerous occasions in which the interviewees had been eye-witnesses to the savagery inflicted on women from one group by men from another, which included amputation of breasts, mass rape, parading them naked through public and religious places, cutting open pregnant women, and tattooing their bodies with nationalistic and religious slogans. Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin explain this particular form of violence and the reasons behind it as actions that would last for much longer than the Partition. According to them:

Marking the breasts and genitalia with symbols like the crescent moon or trident makes permanent the sexual appropriation of the woman, and symbolically extends this violation to future generations who are thus metaphorically stigmatised. Amputating her breasts at once desexualises a woman and negates her as wife and mother; no longer a nurturer (if she survives, that is) she remains a permanently inauspicious figure, almost as undesirable as a barren woman. Sudhir Kakar, in his exploration of how communities fantasise violence, says that sexual mutilation figures prominently: the castration of males and the amputation of breast - “incorporate the (more or less conscious) wish to wipe the enemy off the face of the earth” by eliminating the means of reproduction and nurturing. (44)

The politics and various forms of language and discourse that have been used to remember and re-articulate the trauma of Partition. Oral literature is how most of the population of the subcontinent, remembers the collective ordeal it went through.

This form of articulation of memory of Partition has been marginalised for long enough, and has suffered because of postcolonial nations' obsession with the colonial version of collecting and articulating a national history, which has always been in a written form. Orality demonstrates the complexities of remembering that cannot be captured in written literature and hence adds a dimension missing from the otherwise linear narrative. These collective voices need to be tapped into in order to create new, hybridised forms of national autobiography. Gyanendra Pandey has pointed out the need for inclusion of a variety of voices, some of which could be construed as offering contradictory perspectives. He posits that:

Ultimately, too, we shall have to return to the question of the language of historical discourse and its ability to represent violence and pain and daily struggle. This refers not only to the vocabulary available to historians, but also the structure of their discourse. How do we structure or frame the histories that we write in order to allow some place for the bodies that carry the marks of these 'everyday' (marginal, not so much lying outside as reworking the consequences of centralised production and representation) occurrences, and thereby often constitute the 'larger' events and processes of History. (221)

Pandey's arguments are very pertinent to the urgent need of the collection of oral narratives of Partition in order for the subcontinent to achieve a realistic understanding of what took place during that time. Historians and other academic scholars need to admit and understand that certain events involve such complexities and contradictions that articulating them might fall outside the realm of the tools they might have at their disposal. It should not be such a difficult step if one acknowledges

and appreciates the fact that in many cases, even the victims are unable to either comprehend or explain their traumas.

One of the primary aims of this research is to avoid the rather unsophisticated tendency that State narrative has, which is of generalizing the experience of suffering. Instead, the idea is to give voice to various perspectives that assume the responsibility, and indeed, accountability for those who have experienced specific forms of human pain and are still able and willing to articulate their subjectivity, even when it is most threatened. Individual narratives make connections which are totally ignored by the vertical, fact-based discourse of official history. These stories are rarely as single mindedly simplistic as those employed by the State whose meta-narrative chooses particular leaders, religious ideology or a community to cast as the entity solely responsible for everything that went wrong during Partition.

Women's narratives add a new dimension to the hitherto 'layer' of someone else describing their experiences. These narratives assert first steps, after a period of almost sixty years, to claim their subjectivity, to talk about their loss, how their private domesticity was suddenly shattered by the events taking place in public where they exercised little or no influence. These narratives are examples of how the convergence of individual memories constantly finds ways to overcome State strictures in order to remember, recall and sustain the narrative that fosters a link with the past, which the State constantly attempts to make its own. It was felt that an awakened sense of self-awareness in these survivors, through making their pain public would go a long way in arousing similar feelings in the larger community. The women's sharing of private grief would add a human demonstration to the sterile and reductive version of events that is expected to be accepted by the populace as the only 'authentic' version of what occurred during the Partition.

In the novel *What the Body Remembers*, the author Shauna Singh Baldwin makes the account of the breaking of two Sikh women's spirits and families, visible the way displacement, abduction, rapes, and murders systematically marked women's bodies to signify community, nation, and state. Baldwin's account of Sikh women's struggles during Partition effectively reveals the social practices aimed at controlling and containing women's bodies. The rape and abduction of 70,000 to 100,000 women on both sides of the Indo Pakistan border, the public humiliation of women by parading them naked, cutting off their breasts, or tattooing their bodies with nationalist slogans were all violent reminders that women's bodies are contested sites for fixing competing discourses. Feminist scholars argue that "women's bodies are mapped, or defined with a particular embodiment of unproblematic identity, due to their culturally reinforced materiality and their institutionally sanctified appearances" (Bordo 93). Masculinist anxiety about the body politic (in a state or community) being dismembered finds its expression in the violation of women's bodies, such as systematic rape campaigns, sex trafficking and abduction, and the murder of women who have dishonored the community. At the same time, women are fleshy signifier of morals and values, holding up half the sky, and securing the sanctity, spread, and survival of a community with the purity of their bodies.

An interrogation of the Partition shows the mutually constitutive acts of mapping borders and bodies. After the Partition, the passage of the Inter-Dominion Treaty of

December 6, 1947, the Central Recovery Operation, and the Abducted Persons

Recovery

and Restoration Ordinance Act No. LXV of 1949 set off a massive “rescue, recovery, and

rehabilitation. Indo-Pakistan campaign that was enacted in often violent ways. The recovery operation lasted until 1956, with 22,000 Muslims women recovered from India and 8,000 Hindu and Sikh women recovered from Pakistan” (Butalia 123). The lives of women who were homeless or rejected have not been included in these estimates. Nor do these numbers tell the stories such as police participation with abductors to prevent the recovery of women.

Integral to understanding the mapping of bodies is the hypermasculinization of men who participate in this violence against “other” women, and the emasculation of men of “other” communities (Basu 2001). For example, enforced soldiering has claimed the lives of many men in Siachen Glacier, the one part of the Indo-Pakistan border left unmapped by British cartographers due to the incredibly treacherous terrain. In the recent few decades alone, half of soldiers posted to this contentious border have died (Krishna 200), with the other half barely surviving in inhumane conditions. At this border, and others, codes of masculinity govern the “micropolitics of everyday life” (200). In the mundane practices of daily life, the operative discourse is one in which:

The mucky, humbling limitations of the flesh’ become the province of the female; on the other side stands ‘an innocent and dignified ‘he’...to represent the part of the person that wants to stand clear of the flesh , to maintain perspective on it: ‘I’ness wholly free of the chaotic, carnal atmosphere of infancy, uncontaminated humanness, is reserved for man. (Dinnerstein Qtd. in Bordo 5)

This discourse is a system of signification that produces both women's and men's bodies. Whether it is massive displacement, abduction, or rape, or battles that never reach the headlines, India and Pakistan participate in the gendered mapping of men's and women's bodies as dispensable yet symbolic of countries' and communities' body politic. The focus more on women's bodies is deserving because of the disproportionate way in which they are targeted.

What happens when the body is mapped? Elaine Scarry notes in *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* how the reality of the physical pain of violating people "seems to confer its quality of 'incontestable reality' on that power that has brought it into being. It is, of course, precisely because the reality of that power is so highly contestable, the regime so unstable, that torture is being used" (27). For the person in pain, there is not reality besides pain; if it hurts, it must be real, making the pain useful politically. The body is accordingly an appropriate political metaphor "enabling discourses of discipline and containment" (Campbell 79).

The body, then, is necessary to "map" in order to discipline the inhabitants of the territory that is simultaneously being mapped. The link between deciding what happens to bodies and borders becomes even clearer in Judith Butler's argument that "the body's boundary, as well as the border between internal and external, is maintained by turning elements that were part of identity into a defiling otherness" (133). No longer fluid and fragmented and multiply located, the body, sex, and gender become determined, naturalized, and unquestioned. But Butler argues that the body is performative, such that gender is "an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts....[achieved] not [through] a founding act, but rather a regulated process of repetition" (145). Like the practice of fixing territoriality, the marking of bodies is important to stabilize and immobilize

identities that are hailed as “national identities...identities vital to the existence of the state and the justification of its activities” (134). India, for example, used the issue of recovery of women to express the dishonor of the less civil, nonsecular, intolerant Pakistan—a constant reminder of betrayal, of the cutting up the body of India.

However, Indian officials could not explain why they could not recover as many women from Pakistan as Pakistan did from India. In response to the anxiety India experienced about having the proper inhabitants within the proper space of India’s territory, India emphatically placed an emphasis on religion defining home--Hindus and Sikhs were to live in India. As Butalia documents in her narrative study of women during Partition, “...women living with men of the other religion had to be brought back, if necessary by force, to their ‘own’ homes-in other words, the place of their religion” (105). Embodying women with religion was a particularly peculiar move for India which was claiming its status as a new secular sovereign state. Yet, Indian officials and nationalists circulated literature pronouncing the honor of returned women by referring to the Hindu religious text *Ramayana*, in which the Lord Rama’s wife, Sita remained pure despite her abduction by the demon Ravana. Sita later proved her purity by surviving agni-pariksha, trial of walking through fire, putting the burden of proving purity on the returned woman. Hindu nationalists also encouraged war against Pakistan, citing the moment when Hindus went to war to defend Sita’s honor. Secular and Hindu nationalists alike argued that “The very formation of the nation of Pakistan out of the territory of Bharat (or, the body of Bharatmata) became a metaphor for the violation of the body of the pure Hindu woman” (139). However, these nationalists failed to mention that the denial of freedom to women who resisted return to “proper” homes [India for Hindu and Sikh women, Pakistan for Muslim women] was vital to fixing India’s postcolonial state identity as modern, secular, and

rational. The violence of the Partition is so crucial in itself and in the similar violence that has been rehearsed since then because it very clearly linked the appropriation of territory as nation and the appropriation of the body of the women as territory. What is remarkable is that the nationalist project of disciplining sexuality is a connection with rather than rupture from the colonial project of disciplining sexuality.

McClintock, for example, argues that “European men marked the boundaries of the discovered worlds by ritualistically feminiz[ing] borders and boundaries with female statues, wooden female figures on ships, mermaid imagery on maps, and tropes of invading virgin territory” (24). It means postcolonial states are producing gendered politics of cartography because they face the same crisis of origin as did the colonial powers; something becomes real and thus born only after it is named and made visible through maps, texts, and discipline of women’s bodies.

The politics of mapping borders and bodies, then, are evidently connected in the way that the representational practices work, but what is it that sustains and secures these politics in the specific case of India and Pakistan? The answer is the logic of Orientalism, a logic arising the concern of stretching the metaphor of mapping too thin. The project of exploring the mapping of bodies and borders does not end, in other words, with the elaboration of discursive production and the fixing of inside and outside.

In his critical study of India’s border politics, Sankaran Krishna argues that cartography comprises:

Representational practices that in various ways have attempted to inscribe something called ‘India’ and endow that entity with a content, a history, a



meaning, and a trajectory. Under such a definition, cartography becomes nothing less than the social and political production of nationality itself.

(94)

India's fixation with inscribing this entity makes sense given the overwhelming scholarly and policy commitment to territoriality within the world's state system. Ruggie argues that the "central attribute of modernity in international politics has been a peculiar and unique configuration of territorial space...territorially disjoint, mutually exclusive, functionally similar sovereign states" (144). Postcolonial countries accordingly inscribe the already given territory with a "national political authority [that would] exercise sovereignty within the territory" (Prakash 221). However, despite accepting territory as given, natural, and already there, it must be constantly guarded, remade, and secured. The mainstream political science discipline takes for granted that the territory is ontologically prior to the state, rather than being an effect of state (or empire practices. As Campbell points out, "the drive to fix the state's identity and contain challenges to the state's representation cannot finally or absolutely succeed" for instance, Edney 1997 for a critical examination of the intersection of British imperialism and mapmaking of India, and accordingly the politics of cartography (11). The production of an external threat, of dangerous margins, of the other, is precisely what maintains boundaries and thus constitutes the state's existence. The geographical boundaries of India, the condition of its possibility, are determined by the boundaries of India's postcolonial security imaginary. The imaginary is a "social

signification that makes possible, real, and meaningful certain social identities and practices, and is reproduced by the continued performance of these identities and acts” (131). Further, the boundaries of the imaginary “are reached when particular representations of the world seem unintelligible, irrational, meaningless, or ungraspable in and through the symbolic resources offered by the security imaginary” (125). The establishment of a sovereign, autonomous territorial state as against the colonizer first legitimated such an imaginary. Indian political actors have since understood the “physical preservation of the borders [to be] metonymous with the state of the union” (Krishna 200). The Indian state’s persistence in producing external threats and dangerous Others not only stems from the drive to secure its existence but also from a need to deal with its emergence by virtue of violent carving up of boundaries. Accordingly, the prevailing fear that India is less than features consistently in government discourse. Witness, for example, the strict control the Indian government maintains over mapmaking, particularly regarding the boundaries of Jammu and Kashmir. The Indian website on Jammu and Kashmir also expresses a deep regret over the border problems in this region, denying any role whatsoever by the Indian government in the political volatility yet placing the integrity of India in the future of Jammu and Kashmir’s borders.

India’s “cartographic anxiety [has been] inscribed into its very genetic code” (196), enacted in the 1962 border conflict with China, the creation of Bangladesh from East Pakistan in 1971, involvement in Sri Lanka’s civil war and consequential secessionist movement in Tamilnadu, various separatist movements in the Punjab, Assam, Sikkim, and other regions, the recent creation of new Indian states, and the ongoing battle with Pakistan for Kashmir. The Subaltern Studies collective explicitly interrogates, in fact, India's history in terms of a lack:

It is the study of this historic failure of the nation to come to its own, a failure due to the inadequacy of the bourgeoisie as well as of the working class to lead it into a decisive victory over colonialism and a bourgeoisdemocratic revolution of the classic nineteenth-century type...or [of the] 'new democracy' [type]-it is the study of this failure which constitutes the central problematic of the historiography of colonial India. (Guha and Spivak 1988)

Despite the attempts to examine India's cartographic anxiety, the crucial role of mapping bodies has been left out of most security studies work on India and the Indo-Pakistan border. The following chapters of this dissertation examine the mapping of borders and bodies from subalternist perspective in two novels of Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India* and Bhisham Sahni's *Tamas*.



## Chapter Two

### Representation of the Partition in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India*

This chapter investigates how the Pakistani novelist Bapsi Sidhwa represents the Partition of India in her novel *Cracking India* from a subalternist perspective. Sidhwa represents the Partition through a young girl's narration about what she experiences before, during, and after the Partition. She narrates the changes among the people around her and her witnessing of the violence that occurs during the Partition. Through Sidhwa's representation, we perceive the Partition in a way that differs greatly from that represented in nationalist historiography. Sidhwa represents the painful and bloody side of the Partition; in contrast, nationalist historiography mentions little of the suffering of people in the Partition. Sidhwa represents Lenny's everyday experience of the Partition—the increasing conflicts among friends, the change of people, and the violence.

Sidhwa's semi-autobiography, in which she gives the narrator Lenny, an eight-year-old girl, the same background as hers—a Parsee who grew up in Lahore and suffered from polio. "I was a child during the Partition," Sidhwa replied in an interview when she was asked how she was able to re-create the moments of the Partition (Rajan). The story of *Cracking India* is set in Lahore, a city which is now in Pakistan and close to the border between India and Pakistan. This location permits us to see the events that happened right in the center of the Partition—the turbulence and violence that the Partition caused are directly presented to us. Many of the characters in this novel are named after their occupations, such as Masseur or the Government House gardener. The form of naming indicates that the protagonists in the novel are the people—the subalterns—who suffered in the Partition instead of the brilliant elite leaders like Gandhi or Nehru. Furthermore, Lenny's narrative focuses on everyday

experience; she narrates the increasingly uneasy mood of people with the coming of the division, the changing relationship between friends, the outbreak of violence, the abduction of her Hindu ayah, and the impact on the people around her during and after the Partition.

In the novel, Sidhwa represents a marginalized history. It is the silence—what is not represented—in nationalist historiography about the Partition. Against nationalist historiography’s rendering of the Partition as absent and aberrational, Sidhwa portrays the violence of the Partition of 1947 and the people’s struggle for making the nation. Perceiving the Partition in this way, we obtain a new perspective to re-read the history of the Partition. In discussing the communal riots in his essay “In Defense of the Fragment: Writing about Hindu-Muslim Riots in India Today” , Gyanendra Pandey opposes the monolithic grand historical narrative of nationalism and emphasizes the importance of the point of view from the fragment—what does not belong to the mainstream. He proposes this fragmentary point of view in order to resist “the drive for a shallow homogenization” by nationalist historiography and struggle “for other, potentially richer definitions of the ‘nation’ and the future political community” (28-29). He takes for example Manazir Aashiq Harganvi’s poems as the “fragment” to be “a different commentary on the meaning” of the Bhagalpur violence of 1989 (47). He writes:

I present this fragment here not as another piece, or even another kind, of  
‘evidence.’ I propose it, instead, as the articulation of another subject position arising from a certain experience (and understanding) of sectarian

strife, [...] this articulation provides a commentary on the limits of the form

of the historiographical discourse and its search for omniscience. (47)

In conjunction with Pandey's theory, Sidhwa's *Cracking India* is proposed a fragmentary point of view to read the history of the Partition. This alternative reading of the Partition enriches our knowledge of the Partition and enables us to re-think the meaning of the Partition and how the Partition is represented in history. Being an alternative to nationalist historiography, the novel reveals the limit of the representation of the Partition in nationalist historiography. As Pandey states, "There are many different stories to be told about 1947, many different perspectives to be recovered" (44).

In *Cracking India*, Sidhwa employs Lenny—a Parsee girl who turns eight in 1947—as the narrator to depict her experience of the Partition. This point of view can be analyzed in three respects: the narrator as a child, as a Parsee, and as a witness. When asked about a decision to use such a narrator, Sidhwa explains: "As a child, you lack prejudices—the hatred and biases you learn as you grow up" (Rajan). Lenny's innocence is observed in her question when she knows the coming division of India, "India is going to be broken. Can one break a country? And what happens if they break it where our house is?" (Sidhwa 101). Her innocence suggests her immaturity due to her age. What is more, it suggests her distancing from the mental pain and terror while perceiving the violence. In addition to the handling of a young narrator, Sidhwa's manipulation of Lenny as a Parsee is also noticeable. Being a Parsee—which means not a Hindu, not a Muslim, or not a Sikh—"ruptures the Hindu/Muslim binarism" (Hai 389), insisting on an ethnic neutrality and also helps to build an alternative point of view when reading the violence of the Partition.

Witnessing the communal violence, this Parsee narrator remains neutral among her friends from different religions. This enables the reader not to attribute the guilt to any certain group. The narrator as a child and a member of a minority group leads us to a more neutral and less emotional stance to view the violence of the Partition.

Moreover, even though she is not a victim who receives bodily violence directly, Lenny as a witness also tells her traumatic experience that the Partition brings her. In her essay “The Act of Witnessing: Violence, Poisonous Knowledge, and Subjectivity”, Veena Das investigates the impact of witnessing during the Partition. She emphasizes “the importance of finding ways to speak about the experience of witnessing” during the Partition, arguing that “if one’s way of being-with-others was brutally injured, then the past enters the present not necessarily as traumatic memory but as poisonous knowledge” (221). Because of her disclosure of the hiding place of the Hindu ayah, who is called “Ayah” throughout the novel, Lenny’s intimate relationship with Ayah is irrecoverably and brutally injured. Lenny’s sense of guilt after her betraying Ayah is detected in her lines:

For three days I stand in front of the bathroom mirror staring at my  
tongue.

I hold the vile, truth-infected thing between my fingers and try to  
wrench it  
out: but slippery and slick as a fish it slips from my fingers and mocks  
me  
with rigorous scourings from my prickling toothbrush until it is sore  
and  
bleeding. I’m so conscious of its unwelcome presence at all times that  
it



swells uncomfortably in my mouth and gags and chokes me. (196)

Words like vile or unwelcome presence indicate Lenny's regret and self-blame. Her description of her tongue gagging and choking her implies her torment for what she has done. This narrative reveals the fact that, by virtue of witnessing the abduction of Ayah, Lenny transforms her position from one marked by distance from the violence into one in which she herself suffers. And in this process, she has gradually formed her subjectivity. From being an innocent child to the witness of the violence, Lenny has awakened to the impact that the Partition has brought. And from this point of view, we have deeper understanding of the Partition.

*Cracking India* narrates how the Partition has changed Lenny's life and the people around her. Sidhwa represents these in the everyday form. She narrativizes Lenny's everyday experience into the novel. Jill Didur, in her essay "Fragments of Imagination: Re-thinking the Literary in Historiography through Narratives of India's Partition", points out the importance of the everyday experience. She writes:

historiographers [who work on writing the history of Indian Partition] have redirected their attention towards explorations of 'the particular' rather than 'the general' in an effort to disrupt the state's universalizing and hegemonic historical narratives. To this end, historiographers have turned to literary texts and their representations of what has been called 'the everyday.'<sup>(1)</sup>

Focusing on the details, Sidhwa's novel portrays the day-by-day transformation of people, their relationship with each other, and their life with the approach of the Partition.

Through Lenny's eyes, Sidhwa represents the switch from the pre-Independence harmony to the gradual visibility of religious difference. In Chapter 7 of Sidhwa's novel, the violence has not yet outburst; there are only rumors. When Imam Din, the cook in Lenny's family, goes back to his home village to show his concern toward the coming of the Partition and the possible violence that may befall the village, the villager to whom he talks expresses an easy manner about Imam Din's worry. While talking, the villager slowly strokes his thick, up-twirled moustache, saying, "all that [the violence] is in the cities, [...]. It won't affect our lives" (64). After Imam Din's objection to the villager's assumption and his further explaining and describing the violence that has happened in the towns, the other villagers, who are neither Sikh or Muslim, make their protest. A Sikh proclaims, "Brother, [...] our village come from the same racial stock. Muslim or Sikh, we are basically Jats. We are brothers. How can we fight each other?" (64). Another villager speaks, "If needs be, we'll protect our Muslim brothers with our lives!" (65). People, at this period, still maintain their brotherhood toward their neighbors of different religions and believe that the Partition will not affect their relationship. However, the tensions among people gradually surface. In Chapter 11 of Sidhwa's novel, Lenny states, "My perception of people has changed. I still see through to their hearts and minds, but their exteriors superimpose a new set of distracting impression" (103). In Chapter 12, she states, "I've noticed a lot of hushed talk recently" (110). This uneasy mood is felt not only by Lenny but also by others, including Ranna, who is Imam Din's great-grandson in Punjab and a friend of Lenny's. In Chapter 12, when Ranna and Lenny

play in the fair, Ranna senses the chill spread by the presence of strangers, their unexpected faces harsh and cold. A Sikh youth whom Ranna has met a few times, and who has always been kind, pretends not to notice Ranna. Other men, who would normally smile at Ranna, slide their eyes) past. Lenny also grasps the religious difference “I become aware of religious differences. It is sudden. One day everybody is themselves—and the next day they are Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian. People shrink, dwindling into symbols. Ayah is no longer just my all-encompassing Ayah—she is also a token. A Hindu” (101).

Lenny’s perception is embodied in the representation of the Queen’s Garden. The Queen’s Garden is the place where Lenny, Ayah, and Ayah’s admirers meet regularly. In the representation of the park, Lenny unconsciously sees in her surroundings the Sikh women, a Muslim family, and a group of smooth-skinned Brahmins. She used to pay little attention to the differences of communities. With the Partition getting closer and the arousal of community identity, the differences of communities become highlighted and thus visible to Lenny. Ranna’s and Lenny’s examples allow us to notice the representation of the gradual changes among people and their growing consciousness of communities.

The observation of the altered representation of individuals also brings us a close look at the influence generated by the Partition. Lenny observes, “Imam Din and Yousaf, turning into religious zealots, warn Mother they will take Friday afternoons off for the Jumha prayers. On Fridays they set about preparing themselves ostentatiously” (101). The cook’s and servant’s adjustment of the ways they represent themselves, especially in the religious performance, indicates their reaffirmation of their community identity. This self-representation is worth investigating. Didur puts forward her point that they “reconfigure their self-representation when they sense

their interests are in danger of being marginalized—or conversely, elevated to a privileged position—within the shifting relations of power pervading the country” (60). Besides the hostility toward the others from different communities, how people represent themselves serves as a way to reinforce and demonstrate their identities. In the situation that Lahore will be assigned to Pakistan, the Muslim cook and servant take advantage of being a member of a future majority and submit their request to take Friday afternoons off.

While depicting characters undergoing unexpected changes and communal conflicts, Sidhwa also offers a representation of official versions of the Partition. The violence of the Partition represented by the government has been different from the violence that people actually confronted. In this novel, there is little portrayal of the nationalist leaders and the government. People can only hear their voices or commands through the radio. However, they usually find the situation described by the elite leaders or the government to be very different from what people really perceive in life. For example, when Lenny and the others gather and listen to the radio, the Congress and Muslim League announce that people should not “heed mischievous rumors” and the Muslims can just “remain where they are” (117). Lenny’s subsequent narration ironically switches to the news of the attacks on Muslim village. Another example; the narration goes, “The radio announces through the crackling ‘There have been reports of trouble in Gurdaspur. The situation is reported to be under control’ (158). After hearing this, the gardener soon retorts to the official statement, saying “Which means there is uncontrollable butchering going on in Gurdaspur” (158). In addition to the representation by the government, Sidhwa also represents how the British handle the Partition during the last phase of rule—“the Radcliff Commission deals out Indian cities like a pack of cards” (150). In these

examples, Sidhwa ironically discloses how the elite—the nationalists as well as the colonialists—respond to the violence of the Partition.

The representation of Lenny and Ayah and her admirers' meeting also mediates the influence of the coming Partition. They change their meeting place with the increasing disorder in the society. In the final days before the Partition takes place, they have stopped going to the Queen's Garden; instead, they go to the wrestler's restaurant—a switch from a public place to a more private one. The switch of the meeting place suggests their awareness of the growing tensions in public spaces. However, the conflict still happens since it is generated within this group of friends. The members of the group, who are from different religions, have a fierce quarrel with each other. At the table, a Muslim argues with a Sikh, shouting, "They [the Sikhs] have a tradition of violence, [...]. Haven't you seen the portraits of the gurus holding the dripping heads of butchered enemies?" (140). The relationship between each other in the group progressively becomes worse. In Lenny's observation, "Everybody appears to be quarreling these days" (137). After the Partition has taken place, and after the violence has begun to burst, Lenny and Ayah and the admirers stop going to the restaurant. Some of the non-Muslims in the group have already made their plan to leave Pakistan. The Government House gardener says, "When our friends confess they want to kill us, we have to go" (167). His words reveal the fact that the promised brotherhood or friendship can no longer be retained and people start to lay their hands on those whom they used to call brothers. In addition to the growing animosity against each other in Ayah's circle of friends, the case of the previously mentioned villagers in Punjab is also an irony—its Muslim villagers undergo the genocide by their Sikh brothers.

The representation of the violence of the Partition in *Cracking India* also merits attention. In analyzing the representation of the violence of 1947, the focus particularly on the violence represented through the body is the must. The body, according to Merleau-Ponty, a French scholar of phenomenology, carries what we want to express; it is “the visible form of our intentions” (5). Through the body, violence is actualized and thereby brings the message of the perpetrator. The body of the victim becomes the locus where the powers of the perpetrators (in this novel, say, the Hindus, Muslims, or Sikhs) meet—the intention is embodied.

When we read the literary works or see the films about the violence that the re-shaping of communities generates, what we often see is dead bodies or limbs taken into pieces. The intention of killing and dismemberment suggests the violation and disintegration of the subjectivity of both individual and nation. The dead or broken bodies are exposed to the world—what Mark Seltzer calls the “public spectacle” (254)—to display the perpetrator’s power. This spectacle penetrates into the mind of the spectator and produces a shock and warning. “Visual depiction is feared to the extent that it interdicts role distancing, collapses the space between public and private lives” (47), says Allen Feldman in his essay discussing violence and vision. Through the injured and murdered bodies during the Partition, we are directly told about the unspeakable pain and suffering of the victims. Those wounded bodies, though horrible, envision what is unseen (the bloody deeds) and foreseen (the democracy of the independence), serving as the passing from the colonial period to the postcolonial period, and also an initiation of the postcolonial period. The body is endowed with memory, history, and meanings; it is an embodiment of nationalization rather than a mere represented fact. Pandey writes the Partition is “a moment of rupture and genocidal violence, marking the termination of one regime and the

inauguration of the two new ones” (1). Far from our common notion of violence as immoral and something that should be avoided, the violence of the Partition is meaningful. It is legitimized, functioning to create a new social order and foundation of the two nations; as David Apter observes, “history is a virtual chronicle of political violence” (vii). This kind of violence deconstructs the existing structures of the society, and it re-defines and reconstructs them. In such deconstruction, the body often becomes the target, the model of this discourse, the best manifest that is “given symbolic shape in both iconic and discursive contexts” (Aijmer 4-5). With the mutilation, rape, and murder, the effect that the violation of the body causes is physical, psychological, and social-symbolic. Not only for cleansing, it is employed also for the working of social symbolism. The wounded or dismembered body frightens and humiliates the other groups and, what is more important, it demarcates the communities.

The body is indispensable in the representation of the Partition; it is the object which primarily receives the suffering. It is the location from which the narrative of the violence begins. For instance, when Lenny and Himat Ali find the gunny-sack of Masseur’s body on the road, the depiction of the body starts:

The sack slowly topples over and Masseur spills out. [...] He was lying on one side, the upper part of his velvet body bare, a brown and white checked lungi knotted on his hips, and his feet in the sack. I never knew Masseur was so fair inside, creamy, and his arms smooth and distended with muscles

and his forearms lined with pale brown hair. A wide wedge of flesh was neatly hacked to further trim his slender waist, and his spine, in a velvet trough, dipped into his lungi. (185)

Masseur's body is the starting point of the narrative. Even though he is dead, his body continues to tell the story and produce meaning; "they look at him as if he is not a person. He isn't. He has been reduced to a body. A thing" (186). Masseur's body is the embodiment of the violence.

In the Partition, the body is taken as the medium of violence to demonstrate power. In Chapter 16 of Sidhwa's novel, in the demonstration of the Sikh mobs, a child is poked by and hung on a spear, "waved like a flag" (144). A flag is one of the most common symbols that we use to represent a group. Lifted high in the air, the flag demonstrates the power of the group. This frightening scene of a child being turned into a flag expresses something more than meaningless cruelty. Her body is utilized to become the display, through which it manifests the power of the Sikhs and their fervor for the re-ordering of communities. After the child is struck by a spear, Lenny sees another bloody deed. She narrates:

My eyes focus on an emaciated Banya wearing a white Gandhi cap. The man is knocked down. His lips are drawn away from rotting, paan-stained teeth in a scream. The men [the Muslim mobs] move back and in the small clearing I see his legs sticking out of his dhoti right up to the groin—each thin, brown leg tied to a jeep. [...] There is the roar of a hundred throats: 'Allah-o-Akbar!' and beneath it the growl of revving motors. (145)



Bodily mutilation is commonly seen in the violence of the Partition. The performance is usually illustrated to render the shocking effect and thus to reinforce the power imposed on the victims and spectators. After seeing this dreadful event, Lenny returns home and performs the same action on her doll—she pulls the legs of a doll apart. She is frightened by the result, crying, and her brother is confused and infuriated by Lenny's "pointless brutality" (148). Lenny's action is a response to the mutilation of the man; however, rather than a simply psychological effect of being scared, it is a preconception endowed in her mind about the partition of the nation. Being a child, she does not understand the mutilation is the exemplification of the people's furious call for the partition and independence. The mutilation of the body echoes the disintegration of the colonial regime; the man's mutilated body is sacrificed and politicized. The action of dismembering the man foresees the separation of India and Pakistan in the future and the bodies that the violence of the separation will claim.

The train loaded with bodies is the most severe and well-known violence that happened during the Partition. Sidhwa narrativizes this event into her novel. In Chapter 18, Ice-candy-man comes to announce the terrible news to the group of his friends: "A train from Gurdaspur has just come in. [...] Everyone in it is dead. Butchered. They are all Muslim" (159). The victims are killed and left in the train on purpose. Not disposed where they are killed, the bodies of the victims are transported by the train to bring messages. The bodies are silently lying there, displaying the torture they bear due to their identities of different religions and communities. They are murdered and brought to "communicate," conveying the power of another group. They are speaking bodies, telling what has happened and the message they take. The train thus is the message carrier, and the dead bodies visualize the intention of the perpetrators.

In addition to the corpses of the Muslims in the train, the body is presented in parts to communicate. Ice-candy-man continues his report: “[t]here are no young women among the dead! Only two gunny-sacks full of women’s breasts!” (159). The scary content of the two gunny-sacks is not just the result of brutality but something iconic and symbolic. To cleanse the community is to exclude and destroy the members of other groups. Because of the biological function of reproducing or nourishing offspring, sexual organs often serve as the symbol of continuity of life, and hence the aim of violation. Menon and Bhasin restate Sudhir Kakar’s point: “the castration of males and the amputation of [a woman’s] breasts ‘incorporate the [...] wish to wipe the enemy off the face of the earth’” (44). The amputation of a woman’s breasts implicates more symbolism than barbarity, for “[a]mputating her breasts at once desexualizes a woman and negates her as wife and mother” (44). Without her breasts, a woman is no longer a nurturer; her reproductive power is appropriated. The breasts in the gunny-sacks suggest the prevention of the future generations of the victims. Such sexual violence is common in communal violence and women are most frequently the target. “Was your mother raped?” the question can be easily spoken out by a young child like Lenny to ask a boy of refugees as if it is a very usual treatment that a woman would receive during the Partition. “[T]hey’re fallen women,” Lenny’s cousin tells her when talking about the courtyard full of the female refugees. The gunny-sacks of women’s breasts cause Lenny to imagine her mother’s breasts being detached, “soft, pendulous, their beige nipples spreading” (159). The women’s breasts in the gunny-sacks are the expression in the most horrible way to symbolize the obstruction of Muslim offspring and demonstrate the eagerness for the reformation of the communities.

The extreme form of community violence is killing, yet there are other forms of violence in the Partition. While they do not kill, they cause permanent changes or trauma to the victims. The one this dissertation is going to discuss is the violence displayed on the body being circumcised. When the Muslim mobs come to Lenny's house to find out and catch if there is any Hindu or Sikh, they question the gardener Himat Ali, who, before the Partition and his conversion into Muslim, is known as "Hari." They ask him to recite the Koran and expose his circumcised penis to the crowd so as to prove that he is already "a proper Muslim" (192). After the guarantee by the barber who himself circumcises the gardener and the gardener's reciting the Koran with a Hindu intonation, the mobs let the gardener pass. The circumcision, "an engraving of 'being Muslim' upon the body" (Mehta 98), functions to achieve "a unity between the spiritual and the corporeal" (80). It is regarded as the rite of passage in a society; in Françoise Lionnet's words, it "tests the mettle of the individual, [...] endurance of pain, [...] ability to remain impassive and stoic in the face of severe discomfort" (133). Through the circumcision, the gardener's body is "willed and represented so that it enters the domestic group and the community of Islam at the same time" (80). The pain and the endurance of the circumcision is the evidence to make believed that one has not only strong willingness and faith but obedience to the system which circumcises him. In the gardener's case, there is a force behind the ritual, that is, the force of regulating. This regulating force substitutes "a collective body of the male Muslims for the individual body of the gardener" (80). The circumcised penis works as the permit, and the loss of the body is what takes the gardener to enter into the new community. For the gardener, his circumcised body is like a transition, a mark of self-denial of being a Hindu and the acceptance of building new identity for being a Muslim. With the conversion, both his name and his body

have been changed. To him, this change, especially the change of his body, is irretrievable. Lionnet's term, "ritualized violence" (133), is borrowed here to indicate the circumcision as a means to demonstrate the dominance of the Muslims over those who convert into Muslim.

Among Lenny's narrations of the different experience that the people have undergone during the Partition, Ranna's survival story is the most impressive and shocking.

When Lenny sees him for the second time, Ranna is already the survivor of the assault that takes place in his village by the Sikhs. She can hardly recognize Ranna, for he does not look like the one Lenny used to know before the Partition. Lenny narrates at her first sight of Ranna after his survival: "so painfully thin [...] His limbs are black and brittle; the circular protrusion of his windpipe and ribs so skeletal that I can see the passage of air in his throat and lungs" (205-06). Ranna's abnormally skinny body discloses his story of the struggle for life during the killing in his village. Instead of running away, Ranna's kin and other villagers decide to stay and defy the Sikhs. They eventually fail. In the Sikhs' attack, Ranna witnesses the entire bloodbath. He sees his father's head cut off by "a sunlit sweep of curved steel, turning once in the air, eyes wide open" (213). The decapitation of Ranna's brothers and uncles soon follows his father's; then it is Ranna's turn. He receives a blow and then falls onto the pile of bloody bodies. The room in which they hide themselves becomes a "pool of blood" due to the "bodies blocking the entrance" (213). Their bodies seem to be valueless, represented like exhibits. These bodies exhibit as a spectacle of collectiveness. They function to terrify, serving as the scapegoats that work for the basic psychological mechanism of classification which is generating violence. The individuals are turned into the agglomerated bodies so as to maintain

the certainty of the new order after the community reshaping. Their souls are not the aim but their bodies, which are entailed to create a political mechanism.

Ranna's kin and villagers are powerlessly forced to suffer the horrible torture and death. Ranna says that he thinks, in the violence, he sees his sister "run stark naked [...] her long hair disheveled, her boyish body bruised, her lips cut" (213). In contrast, the bodies of the Sikhs are described in vitality at the beginning of the violence: "tall men with streaming hair and thick biceps and thighs, waving full-sized sword and sten-guns" (211). The discrepancy in which the two narratives result suggests the opposite conditions of the two groups; the line of demarcation is dramatically and intensively drawn between them. The price of refusing to move, refusing re-ordering is genocide. Ranna's kin and villagers become the scapegoats under the community reforming. The force of the reconstitution of community necessitates their bodies to warn and to scare. Although surviving, Ranna receives a wound from a blow on his head by the

Sikhs. Like the gardener's circumcised body, Ranna's wound records his history of the Partition and becomes a reminder of the atrocious story. When Lenny notices Ranna's scar, she says: "I see the improbable wound on the back of his shaved head. It is a grisly scar like a brutally gouged and premature bald spot" (206). The wound on the body, at this moment, is symbolic and significant. "To be wounded is to be opened to the world," Dennis Patrick Slattery states, "it is to be pushed off the straight, fixed, and predictable path of certainty and thrown into the ambiguity" (13). One has been placed into a state of unstable situation both physically and psychologically since he is wounded. Slattery talks about his wound after the surgery; he, in an interesting way, explicates that because of the anesthetization, he did not know what happened to his body during the operation; only the wound left to tell "the

entire story in all the violent invasion that I [Slattery] was not part of” (6). The wound—and not Slattery—knows and tells what has been done. The wound carries what happened in the past, and it renders the story in its presence. For Ranna, his wound leaves not only an unforgettable mark on his body but also an unforgettable trauma in his mind. Whenever he touches it, the memory will spill out. The wound does not let him forget how he obtains it. The scar always makes him recall; what the Partition effects upon him is everlasting.

The violence collapses Ranna’s body, leaving the tracks of what the Partition has done to him. Through the description of Ranna’s body, the image of re-integration is notable; Lenny describes: “He is covered with welts; as if his body has been chopped up, and then welded” (206). The body being “welded” symbolically means the re-organization of his subjectivity just like the reconstruction of the community after its deconstruction. From the scar, the storytelling is produced; so is the meaning for Ranna. It gives him the new birth and the new subjectivity after the survival. Lenny describes the wound that looks like the “shape of a four-day-old crescent moon” (206). The symbol of crescent moon used by Sidhwa here, has a double implication: one implying the beginning of Ranna’s new life and the other implying Ranna’s new identity as a Pakistani.

While the Partition designates the rupture of the nation, it also stands for the rupture in the people’s lives. After this fissured moment, subjectivities become new ones; something is lost and meanwhile something is added to it after the Partition. For the people of the two nations, the Partition and its violence lead them to a new level of perceiving the world. The violence, like the chasm on Ranna’s head, opens a deep gash in their lives. However, it also bridges the periods before and after the Partition, being the connecting point between the termination of British domination and the

inception of the independent India and Pakistan. It is the “passing” bringing the people “from one domain to another” (14)—from the state of the colonized to that of the postcolonial. While in that passing, the starting of the independence for the two nations is under way. After surviving the violence, Ranna appears as the storyteller. He comes to Lenny’s house and tells his experience of the Partition. For those who survive after the Partition, they do not begin the kind of storytelling that merely “claim[s] a representational truth” (Fridman 5). The survivors are the memory and suffering bearers more than the witnesses of the disaster. In Lea Wernick Fridman’s words, they survive to claim “a truth of having seen or been present in a historical and existential, rather than in simulated, linguistic reality” (5). By their stories and their memories, these storytellers show us that they have survived—and participate in—through the great moment of rupture.

### **Chapter Three**

#### **Mapping Daily Life Experiences in Bhishma Sahni's *Tamas***

The novel's story is based on the true events of riots of India-Pakistan partition in 1947 to which the author was himself the witness. It also explores the horrible politics of those times and events of a freedom struggle. The story captures the four days of violence through the eyes of different characters in the book and the horrifying experiences of people. The book tells the stories of Hindus, Muslim and Sikhs both good and bad and British. The events after the riots show how British achieved their divide and rule policy successfully. The novel has a sort of episodic structure and some what difficult to find the connection to the last but that does not remove the greatness of this book. The book is depressing, frightening still it is a must read book for anyone who is needs the historical events and facts connected to India-Pakistan partition. A riot that resulted from finding pig carcass on a mosque's steps that eventually leads to the deaths of nearly a quarter million.



People have always moved from one place to others. Normally such movements are voluntary but not always. There are several instances, in our memorable past, of mass migrations to evade perceived prosecutions in the name of racial/ ethnic cleansing, etc. a few of these experiences, especially of the modern times, are well-documented and attracted people with the human(e) sensitiveness belonging to the academia and non-academia too. The partition of India in 1947 is one such major event in the modern history of South Asia. Though this exercise was political giving birth to three nations out of one in due course, its implications are far wider probably encompassing whole gamut of the South Asian life. It sowed seeds of mutual hatred, mistrust, and so on into the hearts and minds of an average Indian Pakistani, and later on Bangladeshi. That way it has been the dividing line in the geography, polity, history, economy, and real lives too. The transition along this line can by no measure termed smooth – upheavals were enormous: more than what is required to make one mad. The present chapter re-reads and explores its effects on the geographic and socio-cultural spaces by mapping the daily life experiences as narrated in Bhishm Sahni's *Tamas* ('darkness') where Sahni covers the landscapes of urban scene.

The partition's problem assumes significance for turning the course of South Asian geography, history, and polity in an unprecedented manner. Visiting and re-visiting this problem new process continues till today; of course the perspectives are different. Some scholars try to locate the factors responsible and try to evaluate the pros and cons and fix the onus on one force on the other(s), others may look at political and economic organisation at regional level, and yet another group tries to pen down

experiences and emotions interwoven with the real happenings which marked the Partition time.

Though Partition got effected through constitutional provisions and it was made a reality in mid-August 1947, the partition-engineering had begun long back when languages were used for estimating the number of persons belonging to different religious groups. Two natural consequences of this effort could be seen – first, the crystallisation of religious identities in the sphere of public life, and second probably, was language got linked with religion and thus forming the basis of politics in the years to follow. It was also the beginning of a new political culture that sustains on linguistic parochialism, religious fundamentalism, and the very fact of religio-linguistic division. The processes which led to the Partition point were failure to be secular after the series of 1920s riots, the Lahore Resolution of Muslim League articulating for a separate Muslim nation based on the famous two-nations theory, the failure of Cripps Mission (1942), lack of enough contention by the Congress to the British recognition of Muslim League representation of the Muslims, and the considerable electoral success of the Muslim League in 1946

The job of drawing the dividing line was assigned to the British cartographer Cyril Radcliffe. The critics understood him as ‘a man without the understanding of the composite culture of India’ (Ravikant and Saint xii). Accomplishment of this task broke a singular geographical entity into three pieces and led to several reorganisations internally as well as externally. This division of geographic space, though based on the socio-cultural divide already existing, further deepened the divide – people were scary of living in others’ territory. And, hence, their hearths and homes for last several

generations were abandoned overnight; of course, with a hitch and a distant desirous hope to return to feel that warmth. Waves of forcefully displaced undertook a journey to unknown destinations to live like destitute, if they could survive mass murders, pains of forceful conversions, and the traumas of rapes! Literatures covered the public and private spaces and have narrated public frenzy and personal fears with superb skills. Consequently a whole genre of partition literature came into being. Some of the literatures had directly received the Partition wounds, some others got affected somewhat indirectly, and yet another created/crafted Partition fiction. While historians mainly re-produce and mainstream versions of the Partition; literary images capture less dominant spaces occurring simultaneously and playing stronger roles in retention/ demolition/ re-creation of landscapes at local levels.

Bhishma Sahni (born 8 August 1915, died 11 July 2003) had been one of the prominent Partition writers. Beside his famous novel *Tamas* ('Darkness'), published first in 1973, Sahni has authored many short stories related to the Partition. This novel bagged Sahitya Academy award. The novel highlights the darkness ('tamas') of communal intolerance and riots, the handiwork of vested political interests, implemented by the innocents' involvement. How people are forced into bloody clashes and are subjected to series of sufferings is narrated vividly in it. Though the main body of the novel contains urban interactions, it also illustrates how the developments taking place in urban centres spread out into the surrounding countryside like jungle-fire and changing the sleepy villages more than happy in their routine monotony. *Tamas* is a narrative of engineering social conflicts, peoples instant reactions and strategies to force the same, the then administration's attitude and response to such crises, exodus of people and their endless search of themselves.

Despite having lived together for centuries Hindus and Muslims do not trust each other. It is easy to find how insecured they feel in other's presence:

Musalmaans have intruded into all localities/ neighbourhoods. This town has developed so haphazardly that Hindus and also Musalmaans live in every neighbourhood. Why to form neighbourhood committees – Musalmaans are informed of every bit of news. After 1926 riots, such two-third neighbourhoods got formed wherein Hindus have built houses, like Naya Muhalla, Rajpura, etc. which are exclusively of Hindus-Sikhs, else in all others Musalmaans are present. (64)

Whether we like it or no, accept it or not, interaction between these two communities rather all communities living in one geographical space becomes a necessity. Consequently, socio-cultural linkages develop and naturally they start living together. "If we go by religious identities, in the perennially inhabited North Indian settlements almost every religious group is found inter-connected. The same is exemplified in the case of tailor Khuda Baksha and his clientele" (Sahani 95). Actually, community-wise professional specialisation is one of the hallmarks of traditional Indian society. In *Tamas'* society too the same is found "most of the cloth-shops are of the Hindus, shoe-shops belong to Musalmaans, motor-lorry works are with Musalmaans, grains' business is in Hindus' hand. Petty jobs are done by Hindus and Musalmaans both" (92). But, still they have the fighting tendency. Mr Richard, the

(district) deputy-commissioner observes, “They fight amongst themselves in the name of religion and in the name of country with us” (47). But even the national cause could not hold them together. The colonial administration apathy played its own role in widening the communal gulf. Mistrust got deeper and hearing gossips like “... whatever has been found in front of the mosque, there is a great mischief of Hindus behind that’ and ‘Pir Sahib does not touch kafirs; (he) hates kafirs. Earlier every one could go to Pir Sahib. If some kafir visited him for treatment he used to ... but now he does not allow any kafir to come nearby” (107). Such talks at common places definitely deteriorate social relations, particularly when tensions are ubiquitous and environment is highly charged. Then it is quite natural to find contestation among involved parties and confront "Vande Mataram! Say, hail to Bharat Mata – Hail to Gandhi-Ji vs./ Pakistan – Long live! Pakistan – Long Live! / Qaiyade Azam – Long Live". (31-32).

In such circumstances, people like Murad Ali (a mischievous character in the novel), who are again pawns of bigger forces, using the poor and needy subaltern like Natthu Chamar implement engineered communal conflicts to yield political mileage. It becomes very difficult for the neutrals to control such situations and the ‘darkness’ (tamas) of communal hatred takes its toll. Simultaneously, it is equally difficult to believe and trust friends of long time; at least the character of Shahnavaj makes one to draw such a conclusion.

Sahni’s present novel, in true sense, is a narrative of riotscape. It sketches a complete anatomy of riots: from inception to maturity and also the after-math. Riots are engineered and

implemented in urban environments characterised by segregation, divides, and isolations – a perfectly fertile ground for reaping the drops of conflicts, hatred, mistrusts, etc. thereafter it spreads out in space and also time engulfing villages. During Partition, urban and rural areas had different experience of rioting.

Poor Natthu did not know what he is doing by killing a pig, after accepting Mural Ali's offer to do so. He was really innocent, about the purpose of the task he accepted and later on accomplished, as reflected himself but is not able to share the fact that he killed a pig and that was done without knowing the objective of such an act – all that is upsetting him and making him restless. Finally, he broke down emotionally, "I killed that pig" (150). Even then could not feel free. How could he? After all he carried the moral burden of setting the town in fire!

Tension slowly mounted on into the town and town's men seem to be too sensitive and alertly observing the change in life-rhythm. Change again is not something with which they are non-acquainted; such 'waves were common during Congress movements, Guru Parva processions, Musalmaans' tajiya processions – these tension waves were quick in scaling up, but then quicker in calming down. The same did not happen this time, riots began with torching the grain-market. Urban landscape got gradually converted into riotscape, dominating personal and public spaces. Every one appeared scared. Hindus assembled for weekly satsang (spiritual discourse) and after routine rituals several rounds of meetings and consultations were held to discuss defence strategies. It appears that Hindus are in minority in this town. A delegation went to meet the deputy-commissioner to urge him for administrative intervention to restore normalcy. But, the administration apparently had no interest in

doing and therefore the delegation is told to form neighbourhood committees and work towards communal harmony. Efforts were made, of course with several internal bickering, without making much effect.

People could sense the ineffectivity of administrative response and social committees' attempts. That is why personal initiatives were taken, e.g. by Lalji Laxminarayan. Life broke down as:

Town was lying half-dead (almost dead) in broad day-light as if ... grain market was still burning as fire brigadewalas had finally stopped fighting the fire .... Seventeen shops were gutted down. Shops were closed ... and several rumours making rounds in public gossips. In Naya Muhalla chowk, a hoarse was found dead. On the road to the adjoining village, an old man's dead-body was found. A shoe-shop and tailor's shop were looted in College road. Another dead body found in a cremation ground at one tip of the town ... lines got drawn between muhallas, it is difficult to go in each other's muhallas ... environment was life-less, everything struck up. ( 125-126).

At one point volunteers working to save the peace realized futility of their labour, "if labourers can fight with each other then it means this poison have affected deeper" ( 144). Future was uncertain except strong likelihood of anything bad rather worse. The lone crusader Gernail Singh, whose elan 'Pakistan meri lash per' ('Pakistan would be on my dead body'), is killed and metaphorically the road (or obstacle) to formation is cleared.

Through the experiences of a Sikh family, Sahni ably demonstrates hardships faced by minorities in rural parts. How the life was shattered in every possible manner

– properties were buried and burnt and captured. All that was dear to hearts had to be left behind. Hard decisions were made without heart's acceptance and in search of safe refuge people embarked upon a journey of uncertainties. In their absence free looting, of whatever was earned and saved in the course of several past years labour, was no wonder. Once uprooted, they luckily ones could best land up in the refugee-camps. "Places of worships were used as warships" (211-222). The acquaintances suddenly turned to unknowns. Villages were burnt down and forced conversions became fun-plays. Consider the example of Iqabal Singh who was humiliated worse than an animal despite the fact that he agreed to conversion (of course under pressure and hesitatingly). He reacts as "Oh, words can not express horrible twitch of heart when the self dies piece by piece, poor Iqabal Singh" (210). No different was the condition of Prakasho, in possession of Allahrakkha, who had to yield to his sexual advances.

*Tamas* portrays three patterns of life: the Europeans', rhythm of urban hustle-bustle, and private domains where physical relations are prominent. To narrate the demands of life and worries Lisa, the deputy-commissioner's wife, and her various problems are the medium. How different it was for a handful Europeans, particularly women to even pass time and to get away from the routine boredom beer and wine are sought. Interaction among them reflects highly bureaucratic hierarchic internal divides not allowing free exchanges. Quite naturally, personal isolation is intensified instead broken down even during socialisation.

Rhythm of urban life is painted through the hustle-bustle of bazaar – the market place, the activities of Congress, and the playing children. The narrative of bazaar activities ably



demonstrates community-wise business specialisation in which the contributions are from every community. Meaning thereby that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to deny the communal cohesiveness at least from the economic functional perspective. It is very clear that Congress by that time was highly fragmented from within and several mutual bickering were deep rooted. Similarly, the party had lost its credentials particularly among Muslims' majority to which it was a Hindu party. Thence it could not gain mass support and relevance of its programmes seems doubtful.

Another considerable space is devoted to subaltern Natthu's personal life, the physical communication between him and his wife. After having done the job of pig killing he felt the need of warmth of female body—thinking sometime of his young wife and sometime to go visit some whore. Finally, he comes to his wife and tries to get some relief in her company. He tries to get involved in sex-play, but not able to do so. His being mindless during sex makes her suspicious. Life was not the same after the era of darkness (tamas) of riots and partition. People were refugees on own land and were desperate to go home – homes which no longer belonged to them for the reason being some Ramzan or Shahnawaz had taken over them. They were anxious, to the extent of madness, to know the whereabouts of family members separated in the process.

## Chapter Four

### Conclusion

This thesis has investigated the representation of the Indian Partition of 1947 in the Subaltern Studies project, Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India* and Bhisma Sahani's novel *Tamas*. Here, I have adopted a standpoint that focuses on the representation of the subaltern to analyze these three sites. Focusing on the subaltern in my analysis, I have drawn on perspectives generated by the Subaltern Studies project, a project which was inaugurated in the early 1980s by a group of Indian historians concerned with the role of the subaltern in the historiography of colonial India. The members of the Subaltern Studies project objected to the representation of the Partition in nationalist historiography, which only celebrated Independence and the contribution of the elite leaders but ignored the violence and the struggle of the subaltern in the Partition. Against such a partial historiography, the aim of the Subaltern Studies project was to revise the history of the Partition in nationalist historiography and to attempt to recover the voice of the subaltern in history. Resonating with the motif of the Subaltern Studies project, Sidhwa's *Cracking India* represents what has been silenced in the history of the Partition in nationalist historiography. Through the narration of the young girl Lenny, *Cracking India* represents the particular experience of individuals rather than a generalized collective experience. *Cracking India* represents directly the violence generated by the Partition. Besides the violence and arson Lenny has witnessed, the story of Ranna—the boy who survived the genocide by the Sikhs in his village—is a narrative which appears to re-tell Ranna's survival story of the Partition. *Cracking India* renders a vivid account of how people receive the violence during the Partition, recognizing the violence as a constitutive part of the process leading to the

independence of the two new nations. In this respect, *Cracking India* diverts the attention from the elite leaders and the celebration of Independence to the subaltern and the violence of the Partition. It offers an alternative reading of the history of the Partition and reveals the inadequacy of nationalist historiography to represent the other side of the Partition.

There is a gap between the historians' history of the Partition and that of the survivors. This is a gap between history and memory. There are two faces of the history of the Partition; they represent the perceptions of different classes a ruling privileged class celebrating independence, and, a refugee class unable to do so. Sidhwa's novel certainly objects to the version of nationalist historiography—the one belonging to the ruling class. Writing about the freedom moment of India, Sidhwa represents the Partition in a way that focuses less on the elite leaders and celebration but more on the people and their struggle. Through a child's eyes and her innocent expression, Sidhwa portrays the horrible side of the Partition that nationalist historiography has tried to conceal. In the novel, Sidhwa reconstructs the history of the Partition and its violence, representing how people receive and survive the violence. She retrieves people's voice and allows them to relate their experience of the Partition. Rather than forgetting the painful memories of the Partition, Sidhwa chooses to represent these events so as to memorialize them. For the survivors in the Partition, the memory and trauma produced by the violence will not be buried together with the dead. In *Cracking India*, Sidhwa adopts a stance of the people—the subaltern—to re-tell the history of the Partition and includes them into her story. In this form, novels by Sidhwa and Sahani serve as an alternative to nationalist historiography. These novels reveal the silence in the history of the nationalist version, enrich the

definitions of the Partition, and recuperate the voice of the subaltern. These novels thereby underline the limit of the representation of the Partition in nationalist historical discourse and destabilize it. This permits us to take *Cracking India* and *Tamas* as another form of historiography—what is termed as little histories yielding in a subalternist perspective.

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