

I. Introduction: The Representation of the Partition Violence in Historiography and Literature

The sectarian violence has been an indigenous phenomenon of India. The country has seen hundreds of communal riots causing an unlimited loss to its lives and property but the Partition Violence was the greatest. Perhaps no communal riot will be able to exceed it. It has split the (British) Indian Empire into two countries: India and Pakistan. This violence was so great in its magnitude that the word "Partition" itself became the metaphor of sectarian violence for the inquisitive academic minds of South Asia. It is better to have a microscopic view of the violence and recall the events as well as the circumstances leading up to Partition before making any comment. The starting point that one might think led to Partition may vary from person to person. However, a point that everybody should agree with is the age-old hostile relation between the Hindus (and Sikhs) and Muslims.

There has been an antagonistic relation between Hindu and Muslims in India from the very beginning. However, to focus on Partition let us start from 1920. After the failure of Hindu-Muslim co-operation in Gandhian *Satyagrahs* (peaceful demands) and *Khilafat* (civil disobedience) Movement, there occurred a series of Hindu-Muslim riots in that year. After that, several attempts were made to create a secular agreement, religious harmony and peace between them. Unfortunately, by 1940, it became evident that those efforts were too feeble to produce any concrete result. In that very year, the Muslim League, who found themselves increasingly marginalized, in their Lahore Resolution, for the first

time, put forward the demand for a separate Muslim State. In fact, it has long been a vision of the elite Muslims of India. According to Talbot, Chaudhari Rahmat Ali, a promising Punjabi law student at Cambridge, had already put forward a similar proposal in a pamphlet *Now or Never* in 1933 ("Introduction." 5). Thus in 1940, it was the only way left with the Leaguers to tempt the Muslims of India. The demand of the Muslim League made the Hindu-Muslim relation further sour. Amidst the mistrust it generated, the religious polarization became clearly visible in the country. According to Ravikant and Tarun k. Saint:

Political groupings like the Unionist Party in Punjab and the Krishak Praja Party in Bengal, which did not rely on religion, lost their political base in the 1940s, setting the stage for polarization between the Muslim League and the Congress, amongst whom negotiations became increasingly acrimonious. (xii)

However, it was only in 1946 the proposal for a separate Pakistani State with two wings was formally put forward. Prior to this, the demand for a separate Muslim State may have been a mere bargaining counter for Jinnah. This also makes clear that no serious attempt was made to solve the crisis since 1940 by the largest Indian political party, the Indian National Congress. Eventually its passivity in 1946 gave way to an inevitable Partition of the country. The party was proud enough to be a national player and the difference among the people at the local level was not a matter of concern for them. The passivity of the Indian National Congress disillusioned the Muslims who had trusted it for a long time and encouraged them to fall under the temptation of Muslim League's vision.

Consequently, Jinnah launched Direct Action Day in mid-August 1946. This led to the greatest communal riot India had ever seen and ultimately resulted in the Partition of the country. It broke out in Calcutta and before anybody could understand anything, it quickly engulfed the whole Bengal, Bihar and northwestern provinces of India. Within a few weeks, the death toll crossed over one hundred thousand. Rumours about the ultimate fate of the minorities in the newly formed states shook the hearts of common people. Rape, arson, kidnapping, plunder and murder became quite ordinary events in Punjab from March 1947. Those events led to large scale migration and evacuation. According to Ashis Nandy, about sixteen million people lost their homes but still they considered themselves lucky that they were not among the one million killed. He remembers the exodus in his “The Invisible Holocaust and the Journey as an Exodus: The Poisoned Village and Stranger City” in this way:

The exodus in north India often took spectacular forms; in Punjab caravans of refugees escaping from the carnage and the plunder sometimes stretched for miles. At places, it turned pathetically low-key, too, as in Bengal and Bihar where tens of thousands of poor peasants and artisans trudged their way towards the newly created borders [. . .]. Observers talk of four- or five-mile columns which, in turn, attracted marauders eager to plunder not only the often-plentifully- small amounts of belongings the refugees could carry but also the young women among them. (307-8)

Thus, the migration too was full of risk. In the process any one, who dared to oppose the saboteurs were killed and the military, escorting them too, were unable to beat off these attacks.

The terror in the migration through train was also awesome. Train was supposed to be an appropriate space, which could take a huge number of fleeing people to their destiny. The presence of people from the same community in large number might have provided a sense of security among the running away people. Therefore, they happily chose to take shelter under this mobile machine. But unfortunately, it was their fault as it was also an appropriate place, for the rioters. This made them able to cause maximum harm to the opposite side in a single attempt. Suddenly the trains became a popular place to assault. Thus, trains loaded with dead bodies began to arrive into stations on the both sides of the border, precipitating further atrocities in the name of revenge and retaliation. The calamity increasingly became intense with each passing day and it looked as if it would never end. The violence eventually took the lives of more than one million people and left about ten million destitute and helpless refugees on the shoulder of the two nascent nations.

Though it is evident that the Partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 was resulted in a massive sectarian violence, the historiographies of Partition in India have hardly addressed them. It seems quite surprising and outwits the readers and researchers. On the question of Partition, the Indian historians have a paradoxical position. They accept the event of 1947, the Independence of India, as the most important point around which the history of twentieth century India revolves but

hardly addresses the massive violence that went with it. This violence actually proved to be a prime factor, which gave the Partition a concrete shape. It succeeded to persuade both the political and non-political communities to accept the Partition as a better option. The people, who were until then against the partition of the country, also took it as the only remedy to end the riot. What had then made the historians remove the violence from the pages of history? Everybody might be curious to know about.

Gyandra Pandey, in his “In Defense of the Fragments: Writing about Hindu Muslim Riots in India,” has sought some reasons behind the removal of the sectarian violence from historiographies. It is, in his words, represented as an “aberration” and “absence” in the historiographies (27). According to him, it is discussed in context and its “contour” as well as “character” are largely assumed (27). It is for granted that the horrible instances and vicious circumstances of communal riots are known or understood by all.

Among the many causes behind the removal of the violence from the historical discourses, the nationalist attitude of historians is most prominent one. All the historiographies of India since 19th century have been labelled as national histories. Being so, they have tended to wipe out the signs of violence though its own success is based on this. It is the most inherent human nature to hide their own fault. They are always in search of others, whom they can blame for the loss they have to bear. Nationalist historians have also represented only those things, which suited to their state’s image. They knowingly omitted the episodes of sectarian violence as they can challenge the reputation of India. India is proud of

being a great democratic country. The people of India irrespective of their castes and creeds are supposed to be able to enjoy equal rights and freedom. In such condition, a different look in the historiography might create a new controversy. The Indian historians being nationalist cannot do that. Therefore, they do not highlight the segments that are the insignificant fragments (socio-economic disputes) of India according to the nationalists. Since touching the controversial issue is regarded irrational and anti-nationalistic works, the nationalist historians think they must remain aloof from it.

The historiography of sectarian violence in India has been, since very long, functioned in political context where the rhetoric of nationalism is of central importance. The history of sectarian violence is overwhelmingly discarded. People have called any such attempt a communal attempt. The historians in their turn have tended to justify themselves that why they are unable to provide space to communal writings in a secular state. For them the subjects related to Hindu or Muslim politics (in this regard only Muslims) are petty things. However, by doing so, Pandey remarks, they have paradoxically marginalized a huge majority in the name of fragments though their plea is they represent the national culture.

Actually, the fragment is too broad in his words:

The 'fragments' of Indian society- the smaller religious and caste communities, tribal sections, industrial workers, activist women's groups all of which might be said to represent 'minority' cultures and politics- have been expected to fall in the line with "mainstream" (Brahmanical Hindu, Consumerist) national culture.

This “mainstream,” which represents in fact a small section of the society, has indeed been flaunted as *the* national culture.

(“Defense” 28)

This mainstream does not include the sections like Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and primitive Indians of unknown religion. They all are regarded as minorities.

The history of Partition, which I have already mentioned as a metaphor of communal strife, is carefully assimilated to the career of British Empire in India and its emergence into a sovereign nation. The nationalist discourses show how the patriotic Indians fought voluntarily for the freedom of the country. The liberation from the British Raj was the time to reap the fruit of their toil. The dawn of Independence in the country, made its people forget that some parts of the same country were still in dark due to Partition violence. In the nationalist discourse, it appears as if the whole country were indulged in celebrating the Independence. They overlooked the agony that Partition brought with it. Pandey makes it clear in his other essay, “The Prose of Otherness” in these words:

...the history of partition is effectively suppressed by the focus on India’s freedom struggle- the unity of India and the many-sided struggle to liberate it: the implication indeed is that the nationalist enterprise continued almost unaffected by Partition and all that accompanied it. The history of Partition (sometimes called the history of ‘communalism’) is presented separately, or at best as a subordinate and apparently (in long run) inconsequential motif in the larger drama of India’s struggle for Independence. (204-5)

For the Indian historians the Independence of the country was more important. Partition for them was just a departure of a few disloyal nationals. According to them, if those people had stayed in the country, they would have definitely contaminated the pulse of harmonious and secular India.

Another reason for the removal of violence from the historiographies is the bias attitudes of the historians towards public violence. The recent historiographies in India (and elsewhere), treat the violence of the state in a class apart. The public violence is connected with fragmentation whereas the violence of the state stands for the wholeness. Unlike the violence of the people, the violence of the state is thought to be legitimate. It is, in nationalists' historiography, an extremely important action needed for the regulation of the system. This action is very carefully organized and controlled by the system's machinery. The terms like war and counter-insurgency operation are used to justify the violence that the state uses against its people. This violence is not to be feared and thus unworthy to get place in the history books. The terror of the state is surprisingly mentioned as a tactics needed for the greater peace. Rather they are more concerned with the disorganized, spontaneous and haphazard violence which do not, as they believe, belong to the dominant groups of the state. Their violence is recognized because they are alien or foreign to the state. The state has authority to suppress such violence and the historian must not encourage them by throwing light on their demands and ideology.

The Indian historiography of the last few centuries has also been a history of transition. In the process of transition and modification, some disputes and

difference are common. The historians have a plea that after all no system can satisfy all. After all, it has to look for the welfare of *many* against *a few*. As a result, *a few* are always left discontented. Sometimes these *a few* also cause violence and the state has to bear the loss. The sectarian violence is also presented as the result of a similar discontentment. It is the price essential for the transition of modern India. Such moments of violence are designated as aberrational and extraordinary acts in history books. These acts are the result of emotional outbursts and collective madness. They are represented as involving a temporary suspension of reason and normal behaviour. The people involved in violence do not actually mean to harm the state for them.

The treatment of violence simply as reflection of an on going process serves to normalize it and reduces its history to a mere recurring jolts by the discontented ones in a more or less generalized account of India's triumphant march towards modernity and progress. The violence is utilized by the discontented to get their demand fulfilled. In this process, *reason* and *progress* have been put into the side of the state and the ruling class; and *violence* belongs to those who are left behind by history, the *Other*. In Partition historiographies, this 'Other' is always Pakistanis or Muslims.

It is a fact that history writing plays an important role in the task of shaping what is to remember and what is to forget. This can be illustrated by a brief reference to British colonialist's writing on 1857, the great military mutiny in India, and Indian nationalist's writings on Partition.

In colonialist's historiographies on 1857, the native Indians are of little importance. It is simply a history of the danger faced by a handful of British folk in India. The brutal way, they took to suppress the revolt became their heroism. The Indian natives and their sufferings are of little importance in their history.

In a parallel way in the nationalist historians' account of Partition, the event is simply a history of crisis for the Indian nation and nationalist leadership. It is not the history of those people, who lived through that time. Those whose relatives were slaughtered, abducted, raped and whose lives changed forever after that sectarian violence are of little importance in Indian historiographies.

Pandey opines that the history can be written from the "two diametrically opposed points of view" i.e. from the perspective of rebels' and of state's ("Prose" 191). But unfortunately the former is scarcely addressed. There is always the danger of adopting the point of view of latter because the dominance of the state archives and the nature of the historians' enterprise both promote this tendency. For example, the colonialism in India has always represented the native Indians as the *primitive other* and the *violence* as the history of these backward and ill-educated people. Here, education strictly means the western education. Thus, all those who are not trained in western education are ill-educated and primitive people. In this way, the violence is never shown associated with the actual or majority of the people in the colonialist historiography though our rationality suggests quite opposite to the claim.

The nationalist account of violence in the subcontinent shares much common ground with the colonialist. Nevertheless, the native is no longer the

Other in their writing although Pandey believes “part of the native may still be so” in their opinion (“Prose” 198). He writes: “By the nationalist account, it is the ‘backward’ sections of the population the lower classes and marginal groups, that still fall prey to primitive passions on occasion” (198). Such people are easily carried away by emotion and flow with the mob. Pandey, in the same essay writes:

Such moments of violence often come to be designated as aberrational, extraordinary. As acts of ‘collective madness,’ they are represented as involving a temporary suspension of reason and normal behaviour. In other words, the designation ‘extraordinary’ itself stands in for explanation, and any further attempt to understand the moment is rendered superfluous. (192)

These evil acts must be forgotten. There is an Indian belief that if you discuss the evils, they tend to visit you like ghost and snakes. Therefore, why should one talk about the people died in Partition and invite their ghosts. Such talks create a lot of pain and stress. Therefore, according to Ashis Nandy:

Many victims call the carnage and the exodus a period of madness. This helps them locate the violence outside normality and disown their memories. Others call the period evil, when all humanity and all ethical concerns are jettisoned. They prefer not to recount those evil times lest they contaminate their life. The spirits of the victims and perpetrators, they fear, will enter the life of living, if clandestine memories are reactivated [. . .]. (308)

Thus, the historians also did not pay attention on these aberrational acts of abnormal people in abnormal circumstances. It is not wise to rub salt on the old wound of Partition victims.

The nationalists have charged several other forces responsible for the violence too. The main among them are mischievous elements and the British mechanism. Ravikant and Tarun have charged the British in *Translating Partition* in these words:

The conjuncture which brought about this terrible cataclysm was constituted, in the first instance, by the passivity of the British Government, and the complete breakdown of law and order. The administrative vacuum which ensued, allowed unscrupulous, greedy and power-hungry elements to rush in to grab the spoils; latent economic tensions relating to property relations thus came to surface. (xii)

In the above lines, the author duo quite smartly proved the government guilty for what is not their fault. It is also noteworthy that a large part of nationalist historiography has been filled by its exercise to establish the reasons for Partition rather than searching the effect of violence. As expected, first to blame for the disaster is the British. However, the colonialist (e.g. Ian Talbot) point out the impotency of the local British system was caused due to the Second World War. According to them, it was not the British passivity but politically inspired hatredness of people a major responsible factor behind the Partition and the violence it generated.

In the nationalist narrative, the lawless, migratory and underground elements are not less responsible for social unrest. Sometimes these *goondas*, *hooligans*, criminal masses, reactionary proprietors and self-seeking politician are central to the whole act of violence. From the standpoint of observer, Gyanendra Pandey would insist, these elements “are not the ordinary residents of the town and village, hard working and god-fearing Hindus and Muslims - in a word not people like us” (“Prose” 200-1). These violators are always recognized as mischievous elements, which infiltrates from outside as an organized group with an evil intention to disrupt the internal brotherhood prevailed in the city. It is their aim to create an atmosphere of uncertainty and mistrust among the original inhabitants and take the monetary advantage from the situation. One can see here how smartly the serious issue of communal riot is diverted to the general activities of burglary and robbery of the mischievous elements by the historians.

By suppressing the sectarian strife in the historiography, they want to say that these events are not really the part of their history or at least not a significant movement in their history. This helps them to cope with the sensitive issue like communal strife. Thus, it also becomes a need to elide the violence from the nationalist discourses.

There are of course, numerous challenges, one has to meet while writing about the sectarian violence. Gyanendra Pandey in his “In Defense of...” has mentioned how the historians are short of reliable sources to make such attempts. There is lack of trustworthy evidences. The most important and reliable source for historiography is state archives, but is found that these sources are intentionally

destroyed or distorted. There is nothing surprising here. It has been the trend of Indian administration since British Raj to hide the faults of the state organism. It is noteworthy that sometimes they even create an encouraging atmosphere for the hooligans where they can do whatever they want without being recognized or punished. In such condition, the historians have to turn to other options than state archives. These resources are hardly free of prejudice.

Other options too, to know the ground reality, hardly seem able to find out the fact. They too, do not show the realistic picture of the sectarian violence. Let us take an example. A general way of getting information about a certain area in India is to call every body of the related area to some central spot. There the local elders and educated provide an authorized account of local happenings. The youths and women are not allowed to talk freely with the investigators. However, by chance, even if they do then too, their narration emerges nothing more than a mere collective statement.

Such statements also do not deal with the real cause of the sectarian violence. Pandey thinks the real cause of battle lies somewhere else, which is always hidden. It might not be where it appears to be, but in the question of immediate interests. He quotes a fragment from the report made by PUDR (People's Union for Democratic Rights) on 1989 Bhagalpur riot in his "In Defense of..." which states, "One of the major factors contributing to the state of affairs is property, especially land, of those who left their homes. Threats continue to be made by those who have now set their eyes on either grabbing or buying land cheap" (40).

There may be numerous similar issues that are still behind the curtain. Nobody has tried to lift it up which actually can expose the ground reality. However, let's move back to our original issue of the removal of the violence in the historiographies and the search of the sources where reliable evidences can be found.

Thus, the Indian nationalist historiographies have tended to generate something like collective amnesia. For them the violence and the agonies of the people are secondary elements in the main drama of India's struggle for Independence from the colonial rule. It is better to forget the cruel acts of Partition. They have represented Partition and all that went with it as an aberration. They all think the establishment of Pakistan was a "mistake" but for that, not the Indians but *Others* were to blame.

The Indian historiography is helpless to depict the Partition as a mere transfer of power. The historians are unable to show Partition a great human tragedy. It is because most of them have never experienced the trauma of Partition directly. They are dwellers of those cities which somehow were fortunate to get the chance to celebrate the Independence. What they have written were most of the time based on second hand and collective narration.

After that, at least a couple of generations of the historians are those people who read the superficial and apologetic histories produced by their predecessors in the schools and colleges. Those accounts washed their brains and created a very clear picture of stereotyped heroes and villains. Thus, the historical

narratives they have reproduced also speak more and more on the behalf of stereotyped and collective memory of Partition.

There is another important reason too, behind the absence of Partition violence from the Indian historiographies. The nationalists are compelled to justify the state's claim of being secular. However, the state's claim of being secular and religious tolerant of the state seems hollow. Rather, there is ever-lurking threat of possible collision between Hindu and Muslim in the Indian society. Even the slightest difference between the two communities can initiate a perennial and severe riot in the country. Thus, it becomes the need not to stir ashes of past which might still have fire inside them. No one thinks it wise to air the fire. Ravikant has written in the "Partition: Strategies of Oblivion Ways of Remembering":

...there exists a liberal consensus whereby issues of communal violence in general, and Partition in particular, are disallowed any serious space not only in the children's histories, but in adult discourses. The device of declaring certain issues as "sensitive," and therefore taboo has meant, for all practical purposes, an undeclared ban on them, making writing or any other practice a difficult exercise. (162)

He supports the statement with an example of the telecast of *Tamas* on Doordarshan, the state-owned television channel of India, in 1998. It was based on the Bhisham Sahni's novel of the same name. The television drama had touched some sensitive issues. It had shown some Hindus indulged in the criminal

acts. The conservative Hindu dominant society of India could not digest those scenes. It received violent responses from the people all over India. Some challenged the validity of the telecast in the Bombay High Court. The Hindu nationalists demonstrated in front of the relay centres of Doordarshan in Bombay, Delhi and Punjab. After certain period the issue became so intense that the government was forced to deploy a twenty-four hour security to Govind Nihalani, the director and Bhisham Sahni the storywriter of the television serial with a ring of pistol-packing security personals. Ravikant remembers: “the telecast of *Tamas* was an explosive moment. The debate around, and the protest against *Tamas* exposed the hollowness of many truth claims- for example, the inherent presence of tolerance and democracy in Hinduism” (163).

The attitude of Hindus of India towards their Muslim brethren is sceptical. The former always sense a conspiracy in the latter's actions. The scepticism towards Muslim is also visible in the pages of history. They are always marginalized in the history. Nobody has ever paid attention to their agony and sufferings during Partition, too. Even today, the community is supposed to be a perfect scapegoat on which all the blames for social or national disturbance can be laid upon. There is always a demand of genuine loyalty from the Muslims towards India not only from the common men but also from the great statesmen. Let me start with a fragment from the speech of Sardar Patel, the first Home Minister of India:

Mere Declaration of loyalty to the Indian Union will not help them at this critical juncture. They must give practical proof of their

declarations... Those who are disloyal will have to go to Pakistan. Those who are still riding on the two horses will have to quit Hindustan [. . .]. Let them prove that they can be trusted and they must understand that they must be loyal to Indian Union and not Pakistan. (qtd. in Ravikant: 166)

Nobody has ever in the history of India, wanted such an unalloyed chastity from the Hindus. Neither has anybody ever dared to admonish them like Patel.

However, Patel was not the only reputed political person to make such comment.

Another great politician and famous for his knowledge as well as the first

President of India Dr. Rajendra Prasad was also not less sceptical about Muslims.

Ravikant has also quoted some parts of his text in the same essay:

... [They] gradually drifted away from the Congress and the Congress movement and with the exception of a stalwarts amongst whom the most prominent was Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad, practically the whole community became indifferent, if not hostile, to what the Congress was doing. Before the Muslim League emerged as a power demanding division of India into Muslim and non-Muslim, there were some who had been working in their own silent way and carrying on propaganda among Muslim intellectuals. But Mahatma Gandhi did not lose faith and continued to work for unity and especially for Hindu-Muslim unity [. . .]. (167)

In this hasty generalization, he quite easily blamed the entire Muslim community guilty for Partition and thus for the violence it accompanied. The statements made by Patel and Prasad reflect the unsympathetic image that a Hindu still has for a Muslim in India. The current Muslim generation in India still fights against the stereotypical image of their community to pass the expectations of state. Ravikant thinks:

Kashmir, Ayodhya, Bhagalpur, Pokharan, Kargil or even a cricket match becomes an occasion for the nationalist surveillance and scrutiny of the ever suspect Muslim loyalty. For ‘proven defaulters’ Pakistan represents a ready-made dustbin to which they can with impunity be consigned. (171)

Thus, as Pandey thinks, the historians are still restricted with the question, “what caused the Partition of India?” (“Prose” 215). They have still not touched the social, political or economic issues. The contaminated regulation of state control and bias individual freedom are still to highlight. The historians have ignored the marginal voices, the memories and dreams of forgotten people. One may think that the forgotten evidences can be sought in the fictional works. This may help to rise some more untouched issues like what does it mean to be the victim of a communal riot, the reality of uprooting, migration and coming to the terms with the meaning of Hindustan and Pakistan which the historical discourse has up to now not been able to represent.

Unlike the historiographies, the Partition literature is somehow able to depict the violence in significant amount. Ravikant and Tarun believe, “The best

of the literature that emerged in the wake of the Partition bears the imprint of the struggle to grapple with pain and suffering on a scale that was unprecedented in South Asia” (xi).

According to him, these fictions have stood the test of time, offered an insight into the nature of individual experience, and break the silence. It is a storehouse of localized truths, which the historical discourses on Partition have tried to undermine due to a number of reasons. The Partition stories are not collective and uniformed like historiographies. Each of them is of different types and exhibits its own idiosyncratic characteristics.

However, there are still plenty of questions hovering over the Partition literature. First, are they free of prejudice? Are they not bias towards the marginalized groups? What are the numbers of the volumes, which in the words of Ravikant and Tarun are best of Partition literature? The possible answers are still far from being satisfactory.

Of course, some works like that of Sa’adat Hasan Manto might be exceptions. His works are able to show the disillusion of the people who were promised a better future in the independent India. He is also able to express the sheer disbelief among the people when they found their country suddenly divided into two. His stories have registered the sense of suddenness and bewilderment of the people who find the national symbols changing overnight along with the change and renaming of the signboards in the cities.

Nevertheless, we must have to accept that the numbers of the standard works like that of Manto are too few. Most of the Partition literatures are bias. Of

course, they are able to cover much ground than historiographies but it is only because literature has a wider range. Otherwise, most of the picture and image created in them are partial and sometimes even too fictitious. They are bound by the limitations of prejudice. The ideal inscriptions on the pages of literary volumes always come at the cost of the image of other side, which unfortunately, in Partition fiction are the Muslims. Khuswant Singh's novel *Train to Pakistan* puts forward a similar fact.

In the novel, Singh depicts the train as a source of massacre. In the novel two trains from Pakistan arrive loaded with the dead bodies of presumed Hindus and Sikhs. But, remarkable is that it does not show a similar act from Indian side. Here, the novelist share a common ground the historians. Like historians, he also shows that the angry reactionary, who want to take revenge are the mischievous elements from outside not the local Mano Majrans. Rather they are depicted passively innocent who could not stop the attempt of massacre. He has shown the Sikhs as a great pacifist in the contrast of Muslim or Pakistani. The protagonist of the novel, Juggut Singh, emerges as an image of Christ who sacrifices his life for the safe passage of a train to Pakistan, which also carry his beloved Nooran. In this way, he has tried to create a Sikh hegemony amidst of barbarous and savage Muslims and Pakistanis. The novel makes clear that the intention of the writer is not to show the trauma of the Partition victims. It does not show any concern about the inevitable fate of destitute and refugees like Nooran.

There are bulks of contemporary similar literature, which can be considered as nationalist literature. A famous poet whose name can be cited in

this category is Ramdhari Singh Dinkar. His poems show extraordinarily optimistic future of the nascent nation. There is hardly any signs of religious or cultural differences in his poems. Same is the case with the Indian journalism and Hindi films. Pandey writes, “our nationalist historiography, journalism, and filmmaking have tended to generate something like collective amnesia. Consciously or otherwise, they have represented Partition and all that went with it as an aberration” (“Defense” 33).

In short, the representation of Partition violence is partial or at least not up to the mark in the Indian historiography. The event struggles to get a proper space in the history books. The Partition and Independence of India are the two sides of the same coin, but unfortunately, the side having the inscription of Independence is only visible on the pages of modern Indian history. The events constituting Partition and Independence are smartly reshuffled. They have only touched those issues that suited to their nation’s secular image. On the name of national unity and integrity, the matters of religious and cultural differences discarded as communalism. It has helped them to suppress the history of Partition by its focus on India’s struggle for freedom. Thus in the trauma of Partition and its victims have been lost somewhere in the way. The problem of dealing with an unwanted past is further complicated by the continuous tension and conflict between Hindus and Muslims on one hand and India and Pakistan on the other. Due to the venerability of the Indian society, the historians could not show in any significant detail the Partition as a great human tragedy. The ever-lurking danger of possible collision has forced them to show the Partition simply a transfer of power from

British to Indian. The attempt to look through the window of contemporary literature is also an absurd act. The modern Indian literature too, like historiography, has spoken more and more on the behalf of the Indian state policy and the dominant religious group. They are alike in creating the stereotyped villains and heroes. The ideology of dominant is always highlighted and minority is always marginalized. Like historiography, the Muslims are treated as others. In fictions and films, too they are thought to be sceptical in the matter of national concerns. They are aliens, not people like common Indian. Their infiltration must be stopped for uncertainty and disturbance in the society. However, none of them speaks on the behalf of victims of Partition. There exists a liberal consensus whereby the issues related to sectarian violence are thoroughly discarded. Both, the history as well as the literature, still need to touch the question like what does it mean to be the victim of partition. What might have happened to the people who were uprooted from their ancestral village and migrated to an unknown land? What do the terms like India and Pakistan mean for them who have lost every thing in the Partition? The vocabulary of history and literature must be enriched with these answers.

II. Indian Railway at the Heart of the Nexus between Modernity and Violence

In a number of Partition fictions, besides the two I have selected for my paper, like Saadat Hasan Manto's "Modesty" and Krishan Chander's "Peshawer Express," the railway has made its presence felt dominantly. It is either the place of main setting or the scene of the violence. The abundant prevalence of railway in the works from Partition evokes some questions. Marian Ida Augair, in her doctorate thesis, *Tracking Modernity: Writing the Rails of Empire*, has tried to answer the same question: "Why did so many Writers from this period depict the space of Train? One reason is historical accuracy" (90).

The railway has been a boost for India for a long time. It has a vast territory with a wide-ranging topography and the Indian railway has connected its parts in a significant way. "From its first railway in 1853, it has grown to become Asia's second largest (after China) and the world's third largest state-owned railway system" (*Microsoft Encarta Encyclopaedia*). Needless to say what importance it has in modern world. For long distances, it is thought to be safest (though not in the context of Partition) and certainly the cheapest of transport that is available to all. To carry food where there is shortage, to stabilise prices by intelligent distribution of the available commodities, and to bring together the people living in distant parts of the country close to each other, all these things have established its authority over the lives of the modern people in India. Without this, life in modern society is almost unimaginable. It becomes the pivot, ensuring the smooth operation of necessary activities. May be for these reasons,

Augair writes, “early European rhetoric predicted that the railway would become the great equalizer” (4).

The image of railway has many other layers of meaning. It is the product of British colonialism. Therefore, its image is essentially linked to the history of empire. For the older generation of India the railway might have been an alien technology belonging to colonizer, their tormenter. However, at the same time it was also a device for anti-colonial struggle. More importantly, with railway the conception of modernity was introduced by the colonialist as a state sponsored project in opposition to tradition and communalism for the first time in the Indian history. Therefore, for younger generations this machine has an ambivalent value. It is a part of the neutral truth that transcends both colonialism and race to represent a hybridized modernity. Consequently, the Indian and Pakistani writers depict the railway as an ambivalent modern national space navigating the geographies fragmented by communal allegiances.

Railway tracks are not only the skeleton that has mapped the Indian territory and supported the corpus of a nascent state but the railway system is a symbol of nation itself. It is a national entity. Its schedules and stoppages are national enterprises. The railway station is not merely a place to detrain or entrain passenger and their luggage. Every railway station is provided with a time-chart for the arrival and departure of train and it has to maintain it in accordance with standard time of the country. Therefore, ‘the railway time’ is ‘the national time’. Its staffs, who take care of the life and property on the train, are representatives of the government. They arrange for passengers, vendors and porters on the station.

Passengers obey the railway rules and regulations for their own convenience. Therefore, the 'railway subjectivity' is the 'national subjectivity'. Once we consider the railway as structuring agent and feel its power on the common people, it becomes clear that it is a metaphor for the invisible power that a nation holds upon its people. Nevertheless, the train is not static. Its nature is to move forward and this movement brings about some changes with it. Augair writes:

The train, as the realization of a state-sponsored development programs (first colonial and then national), became a fitting symbol of the modern nation. The movement of the train forward toward a destination lent itself as a symbol of progress. With a carriage containing people from diverse backgrounds, the train provided an ideal tableau, a nation in miniature, for the authors to explore the meaning of the modern nation. (92)

The railway is, of course, a modern a space on which the progress of the nation depends. Therefore, everybody in India has emphasized on its consolidation. Unfortunately, the progress did not remain same. During Partition, the 'secular' and 'national' image of the railway gave way to 'communal' and 'violent' one.

The close alignment between the image of the train and the rhetoric of secular, modern nationalism enabled the Partition writers to use its setting to criticize the path of the nation. The scenes of violence in the trains of Partition fiction were the representation of national violence, and the failure of railway to remain neutral was the failure of the two nations' claim of being secular. They questioned both the specific decisions by nationalist leaders and the model of the

nation offered within those decisions. Particularly, the writers of the Partition have used the image of the railway to comment upon modernity within the South Asian context, an idea embodied by the train and closely linked to the state.

The state is not always secular and harmonious as it appears to be. There are several communal identities submerged beneath a national identity. At different times, the religious affiliation of the nation manifests itself through different forms. A nation dominated by Hindus is likely to have soft corners for Hindus and takes various decisions by keeping them in mind. Similarly, a Muslim country is likely to fight for the Muslims' rights. The train is a striking place to view this progress in Partition fictions. There were many instances during the period of Partition, when this symbol of nation itself became contaminated with communalism. First, from a usual means of transportation it was changed into a carrier of refugees and the site of communal violence. Second, due to the deterioration in the train, it could not retain its signification as a "modern" national space.

As refugees clamoured for the space on the train, they placed their trust on its sanctity. It was because the railway offered itself as a national space, and transcended religious enmity and violence until Partition. Therefore, the space sectioned by the modernity and secularism was supposed to be a rational utopia. Yet, inside them, the communal bodies awaited tragedy. The trains without adequate protection from the government (frequently containing a limited number of soldiers who themselves may have had communal allegations) were hardly safe. In many of the Partition fictions, there are scenes of violence and fear inside

and around the train. The breakdown of the railway space is represented as a “ghost train” in Khuswant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan* and as a murder scene in Bhisam Sahni’s “The Train has Reached Amritsar.” However, they still represented the railway as a confluence of national and local, and secular and communal space. Augair makes it clear in these words:

Inside the modern space of the ‘death train’ we see the convergence and renegotiation of the meanings of the nation and the local, secular and communal. The railway station is both a local space, in the sense that the station is part of the village geography and frequently a local gathering place, and a national space, in that the station and trains that pass through are part of a state system under the control of the state. (102)

The categorization based on the opposition like nation versus local, and secular versus communal not only existed together but they were also articulated through each other.

As the waves of exodus and evacuation increased across the Indo-Pak border, the appearance of the train also changed. Its image was conceptualized from a neutral vehicle to a fraught and embodied social space. Rather than just acting as a national symbol, the train now turned into a symbol of communally coded vehicle, a caravan of Muslims travelling from India to Pakistan or Sikhs and Hindus travelling into opposite direction. The direction of the train became increasingly important because it signified the religion of the passengers. In this context, the trains became more vulnerable as their victimizers exactly knew that

the train pointing east was not the same to the train pointing west. In this way, the train became a metaphor of genocidal violence.

The Partition writers address the brutality of the communal hatred through the extended metaphor of a train journey. They portray the corrosion of human decency and harmony by fear, suffering and revenge. However, I still insist, the Partition writers depict those events as the result of aberrational actions and also intend that those events could have been averted if their characters had acted differently.

Inevitably, there are limitations of literature. It cannot uncover every kind of emotions, beliefs and experiences. In order to explore greater impact of Partition on human, it seems necessary to engage with some personal accounts provided by autobiographies and interviews. The revisionist historiographer, Ian Talbot, makes one of such attempts in his “Train to Pakistan: Massacre, Migrations and *Mohajirs*.” His works show up to what level the violence was prevailed in and around the trains during Partition. According to him, the railway track between Sialkot and Amritsar was strewn with dead bodies of Sikhs during the pick of the Partition violence. The rioters looted the train to such an extent that the Governor, Sir Chandulal Trivedi, warned in a conference on 17th September that “he would not be sorry if the army shot ... those (police) who exist ... including their officers” (159). However, the intensity of the violence in and around the trains can not be described more vividly than in the autobiographical narration of Dr. Zahid Amjad quoted by Talbot in the same article I have mentioned above. Dr. Amjad lost his mother and six months old sister in an attack

on their way to Pakistan. However, the description of what he had seen from his train cannot be more fearsome:

If you looked out of the window, you could see bodies lying in the distance. Human skulls without flesh were an obvious proof that there had been a brutal massacre. At many places, you could see corpses lying on one another and no one seemed to have any concern. And on some roads and walls you could see the signs of *Holi* played with human blood. At one place, we saw the dead bodies of innocent children, in such condition that even the most stone-hearted person would stop breathing for a moment if he saw them. By looking at a newly born baby, I could immediately see that his body was torn apart by pulling the legs. These were the scenes that made your heart bleed, and everybody around loudly repented their sins and recited verses to ask for God's forgiveness.

(185)

The refugee-trains like that of Dr. Amjad were attacked on the both sides of the border in a pre-planned operation. The state troops, who had been assigned to protect it, stood by and did nothing. Sometime they themselves wanted the rioters to attack the train due to religious affinity and sometimes their number was too few to stop the assaults on the trains. The refugees were defenceless, as all their weapons had been confiscated at the beginning of the journey. Thus, the attackers could easily break into the barricaded compartment to kill the men, women and

children indiscriminately of ill fated trains and proved it a real metaphor of genocidal violence.

To sum up, Partition literature represents the intersection between a secular state and an immediate communal space through railway. Yet, the relation it describes between the national and local entities neither substitutes one for the other: nor does it set them in complete opposition. The narratives of communal violence are linked to notion of a secular and modernizing state that offer a sanctuary that the local cannot provide. The neutral power of colonial state, posits that neutrality in the guise of modernity. The modernity that appears mostly in the form of a train in Partition fiction, acts as a mediating force through which the nation enacts its power within the forum of the local and also gets influenced by the local events and setting. Thus, the representations of communal violence in the Partition literature not only reflect the opposition between modernity and communality but also open up a space to question the validity of this opposition. Thus, the nexus represented by the railway, between local and national, tradition and modernity, and communalism and secularism is well depicted in the Partition fictions.

III. Politics of Train Massacre in “The Train has Reached Amritsar”

Story in Brief

“The Train has Reached Amritsar” by Bhisham Sahni is edited and translated into English by Alok Bhalla. The story begins with a train journey from Pakistan to India. The compartment in which, the narrator is travelling, is almost vacant at the start of the journey. Therefore, a kind of familiarity emerges among the passengers who have been there since beginning. Among the characters, excluding the narrator, are three Pathan traders, a Sardarji, a Hindu Babu and an old woman with her head and shoulder covered. Meanwhile the ethnicity of the narrator is kept unknown to us. This seems intentional as it serves the author to make his point of view objective.

The narrator is going to Delhi to watch the celebration of the Independence Day of India. With the reference of the Independence of India, it also becomes clear that the decision to create Pakistan has just been announced. Throwing light on the co-incident, he says, “Some people rejoiced at the creation of Pakistan, others rejoiced at India’s Independence” (148). However, there was also another aspect related to Pakistan’s creation and India’s Independence. The co-incidents precipitated a disastrous and perennial communal violence. People forgot moral righteousness and wrecked on each other in their wrath and flow of vengeance. The ordinary Hindus were ready to quench their thirst with the blood of Muslims and the Muslims did the same to Hindus in reply. The story touches a similar subject.

On its normal course of journey, the train passes through the areas, which are badly affected by the communal violence due to the Partition. The migrating people in the train are deadly conscious about the new stations and the passengers trying to board the train. They shout at the new passengers and tell that there isn't any place inside. However, the compartments become more and more crowded with each passing station. In the meantime, a man comes with his wife and a juvenile daughter. He also has some furniture and trunk with him. Like every new passenger, the people inside, also resist him. But his situation makes it clear that he is really in great trouble and thus, their voices of resistance is subdued. However, the Pathans do not want them to get inside that compartment. They stop him to so. When the man ignores them, one of the Pathans kicks him but unfortunately hits his wife. Eventually, due to the resistance of the Pathans, the family cannot pull their luggage on the train in time. Therefore, he throws his luggage out of the door and jumps out of the train with his wife and daughter.

The mistreatment of Pathans makes the Hindu Babu very angry though he does not express his anger at this time. He waits for the right time to take revenge. He sees the flames of fire in the sky and is confirmed that the area is trapped in an intense riot. When the train reaches Amritsar, he starts scolding the Pathans. He goes out and brings an iron rod from somewhere to beat the Pathans but fortunately, by the time he comes back to his compartment, the Pathans sneak out from the compartment. The Babu cannot control his anger and calls his fellow passengers impotent for letting the Pathans escape from there. He becomes restless and cannot sleep. At dawn, he hears a bang on the door of the

compartment. When he goes out, he sees an old Muslim couple pleading to open the door. They are also trying to board the train. Their activities make it clear that they are also running away to escape from the terror of riot. Mad in anger, the Babu hits the husband with the iron rod he has in his hand. The man immediately collapses there and falls down like a cut tree. The narrator is awake and sees the whole event with his eyes. However, he does not disclose this fact. Quite ironically, when the Sardarji gets up in the morning, he appreciates the Babu of being brave for threatening the Pathans though the latter himself seems suffering from the guilt conscience.

The Narrator's Compartment: a Nation in Miniature

The story is set in a railway compartment. The train is going to Delhi from Pakistan. The narrator is a passive character in the story. He has only narrated the events that have occurred in his compartment and what he sees from inside it. The compartment, in which the narrator is travelling, is remarkable for its passengers and setting.

It has a Sikh Sardarji, who has fought in a war at Burmese front, three Muslim Pathan traders, a Hindu Babu from Pesahawer, a woman with her head and shoulder covered and the narrator of an unknown ethnicity. It is a nation in miniature, which accommodates the heterogeneous population from the diverse geographic location as well as from different community of the society, most importantly the three main communities (the Hindus, the Muslims and the Sikhs) affected by the Partition. This is remarkable because the setting has been kept in line with the nationalist historical discourses and literatures. The modern space of

railway carriage is tactfully improvised into a natural space. This space is constituted by the ideal of modernity, democracy, equality and secularism. In national discourses, the Indian society is always the place of integrated camaraderie and mutual co-operation. This story too, represents a secular society, where the ethnicity of everybody is equally adored.

When the story begins, it provides an image of stable and integrated social harmony. Therefore, although we find that the decision to create Pakistan has just been announced the Muslim passengers are enjoying the company of Hindu and Sikh passengers. The initial setting and dialogue highlight the normal image of an Indian society, which every Indian likes to see. It is always a peaceful and harmonious place. When the Muslim Pathans offer meat to the Hindu Babu, they show their acquaintance with the Hindu prohibition related to food. Therefore, the Pathan who offers the meat to the Hindu, assures him, “O zalim, if don’t want it from our hands, pick it up yourself. I swear it’s only goat’s meat and nothing else” (148). His statement is the sign of how the common people of India and Pakistan are willing to co-operate. He adds some typical native slangs to make it sound funnier when he says, “O son of swine, no one will know. We won’t tell your wife. If you share meat with us, we will drink dal with you” (148). Everybody laughs at his comment. Even the Babu against whom the comment is directed, smiles at him and says something in Pushtu.

The statements of jovial Pathans and the responses that he receives in the compartment from their co-passengers are the signs of how pure are the common people at their heart. They are willing to live together in peace without any

complain even at the time of crisis. The author has wished to show that the ordinary people are unaware of the change that the Partition has brought with it. They can hardly imagine that there will be any change in their peaceful and harmonious lives in the coming days.

Even if they have heard that, the British India has been divided into two countries, they ask innocent questions. The people are busy in speculating the shape of future. They are hardly able to make out which side of the Lahore and Gurudaspur will find themselves in. No one exactly knows what steps to take. Some people after hearing the rumours about the inevitable fate of minority in the wrong side of the border, has decided to run away. While those, who don't suffer laugh on those who have chose to run away. Though they have heard about the Partition, they are ignorant about major players responsible for the event. The narrator says:

The Sardarji, sitting opposite to me, asked me repeatedly whether I thought Jinnah Sahib would continue to live in Bombay or move to Pakistan. My answer was always the same, "Why should he leave Bombay? What would be the point? He can always go to Pakistan and come back". (147)

With these innocent questions, the author has emphasized that for the common people Partition was not so important. They were not involved in the game played to divide the country. He wishes to highlight the people's ignorance about the change that Partition had in store.

The Objectivity of the Author

The author has tried to remain objective in the story. Through the amities that the Pathans show, he has also tried to depict the common Muslims' attitude towards the Hindus. A retake on the Pathan's remark makes it clear that the Muslims are critical to the social evils like untouchability system that prevails among Hindus. It seems that the Pathans want to make the Babu aware about the backwardness and narrow thinking of Hindus. They also remind him that they won't mind, however, to share dal with him. Similarly, a Pathan says, "Here Babu, eat. You will become strong like us" (148). The statement depicts the superiority complex of the Muslims and makes categorization between *superior us* and *inferior you*. It means the Muslims are more superior in terms of culture and physical structure. They are higher race. Their scorn towards Hindus becomes visible when one of them does not even hesitate to call the Babu, a "son of swine" (148). Of course, the slang is common in day to day Indian life, but we must understand that they are neither close friends nor enemies, the circumstances in which we the exchange of these abusive words in the Indian literature. They meet in the railway compartment for the first time and in the duration of this short journey, one is supposed to maintain formality, not to exchange in vulgar language.

However, we see the Babu does not mind their comments and smiles at them instead. His attitude and responses show that he is friendly and sombre. He does not kind in any one laughs at his frail look and his restriction related to food. The Pathan' comments seemed true to him. Therefore, he does not feel it

necessary to argue with them and smiles in return. Nevertheless, having said that, we must have to accept that Bhism Sahni has utilized these statements as good devices to show how discourteous are the Muslims on one hand and how generous, cultured and broad minded are the Hindus on the other.

Surprisingly, it seems that the author is prepared that his reader will understand the paradox behind the Pathans' statements. Therefore, he has made another attempt to remain objective. He counter balances the Muslim prejudice towards Hindus with the Sikh prejudice (which includes Hindus) towards Muslims. When the Babu does not take meat from Pathans, the Sardarji says, "The Babu doesn't want to accept meat from your hand, because you have just woken up and have begun eating. There is no other reason" (148). Remarkable is the fact that he repeats the same statement twice. Although no one except he himself laughs at his comment, it justifies that a Hindu is probably right in not accepting food from the hand of a Muslim. The Muslims according to him are not civilized and do not know when or how to eat whereas the Hindus prefer cleanliness and purity of food. The statement of Sardarji, similar to Pathan's statements, also depicts his racial superiority and pride. Similarly, the mockery of the Pathans' dirty appearance is a reply to the mockery of Babu's frail look.

The above evidences in the story are the signs of communal fragmentation that is visible in every society of the Indian Sub-continent. There is a great chasm between Hindus and Muslims in practical life. Both are critical and suspicious of each other's behaviours and manners. Sahni also becomes able to show this ungracious reality in the story.

When the lighter moments those appear on the surface are changed into seriousness the story enters into the next stage. The normal and stable setting of the compartment is disturbed when the train stops at a station before Wazirabad.

The narrator recollects the twist in the story:

A man had got down from the next compartment to get some water. He had just begun to fill his pot, when he suddenly turned around with a start and ran back. Some water spilled out of his pot. But the manner in which he had been startled was revealing in itself. Other who were standing around the tap also ran back towards their compartments. (149)

It creates a general panic among the passengers. Other passengers who have climbed down from the train also run back to their compartments. There follow an eerie silence. Although no one knows what has happened, the activities around are enough according to the narrator to suggest that there has been a communal riot nearby. The panicky activities of the passengers create a vivid picture of riot.

With this event, it becomes clear that the story is set in the background of the communal violence that broke out during the Partition of India and Pakistan. During partition, the trains were the favourite place to attack. It enabled the rioters to cause maximum damage to the other side. The author brings the terror in travelling through train in mid-40s in the Subcontinent.

It also makes clear that those who have boarded the train for India are most probably Hindus and Sikhs. For them any communal disturbance inside the territory of Pakistan is a matter of life and death. Thus, all the passengers run back

to their compartments and take seats to make their life secure. The possibility of attack on the train has enveloped everybody in terror. Marian Ida Aguair calls this ubiquity of violence “an invisible and all-powerful aura” (121).

The passengers who want to catch the train after this event have to face extreme difficulties to make their way inside the train as the inner world constantly keeps shouting that there isn't any place. Here too, the author becomes successful to expose the selfish nature of humans who tend to think about themselves in the time of crisis. The narrator has described it in an interesting manner:

As long as a passenger outside tries to force his way in, people inside oppose him. But the moment he gets in, all opposition subsides and becomes a part of the inner world of the compartment, and at the next station begins to shout and scream at other passengers trying to get in [. . .]. (149)

However, the commotion at the door increases with each passing station. Among them, there comes a man with his wife and an adolescent daughter. He also somehow becomes able to manage his way inside the compartment amidst the passengers' continuous screaming and resistance. He also wins the favour of the inner world when he says he not only has a ticket but “was lucky to reach the station” (150). Everyone in the compartment understands the situation that the rioters must have tried to harm him and his family and sympathises with him and “Suddenly all the passengers fell silent” (150).

The reason is very clear. The passengers travelling in the compartment are mostly Hindus and Sikhs. There is hardly any one unaware that a passenger trying to board a train to India from the newly created boundary of Pakistan with his family and furniture must be a Hindu or a Sikh. He is running away to save himself and his family's lives which is only possible if he reaches inside the Hindu and Sikh dominated territory of India.

On the contrary, the Pathans, being Muslim are not aware of a Hindu's suffering inside the territory of Pakistan. They do not see anything wrong in compelling a Hindu family to get down of a overcrowded compartment. The narrator has mentioned their activities in detail. He says:

But the Pathan sitting on the lower berth yelled, "get out of here! Can't you see there is no room?" Blind with rage, he got up and tried to kick the man. But unfortunately the kick landed on his wife's stomach. She screamed with pain and collapsed on the floor.

(150)

The Pathan's action does not distract the man. He does not have time to argue and keep himself busy in pulling his luggage on the train. The person whose wife is kicked by another man and crying with pain on the floor while her husband is busy in pulling the luggage on the compartment is enough to clear the crisis the family is undergoing. On the other hand, the Pathan is still not content. He cannot control his anger by the way the man is ignoring him. The narrator says:

Seeing that, the Pathan sitting on the Upper berth lost his patience, and yelled, "Throw him out. Who does he think he is?" the Pathan

sitting on the lower berth, got up and threw the man's trunk out of the door of the compartment. It fell at the feet of a coolie in a red uniform. (150)

No one has courage to oppose the Pathans. All the passengers being inside the territory of Pakistan know that any disagreement with them might invite some more trouble. The resistance of Pathans does not allow that man to pull his entire luggage on the compartment before the train starts. Therefore, he throws out his rest of the luggage and jumps out of the train with his wife and daughter.

After the train has left the station, an ominous uneasy silence descends on the compartment. No one has dared to ask anything to Pathans. It is the effect of the geographical location according to Ida Aguair and he is right. Human beings are thrown into a certain time and space and attuned to carry out a certain fate. They cannot change it. The situation outside has affected the inner world of the compartment as well. It creates a bipolar situation in the compartment. The Sardarji gets up from his seat and sits next to the narrator. The Pathan on the lower berth climbs up and joins his two companions on the upper berth. Each passenger of the compartment looks nervous and suspicious about his neighbour. The communal harmony, which has been the characteristic of the compartment at the beginning of the story, is changed into communal fragmentation. This is actually the reality about the Indian society. There is always the threat of racial collision lurking beneath the surface. It tends to lift its head whenever it gets a chance. The narrator guesses the situation in the other compartment must be same. Ida Aguair highlights the importance of geographical setting:

With a new awareness of permeability of public space come an increasing sense of vulnerability. The dynamic inside the car begins to shift in relation to what is happening outside the train the power balance of outside through the train travel-at this point predominantly Muslim tow- is mirrored inside what originally appeared as neutral space. (121)

As the train passes, the passengers also see flames leaping out of the clouds of smoke, which rise above the city. The Babu sitting besides the narrator makes remark, “A riot. That is why people were scared at the platform. There has been a clash somewhere” (151). Ida Augair notes, “Unspoken but understood is that the fires most likely represent Sikh and Hindu properties burning, and the Pathans inside would be relatively safe in Muslim area” (122).

The atmosphere becomes tenser as the train passes one station after another station. The passengers turn off the lights in their compartments so that nobody can target them. No one is able to sleep when the night falls. Instead, they keep close look over each other. The name of each station is creating special effect on the passengers. The narrator mentions the name of such a station. When the train is travelling under the threat of possible attack, it passes a new station. Somebody tells that the station is Wazirabad. The narrator, “The name produced a strange reaction amongst the passengers. The Pathans became less tense, the silence amongst Hindus and Sikhs became more ominous” (152).

Emphasizing the geographical location, the narrator wants to tell that the Muslims do not need to fear in the Muslim Majority area. This brings the allusion

of those events in which the trains used to be stopped by the rioters in the midway. They used to separate the passengers into two groups. The groups which used to contain the people of other community were mercilessly killed in many places. While at the same time those who belonged to the same group were given a warm welcome. One similar example is quoted by Ida Aguair in his “Literature of Partition: The ‘Death Train’ ...” from “Modesty” by Saadat Hasan Manto:

Rioters brought the running train to a halt. People belonging to the other community were pulled out and slaughtered with swords and bullets.

The rest of the passengers were treated to halwa, fruits and milk.

The chief assassin made a farewell speech before the train pulled out of the station: ‘Ladies and gentlemen, my apologies. News of this train’s arrival was delayed. That is why we have not been able to entertain you lavishly – the way we wanted to. (88)

The nightmarish illustration in the ironic story, “Modesty” of Manto was a typical model in the railway journey. Although Sahni is known for the stark realism like Manto, the situation of the train in this story is also under similar threat. The narrator says when the train reaches the Wazirabad station a mushquee tells the passengers that there has been a communal riot. The platform is deserted and there is not even a bird in sight.

The author has hit two birds with a single stone by depicting a noble Muslim and his humanitarian activity at Wazirabad station. By showing a generous man giving water to destitute people, he shows that he does not want to

say that everybody in Pakistan are bad. It is out one's reason why does a person need to serve water on a station affected by intense communal riot and who will trust that water that a Muslim is serving to Hindus is not poisonous. On the other hand, perception of the passengers and the report that they get are enough to erect their hair with fear. They all know that being in the Muslim majority area they are the prospective victims themselves.

We see the train travelling under the threat of probable attack finally arrives at Amritsar, which is possibly a safer place for Hindus and Sikhs. With the transfer of train on the other side of the boundary, the author has also shown the transfer of power. In Pakistan, which was a Muslim dominated area, the Pathans were all powerful and feared by all. Now, as the train enters inside the Indian territory, everything slips out of their hand and they find themselves impotent. The reason is, they are ruthlessly marginalized with shift in location. On the contrary, the Babu who has been quite timid until then begins metamorphosis. Ida Augair observes his transformation in this way:

The greatest transformation within the railway carriage is embodied by the man from Peshawar. Sahni portrays him first a extremely fearful: he lies down on the floor, "his face deathly pale as before" as the train passes by rioting in Wazirabad. As the train passes over the border, he begins his metamorphosis. He exclaims in excitement when they pass Hanspura, a town close to the border; as they approach Amritsar, he begins to ridicule the Pathan he had previously feared. They in turn, quiet down. 122

The shift in the geographical location transforms a fearful and defensive person into a daredevil and arrogant person. After the train has reached Amritsar, the Babu does not get content by abusing Pathans sneak out by the time he reaches in the compartment and it avoids the possibility of collision.

The absence of Pathans does not however, cool the temper of the Babu. He becomes possessed and restless. The feeling of vengeance does not let him sleep at night and in the climatic scene, he murders an innocent old Muslim who has been trying to catch the train with his wife.

Thus, we find the author has attempted to remain objective in the story. Unlike most of the Partition fictions in India, he has not tried to glorify the Indians at the cost of savage image of Pakistanis. He shows both sides indulged in violence and victimizing the innocents whenever they get any opportunity. We see the Sikh Sardarji making mockery of Pathans when the latter makes fun of the Hindu Babu. Similarly, the violence done by the Pathans on a Hindu family is counterbalanced by the Babu's fatal blow to an old Muslim man.

Absence of Violence

The violence has been treated in the Indian literature as in the historiography of modern India as absence and aberration. Absence in the sense that the violence is not represented in detail. We don't find what are the effects of violence done on the victims. Its contour and character are simply assumed. Aberrational in the sense that the actors of carnage are not depicted in their normal frame of minds. Their activities are represented in distorted form as exceptional moments.

In this story too, the source of violence is hidden. Therefore, the readers get bewildered when the air of communal disturbance stirs the sociable atmosphere of the narrator's compartment. They do not find what the reason behind the panic among the passengers is. Rather than telling us about the type of violence confirming sectarian strife, the narrator highlights the contour of riot:

Something was certainly wrong. But none of us was able to find out what had happened. Since I had seen many riots, I could sense the slight change in the atmosphere. The sound of doors shutting, people standing on the roof-tops and an eerie silence – they were all the signs of riot. (149)

Here the readers are supposed to understand the situation themselves. It is taken for granted that they do not need any assistance or reference from the writer to understand the nature of communal violence.

Similarly, when the train reaches Wazirabad station, we find that there is an ominous silence among the passengers. There is not even the bird in sight. A mushqee reports that there has been a communal riot in that area. After that, the ghost of fear keeps on hovering over the train. The narrator writes, "As soon as the train began to move, people pulled their windows being shut in the compartments far away" (152). These activities of the passengers show that at anytime a bullet or a spear can enter through their windows and take their lives in seconds.

The Babu, who seems knowledgeable and gentle and is under the microscopic observation of the narrator from now onwards, gets so terrified that

he jumps from his seat and lays down flat on the floor. His face looks tense with fear. His lips are dry and he tells something in a whisper. After sometime, he gets up, dusts his clothes and sits again on his allotted seat. The narrator wanders, “I didn’t know why he had decided to lie on the floor. May be, when he heard the sound of the shutters being pulled down, he thought that people outside were either throwing stones or firing at the train” (152-153). The author has not cited any reference of a similar kind of attack on the train. However, the readers of the contemporary time can easily remember the times when the train filled with a specific community forcibly stopped at the wrong side of the border and killed in a uniformed massacre.

A similar incidence appears in the story when a frantic man comes and struggles to find place in the compartment. The author does not feel it necessary to describe what has happened to him. Here too, unsaid but understood is the fact that he is Hindu. However, the narrator does not mention that. Neither has he showed any possibility that mistreat from the side of Pathans might be due to his ethnicity. Again, when the man jumps out of the train with his wife and daughter, the fate of the victims is not mentioned in the story. The readers can only guess what unfortunate fate might have been waiting for the man, his wife and daughter. Perhaps the Muslim rioters of Pakistan will kill the man and make daughter and wife the victims of their lust before giving them a painful death. The author does not feel to predict their future. The only hint that something wrong will happen to them is provided to the readers, when we see the woman of an unknown ethnicity shouts at Pathans. The narrator recollectes her words, ““you are cruel people, that

was an awful thing to have done,' the woman protested loudly. 'There is no pity left in your hearts. He had a young daughter. You are cruel, pitiless people, you have pushed them out'" (151). This is the only statement that helps the readers to foresee their fate in the wasteland otherwise, rape, murder and plunder, which have the prime characteristics of riot have been discarded thoroughly in the story.

Another victim of the communal violence in the story is the old Muslim man. He has been trying to board the train with his wife. When the Babu hears the knock on the door, he hits the old man with the iron rod he has previously arranged to beat the Pathans. The innocent victim immediately falls on the ground unknown of the offence he has done to his victimizer. The narrator tells that with that his wife "stopped running, as if both of them had reached their journey's end at the same time" (157). Again, he forgets what will be end of their journey and readers are left bewildered once more. Their fate is also unknown to us.

Besides mentioning the violence in context, the author has also depicted the act of violence as an aberrational act. First, the offence of Pathan is the result of the irritation that is generated due to over crowded atmosphere in the compartment. The Pathan kicks the wife of the man who has been trying to board the train because gets carried away in anger as the latter ignores him. The Pathans appear rude, rough and uneducated according to the narration of the narrator. In the national historiographies and literature, violence is always the work uncivilized and savage people. Thus, the acts of Pathans are likely. It is always same in other Partition fictions too. However, the work of the Babu is aberrational, too. When he sees the Pathans mistreating a Hindu family in

Pakistan, he loses his temper and is carried away in sentiments. Although he seems quite educated and knowledgeable, he forgets what is right and what is wrong. He tries to teach the Pathans a lesson but when they escape from there he becomes mad in anger. The murder that he commits in the climatic scene of the story is the result of the same madness.

In this way, the author has tried to state that although the characters in the story are involved in some violent activities, they are not totally bad at their heart. Their acts are similar to the pots in the kitchen, which is bound to make rattling sound if somebody shakes it. Neither the Pathans nor the Babu wants to break the harmony of the society. They are the slave of circumstances and the temptation who tend to manifest some abnormal behaviour under its influence. Otherwise, they all want to live in peace and harmony. The guilt conscience of the Babu after he commits murder also hints the same message from the author.

Legitimization of Violence

It is very important to understand the structure of the ideas within which violence may be legitimized in the society. It is considered that sometimes some measures of violence become necessary for the continuity and maintenance of the social order. Veena Das and Ashis Nandy writes in “Violence, Victimhood and the Language of Silence” that according to Girard:

...the mythological beliefs of all societies trace the origin of human society to an act of violence, which is then sought to be contained by the construction of a sacrificial order. The major function of sacrifice in this scheme is to contain the violence which

is necessary in any act of birth so that it may not become the normal condition of existence. (177)

For example, the Upanisadic view states it is the characteristics of life that it feed upon life. According to it, the origin of the world is itself the result of the supreme sacrifice of Purusa, the primeval man who disseminated his body so that its different parts may become constitutive of the natural and social world. Thus, the self-imposed violence of a great entity resulted into the creation of the whole world. Similarly, the soldiers, who sacrifice their lives on the frontier and a patriot's martyrdom for the sake of the country is not considered as violence at all.

The practice of the violence for the regeneration is also visible in the judicial form in the modern worldview. There are fixed punishments for every kind of crime, which discourage the culprits to do the similar kind of offence again. Some countries have even allotted death penalty for some serious and obscene crimes. The administration of every country uses certain kinds of force like baton charge, tear gas and sometimes even bullet for the maintenance of law and order. These acts are not counted as violence in the eyes of civilized society and sometimes even prescribed for greater peace. Similarly, a doctors uses violence on a patient while performing a surgery or amputating his or her limbs. We accept this violence because it is done for the higher good and only for the betterment of the victims. Thus, these actions are legalized and no one consider them as violence at all.

In the same manner, the aggression that one must have to choose to resist unjustified violence is also legitimized in the modern worldview and in the works of literature. Veena Das and Ashis Nandy in their extensive study of violence write:

From the perspective of the actors, violence may be justified when, (a) it is counter-violence, that is, it is a response to unjustified or legitimate violence; (b) when violence is imposed as a part of an ideology of salvation or liberation on those who are the subjects of knowledge, for the latter's own good; and (c) when one has journeyed through the experience of self-imposed violence and thereby acquired the right to demand austerity or suffering from others. (181)

If we look from the above perspective, we find the violence that results in the railway compartment of Bhisham Sahni's story is also legitimate. The Babu, who is a metamorphic character, in the "The Train has Reached Amritsar," has matched two commonalities from the above three structures under which the use of violence is justified.

The Babu has experienced the violence and suffered when he has been in Pakistan. He has seen the Hindu's and Sikh's houses being burnt through out this journey. He has sensed the danger under which a Hindu and Sikh have been living in Pakistan. He has seen them being insulted publicly as in his own compartment. There is no one to fight for their rights. Having seen all this he is likely to react against the injustice. The activity of Babu is reactionary and thus, is excusable.

The author's intension is clear, which is to justify the action of the Babu as a mere reaction against the injustice he has seen in Pakistan. In this way the author has legitimized the violence carried out by Bubu.

IV. Glorification of the Sikhs in *Train to Pakistan*

The Story in Brief

The actions in *Train to Pakistan* start in the summer of 1947. It is the most important year in the Indian context as it marks the division of the British Indian Empire into Hindu dominated India and Muslim dominated Pakistan precipitating a great communal anarchy. The story covers the time during which, about ten million homeless and destitute people are in flight and the large-scale communal disturbances has taken nearly one million's lives. Only Mano Majra, a small Punjabi village on Indo-Pak border, in which the story is set, is free from communal strife and enjoying a pure fraternity, when the novel starts. Most of the people in the village are either Sikh or Muslim. They have been living together for centuries. However, there is also Hindu family of Ram Lal, a moneylender and he is important as the novel starts with robbery at his home.

On an August night, a gang of robbers under the leadership of Mali from a neighbouring village, breaks into the house of Ram Lal, robs him and kills him. Before the gang leaves the village, they drop a few bangles inside the boundary of Jugaat Singh's house. Jugaat Singh, alias Jugga, is a notorious person of Mano Majra. He has been put into jail several times for his mischievous activities, and his father and grandfather were hanged under the allegation of murder. Now, he is forbidden to go out after the sun sets. He is in love with Nooran, the daughter of a local Muslim weaver. On the night of robbery, he has sneaked out to meet her, and by the time they return to the village Mali and his gang has already completed their work. Due to the social prestige of his beloved he does not reveal where he

has been at night and comes under the suspicion of Ram Lal's murder when the police interrogate him. Almost at the same time, Hukum Chand, the divisional commissioner, who comes in the government residence to control the possible communal riot in the area, is indulged in a sordid affair with Haseena, a teenaged Muslim prostitute. When he hears the sound of gunfire in the night, he senses the problem in the area and leaves the girl.

Next morning, the police arrive at Mano Majra railway station to investigate into the case of Ram Lal's murder. By the same train, Iqbal Singh, the third most important character after Jugaat Singh and Hukum Chand, arrives at Mano Majra. He has studied in western countries and has westernized attitude. Perhaps he is a socialist activist and has an assignment by his party to go among common and simple-minded villagers on Indo- Pak frontier and discourage them to take part in any communal conflict. He goes to the village Gurudwara and finds a suitable accommodation under the hospitable Sikh priest of the village, Meet Singh. After a day or two, the police arrest him along with Jugaat Singh under the charge of Ram Lal's murder on suspicion. Although the police officers sense that they are wrong in arresting Iqbal, the inspector doubts him to be Muslim. In order to confirm himself he makes Iqbal undo his pyjama and finds he has been circumcised according to Muslim practice. This is ample sign for the police to refer him a Muslim and thus a man with an evil intention, who has been in Mano Majra to fan the fire of communal disturbance.

Meanwhile, in Mano Majra, a train filled with corpses arrives from Pakistan. The villagers are not allowed to go near it. Rather, they are asked to take

kerosene and firewood to the station. Later, they see high flames of fire from their rooftops and understand what must be in the train. Whole India is burning in the fire of communal strife. Now the villagers become aware of this fact and rightly guess that the train must have brought the dead bodies of Hindus and Sikhs from Pakistan. It disturbs the age-old camaraderie of the village. The dark clouds of suspicion and fear arise among the Sikhs and Muslims. In that evening, neither the Muslim mullah nor the Sikh priest conducts evening prayers. Rather they meet for consultation in which the Sikhs show their determination and benevolence to defend their Muslims brethren from any kind of disaster. However, the Muslims of the village are evacuated as a precaution. They are taken to the refugee camp in Chundunnugger, a nearby city, from where they are supposed to be transported to Pakistan via train. To make the situation worse one more train comes with dead bodies and this time it is hurriedly buried with a bulldozer.

Now there is a great possibility of a reactionary Hindu attack on Muslims. We see some Hindu fanatics run a campaign to incite the local Hindus and Sikhs and plan to blow up the train going to Pakistan carrying the Muslim refugees. Hukum Chand sniffs the danger and makes out that there can be an attack on the train carrying Muslims refugees to Pakistan. He also knows that Nooran, the beloved of Juggat Singh will be boarding the same train. He has a hope that Jugaat Singh for his love for Nooran and Iqbal Singh with his excellent western education will do something to save the innocent Muslim passengers. Therefore, he releases them at this time of crisis. When they reach the village they learn about rioters' plan to blow up the train. Iqbal finds himself impotent to do

anything to contain the reactionary Hindus. He learns the meaninglessness of the wisdom, which is unable to influence others and dictate them the right way. Nevertheless, Jugaat Singh, unlike Iqbal, is certain about what he has to do. He goes to Gurdwara for the blessing of Guru and requests Meet Singh, the local priest, to read some lines from the holy book like an ordinary god-fearing Sikh before starting the most important mission of his life, which is to save the lives of all the Muslims going to Pakistan including his beloved. He climbs the spans of the steel and begins to slash at the rope connecting the explosive material with his knife. The Hindu rioters fire a bullet at him but he succeeds to cut it before his lifeless body falls on the railway track. On his lifeless body, the train containing thousands of lives successfully passes to Pakistan and the story ends with his act of heroism.

Mano Majra: An Oasis amidst Desert

Desert is an inappropriate place for human settlement. The scorching heat and lack of water make it a wasteland. In this wasteland only thorny plants like cactus grow, which is ugly and dangerous. The time in which the story is set is also similar. It is set in the background of the Partition of British India into Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan. That incident resulted in a perennial riot. In that bloody dance of death and dark cloud of terror, nearly sixteen million people lost their homes. If we believe Ashis Nandy, almost the entire Hindu and Punjabi communities were eliminated from West Pakistan and nearly the entire Muslims from what was the former East Punjab (*The Invisible Holocaust...* 307). Still they considered themselves luckier as they were not among the one million,

who lost their lives in the carnage. Anarchy prevailed everywhere and it made the human life cheap. People found their lives on the razor's edge, which could be put to an end at any time. Retaliation became the talk of the day. The Hindus and Muslims toyed with the lives of one another.

However, even in that time of crisis too, there were some places, which remained untouched from any evils like Eden. Singh has called such places the oases of peace. It is mentioned in the novel in clear words: "By the time monsoon broke, almost a million of them (people) were dead and all of the northern India was in arms, in terror, or in hiding. The only remain oases of peace were a scatter of little villages. One of these villages was Mano Majra" (10).

Mano Majra is the village in which the events of the novel are set. It is a tiny village situated on the bank of Sutlej river at Indo-Pak border. There is a railway bridge over the river, which links it with Pakistan. To the north, there is a government residence for VIPs, where the district magistrate Hukum Chand comes to observe the communal cacophony, the irregular immigration of refugees and direct the safe evacuation of Punjabi Muslims. The village is comparably poor. There are only three brick buildings. One is the house of Ram Lal, the local moneylender and the other two are a Sikh Gurudwara and a Muslim Mosque.

There are only seventy families in the village. Among them Ram Lal's is the only Hindu family. Majority of the villagers are Sikhs and Muslims. The numbers Sikh and Muslim families are almost same. However, there are a few families of sweepers of unknown religion. The Muslims claim them as their own but they also visit Sikhs' temple occasionally. Yet, they seem influenced by the

American missionary Christians. The Sikhs, the Muslims and Hindus live in perfect harmony in this village. Like Sahni's railway compartment *Mano Majra* too, is the representation of India in miniature. This is the epitome of India, which presents the picture of an unruffled rural life and draws attention to the gravity of social and cultural life of an Indian village. The novel seems to focus specially on the bonds of friendship between the two communities in the province of former East Punjab where the composite culture of India is pulsating. Accordingly, when the overall pattern of pre-Partition communal harmony between the Sikhs and the Muslims begins to fall into pieces, the exponents of Sikh-Muslims goodwill rise to prop up the crumbling superstructure in *Mano Majra*.

Khuswant Singh has emphasized on the religious tolerance and fraternity of the villagers. Although the *Mano Majrans* are the followers of different religions, the diversity of their religions never becomes a matter of dispute among the villagers. In some cases, it becomes hard to distinguish the religious identity of the villagers. The ambivalent religious adherence comes first into light in the families of sweepers of *Mano Majra*. They seem to be Christian but also visit Sikh's temple. Still, they are treated as Muslims by the Muslims of the village. Moreover, the ambivalent religion does not bore conflict, rather it function to dissolve the diversity into a greater unity. The religious ambivalence generating unity is accentuated when the novelist says:

... there is one object that all *Mano Majrans* – even Ram Lal – venerate. This is a three-foot slab of sandstone that stands upright under a keekar tree beside the pond. It is the local deity, the deo to

which all the villagers – Hindu, Sikh, Muslim or pseudo Christian
– repair whenever they are in special need of blessing. (10-11)

The adoration of the demigod by all the villagers is also the manifestation of the novelist's stance that there is not much difference among the common people in accordance with their ethnicity.

The novelist seems to suggest that somewhere deep in their psyche the Mano Majrans understand the foolishness of erecting the communal barriers. Their religious attitude to life is a point worth consideration. The partition has been understood as a religious schism, which has barricaded the human within the periphery of a certain religion. The novelist has set the Mano Majrans in contrast to this belief. They are the people who are of the opinion that religion acts as a cohesive force in communal relationships. The nationalist poets, fiction writers and historians of India have put a similar kind of picture in their black and white the same picture in their works. It helps them to highlight the democratic, amiable and secular image of their country. Like majority of writers, Singh also thinks that the destiny of the people of India is combined and for that, every Indian must walk together. The development of a particular group also helps other to develop.

In this novel, the interdependence of Sikh and Muslim also carries forward the same message. The novelist says, "The Sikhs own all the land around the village; the Muslims are tenants and share the tilling with the owners" (10). The Sikhs must need labourers to cultivate their lands and the Muslims can hardly survive without working on the fields of Sikhs. Another example of the co-

existence of Sikh and Muslims is also visible in daily ritual that goes on in the mosque and the Sikh temple. When the crows begin to caw in the dawn:

The mullah at the mosque knows that it is time for the morning prayer. He has a quick wash, stand facing west towards Mecca and with his finger in his ears cries in long sonorous notes, “Allah-ho-Akbar”. The priest at the Sikh temple lies in bed till the mullah has called. Then he too gets up, draws a bucket of water from the well in the temple courtyard, pours it over himself, and intones his prayer in monotonous singsong to the sound of splashing water.

(12-13)

Through activities of the priest and mullah, the novelist wants to show how closely the lives of the different communities in India are interwoven. They progress hand in hand.

When the novel starts no one in the village is aware about the fact that the British has left India. They are also not aware about the Partition of the country. The only thing that has influenced them is the unscheduled arrival and departure of the trains and the increasing immigration of refugees from Pakistan. The overwhelming number of refugees and Hindu fanatics fan the fire of communal disharmony and create a dangerous situation in the village. With each passing days more news as well as rumours about the brutalities by the Muslims and Sikhs against each other on both sides of the border come. This obviously arouses suspicions between the two communities. Quite suddenly, every Sikhs become stranger with evil intention. Yet the feeling and spirit of mutual welfare and

goodwill endured. They sit to decide what they can do with the Muslims of Mano Majra as the anti-Muslim wave start blowing all around the village. The portrayal of the scene when Muslim priest, Imam Baksh comes in meeting of the villagers to know the decision of the villagers is quite touching and movable:

‘Well brothers, what is your decision about us?’ he asked quietly.

There was an awkward silence. Everyone looked at the lambardar.

‘Why ask us?’ answered the lambardar. ‘This is your village as much as ours.’

‘You have heard what is being said! All the neighbouring villages have been evacuated. Only we are left. If you want us to go too, we will go.’ (146-147)

The above conversation between the lambardar and Imam Baksh makes it clear that how amiable and sociable is the atmosphere of Mano Majra. Imam Baksh still thinks that his Sikh brethren will not take any decision against him and his community and he is right in his speculation. It is heard in the answer of a young boy of the village comes in his defense and says, “As long as we are here nobody will dare to touch you. We first die then you can look after yourselves” (147). The Sikhs of Mano Majra know that the Muslims of this village have nothing to do with Pakistan. Their ancestors were born there and they were living like brothers for centuries.

However, the Mano Majrans are forced to separate as the deteriorating situations are beyond their reach. Singh has used good skill to depict their unwillingness to get parted. The poor villagers still hope that the Muslims can

return once the communal frenzy is over. Thus, it seems that by highlighting the absolute nature of the pre-Partition communal amity between the Sikhs and the Muslims of Mano Majra in the post-Partition period, the novelist wants to highlight the resistance of Sikhs to the communal discord. He has tended to show the peace loving nature of Sikhs at the cost of barbarous Pakistanis.

The Train: the Means of Infiltration in Mano Majra

As a contrast to the tranquil and static environment of Mano Majra the train stands for all that is dynamic and mobile. If the former is defined as the protagonist then the latter is of course a villain. Its activities are threatening and a challenging for human life. The harmonious atmosphere and the idyllic tranquillity of this tiny village during Partition, have led the novelist to consider it an oasis of peace. It remains unruffled by the frantic acts of murder, plunder arson abduction and rape while the train is invaded by these acts. However, although the train and the village are set in binary opposition, the train has great impact on the village. Therefore, as the novel evolves the train becomes more and more powerful and badly affects the village. At the outset of the story, it acts as a regulator for the people of the village. Later on it acquires a formidably horrific dimension and gives a shocking jolt to the swift and placid tenor of the Mano Majrans.

The train plays very important role for deteriorating the condition in the novel but it is not without reason. It has a close association with Mano Majra. Although no express train halts at the village it has always been known for its railway station. More significantly, the arrival and departure of the train has

synchronized the lives of the Mano Majrans in a special way. Before the sun rises, the morning mail train to Lahore from Delhi blows its whistles loudly to awake the villagers. Then the mullah and the Sikh priest call their followers to prayer. The next train, the passenger train of ten-thirty from Delhi finds all the villagers at work – men in the fields and women in the kitchen. The mid-day express passes by when Mano Majrans are having a siesta. When the evening passenger train from Lahore comes, everyone gets to work again. The cattle are rounded up and driven back home to be milked and locked in for the night. The women cook the evening meal. At night when the goods train stems in, they say to each other, there is the goods train. The novelist says, “It is like a good night” (13). After that, the mullah calls again and then the life in the village becomes motionless except for intermittent sounds of dogs’ barking and the trains that pass in the night.

The everyday life in the village ultimately depends of an out side agent. This agent is railway, a national entity. Its schedules and stops are state enterprises and therefore, according to Marian Ida Aguir, “‘the railway time’ is national time and ‘railway subjectivity’ is a form of national subjectivity” (*Tracking Modernity...* 109). Thus, the railway serves as a link to national context for the Mano Majrans it also an infiltration into their pure and undisturbed life. The organization of life around the railway is in a way entrance of the nation with its ideology and the consequences of that ideology in the culture of rural Punjabi village in a determining way. The villagers are aware of the railway tracks and its engine but they are hardly aware about the power of the railway space that

represents the natural power of the state until on the eve of Independence and Partition of India.

The railway timetable has become so entranced that it replaces the other ways of measuring the hour in the village. But it does not remain same. The spell of Partition violence has affected it. Now its timing fluctuates widely. It first becomes visible in September:

Early in September the time schedule in Mano Majra started going wrong. Trains become less punctual than ever before and many more started to run through at night. Some days it seemed as though the alarm clock had been set for the wrong hour. On others, it was as if no one remembered to wind it. Imam Baksh waited for Meet Singh to make first start. Meet Singh waited for the mullah's call to prayer before getting up. People stayed in bed late without realizing that times had changed and the mail train might not run through at all. Children did not know when to be hungry, and clamoured for food all the time. (92-93)

If the railway time is a signifier of the nation, its changed schedule is confirmation that something is changing within the order of the nation itself. The nation is divided into two parts on the basis of religion. The nation, dominated by a particular group of religionists, does not have place for other religionists. They dispatch the unwanted civilians and welcome the followers of a particular religion. The train being a cog in the machine of nation also shifts its role from

being a neutral space to a communal national space and starts carrying refugees instead of goods and passengers.

With the announcement of the creation of Pakistan, the train becomes more important national asset as it proves itself an important means for exodus. However, the train not only brings the refugees from Pakistan but also the stories of tortures, atrocities and mutilation of women there. Later it becomes unable to bring the refugees safely to their destination and carries their dead bodies. Thus, it becomes the harbinger of violence and affects the life of Mano Majrans significantly. The messenger of death and disaster starts contaminating pure life of the village with this event:

One morning, a train from Pakistan halted at Mano Majra railway station. At first glance, it had the look of the trains in the days of peace. No one sat on the roof. No one clung between the bogies. No one was balanced on the footboards. But somehow it was different. There was something uneasy about it. It had a ghostly quality. (93)

The arrival of this altered train is a turning point for the village that has so far appeared to be an oasis of peace. The alien look of the train and the uneasiness it causes among the villagers reveal that the change has already begun to move slowly through the village. Although they are forced back towards the village and do not see what does the train carry inside it, they know it by instinct. The “eerie silence” caused by the arrival of the train, like Bhism Sahni’s “The Train has

Reached Amritsar” is all powerful aura. Also, like his story there is no depiction of violence. It is absent, invisible and only assumed by instinct.

The truth that the train contains the dead bodies of Hindus and Sikhs is descended in the unbearable silence. They realized it when they were asked to take firewood and kerosene to the railway station and it is confirmed when:

A soft breeze began to blow towards the village. It brought the smell burning kerosene, then of wood. And then – a faint acrid smell of searing flesh.

The village was stilled in deathly silence. No one asked anyone else what the odour was. They all knew. They had known it all the time. The answer was implicit in the fact that the train had come from Pakistan. (100)

The answer is, of course, that the bodies of the passengers are burning. The villagers are also sure that since the train comes from the Pakistan the dead body inside it must be of Hindus and Sikhs. The contamination of soft breeze with acrid smell of searing human flesh suggests the contamination of amity in Mano Majra. It builds the foundation of the forthcoming events, which is likely to get worse. The clouds of suspicion start hovering over every one in the village. The Sikhs start feeling uneasiness about the Muslims and each Muslims become alien in their own village.

The arrival of the death train not only destroys the communal harmony in the tiny village of Mano Majra, but also shakes the government, which is represented in remembrance of the chief inspector’s visit to the train. The huddle

of dead women and children in corner and a dead man stuck between his bedrolls, do not make the inspector thoughtless and speechless but also bewilder the government. Everything is so sudden that it catches the government by surprise. It brings the historians' remark into memory that although the political leaders had decided to divide the country; they were not prepared for the out coming exodus and massacre. Therefore, when that occurred they were caught by surprise and watched it helplessly as a mere spectator.

The inaction of the government led to misfortunate arrival of another ghost train. Unlike the first death train, it arrives in dark night. The train has no light. Its arrival is similar to a haunting ghost. The association of train with darkness is symbolic. It highlights the decaying hope for reconciliation and harmony between the two communities. Even the Mano Majrans who have showed their benevolence to fight against the evil invaders from outside, now themselves turn into an anti-Muslim mob. This time they do not provide any help in the funeral of the dead bodies which is very important as it is likely to fan the fire of communal conflict. Therefore, a bulldozer is called for mass burial. It is an attempt to erase the sign of massacre with a machine.

It is also not without significance that a heavy bulldozer was used to burry the dead bodies. This cold, massive, mechanical burial demonstrates the dehumanization of the human lives. The machine has overwhelmed and controlled man. All humanist values are shattered, the bulldozer along with train becomes a symbol of the forces oppressing humanity. The train becomes the favourite space for genocide and thus an enemy of human. Similarly, the way the

use of a bulldozer for mass burial degrades the value of human lives into the heaps of rubbish.

Into this world of degraded humanity, when a few Hindu reactionaries come with a young and aggressive leader, they find the villagers very gullible. The leader is not an extraordinary person. He looks like an American cowboy, is effeminate, and strangely enough, called for revenge. However surprisingly enough, when he wants the Sikhs to retaliate on Muslims for what is happening in Pakistan, nobody resists him. Meet Singh argues in vain that it is a sin to kill innocent people and that the Muslims of Mano Majra cannot be made scapegoats for the crimes of the people in the Pakistan. The effect of dehumanization through train is so appalling that the Mano Majrans forget the preciousness of human life and blood. Therefore, the leader outlines his plan to blow up the train on the bridge and asks for volunteers and eventually he gets them in significant numbers.

This scene leads up to the final drama where every Sikhs seem agitated. They plan to blow a train going to Pakistan in retaliation with the Hindu fanatics. They also know that the Muslims of their village too, whom they have vowed to protect even at the cost of their own life, will be there on the same train. However, the arrival of second train does not let them to step back from their plans.

Thus, it can be said that the train has a tremendous effect on the people of Mano Majra. It adversely affects the Hindu, Muslim and Sikhs. The community, which has lived in peace for centuries, becomes enemies overnight. It makes Mano Majra fall from an Eden like space into violence and disorder. The irregularity of trains symbolizes the disturbances in the free flow of life in Mano

Majra. It presages chaos and disorder, riot and violence. The odd arrival of train from Pakistan with the heaps of mangled and mutilated corpses lets loose a reign of terror. The rumors of bestiality, violence, mass rape of women, arson and infanticide on the other side of the border leads the villagers to the massacre of the Muslims on a train to Pakistan.

Glorification of Sikh Values

Jagdev Singh in his “The Sikh Perspective on Partition: A Study of *Train to Pakistan*,” has rightly said “the Sikh novels on Partition show the strength of communal harmony in the not being palpable during the pre-Partition period but also remaining intact during communal genocide of Partition” (65). He also holds, “It is always the marauders from outside who strike much against the wishes of local residents” (65). Khuswant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan* acutely matches with the above perspective of Jagdev and has tried to highlight the quintessential benevolence of Sikhs in the whirlwind caused by Partition. It is not only depicted in the meeting of before the evacuation of Mano Majran Muslims where the Sikhs show their determination to save the lives of Muslims and in the extraordinary sacrifice of an ordinary scoundrel but through out the novel.

The novel starts with the attention of the novelist on the pre-Partition communal amity between Sikhs that one thinks was once prevailed in the rural areas of Punjab. The inseparable bond of friendship between the two communities is nostalgia that most of the Indian fiction writers like to deal with. One of such villages is Khuswant Singh’s fictional village Mano Majra. In Mano Majra, in his own words, the Sikhs are the landowners and the Muslims are the labourers who

must work in the field of Sikh peasants to rear themselves. However remarkable is the description that there is no conflict between them. It does not seem possible.

According to Karl Marx, there is always struggle between the base and superstructure as the existence of latter always depends on the exploitation of the former. The people in the base are always deprived and therefore, are discontented. Psychologically a kind of vengeance is common among them and their relation cannot be anything else than being hostile. Surprisingly, we do not find any similar instance in the novel.

It is not that the people of the village are non-materialist. Rather they seem greedy. They even rate freedom in terms of buffaloes and pieces of land. Therefore, when the socialist Babu preaches the importance of freedom, Lambarder responds, "Freedom must be a good thing. But what will we get out of it? Educated people like you, Babu Sahib, will get the jobs the English had. Will we get more land or buffaloes" (62)? Now, one may wonder, how can the people who are so narrow minded and who do not even understand the difference between slavery and freedom, remain aloof from class struggle. Thus the depiction of amity between landowner Sikhs and landless Muslims seems misleading and questionable to critical insight. It reminds me of the favourite term, "objective correlative" of T. S. Eliot, the famous poet cum critic of twentieth century. While dealing this profound term, he has written that a literary work must be rated in accordance with the uniformity in the character's behaviour. It is on the same principle he has dared to call Shakespearean tragedy "Hamlet" a lesser work. Keeping the same principle in mind, we can say that

Singh's novel also lacks the objective correlativity in showing the contradictory behaviour of the villagers.

In this way, the amity that prevailed in the Sikh village is a mere exaggeration. The Sikhs are shown extraordinarily benevolent. Their sense of altruism is manifested when the novelist writes how the Mano Majran Sikhs assisted Imam Baksh to rear Nooran after the death of his wife. The willingness of the Sikhs to defend their Muslim brethren at the cost of their own lives, which I have already mentioned is not only extraordinary but also intentional. Singh wants to present a civilized and generous picture of the Sikhs, who, according to him, never hesitate to sacrifice life for the sake of humanity and brotherhood.

However, the generous picture of the Sikhs comes at the cost of barbaric image of Muslims. He mentions that Muslims massacred Hindus in East Bengal. He also mentions that Hindus massacred Muslims in Bihar but has not mentioned whether the Sikhs were indulged in the similar hideous work. He reports about the communal strife in Pakistan from the mouth of the police inspector. He tells Hukum Chand, "Did your honour hear what the Muslim mobs did to Hindu and Sikh refugees in the market places at Sheikhpura and Gujranwala? Pakistan police and the army took part in the killings. Not a soul was left alive" (31). But the same inspector makes a contradictory statement about the Sikhs of India and expresses dissatisfaction at the behaviour of Sikhs, who are surprisingly not killing the Muslims. Singh forcibly makes the words of Sikh glorification fall from his mouth, "The Sikhs are not doing their share. They lost their manliness... You ask the Sikhs why they allow it and they answer that the Muslims are their

brothers” (30). This statement clearly shows Singh’s racial prejudice and tiltness towards Sikhs.

Singh has even referred the holy scripture of Sikh to show how barbaric and untrustworthy the Muslims are. He writes, “The last Guru had warned them that Muslims had loyalties. He was right. All through the Muslim period of Indian history, sons had imprisoned or killed their own fathers and brothers blinded to get the throne” (141). To highlight the barbaric image of Muslims, he has not only wrongly used the sacred words of Sikh Guru but also mentioned the patricides and fratricides committed by Muslims. He must understand that Muslims were not alone in practicing such acts. The Hindu god Lord Krishna killed his own uncle and Pandava under his supervision their own brother and cousins. The great Indian emperor, Ashoka also killed his several brothers to get the throne. But Singh has ignored those facts and only concentrated on the drawbacks of Muslims. Not only that, on the first page of the novel he writes, “Mullahs roamed the Punjab and the Frontier Province with the boxes of human skulls said to be those of Muslims killed in Bihar” (9). In this way he also disgraced the holy image of the Muslim spiritual leaders but hesitate to mention about the similar acts by the Hindu or Sikh priests. Thus, his description seems bias and one-sided.

In spite of the fact that both side actively participated in the killing, looting, torturing and rape during Partition, Singh’s account is pro-Sikh. He seems to suggest that had the Punjabi life remained unruffled by the Partition waves the people would have remained broadminded and enjoyed the coexistence. However, the reality is a little less sanguine India has always suffered from the disturbances

due to religious fragmentation. This is the region, where Parasuram once wielded the axe to decimate all the Kshetriyas (barons) from the face of the earth. The conversion drive of Emperor Ashoka was unquestionably backed by the force of “accept or else”. It is not surprising that flourish of Buddhism and Jainism passed into oblivion due to the uncooperative attitudes of Hindu scholars. Thus, the country and its people have never been known for its secular tolerance. But these are not the matter of concern for Khuswant Singh as his only aim is to establish the cultural superiority of Sikhs and India over the Muslims and Pakistan.

V. Conclusion

Literature is the mirror of life because a literary work shares many experiences, which are common in human life across the frontier of time and space. The imperishable literature always does this by giving the expression of life in truthful and attractive ways and records the man's spirit, thoughts, emotions and aspirations. For this, it should be solid, truthful or at least likely in its matter and manner. The literature also provides historical insights. Therefore, all literary works are treated with utmost care and sensitivity.

The quality of matter and manner depends upon the writer's attitude and mind-set, whether he is progressive or reactionary in his outlook. Naturally, a writer with conservative mind-set stresses those aspects of social life, which put the traditional ways of life in the best possible way. He sets a high value on reverence for age-old ideals, respect for (every) religion, chastity of woman, the devotion of the lower classes of society to the higher classes and so on. On the other hand, a progressive writer tends to show how old ideals act as a restraint on the natural freedom of the human mind and cripple the free movement of man and woman in an atmosphere of freedom. He sets for the liberating and liberalizing aspects of new ideals and forces. He also shows the value of forward moving society that looks for newer and modified ways of life.

Unfortunately, Singh and Sahni are neither pure conservative, nor sheer reactionary though they have tried to be both. They appear conservative in the guise of reformist, especially Khuswant Singh. They present such a traditional society that hardly needs any improvisation. The educated men like Babu are

respected, the rich and poor live in amity, the religion and ethics are not the matters of dispute and no one prefer to bully women. Remarkably, this is always the situation inside the boundary of India in the stories of these two writers. On the contrary, there is not any inter- human affinity in Pakistan. Fleeing people, burning cities and deserted railway stations are the characteristics of Pakistani territory. The situations like this tempt even the peace lover and educated person like Sahni's Babu to take the path of violence in "The Train has Reached Amritsar". On the contrary, those who have not passed through the experience prevailed in Pakistan are ready for supreme sacrifice like Juggat Singh in *Train to Pakistan*. After reading the above texts and seeing the behaviour manifested by the two characters, one is likely to conclude that the environment of India is harmonious and the situation in Pakistan is hostile because the environment in which one lives, determines one's consciousness.

Singh and Sahni have depicted their characters in the shell of old traditional values to draw the attention of readers. They have also elided the signs of social struggle and conflicts of India. Their irresponsible attitude makes them unable to reflect the life in wholeness. They expend all the resources of their genius in sharpening, polishing and ornamenting the fragments of life, which has resulted into romantic idealization. For example, Singh's Mano Majrans and Juggat Singh are free from the significance of external flow of life. They seem perfect in themselves. They have a single goal and exactly know how they have to achieve it. Juggut Singh is rock-solid in his determination and reaches his goal,

which is to pass the train that includes his beloved, Nooran safely to Pakistan at last.

Singh and Sahni both have used the modern space of train as a harbinger of violence and destruction. The place from where it starts journey, is suffering from communal strife and this place is always in Pakistan. It is like an epidemic for the people who are the members of minority. They are seeking a safe passage to the other side of the frontier through the train because the situation has turned too hostile for them in Pakistan. When they come inside the train they also bring fear and terror with them and affect the barricaded place of railway with epidemic of bloodshed spread in Pakistan. Throughout the way they see same thing from the windows of their compartments– burning houses, frenzy assailants, panicky reactions and fleeing people. They are attacked by the Muslim rioters in the way. All these things make the impact of the epidemic more intense. As a result when the train reaches its destination in India, it brings the communal fury in her peaceful atmosphere. In this way the author duo, through the extended metaphor of train, have glorified the Indian civilization on the one hand but on the other hand undermined the Pakistanis as uncivilized ones.

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