Exploration of the Language of Violence in South Asian Partition Fiction in English

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Abstract of the Dissertation

Exploration of the Language of Violence in South Asian Partition Fiction in English

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The dissertation unravels the politics of the language of violence in South Asian English partition fiction. It contends that partition literature written between 1947 and the 1980s, with the exception of the short stories of Urdu writer, Saadat Hasan Manto, follows along the lines of nationalist historiography and fails to rise above the prose of otherness in its representation of the brutal violence that constituted the partition of India. By highlighting Manto’s subalternist humanism through a discussion of his metairony, which locates and relives the relentless partition violence in the trauma of the ironic subjects, the dissertation proposes that the focus must shift from remembering partition as a mode of resistance to victimhood to remembering it as a trauma that has be confronted in order to come to grips with the realities of communal and neighborly tensions in South Asia.
In memoriam

to my parents:

Surya Narayan Pandey
Vaidehi Pandey

&

Dedicated to my wife, Kalpana whose numerous sacrifices made the study possible
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Historiography of 1947: Remembering the Partition of India as a Trauma

The decade of the 1940s marks a watershed in the history of India. It unfolded the events that saw the independence of India from the British colonial rule. The decolonization, however, took place simultaneously with the country's partition into a primarily Hindu India and an exclusively Muslim Pakistan. Independence and partition came out of the womb of India's struggle of deliverance from the colonial rule as twins: "A complex, contradictory reality is symbolized by 15 August 1947. A hard earned, prized independence was won but a bloody, tragic partition rent asunder the fabric of the emerging free nation. Freedom came, but with it partition" (Mahajan 392). For Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, partition "marks a watershed as much in people's consciousness as in the lives of those who were uprooted and had to find themselves again, elsewhere" ("Abducted Women" 1). The defining moment of the partition of India was indeed the massive violence that constituted rather than accompanied it. Even by a conservative estimate, ten million people took to the road in search of a new home. A million, however, did not make it. Trainloads of Indian and Pakistani citizens were killed. It is the singularly violent character of the event rather than what has been called its "high politics" that stands out: for the survivors "partition was violence, a cataclysm, a world (or worlds) torn apart" (author's emphasis; Pandey, Remembering Partition 7). This

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chapter seeks to investigate some of the ways in which the “high politics” historiography effaces partition violence. In order to do so, it focuses on the critique of the “high politics” historiography in the subaltern intervention, especially that of Gyanendra Pandey. It suggests, through the critique of Pandey’s revisionist historiography, that while the exploration of the inner life of the victims through a study of their memories—oral accounts, personal narratives and literary fragments—is indeed a welcome development, the focus must shift from remembering partition as a mode of resistance to victimhood to remembering it as a trauma that has be confronted, acted out (or worked through) in order to come to grips with the realities of communal and neighborly tensions in South Asia.

A privileging of the gloss of nationality over objectivity characterizes the treatment of the high politics of 1947 in the histories of India and Pakistan. Depending whether the historian is an Indian or a Pakistani, the hero in one version is portrayed as the villain in the other. In the hero-villain swap game, the real subject matter of partition—the violence that constituted it—gets elided. While the elision of violence that the victims and the survivors suffered is deservedly criticized as elitist and modernizing in the recent subaltern intervention in the history of modern India, the political context that led to the violence in the first place cannot be dismissed either. A focus on the human dimension needs to be at least prefaced with a brief picture of the high politics that led to the violence. Markers such as community, sectarian strife and communal violence (besides the memory of pain and trauma) that receive the spotlight in studies of the human dimension of partition cannot be divorced from the political context that produced the markers in the first place. After all, they emerged from the protracted
political polemics between the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League—polemics which gave rise to a set of oppositions such as nationalism versus ethnicity, secular versus communal, multi-religious pluralism versus Muslim monotheism, modern versus traditional, democratic versus authoritarian, and civilized versus barbaric in the discourses of the two political groups. The political context, irrespective of the fact that it has received some severe knocks in the subaltern history of partition, can help unravel the dynamics of the politico-cultural formation of the communities—the dynamics which lie at the heart of the recently valorized memory of partition violence, the analysis of which reveals the forging of community (or nationhood) through a discourse of violence "'out there'" (Taussig, qtd. in Pandey, “The Prose of Otherness” 201).3

Even a cursory look at the high political drama of partition brings to the fore the three main players—Britain, the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League—as being responsible for the great divide of 1947. The British played the role of the main villain in the drama. After receiving a near-death blow from the Muslim-Hindu conducted first War of Independence in 1857, the colonial government, in order to weaken the nationalist movement, started using Muslim communalism against growing Indian nationalism. The partition of Bengal, conversation with the Simla delegation in 1906, and finally the separate electorate of 1909 lent a fillip to the British policy of divide and rule. The British, however, did not unconditionally submit to the communal demand of the Muslim League up to 1940. It was in the wake of the Second World War—in order to mobilize Muslim support in favor of war efforts particularly in face of the

3 For a comprehensive treatment of the question of how we as individuals and communities (or nations) live with violence, and of thinking what constitutes violence in our discourses and how therefore violence and community (or nationhood) constitute each other, see the chapter “Constructing Community” in Gyanendra Pandey’s Remembering Partition (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001): 175-205.
opposition from Congress—that the British gave the Muslim League the veto power against any new constitutional development in India. The first testimony of the change in the British attitude turned out to be the August proposal of 1940 through which the government of Linlithgo declared that no constitutional development, which did not meet the approval of the minority, could be adopted in India. The provision for local option made in the Cripps mission further encouraged Muslim secessionism when it declared that any province, if it so chose, could adopt its own constitution. Furthermore, the Simla Conference of 1945 climaxed as the policy of appeasement by the British towards the Muslim League as Muhammad Ali Jinnah was permitted to use his veto power against constitutional development in a true sense. In the post-War phase, however, after the decision to decolonize, the British revised the policy of the appeasement of Muslims. In March 1946, the British government of Clement Atlee declared that the minority in India had no right to veto the progress of the majority. A cabinet mission plan that was sent to India after the declaration rejected the idea of partition, as it was unviable on the grounds that if the Muslim minority was given the right of self-determination, the same right could not be denied to the Hindu minority in Punjab and Bengal. As an alternative to the division of the country, the mission plan presented a three-tier structure. The seemingly well-meaning plan, however, was not seriously enforced since it had been intended merely as a ruse to delay the exit from India. When the intended delay in exit was not possible, the British government enforced partition as an easy solution to what British historiography refers to as a mere transfer of power—a generous gift handed out equitably to the Indians and the Pakistanis as “a natural consequence of the communal divide, the history of which could be taken back either to the Arab invasion of Sind or to
the annexation of the Punjab by Mahmud Ghazni" (Settar and Gupta 7). In February 1947, Lord Mountbatten came with an order, in military parlance, to retreat. Retreat he did enforce, but at such a hastened pace that it indirectly contributed towards the spiral of killings: "Great Britain . . . pursued a policy of ‘divide and rule,’ and remained committed to it until it . . . decided to ‘divide and quit’ in a haste that was irresponsible and costly in human lives, property and sheer mayhem" (Ahmad 55). The Radcliffe axe with which the British tore India apart performed its task in just thirty-six days. Sir Cyril Radcliffe, who did not consider the claim to disputed areas, caused such a dislodgment of the places of pilgrimage, sites of historical associations or centers of economics on such a magnitude, particularly in the province of Punjab, that added fuel to the fire of bloody unrest. British poet, W. H. Auden, outraged at the hasty and callous attitude of the British as manifested in what is called the Radcliffe award, satirizes the author of the obnoxious exercise in the following words:

Shut up in a lonely mansion, with police night and day  
Patrolling the gardens to keep the assassins away,  
He got down to work, to the task of settling the fate  
Of millions. The maps at his disposal were out of date  
But there was no time to check them, no time to inspect  
Contested areas. The weather was frightfully hot,  
And a bout of dysentery kept him constantly on the trot,  
But in seven weeks it was done, the frontiers decided.  
A continent for better or worse divided.  
The next day he sailed for England, where he quickly forgot  
The case as a good lawyer must. Return he would not,  
Afraid, as he told his Club, that he might get shot. (qtd. in Datta 276-77)

Sir Cyril Radcliffe, through the shoddy job that he did on purpose, betrayed the telltale sign of Britain's malevolent role in the partition of India. At the heart of the politics of partition lay the colonizer's ploy of decolonizing only after leaving a final, indelible
impression that the natives, barbaric as they are still even after a long modernizing rule of the British, are incapable of governing on their own.

Great Britain alone, however, was not responsible for the partition of India; the Muslim League played a big role. The history of the role of Muslim separatism dates back to the late nineteenth century when Sir Syed Ahmed Khan showed political opportunism by adopting a pro-Raj policy. He was followed by other Muslim leaders like Aga Khan, Nawab Salimullah, Mohsin-ul-Mulk and others. Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who had both a westernized education and outlook, joined the Muslim League in the early twentieth century. Earlier he evinced little interest in religion or communal politics. Even when political expediency required him to embrace communal politics in 1920, he remained a moderate in his approach up to 1937. But after the elections in 1937 in which the Muslim League's performance was very poor, Jinnah decided to make Muslim communalism a powerful factor in Indian politics. He used religion, with the support from the Ulema, to bring Muslim communalism from the elite to the mass level and became instrumental in getting the proposal for Pakistan as a separate country for Muslims passed in the Lahore session of 1940. Although initially different Muslim groups and associations denounced the proposal, later the agenda became a rallying point for Muslim communal politics. The principal reason was the fear psychosis implanted by the Muslim leadership in the minds of the general Muslims that they would be crushed by the Hindu majority if they did not secede from decolonizing India. Muslim communal politics would not settle for anything less than a double deliverance from the majority Hindus and from the colonial authorities. Cambridge-educated Pakistani historian, Ayesha Jalal, however, exonerates both Jinnah and, by implication, the British of the
responsibility for partition by positing that Jinnah’s demand was for him simply “a political tactic, not an ideological commitment” to secure Pakistan, particularly of the moth-eaten variety that came out in 1947 (The Sole Spokesman 5). As Sucheta Mahajan puts it while commenting on the provocative claim, Jalal “shift[s] the focus away from the role of the two important players, the colonial government and the Muslim League, to the analysis of the role of Hindu communalism” (20). While Jalal’s targeting of the power-mongering Congress leaders for preferring partition to the sharing of power cannot be dismissed outright, the crux of her argument that Jinnah did not want Pakistan sounds preposterous, for the Quad-e-Azam refused to accept first the Rajagopalchari formula and next the Gandhi formula, both of which had sought to accommodate Muslims’ political aspirations without conceding partition. As also Rajan Mahan rightly critiques, Jalal “appears to conveniently ignore that Congress’s acceptance of partition came in the wake of appalling communal riots and deafening overtones of violence and barbarity which accompanied it. And for the outbreak of this malevolent storm Jinnah’s call to ‘Direct Action,’ whether deliberately or unwittingly, seems to bear responsibility” (84).

When we analyze the role of the Indian National Congress in India’s partition, we find that the INC too had its share of blame. If the Muslim League brought about the division through commission, Congress did so mainly through omission. The omission related to Congress leaders’ indifference to the agrarian issues and questions—an apathy traceable to the limitation of the Indian middle class, which dominated the Congress party. The power base of the Indian middle class, unlike trade and industry as the power base of its counterpart in the West, lay in the legal profession and landlordism. The expediency of keeping intact the power base made Congress stay away from agrarian
reforms—an aloofness that turned out to be catastrophic particularly in Bengal, where the majority of the peasants belonged to the Muslim community while the landlords were Hindus. The failure of Congress to address agrarian problems contributed towards the success of the communal propaganda of the Muslim League. Besides the act of omission, some political mistakes committed by Congress, such as accepting the separate electorate of 1916 (acceptance of communal separation in a way) and the haste to take over power from the British in the post-War phase, also led to the partition of India in 1947. The biggest mistake, however, was to have contact with the Muslims not at the level of the people but with their leadership—a blunder that made Jinnah the sole spokesman of a large section of the Muslims. When Jinnah became an irrepressible force, Congress unwittingly started to counter him by maligning the Pakistan movement as Muslim communalism in terms of the polarity of secularism versus communalism, reason versus unreason and civilization versus primitiveness. Thus Congress’s appropriation of secularism by the Indian National Congress turned out to be an anti-Muslim discourse that, even more than fifty years after the division of the country in 1947, has still “corralled our entire future into a box labeled ‘The Unfinished Business of Partition’ ” (Krishna 194). Ian Talbot’s telling comment on the high politics historiography throws light on the Indo-Pak relationship:

The high politics approach . . . has done little to improve relations in the subcontinent because of its polemicism and encouragement of conspiratorial historical theses. It has certainly perpetuated mistrust of Indian intentions in Pakistan and has encouraged chauvinism and belligerence arising from a sense of betrayal and inferiority complexes. As far as domestic politics is concerned, the over-emphasis on Jinnah’s role in the achievement of Pakistan has undermined participatory politics and strengthened a political culture that emphasizes strong leadership. (314)
The partition of India, intended as a panacea to the disease of communalism, has failed miserably: if externally it has helped worsen India-Pakistan relations, internally it has been a catalyst to the recurring communal riots between Hindus and Muslims in India. Partition has continued to feed into India's present so that that communalism, instead of becoming extinct, has only mutated.

Communalism, by which is meant in South Asia "the identification of one religious group in terms of its inherent conflict with another," mimics the logic of secular nationalism with the desire to develop into communalist nationalism (Mufti 90). In the wake of the Pakistan movement, the Indian National Congress viewed it in opposition to secular nationalism, and not in terms of the need to strike a proper balance between the secular and the religious for coexistence:

Just as the new *nationalism*—secular, democratic and, in time, 'socialistic'—was defined largely in opposition to a growing politics of communalism, so *communalism*—or the 'politics of the religious community' or 'communities,' which gave rise to such tension, suspicion and strife—was defined in opposition to what was now conceived of as nationalism. Communalism became in this view part of a 'pre-modern' (if not 'pre-political') world that was shored up by the colonial regime in its own interests. Nationalism was all that was forward-looking, progressive, 'modern' in Indian politics. Communalism was all that was backward-looking, reactionary. Nationalism reflected the spontaneous urge of the Indian people for economic advancement and freedom from exploitation. Communalism reflected the machinations of the colonial regime and reactionary upper-class elements that played on the religious sentiments of the people to further down their own, narrow interests. (author's emphases; Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism* 241)

Pandey gives the reason why communalism came to be pejoratively othered as backward looking:

4 Achin Vanaik, *The Furies of Communalism: Religion, Modernity and Secularization* (London: Verso, 1997), considers communalism as "the sharpest expression in a religiously plural society of the failure to establish a proper balance between the secular and the religious, i.e., the terms of coexistence" (198).
the nationalists of this era were never quite able to decide whether communalism was to be treated as a political or social problem. Communalism was sometimes seen as being organic, i.e., as the natural language of the people, and at other times as artificial. Even some of the most advanced progressive nationalists of the period would appear to have had difficulty in deciding whether communalism was in fact artificial or organic, which is why they often spoke of it as backward, primitive, or, in other words, primordial. (255)

Pandey’s recognition of communalism as the derogatory other of nationalism—an othering that drew on the colonialisstant project of essentializing history and society—, however, fails to deter Ayesha Jalal from ridiculing the subaltern intervention: “The subaltern thunder in South Asian historiography . . . has not shed much useful light on how to link ‘communal consciousness’ and periodic outbursts of inter-communal violence among social groups in the public arenas of localities with the partition of India along ostensibly religious lines” (“Exploding Communalism” 90). Jalal argues that the gravitation of Muslims towards the idea of a Muslim community in colonial modern India is not as much a communal move as a cultural one, which links a “religiously informed cultural identity with the politics of cultural nationalism” (79). In line with her argument, she insists in her conclusive remark that “the problem of difference in South Asia as a whole and of Muslim identity in particular cannot begin to be addressed without forsaking the dichotomies between ‘secular’ and ‘religious’ as well as ‘nationalism’ and ‘communalism’” (102). Jalal insists on replacing the word “communalism” with the phrase “cultural nationalism” because the latter need not but can be a fundamentalism, which means it is comparatively less malignant than communalism: the other it is up against are secular nationalists, not necessarily the religious other, the hatred against which defines communalism. Jalal’s bid to replace the ferocity of communalism with a relatively benign hostility of cultural nationalism turns out to be untenable because the
historiography elides the partition violence on the religious other, which in the opinion of the subalternists stood out “both in scale and method” (Pandey, Remembering Partition 2).

If Jalal downplays Muslim communalism, she plays up Hindu communalism as the original troublemaker while examining Punjab’s role in the partition of India. She attributes the demand for the partition of Punjab to Lala Rajpat Rai’s 1924 bid to find “the problem of contested sovereignty in Punjab” through the partition of the province (“Nation, Reason, Religion” 2183). On the one hand she downplays the Lahore resolution of 1940 as calling for national status, not sovereignty, on the other hand she not only underlines the 1947 division of Punjab as a concession given to the “contestation[ . . .] over sovereignty in Punjab,” but she also attributes the demand itself to the nudging by the provincial Hindu Mahasabha in collusion with Indian National Congress (2186). However inventive Jalal’s argument may be, she is not alone in bringing to light the role of Hindu communalism in the partition of India. Another Cambridge-educated historian, Joya Chatterji links Jalal’s argument to the partition of Bengal, which, in her opinion, reflects “a parallel separatism” of the Hindus, in particular, “the Bengal Congress [that] campaigned successfully for the vivisection of its own province on communal lines” (266). Even though one may dismiss Chatterji’s logic as “obtuse,”5 there has been recently a reappraisal of the role of Hindu communalism in the partition of India, especially after the dramatic rise of Hindutva since the late 1980s. For example, K. N. Pannikar, who believes that Hindu communalism is drawn from an amalgamation of culture, nationalism and religion, traces the role of Hindu communalism

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in the partition of India to the ideological underpinnings of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar. He credits the "crystalliz[ation] . . . of a coherent ideology of Hindu communalism" to Savarkar's *Hindutva* and *Six Glorious Epochs in Indian History*, which made a case for "the exclusion of non-Hindus from the nation" at a highly volatile juncture of time (545). The Hindu communal politics unwittingly worked to legitimize the two-nation theory of the Muslim League and was also responsible for lending a serrated edge to the partition violence—a complicity that culminated with the assassination of Gandhi in January 1948. Gandhi’s murder, however, receives short shrift in the nationalist discourse, where it is mentioned superficially, “opening up no possibility of reflection on its larger context” (Kumar 23).\(^6\)

As the above review of the high politics of partition bears out, explanations diverge in line with the ideological preconception of the historians—a predilection clearly colored by the gloss of nationality, for example, in the case of Jalal. Jalal’s historiography, as also the official discourse of partition in both India and Pakistan, to quote Pandey, remains ideologically “implicated in a political project, whether consciously or unconsciously” (*Remembering Partition* 10). He argues that the ideological function of partition historiography has been to justify the partition violence “as being illegitimate” (3), “to deny its force” (4), and to present it as being removed from the general run of the Subcontinental “tradition and history: how [it] is, to that extent, not our history at all” (3). Textbook history in both India and Pakistan effaces the violence that constituted partition for diametrically different reasons: “for Indian textbook writers Partition marks a tragedy, both human and political, which India had to suffer in her moment of freedom, while for the Pakistani writer Partition is synonymous

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\(^6\) Chapters Three and Four of the dissertation discuss the larger context of Gandhi’s assassination.
with freedom, denoting birth and success” (Kumar 21). The massive violence that was perpetrated on the people of both sides remains a setback to the freedom that came to India and the joy at the birth of a new nation in West Punjab and East Bengal. Consequently, dislocation, relocation, abduction, killing, rape and arson remain dismissed as a footnote both to the history of the triumphant march to independence in India and also to the unalloyed joy at the birth of a new nation in Pakistan. Pakistani Urdu literature on partition, the partition prose of Intizar Husain in particular, normalizes the violence constituting the upheaval of dislocation and relocation through “a wholly new focus on the experience of ‘migration’ (hijrat) . . . a creative moment in which the Prophet Muhammad’s migration from Mecca to Medina was reenacted, with all the concomitant freedom to give direction to a pent-up creative force” (Memon 74). The pallor of tragedy in Indian historiography and the flush of joyfulness in Pakistani historiography lead to the same end result: sanitizing of the narrative of catastrophic 1947 through a deliberate forgetfulness of the cataclysm of partition. In the nationalist Indian discourse in particular, as Javed Alam justifies the amnesia in his conversation with historian Suresh Sharma, the trauma of partition has been consigned to oblivion in the interest of the sectarian health of the nation, for remembering it is suspected to be “greatly misplaced and dangerous in India” (100). Alam strongly supports the nationalist historical discourse, which, as it seems to Pandey, “has never escaped from the constraints of” of the compulsion to keep at bay “the threat of a far-reaching Balkanization” (Remembering Partition 48). Partition, for Alam, is /was a national trauma that should/had to be forgotten so that the task of nation building can/could be
carried forward smoothly with focus on the national issues of governance—both internal and external.

Alam, however, appears to be wrong in his belief that the trauma can be forgotten. One of the leading scholars of trauma theory, Cathy Caruth argues that trauma as it first occurs is uncertain, but that “the survivors’ uncertainty is not a simple amnesia; for the event returns, as Freud points out, insistently and against their will” (6). Caruth is here referring to latency, the temporary delay, which should not be misconstrued as repression because the trauma, as is its character, shows up with a vengeance over a period of time, especially when triggered by a similar event. Taking the same Freudian line as that of Caruth, Ashis Nandy makes the point that the traumatic memories of 1947, “disowned and carefully banished, regularly return to haunt the political culture of South Asian societies. The past can be historicized and anaesthetized. But that is no guarantee that it will not return, like Sigmund Freud’s unconscious, unless the new generations of South Asians are willing to painfully work through it” (13). Coming to grips with the trauma through the remembrance and recognition of the violence of 1947 turns out to be crucial to the task of dealing with the realities of communalism in contemporary India. Stressing the need to work through the trauma by honestly facing the painful memories of 1947, Mrinal Pande asks: “Do we wish to allow the wounds of Partition to fester within increasingly inadequate walls on both sides and plan to destroy each other continually; or do we wish to open up and remember our beginnings as modern nations, understand the great migration collectively and come to terms without grief and shame. The choice is ours” (123).
South Asians will have to unlock the memories of partition violence rather than just rejoice at the moment of freedom or birth, “for only by ‘working through’ the memories of that violence can they acquire the right to celebrate their decolonization” (Nandy 13). Memory offers a chance to parry violence and enhance a life of connectedness rather than confrontation.

Memory, which Veena Das defines “as both an archive and a history” (115), becomes important not only for the therapeutic need that it serves but also because it is “part of the truth in any particular version” of history (author’s emphasis; Butalia 11).

Regarding the incorporation of memory into the history of the partition of India, Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin assert that its significance has now been acknowledged by historians and others, concerned especially with the study of ethnic conflict and violence and, by extension, for the writing of history itself. Official memory, after all, is only one of many memories. Different sorts of telling reveal different truths, and the “fragment” is significant precisely because it presents history from below. The perspective such materials offer us can make for insights into how histories are made and what gets inscribed, as well as direct us to an alternative reading of the master narrative. At their most subversive, they counter the rhetoric of nationalism itself; may even enable us to rewrite this narrative as Gyan Pandey calls “histories of confused struggle and violence, sacrifice and loss, the tentative forging of identities and loyalties.” (Borders & Boundaries 8)

As this passage implies, the fragments of memory subvert and revise official history—a fact fully underscored from the way the memories of the female victims of partition have been interpreted in the works of Ritu Menon, Veena Das, and Urvashi Butalia⁷ to implicate both the state and society in the geopoliticizing of women at the time of the partition of India.

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Memory, however, is never pure and unmediated as it is “conceptualized as a
force in conflict with the counter-force of repression and is highly compromised by the
encounter” (Lambek & Antze xii). The fault-lines of memory accounts are not so much
that they “are not deviations from the ‘truth’ ” (Butalia 11) as that their narrativization is
patterned after disciplinary history that “proceeds on the assumptions of fixed subjects—
society, nation, state, community, locality, whatever it might be” (Pandey, Remembering
Violence 4). For Pandey, it is not just the nationalist discourse of partition based
primarily on the colonialist system of information retrieval that constructs a prose of
otherness 8 but also the blindness seen in the revisionist historiography to the connection
between the discourse of violence and the discourse of the process of solidifying new
communities. Convinced that the narratives of particular memories of violence go
towards the formation of the community, Pandey shows through a scrutiny of a number
of impromptu local accounts of the violence of 1947, such as the accounts of the revenge
attacks in the village of Gharuan near Chandigarh, that the most telling feature of the
discourse of partition violence is the narrativization of violence by the witnesses, who
“employ a variety of techniques to elide the violence or consign it—often against their
own testimony—to happenings somewhere else (‘out there’)” (178). Violence appears to
mark the limits of the community: what happens within its boundaries is not, by
definition, violence—it is at most a handiwork of the outsiders (if it is violence). As
Pandey insightfully asserts, “It is the denial of any violence ‘in our midst,’ the attribution
of harmony within and the consignment of the violence outside,” which secures the life of
the community or nation (author’s emphases; 188). His contention alerts one to the
blindspot in feminist commentary-contained oral narratives of partition, even though the

8 See Gyanendra Pandey, “The Prose Of Otherness.”
history-from-below approach in these feminist historical writings prevents a full-scale configuration along the lines of disciplinary history. The blindspot can be avoided only when a historian is cognizant, as Pandey is, of a larger process, whereby “violence too becomes a language that constitutes—and reconstitutes—the subject” (4).

As a major apologist for the exploration of the language of violence in the partition of India, Pandey is aware of the problems of language in representing pain and trauma, and of maintaining an analytical stance while representing partition violence: “The historian seeking to represent violence in history faces the problems of language (how, for example, does one describe pain and suffering?, of analytical stance (how can one be ‘objective’ and express suffering at the same time?), and of evidence (for does not large scale violence destroy much of its own direct evidence?)” (“The Prose of Otherness” 190). Pandey recognizes the role of cultural politics—the discursive and ideological issues—in the language of the representation of violence as being crucially important for the rewriting of partition history. He, however, fights shy of addressing the problems that he raises with regard to the representation of violence in the essay, which starts with an epigraph to “Toba Tek Singh” and ends with the praise of Saadat Hasan Manto’s language of violence in the story. The essay emphasizes Manto’s subalternist humanism, which, according to Pandey, helps the Urdu storywriter avoid being blinded by the contending nationalisms of India and Pakistan. Manto’s awareness that nationhood (or community) may be forged through the attribution of violence to forces outside the immediate boundaries of the nation (or the community) helps him delineate the partition violence with such remarkable intensity, depth and objectivity that disrupts
the official narratives, which basically elide the violence through the use of the prose of otherness.

Pandey’s analysis of “Toba Tek Singh,” however, seeks to divorce the text’s discursive meanings from its rhetorical dimensions, even though he builds the analysis on what he spots as the central irony of the story: “Manto follows up . . . with the ironical question, ‘Who knows if this decision (to exchange the lunatics) was sensible or not?,’ and then goes on to say: ‘In any event, by the decision of the wise, high-level conferences were held in different places, and finally a day was fixed for the exchange of the lunatics’” (217). Pandey, however, hastily closes the engagement with irony and jumps to make the conclusion that his own subalternist ideology propels him towards: “The rest of the story, set in a lunatic asylum in Lahore, is about the inmates’ resistance to such an exchange and the considerable violence to carry it out” (217). While there is nothing wrong with such a subalternist reading of the story, a purely ideologically motivated discursive analysis, which only half-heartedly sees the connection between the rhetorical and the discursive, and which does not quite appreciate that the contextual is indissolubly linked with the textual, succeeds in achieving only a shallow appropriation of the literary fragment in integrating the moment of violence into a larger history.

Pandey’s attempt to link the fragment to the motif of abduction and recovery of women in Anees Qidwai’s Azadi kin chhaon mein (In the Shadow of Freedom) remains a superficial connection because of his disregard for the need to probe the dialogic relation of the fragment to Qidwai’s memoir through a critical engagement with Manto’s rhetorical strategies in “Toba Tek Singh.” Even when one flattens Manto’s complex irony as paradox or tension as Pandey does, one may counter-argue that the tension that is
resolved at the end is not "a resolution of the paradox" between insanity and sanity, but
the protagonist's death in no-man's land, which foils the State's attempt to fix his identity
on the basis of religion rather than his rootedness to the home village of Toba Tek Singh
(219). The subaltern's resistance is foregrounded in thwarting the State's bid to exchange
Bishen Singh whose nail-and-flesh relationship with Toba Tek Singh is persistently
played up through the tension built between rootedness and uprooting. It is the tension
that links Manto's story to Qidwai's memoir, and not what Pandey calls the paradox,
which is resolved in the first quarter of the text of the story itself—in the humorous
exchanges among the inmates of the asylum. The point of the ironic implicating of the
State(s) to the trope of madness is not the sign of resistance that Pandey sees in it, but
turning upside down the domain of rationality that leaders such as Gandhi and Nehru had
reserved for themselves while constantly condemning the rioters of the partition violence
as mad.

The way my counter-argument and Gyanendra Pandey's argument flatten
Manto's complex rhetorical strategy—what I call the metaironic mode of recapturing
partition violence along with the transmission of shock that underlines itself as the
cognition of the trauma of the victims, victimizers and the witnesses—dilutes the
intensity and vividness of Manto's representation of the genocidal violence of 1947—a
dilution that almost elides the violence which Pandey insists on writing back into the
history of the partition of India. No doubt that Manto's irony has a political dimension,
for he is writer whose sympathy lay with the dispossessed, more so because he himself
largely led a life of the dispossessed. Although Manto's politics equips his irony with a
much-needed critical perspective that even underwrites a minimal subalternist agenda, it
is a mistake to consider his irony solely as of the simple paradox type as Pandey does and a blunder to discuss him only discursively. A careful and comprehensive engagement with his rhetorical strategies is extremely important for incorporating his rendition of the moment of violence into a larger history of the partition of India simply because he had to break all conventions of storytelling in the Indian literature of that period. His characters and events bore the stamp of reality because they broke the unstated norms of plausibility, either by breaking all rules of syntax in the presentation, or by privileging the speech of mad men, or by registering the event from an off-center position. I believe that this mutilation of language testifies to an essential truth about the annihilating violence and terror that people experienced during these riots, namely that as human understanding gives way, language is struck dumb. A relapse into a dumb condition is not only a sign of this period but is a part of the terror itself. It is this fact—that violence annihilates language that terror cannot be brought into the realm of utterable—which invites us to constitute the body as the mediating sign between individual and society, and between the past and present. (author’s emphasis; Das 184)

Irony, for Manto, is an artistic strategy through which he makes silence seem deafening and gaps speak volumes. His notion of irony, in the immediate aftermath of the massive violence of 1947, changes: irony in his post-partition prose can be defined as an admission that language itself is inadequate as a mode of representation. Manto’s irony circumvents the representational appearance of language in order to establish communication with his readers at a time when violence had threatened to mute speech. Manto makes up for the inadequacy of language to represent genocidal violence by his use of metairony that helps him achieve at least four things at the same time: recapture the actual experience, create a heightened awareness of that experience, transmit it to his traumatized readers who, after being forced to engage intellectually with the text, are made to fathom the depths of both their trauma and moral degradation.
Manto’s early partition prose, which adopts the metaironic mode, anticipates Calude Lanzmann’s *Shoah*. Like *Shoah*, which captures the protolanguage of violence through its visual language verging on the metaironic, some of Manto’s early partition stories including the vignettes in *Siyah Hashiye (Black Margins)* cause a vicarious re-experiencing of the shock of the partition trauma in an attempt to act it out rather than, as Ashis Nandy would like, work through it. Acting out is a psychological ploy whereby a traumatized person is forced to be possessed by the past and made to repeat it compulsively as if it were fully present. Working through, on the other hand, in Saul Friedlander’s definition, “means first being aware of” the intrusive emotion that continually penetrates the reizschutz (protective shield) and “the numbness that protects it,” and “allowing for a measure of balance between” the intrusive emotion and “the protective numbing” “whenever possible” (130).

The concept of metairony develops out of Paul de Man’s analysis of irony, which is based primarily on Baudelaire’s essay “The Essence of Laughter.” De Man’s analysis in *Blindness and Insight* focuses upon the poet-philosopher’s ability to laugh at himself because of an ironic dédoublement—the distinction between the ironist’s empirical self and his separated, observing self. In de Man’s view, acerbic, self-reflexive laughter can open onto shock, which comes at an unsettling speed and can lead to madness, “dizziness to the point of madness . . . absolute irony is a consciousness of madness, itself the end of all consciousness; it is a consciousness of a non-consciousness, a reflection on madness from the inside of madness itself” (215-16). Absolute irony turns into metairony because it has a double movement: the ironist unknowingly invents his mad self and proceeds to reflect on his madness thus objectified. Metairony, which puts the authorial intent under

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9 For an analysis of Manto along the lines suggested here, see Chapter Two.

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erasure to foreground the reader’s reception or creation of the shock, would be the madness of language itself. Paul de Man locates the Baudelairean essence of laughter in the cognition of the laughing man that his intuition of superiority is already conditioned by a certain fallenness: that the language of his laughter may refer traumatically to its inability to reach the fullness of the sublime from which it is traumatically separated. The sublime, then, originates only in irony: irony is the disconcerting perception against which the therapeutic energies of the sublime assert themselves. In this view, irony would name the cognition of trauma, even though trauma itself, as Dominic LaCapra says, remains unnamable: “Trauma is the gap—open wound—in the past that resists being entirely filled, healed or harmonized in the present. In a sense it is a nothing that remains unnamable” (244). Metairony names the cognition of trauma—shock—by forcing people to confront anew the shocks that the acting out of a traumatic past may recreate. Irony in Manto’s stories such as “Toba Tek Singh,” “Khol Do” (Open It) and the vignettes in Siyah Hashiye (Black Margins) should be understood as metairony which consistently reveals the shocks of acting out. The story-writer makes the survivors and witnesses and the readers become re-traumatized and relive the past. By so doing, the traumatized mind can cope with the trauma because acting out helps the reflective consciousness to prevent itself from being overwhelmed by shock, by reproducing shock, that is, by seizing upon each traumatic moment and parrying it—in effect, by responding to violence with violence. The partition violence derives its importance from its status as trauma: as a trauma it demands a proper tackling of the problem of rendering the unassimilated scraps of the overwhelming experiences of 1946-47 into narrative language in a way that integrates the past to the present. Manto’s early partition stories, on one of
which Pandey has based his subaltern intervention into the nationalist historiography of
partition, turn out to be an attempt at addressing the problem of narrating the South Asian
memory: transmission of the violent emotion through a sustained engaging of readers’
minds, forcing them to recreate the violence vicariously in order to be possessed by the
past, overwhelming them with shock.

Pandey, one comes to discover, fails to get an insight from his reading of Saadat
Hasan Manto with regard to how his hero has negotiated with the problem of representing
violence. In most of his reconstructions of the history of the partition of India, Pandey
keeps praising Manto for having captured the specificity of the partition violence—a
hallmark that he rightly identifies as missing in the bulk of the literature on the partition
of India. Pandey, however, sees the specificity underlined only through the subaltern
subjectivity of the Urdu writer; he fails to fully appreciate that Manto has rescued the
victims of the partition violence through the dustbin of statistics not just by writing from
the perspective of subaltern subjectivity but also by incarnating the truth\textsuperscript{10} of the partition
of India, i.e., by transmitting the intensity and poignancy of their pain and trauma. The
major way by which Manto avoids dealing with the causes of partition but remains fully
engaged with the representation of the violence that constituted the political divide of
1947\textsuperscript{11} is by adopting a predominantly metaironic mode. Manto’s blindness [to the why
question], to use Lanzmann’s words with reference to \textit{Shoah}, “should be understood as
the purest mode of looking, the only way not to turn away from a reality that is literally

\textsuperscript{10} Andre Colombat, \textit{The Holocaust in French Film} (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, 1993), uses the
phrase with reference to the genre of Lanzmann’s \textit{Shoah}, arguing that the film’s re-enacting of the
Holocaust is more truthful than its representation in history books (312).

\textsuperscript{11} In Gyanendra Pandey’s historiographic reformulations in particular and in the revisionist history of the
partition of India in general, Manto’s partition prose receives the status of a touchstone with which the
given history of 1947 is tested and found wanting: the given history is fake because it is a history of the
elite level causes of partition rather than that of violence that was perpetrated on the common people.
blinding: clairvoyance itself” (qtd. in LaCapra 237). The purest mode of looking is nothing but the actual acting out of the partition trauma, whether in the case of Sakina or Toba Tek Singh, which creates an overwhelming shock effect both on the witness (the doctor in “Khol Do”) and the reader. It is in the sense of communicating the specificity of partition violence that Manto can be mobilized to justify Pandey’s “insistence on the need to write a history of violence on its own terms without reference to particular historical contexts or any notion of broader historical change” (Jalal, “Secularists, Subalternists and the Stigma of ‘Communalism,’ ” 685). Jalal is, however, right in criticizing Pandey for failing to demonstrate what he insists: “It is the history of the experience of and especially of the pain of violence that he would like to see written, even though he gives few clues in his essay as to how this might be done” (685). Pandey does keep “return[ing] to the question of the language of historical discourse, and its ability to represent violence and pain and daily struggle,” but his lop-sided focus on the discursive analysis that betrays his blindness to the rhetorical complexities prevents him from giving sufficient clues as to how a history of pain and trauma can be written (“The Prose of Otherness” 221). And even when he tries to show, in his later writing such as in Remembering Partition, how a moment of massive violence can be historicized without the loss of the specificity of violence, he continues to remain inattentive to the rhetorical complexities of the literary fragments he uses: the evidence of a literary text has to be treated differently from that offered by oral narratives or that produced by the official discourse. Pandey, to quote Suvir Kaul, “seems to choose at will and at the convenience of his local argument: little or none of the evidence he cites offers any resistance to his
own overarching argument, which is a surprise indeed when the topic is one as debated and riven as Partition and its impact on life in South Asia” (par. 9).

In spite of the above limitations, Pandey’s reconstruction of the history of the partition of India, which legitimizes the incorporation of literature into the history, valorizes the violence hitherto effaced in the history of modern South Asia. His reformulation, with its combative attack on the effacing of violence in the nationalist discourse on partition and his suggestion that the elision has territorialized psychological borders among the religious communities in South Asia through stereotyping and othering of each other as barbaric in an attempt to show themselves as civilized, remains a landmark intervention. His thesis that violence marks the limit of the community turns out to be a fundamental insight that uncovers the configuration of the bulk of the partition literature along the lines of nationalist history. The critique of partition historiography—both nationalist and revisionist—reveals several ways of remembering partition: as high political debate between the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League, as a terribly horrendous juncture for communal politics, as an aberration from the Indian traditions of non-violence and tolerance, as a master narrative of hijrat or a metaphor for migration and dislocation, as a mode of resistance to victimhood, as a memory to settle old scores, or as a collective trauma that has be confronted, acted out (or worked through).
Irony, Meta-irony and Critical Humanism in Saadat Hasan Manto's Partition Stories

Saadat Hasan Manto, short story writer from Pakistan blazes a trail of glory matched in the world only by the likes of Maupassant, Chekov and Gorky with whom he bears affinity. Yet Manto has received a very rough treatment at the hands of the Establishment in India and Pakistan. He has been called a lunatic, a terrorist, a pornographer and a Satanist. In India, however, there has been a revival of interest in Manto since the late 1980s, coinciding with the rise of the revisionist history of the partition of India. But in Pakistan Manto still remains a demon that must be tabooed.

Manto himself contributed towards his own diabolical image when he wrote his own epitaph five months before his death in 1955 thus: “Here lies Saadat Hasan Manto. In his breast are buried all the secret and nuances of the art of short story writing. Even now, weighed down by earth, he is wondering if he is the great story writer or God!” (qtd. in Flemming 21-22). Aamir Mufti, invoking Georg Lukács, reads irony in the epitaph—“irony consisting in ‘the freedom of the writer in his relationship to God . . .’ ” (2). Manto looks upon himself as a greater ironist than God because, unlike him and like the Devil, he can laugh at the seamy sides of the human ways of life supposedly modeled on the Divine ways. As ironist, Manto parallels himself with the Devil to cast himself as a rebel who opposes the iniquitous law of society and who shows courage to understand everything including sex that remains a taboo in the Indian Subcontinent. Commenting on the Devil’s role as ironist, Charles Glicksberg writes: “He is the ironist who is vastly amused by the lies that men hail as the gospel truth, the illusions they accept as real. He cannot bring God to his senses, but the creatures God planted on
earth can still be made to listen to the voice of reason and behold the glaring
discrepancy between reality and illusion. He tries, by means of logic and laughter, to
make them see what they had been blind to all their lives long” (166). Since irony, itself
diabolical, apprehends the diabolical that lies within the human society, it helps an
ironist like Manto, a member of the Progressive Writers Movement to protest with
persuasiveness against authority and conformity at a definite moment in Indian
history—at a time when suffocation in the name of religion, politics and tradition was
out to choke the nation. Here it must be clarified that Manto is not an atheist but he
does have a paradoxical attitude to God, which becomes ostensible from his own pen-
sketch, wherein he writes: “It is very surprising that people call him non-religious and a
vulgar person. I also think that to some extent he conforms to this category. But I know
whenever he starts writing some on some subject he begins by inscribing 786 on top of
the page which means the name of Allah. This individual who often denies the
existence of God at one stroke becomes a ‘believer’ on paper” (qtd. in Wadhawan 119-
20). Manto’s paradoxical attitude to God stems from his thinking: “that if God was the
creator of the world and the savior and benefactor of mankind in this world of his
creation then why was there such wholesale pillage, bluff and bluster, evil, inequity,
hunger and poverty rampant in the world? Why doesn’t his heart melt at the agonized
cries of the people who are perpetually wallowing in misery?” (Wadhawan 123). It is
not Islam or Hinduism that happens to be Manto’s religion but humanism—his
compassion for mankind and love for the downtrodden—, which he recognizes as his
religion. Manto’s humanistic tenderness for the marginalized and the brutalized lends a
subalternist edge to his demonic irreverence for religious restraints and political pieties.
It is this humanism-driven irony mobilized with the anarchic thrust of the Devil which grants to a Progressive writer like Manto the highest freedom to undo the suffocation in the name of religion, politics, and tradition by, to quote Salim Akhtar, “open[ing] the window without cringing before the gust of fresh air that blew in . . . [without] mind[ing] how many got colds, pneumonia, and who-knows-what else” (2).

The same kind of freedom and boldness in analyzing the bitter truth and articulating it, as implied in Salim Akhtar’s remark above, becomes discernible in Manto’s fictional rendering of the 1947 partition of British India into a primarily Hindu India and an almost exclusively Muslim Pakistan. His stories, marked by stark realism, sharp irony and critical humanism, transmits “shock waves through complacent minds” (Narang v). Almost everybody who has written on Manto remarks about his irony that lashes the self-righteous readers with “the sting and precision of a whiplash” (Bhalla, “The Politics of Translation” 20), leaving severe scratches on their mind. The present chapter, through a sustained focus on Manto’s use of irony and metairony in some of his major partition stories, argues that Manto is painful precisely because he mostly uses metairony, which not only produces the shock effect that retraumatizes his readers and but which also betrays his critical humanism that he locates in the morality of the subaltern rather that of the bourgeoisie or the elite.

When Manto’s irony does not only hurt but shocks overwhelmingly, it turns into metairony,¹ which helps the story writer overcome the problem of language in representing pain and trauma in history with such remarkable success that his incarnating of the truth of partition violence remains credible and vivid in the readers’ imagination even more than half a century after the bloody event. Manto emerges as an

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¹ Chapter One discusses how metairony develops out of de Man’s theory of irony.
exception to the rule (the general belief) that genocidal violence, by impairing the human power to describe, define, or narrate, disrupts history such that, as narrative, it can resume only much after the genocide has ended, and after the victor has enforced the official version. Manto happens to be one among a few courageous and brilliant artist-witnesses who refuse to be rendered mute by the writ of the violence, and he proves that speech is not completely helpless when confronted by such trauma. The genocidal nature and accelerated momentum of the violence may render the traumatic experience of it unspeakable, but a Devil-ironist like Manto can still communicate the trauma by means of his ironic gaze, which refuses to turn away from the scene of the injury. He knows that when the writ of violence threatens to mute speech, a conventional rhetorical mode will not work. An extraordinary event requires an equally extraordinary negotiation for artistic transmutation: an improvisation, whereby he combines the ironic gaze with a metaironic mode of narration. The combination, assisted by the Devil’s freedom, enables Manto to speak most pointedly about partition violence—the pointedness equivalent to the force that underwrites violence.

In the partition stories, which Manto wrote between 1948 and 1952, he represents partition violence the way he observed it, without any cover-up. He incarnates the truth of the trauma of partition through a volitional use of language in its immediate aftermath—at a time when official spins were still in the process of being put on the cataclysmic event in both India and Pakistan. In this regard, Manto remarks, “If I take off the blouse of culture and society, then it is naked. I do not try to put clothes back on, because that is not my job” (qtd. in Flemming 33). The ability to configure the holocaust-like event without a camouflage valorizes the violence in a way that
completely exposes the nation-states’ attempt to normalize the violence in the official histories. It is the privileging of the partition violence for which revisionist historiographers turn to Manto in order to revise the official histories in which violence disappears in the underbelly of statistics. For example, Manto’s partition prose receives unqualified praise from Gyanendra Pandey in his classic essay, “The Prose of Otherness,” wherein he singles out Manto for having captured, in a most objective manner, the specificity of the partition violence, and the pain and trauma of the victims.2

Manto’s early partition stories such as Siyah Hashiye (Black Fringes), “Khol Do” (Open It), “Thanda Gosht” (Cold Meat), and “Toba Tek Singh,” which are couched in irony, represent “all the terror, irrationality, brutality and inhumanity that the partition had projected in every sphere of life” (Gill 114). Manto wrote Siyah Hashiye in October 1948 after the “events like the partition of the country and the dropping of the atom bomb over Japan during the Second World War had almost paralyzed his creative faculties” (Harish Narang 83). The collection of a series of vignettes or capsule stories shows Manto as a shocked witness to the naked dance of violence in which ordinary human beings turn predators or victims, the former wallowing in the macabre and the latter screaming with pain. The vignettes are so much laden with irony and black humor that they force the Indians and Pakistanis to think intellectually about the independence of India that has been something supposedly bright for both of them and make them realize that the bright fabric of independence is fringed with the black acts of looting.


murder and rape. By thus inserting ironic fragments into the grand narrative of independence, Manto leaves his readers with a self-reflective moment—an ironic moment which, to quote Paul de Man's formulation of irony, comes as "a break, an interruption, a disruption" (137) of Congress's magnificent march to freedom through a non-violent campaign and of the crowning achievement of the Muslim League's century-long aspiration of a separate nation-state. The impact of the irony generated by the fragments turns out to be so overwhelming on the minds of the readers that they are shocked into recreating and rethinking the traumatic event in their minds. When irony does not merely wound but shocks by wounding, it turns into metairony. Metairony, as Vaheed Ramazani defines it, is 'the shock of irony and the sublime—the contradiction, the paradox, the logical or conceptual violence that “hurries the mind into fear and the counterviolence of transcendence” ' (222). Metairony, Ramazani adds, informs the poetry of Baudelaire in whom it remains "aporetic, painful, and pained in contradistinction to Flaubert whose ‘epic vision of history [...] can transmute [...] metairony into higher—or “meta”—sublime’ (222). Metairony, through the disjunction between the trenchant shocks of irony and the therapeutic energies of the sublime, carries "some real chance of producing melioristic effects" (222).

Looked at from the viewpoint of metairony, most of the vignettes in Siyah Hashiye, through an ironic play on ethical values such as propriety, hospitality, appropriateness and consideration, shock the readers into an introspection over the perversions of these values—an introspection that, according to Priyamvada Gopal

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opens onto "some possibility of ethical reconstruction out of them" (264). For example, the ironic play on the word "propriety" in the fragment, "Safai-Pasand" (Propriety):^5

The train was stationary. Three gunmen appeared and looked into the [railway] compartment.

'Any turkey in there?' they enquired.

One of the passengers was about to say something but the other said 'no.'

After a while four men holding lances looked into the compartment windows. 'Any turkey in there?' they asked.

The man, who was quiet before, spoke. 'I don't know. Come in and check out the lavatory.'

The men stepped in, broke down the lavatory door and emerged with a turkey.

'Kar do halal,' said one of them holding the lance.

'No, not here,' his other friend announced. 'The carriage will be spoilt. Let's move to the platform.' (297-298)

The fragment unlocks the horrors of the train massacres of one religious community by the men of the other community by allowing the ironic subjects—the killers and the witnesses (Manto's readers)—to see the disjunction between the impropriety of killing and the propriety of not dirtying the compartment. Similarly, "Munasib Karawai" (Appropriate Action), wherein a fugitive couple from the minority community hiding in the basement of the house of a non-violent Jain family are handed over to non-Jain residents of a neighboring locality for appropriate action, makes the readers see how even the strictly adhered non-violence of a religious community has become a ruse for practiced violence:

When the mohalla (neighborhood) was attacked, some members of the minority community were killed. The survivors fled. A couple, however, sought refuge in the cellar of their own house.

For two days and nights they waited in vain for the assailants.

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^6 An Urdu expression, which means "Half-slash the throat in Muslim style."
Two more days passed. They were much less afraid of death.
They longed for food and water.
Four more days went by. By then the couple were no more concerned with life or death.
They came out of hiding.
The husband tried to draw the people’s attention. “Please kill us. We’ve come to surrender.” He said in a feeble voice.
‘Killing is a sin our religion.’
They were Jains. Had a powwow. And handed over the couple to the people of another mohalla for ‘appropriate action.’ (293)

Likewise, in a three-sentence vignette “Riaayat” (A Concession), a victim’s daughter, out of consideration, is spared her life only to be raped: “‘Don’t kill my young daughter right before my eyes.’ ‘All right, let’s agree. Take off her clothes and throw her in with the rest.’” (297)

Even in those vignettes wherein the therapeutic possibilities of the sublime remain suppressed under the overwhelming force of the irony, the metaironic effect of these vignettes “lies in the contrast between the characters’ understanding of the events in which they participate and the reader’s deeper (and on reflection, horrified) understanding of both character and events” (Fleming 73). For example, in “Sorry” in Black Margins, for the knife-wielding man, who slashes the stomach of a man of his own community by mistake, killing is merely a spontaneous response and the partition a pretext: “The knife slid down his groin. His pyjama cord was cut into two. ‘Chi, chi, chi, chi, I’ve made a mishtake,’ the assassin said with a sense of remorse” (296). The chilling irony here, as Alok Bhalla rightly remarks is that “during the partition murder was no more than an instinct, a mindless passion which hardly left a trace of remorse in the killer” (“The Politics of Translation” 25). The bitter irony of another three sentence vignette “Aaram ki Jaroorat” (A Respite Needed) turns on the hope that bloodletting will perhaps end when it crosses the threshold of exhaustion: “‘He isn’t dead yet. See,
see, he is still gasping for breath.' Let it go, yaar (my friend). I am already exhausted" (296-97). It is the cumulative irony arising out of the fragments that not only interweaves them together but it also helps Manto transmit most poignantly the trauma of the partition violence that no history can communicate. By inducing the readers to the dizzying height of self-reflection, the cumulative irony slaps them into a vicarious recapturing of the gruesome images that their mind so sedulously shuns, images of "Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims chasing each other with knives and swords . . . [and turning] hunters and prey, when blood and water mixed together on the road . . . reminded a child of jelly, when Sikhs 'halaled' and Muslims 'jhatkaed,' when the division or 'taqsim' of loot was the first step to the 'taqsim' of bodies and when the tearing open of a sack of sugar disgorged human entrails" (Joshi 157-58). Thus the self-reflective irony collectively obtaining out of the fragments of Siyah Hashiye makes the readers think that they are vicariously witnessing the partition violence with all its unspeakable horrors. Siyah Hashiye shows that overwhelming violence is non-narratable: "told with the barest distant third person, in the least emotional, most stripped down language possible," the transmission of the horrific images of the partition riots suggest the breakdown of narration in the face of Manto's traumatic experiences of 1947 (Flemming 73). Throwing light on Manto's trauma, Flemming adds:

Threatened by increasing communal tensions in Bombay following Partition, and encouraged by his wife and family, Manto left Bombay for Lahore in January 1948. In so doing, he abandoned more than a decade of

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7 Alok Bhalla, "A Dance of Grotesque Masks: A Critical Reading of Manto's '1919 Ke Ek Baat,' "Life and Works of Saadat Hasan Manto, ed. Alok Bhalla (Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1997) remarks: "... since Manto's text tells a story of doom, at the end language crumbles back into silence and all that remains once again is the hallucinatory clatter of iron wheels on iron wheels" (36).
friends and associations, as well as a comfortable niche in the Bombay film world. In Lahore, he was totally disoriented, unemployed and separated from most of his friends. Consequently, for several months he wrote virtually nothing. When he finally awoke from his lethargy and began writing again, the little volume *Siyah Hashiye* was one of the things to come from his pen. Brief, ironic, occasionally even humorous, the collection grimly alludes to the changes that had taken place in Manto’s life and foreshadows the tone that much of his later writings was to take. (72-73)

*Siyaḥ Ḥashiyə*, in so far as it attempts to textualize Manto’s own trauma, turns out to be his testimonial witnessing, which “approximate[s] the formal techniques of reportage”—a means of transmission that keeps the events of the bloody event before people’s eyes (Nagappan 87). Testimonial witnessing as textualized in the vignettes provides an insight into lived experience and its transmission in verbal paucity may be equated with the “breakdown of signification” in the wake of the partition riot itself (Das & Nandy 182). The tiny vignettes, to use Manto’s words, are like “pearls of a real hue” retrieved from the “man-made sea of blood,” which outshines all other representations of the traumatic partition: it is a transmission of the violence packed with the same intensity as that which underwrites violence, bringing about a metaironic rupture that tears a hole in the heart of the readers, making them feel a presence of the holocaust of the partition in their soul (qtd. in Ashk 113).

Manto combines transmission with narration in “Khol Do” (Open It) to once again shock his readers through testimonial witnessing as in *Siyaḥ Ḥashiyə*. The shocking testimonial witnessing is forced on the readers who are required to intellectually engage with the text, that is to say, to fill in the gaps in the plot in order to make full sense of the narrative. Manto inserts double ironic moments in the ending of the story, where the abducted and severely raped teenager, Sakina fails to distinguish between a predatory
male command and a sympathetic male voice, and where her father, Sirajuddin exclaims with joy that she is alive whereas she is condemned to a living death. What makes the irony ruthlessly pessimistic in the story is Manto’s dramatization of the macabre in humanity—the predatoriness of the rescuers themselves and the helplessness of the traumatized victim, traumatized father and the traumatized doctor.

"Xuda Ki Qasam" (I Swear by God) further ironizes the abduction and rescue narratives central to the Inter-Dominion Agreement for recovery of abducted women, carried out between 1948-56, which sought, in the words of Mridula Sarabhai involved in the operation, “to remove from the lives of thousands of innocent women the misery that is their lot today and to restore them to their legitimate environment where they can spend the rest of their lives with izzat [honor]” (qtd. in Menon and Bhasin, “Abducted Women” 11). However, many women refused to go back to their natal families because on the one hand they had accepted their abductors as husbands and had even children out of the union and on the other hand they were frightened at the prospect of being permanent refugees in their erstwhile family and community. Manto criticizes the literary writers of his time for not considering the human dimensions of the recovery of the abducted women: “journalists, short story writers and poets were engaged in hunting their preys. But in the inundating deluge of stories and poems, their pen would not move freely; all of them were fretful. These hunter-writers did not find abducted women worthy of their pen” (qtd. in Mohan 18). "Xuda Ki Qasam" plays up the tragedy and irrationality on some occasions of the recovery operation through the use of metairony, as the kidnapped Muslim girl now happily living with her Sikh kidnapper-husband refuses to recognize her own mother, thereby shocking the old woman so much
that she dies instantly. The sudden death, in turn, jolts the readers into weighing up in their minds if the basis of human relationship is more powerful than the logic of religion:

‘I noticed a couple. The woman’s face was partly covered by her white chaddar. The man was young and handsome—a Sikh.

“As they went past the old woman, the man suddenly stopped. He even fell back a step or two. Nervously, he caught hold of the woman’s hand. I couldn’t see her full face, but one glimpse had been enough to show she was beautiful beyond words.

“‘Your mother,’ he said to her.7

“The girl looked up, but only for a second. Then, covering her face with her chaddar, she grabbed her companion’s arm and said: ‘Let’s get away from here.’

“They crossed the road, taking, long brisk steps.

“The old woman shouted: ‘Bhagbari, Bhagbari.’

I rushed towards her. ‘What is the matter?’ I asked.

“She was trembling. ‘I have seen her . . . I have seen her.’

“Whom have you seen?’ I asked

‘I have seen my daughter . . . I have seen Bhagbari.’ Her eyes were like burnt-out lights.

‘Your daughter is dead,’ I said.

‘You’re lying,’ she screamed.

‘I swear on God your daughter is dead.’

‘The old woman fell in a heap on the road.’ (169-70)

While the readers, whose sympathy for the old woman is palpable throughout the story, are shocked at her death, they still take the daughter’s refusal as a pragmatic decision—a carefully considered endorsement that brings to the fore the other side of the rescue operation.

Metairony remains at the thematic center of “Thanda Gosht” (Cold Meat) too, but it helps valorize the trauma of the perpetrator of violence rather than the victim or the survivor. Hot-blooded Ishar Singh, after a six-day spree of raid, rape and murder, behaves like a deeply shocked person. Having betrayed impotence in sexual intercourse with equally hot-blooded Kalwant Kaur, he arouses in her suspicion of another mistress.
After being forced on the defensive by the assertive beloved, Ishar Singh tells her about his involvement in a raid and rape. As he continues with the account of his involvement, Kalwant, out of jealousy, strikes him a fatal blow with his sword. At the point of death, he admits having attempted to copulate with the cold meat of a Muslim girl. Immediately after the confession, he himself becomes a lump of cold flesh. The central irony of the story, which is locatable in the metairony—the protagonist’s shock at having stooped so low as to have nearly copulated a corpse—, gains in intensity from the contrast obtaining out of, as Priyamvada Gopal puts it, the dynamics of “hot” and “cold.”

The moment of near-necrophiliac rape becomes the moment when Ishwar Singh is forced to confront the possibility of his own annihilation, for the coldness of the corpse resists and circumvents the ‘heat’ that defines him as a man and a sexual being. Manto asserts that sexuality and the concomitant opposition of hot and cold are central to the story not as a means of eroticizing the text but in order that the contrast between life and death may emerge forcefully: ‘if Ishwar Singh himself had been a cold man then the effect of this incident related to a sexual act would not have been so strong.’ Stalled by the death of his victim, Ishwar must now reckon with the implications of what he has been doing all along in taking life with reckless abandon. This is a reckoning not only brought about by the humanity that supercedes the brutality within Ishwar, but one which results in a renewed allegiance to this humanity. Humanism, for Manto, is born out of and against the very contradictions that texture human existence. (251)

Ishar Singh’s encounter with cold meat and his own cold penis sets him on the way to redemption, which he achieves with his own body becoming icier than cold.

Unlike Siyah Hashiye, “Khol Do,” and “Xuda Ki Qasam,” what tempers the shocking effect of Manto’s metairony in “Thanda Gosht” is his dramatization of the human in the macabre, which suggests that “working through” the trauma is possible.

The first clear streak of humanity in Ishar Singh becomes noticeable when he implores
Kalwant not to swear at his other woman in a “heartrending” tone (*For Freedom’s Sake* 139). The unmistakable sign of Ishar Singh’s transformation from a violent person to a non-violent repentant is reinforced a little later when he reflects, “Man is a damned mother-fucking creature” (139). The reflection, which is repeated a little afterwards and which underscores Ishar Singh’s awareness that he lives in times when man’s claim to humanity is under cloud, tantalizes the readers with the possibility of the recovery of Ishar Singh’s humanity:

> These reflections clarify that he is not a dehumanized, hard-core criminal, but a person who lost his head temporarily in the madness that was the order of the day. The savage act had no specific purpose. The absurdity of the act shames him and he is unable to carry on with life as before. The incident sensitizes him to the absurdity and vagaries of the human existence and hence his reflections. In Manto’s characteristic style of writing, there is no attempt by IS [Ishar Singh] to moralize or seek forgiveness. Yet the fact that IS gracefully accepts the punishment rendered by KK [Kalwant Kaur] acquires a state of tranquility, shows that Manto had not lost faith in human qualities, despite being a witness and a victim of the tragedy that was partition. (Singh 277)

The awareness that makes Ishar Singh see the depth of his degradation will urge him back to rediscover the human dignity in which his redemption lies.

Manto’s reposing of faith in the humanity of a subaltern like Ishar Singh, which comes as stark contrast to his total lack of faith in the bourgeoisie volunteers who rape Sakina so severely in “Khol Do,” is what provoked the Pakistan government into proscribing the two stories on the charge of obscenity. As Priyamvada Gopal shows through her critical analysis of the cultural politics of the court proceedings, particularly of the distinction made between the focus of Manto’s defense on “‘different aspects of real life’ ” and the State’s prosecution’s insistence on “‘the moral condition of our

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domain'" (259), the main reason for the State's wrath was that Manto, by making a low life character like Ishar Singh determine the moral norm, had allowed the subaltern to trespass into the domain of "a cultural elite who alone knew the difference between wrong and right" (252).

Impatient with Manto’s ironic representation of the partition violence from a subalternist perspective, the Pakistan government concluded Manto to be a lunatic and forced him into an asylum—an experience which Manto uses as the setting for "Toba Tek Singh." According to Zafar Payani, who finds the story autobiographical, what Manto seeks to tell through the story is that "the whole of India and Pakistan is a huge asylum in which there is no room for a person who treasures his art, i.e. Toba Tek Singh. People try to circumscribe him within the boundary of a nation-state and wants to paste the label of State doctrines and ideologies on his forehead . . . [but he alone resists like Bishan Singh]" (qtd. in Ranasubhe 242-43).

"Toba Tek Singh" recreates the trauma of all those people, who, like Manto, after the partition of India, were compelled to be confined to or forced to migrate to the appropriate side on the basis of their religion. There is hardly any physical violence delineated in the narrative except for the force used to push the lunatics to what is considered to be the proper side of the border for them. All other prominent markers of the partition violence related to migration such as attacking the convoy, looting the belongings, killing the people and abducting women are merely implied in his erstwhile neighbor, Fazal Deen’s conversation with Bishan Singh in the asylum: "‘Your people have all reached Hindustan safely. I did whatever I could for them. Your daughter, Roop Kaur . . .’ He stopped in mid-sentence. . . . ‘Yes, she too is quite well. She too
has gone away with the others’” *(For Freedom’s Sake* 146). Yet Bishan Singh’s trauma at the Damocles’ sword of dislocation hanging over his head is told with such dizzying force that the simple-looking irony of the sane being insane (and the illogical sounding logical) unlocks the violence associated with the dislocation and heightens the absurdity of its religious basis through Bishan Singh’s knowledge of his own shock in the metairony of every new effect of shock that both his demented incantation and his death at no-man’s land near India-Pakistan border produce:

“Bishan Singh leaped to one side and ran back to his companions who were still there. The Pakistani soldiers caught hold of him and tried to push him toward the other side, but he refused to move. ‘Toba Tek Singh is here!’ And then he raised his voice: ‘Opar di gurgur di annexe di bay dhiana di mung di daal o f Toba Tek Singh and Pakistan.’ . . .

Just before sunrise, a deafening cry erupted from the throat of a mute and immovable Bishan Singh. Several officials rushed to the spot and found that the man who had remained on his legs, day and night for fifteen years, was now lying on his face. Over there, behind the barbed wires, lay Hindustan. Over here, behind identical wires lay Pakistan. In between on a bit of land that had no name, lay Toba Tek Singh. (148)

Krishna Sobati points out that she “has seen many people first laugh at the gibberish, then cry and again laugh or cry together” (19). The breaking of the boundary between laughter and cry here may be taken as an example of metairony in its typical use. The laughter that stems from shock “is a sign of inferiority in comparison to those with the true wisdom” (Baudelaire qtd. in Newmark). Laughter and cry, alternatives to muteness, wordlessly express man’s shock at his fallen condition. The metaironic shock, which Bishan Singh’s gibberish generates, thus valorizes his resistance to the forcible repatriation in sharp contradistinction to the passive acquiescence of millions of others including Manto himself. Bishan Singh’s death, which further reinforces the resistance, turns out to be a *tour de force* in the use of metairony: the shock emanating
from the “acting out” of the trauma by the fictional witness does not merely work towards him but also redounds to the story writer and the readers. At this point, the boundary between the experience of shock and experience as shock is broken. “Toba Tek Singh” exemplifies, in a classic way, the de Manian concept of irony as dédoublement. Any boundary between art and life collapses at the point the trauma of forced migration is relived, for when the survivor-readers break down, they vicariously witness the violent uprooting with all its unspeakable horrors.

Manto’s treatment of trauma in “Toba Tek Singh” shows its impact on the subaltern victim through metairony, which not only ricochets to the many victims (who are the readers) like him but it also brings to the fore the resistance that the fictional victim, the detritus of society, puts up against the State’s attempt to repatriate him forcibly on grounds of an artificially and arbitrarily constructed identity based on religious difference rather than his cultural rootedness. The metaironic trauma that the fictional lunatic is able to “act out” carries the potentiality of enabling numerous similar victims of uprooting like him to relive (and thereby come to terms with) the twin shocks—the physical one of being forced to dislocate and the psychological one of a life of exile after relocation—which people on both sides of the Radcliffe line have been unable to deal with even after a decade of the lacerating line vivisecting India in two nation-states. That only the insane subaltern has the agency to trigger the “acting out” of the traumas and not the sane millions who allowed themselves to be bludgeoned into dislocating and relocating betrays Manto’s perceived sympathy with the subaltern—a politics of metairony, which is further supported by the “working through” of the trauma

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of the protagonist of “Thanda Gosht.” The affirmative nature of irony in “Thanda Gosht” presents a stark contrast to the pessimistic irony in “Khol Do,” “Xuda Ki Qasam,” and Siyah Hashiye. Whereas “Thanda Gosht” shows that the moral cognition that comes out of subaltern Ishar Singh’s experience of violence can lead to a regenerative transformation of the violent psyche, “Khol Do” shows that the State-controlled upholders of bourgeoisie (and/or elite) morality can stoop to horribly nauseating levels. Leslie Flemming attributes the anomaly to “two basic and opposing tendencies [in Manto]: a humanistic, tender regard for other people and an anarchistic desire to rebel against all restraints” (1-2). That the irony in “Thanda Gosht” is considerably modified with sympathy in contrast to the shocking irony of the other two stories seems to be in consonance with the Devil’s role as ironist. As Charles Glicksberg remarks, if the Devil “carries his nihilism far enough, he comes to realize that it is absurd to denounce the universe” (165). By pushing ahead with his nihilism, Devil Manto, unlike the so-called saints of the society, neither papers over the evil in the name of safeguarding morality nor does he normalize the violence under the alibi of discouraging incitement.

With the twin weapons of irony and metairony, Manto analyzes and represents the eruption of the violence at the time of the partition of India with such a precision that keeps the relentless violence at the center—locatable right in the middle of the traumatized self of the victims, victimizers, witnesses and survivors. If Manto is a Devil at all, he is of the kind-hearted kind who comes hard on the thugs that have created troubles for mankind in the name of religion and politics but who sympathizes with an
ordinary human being like Ishar Singh that fishes in troubled waters only in the brief moment of madness let loose by the power-hungry bourgeoisie.
Gandhi’s role in the partition of India has been a controversial issue. While the secular nationalist discourse, which gives short shrift to the events of partition in the history of modern India, does not hold Gandhi responsible for the vivisection of the nation at all, there have been periodic attempts in the right wing Hindu nationalist discourse “to hold him responsible for not only appeasing Muslims at the cost of Hindus but also for bringing about the existence of Pakistan” (Zakaria vii). The revisionist history of modern India as posited by the Subaltern Studies Group merely points to Gandhi’s political appropriation of India’s massive subaltern population for what was largely a bourgeoisie nationalist campaign for independence from the colonial British rule. Interpreting the first few volumes of *Subaltern Studies*, Henry Schwarz points out, “The Indian middle classes achieved independence at the expense of their underclass compatriots. The exploits of middle-class leaders are well researched, but the story of their collaboration with English power and their betrayal of the immense and heterogeneous underclass populations remain untold” (147). One of the greatest and the most immediate betrayals was partition, which turned out to be a tragedy on the scale of the holocaust for the sizeable subaltern populations, especially those living in the states of Punjab and Bengal that were split to create Pakistan.

Yet the event has received a peripheral treatment in the nationalist discourse on modern India. Both the nationalist Indian historiography and its British counterpart, however, do not look back at the decade dispassionately. The tendency to keep the bourgeoisie nationalism afloat gets reflected in both the Indian and the British
Establishment discourse on partition, the most obvious example of which is the 1982 Indo-British blockbuster (Gandhi), which foregrounds the independence and sings paeans of Mahatma Gandhi for making it possible, but which downplays its crowning calamity: the partition and its bloody aftermath. The demands of the bourgeoisie nationalist discourse, as Gyanendra Pandey argues, make the mainstream historians posit Hindu-Muslim conflicts that led to partition as a “secondary story . . . [and] as minor elements in the main drama of India’s struggle for independence from colonial rule” (“In Defense of the Fragment” 29). Textbook history dismisses partition and its holocaust-like bloody aftermath, merely as an aberration—an “aberration in the sense that violence is seen as something removed from the general run of Indian history: a distorted form, an exceptional moment, not the ‘real’ history of India at all” (27). The thrust of textbook history is on foregrounding the image of India as a secular, peace-loving republic. In this history, Gandhi is looked upon as the crusader of a secular, pacific polity and the bulwark of Indian nationhood. The present chapter turns to Indian English partition fiction of the 1950s to undertake a study of Gandhi’s role in the partition of India through an exploration of the language of violence in novelists such as R. K Narayan, Khushwant Singh and Balachandra Rajan. It tries to show that while Narayan’s Waiting for the Mahatma (1955) and Singh’s Train to Pakistan (1956) canonize Gandhi as the Deity, Rajan’s The Dark Dancer (1958) applauds the Mahatma’s role in ending the violence of the partition riots. All these three novels, which fall within the secular nationalist problematic, while privileging Gandhi’s supreme sacrifice and the Gandhian values, considerably elide partition violence and treats it as an exceptional moment and as an
unfortunate accident in the triumphant march of an emerging nation-state along its secular, democratic and tolerant path.

*Waiting for the Mahatma* happens to be the only overtly historical-cum-political novel of R. K. Narayan. Written in the hagiographic mode, the narrative seeks to deify Gandhi, while celebrating India’s independence in 1947. The novel roughly covers the period from 1941 (Quit India Movement) to the assassination of Gandhi in 1948. Apart from Mahatma Gandhi, the other two central characters are Sriram and Bharati. Sriram’s romance with Bharati, one of the most ardent adherents of Gandhi, is set against the struggle for independence. Sriram comes across Bharati in Malgudi during Gandhi’s political visit to the town. The theme of the Bharati-Sriram romance, which sees Sriram eventually emerging into manhood, is tied to India’s march to independence under the leadership of Gandhi.

Narayan gives a rather comprehensive treatment of Gandhi and Gandhism in the novel. He incorporates almost the entire gamut of Gandhian ethical-cum-political beliefs such as *ahimsa, satyagraha*, upliftment of the *harijans*, universal love, simple living, truth, cotton-spinning and religious tolerance. He does not limit the treatment of these beliefs to Gandhi’s speeches, but he also extends it to the romantic realm wherein he shows Bharati as inspiring Sriram to take to the Gandhian way of life. Through Bharati, Gandhi oversees Sriram’s emergence into manhood just as he supervises India’s march to freedom.

Narayan portrays Gandhi as a Deity whom people follow blindly. He uses expressions such as “Presence” (56) with capital P and “Great Presence” with capital G and P to refer to Gandhi. The ending of the novel also reinforces such a view: Gandhi
born as an incarnation to rescue India. The novel ends with twin events: the assassination of Gandhi and Bharati’s marriage with Sriram. What the twin events at the end cumulatively symbolize is that Gandhi is not so much slain as he is translated: his mission accomplished, like his predecessors such as Lord Ram and Lord Krishna, he shrugs human existence.

The hagiographic strain, however, is considerably marred by Narayan’s ironic eye. Narayan’s failure to curb his ironic instinct results in the dispersal of ironic thrusts throughout the novel, especially with regard to the reception of Gandhian ideology. The use of irony, however, remains merely a technique of observation; it remains local in use and never broadens out into a vision. The ironic account of the doings of the municipal chairman, Mr. Natesh, can be cited as an example. With his facile observation of incongruous situations, Narayan could have, like Tagore in Home and the World, attempted a delineation of the Gandhian movement in telling irony, exposing the seamy side of the Gandhian activists, but the deliberate hagiographic goal prevents him from doing so on a proper magnitude. To give another example, Sriram’s baptism with Gandhism is introduced with a telling piece of irony when the protagonist, looking wistfully at a cucumber vendor, thinks, “Waiting for the Mahatma makes one very thirsty” (22). But the protagonist’s ironic observations are not sustained throughout. The observations remain only sporadic and do not lead to a sustained strategy motivated by a larger purpose. Given the fact that Sriram is the protagonist and his actions constitute the cog of the wheel of the plot, the lack of purposive irony weakens the political theme. On the other hand, irony through its negative undercuttings here and there takes the sheen off
the hagiographic portrayal. Had Narayan’s avowed purpose not been to deify Gandhi, he would have exploited Sriram’s point of view for a full ironic vision.

What is ironic about the ironic eye of Narayan in *Waiting for the Mahatma* is that his hagiographic purpose makes him fail to see the discrepancy that obtains between the Mahatma’s insistent plea for universal love arising from a heart bereft of any “residue of bitterness for past history” (27) and the blood and bitterness of the partition of the country into Hindustan and Pakistan. The partition, in reality, was the repudiation of the Gandhian Freedom Movement because the movement was solely and strictly based on the principle of non-violence and universal love. Yet Narayan does not probe the discrepancy ironically. In fact, the partition is dismissed as a side issue to the romance of Bharati-Sriram and the independence of India. The partition is introduced in the novel through a newspaper report. The communal frenzy arising out of the issue of partition even threatens to engulf Sriram while on a railway journey to Delhi. Though Narayan refers to the horrible riots in Bengal and Bihar and Gandhi’s fast unto death sit-ins to stop the horror, he intriguingly leaves out the Punjab, which witnessed the most horrid scenes of communal violence. Narayan’s inclusion of the communal violence in Bengal and Bihar at the expense of the unprecedented rioting in the Punjab serves his hagiographic purpose, for Gandhi’s success in containing the violence through fast unto death sit-ins in Bengal in particular, as Rafiq Zakaria mentions, had won him universal commendation:

The [Muslim] League organ of Calcutta, *Morning News*, commented that Gandhi was ready to die so that the Muslims could live peacefully. Likewise *The Times*, London, wrote that what the Mahatma had achieved, several military divisions could not have accomplished. C. R., the Governor, known as Gandhi’s conscience keeper, observed, ‘Gandhiji has achieved many things but there has been nothing, not even independence, which is so truly wonderful, as his victory over evil in Calcutta.’ (236)
Gyanendra Pandey cites exactly this kind of selective foregrounding of Gandhi’s riot-controlling fasts and tours from Bipin Chandra’s *Modern India* to establish his point that the nationalist historiography, of which Chandra’s textbook is a typical example, takes special care to project Gandhi as the essence of national unity and as a major contributor the stable and natural sojourn of India along “its secular, democratic, nonviolent and, tolerant path” even in the midst of irrational communal carnage (“In Defense of the Fragment” 30). The nationalist discourse endows Gandhi’s massacre with supreme sacrifice so that the Hindus and the Muslims could live in peaceful co-existence.

Khushwant Singh, like R. K. Narayan, configures *Train to Pakistan* (1956) after Gandhi’s martyrdom. Like his predecessor, he also considerably elides the violence, even though he does not choose the hagiographic mode but a tragic track thick with “stark realism” (Shahane 65). The elision gets reflected in his sinister silence about the communalism that led to the partition violence and his “dishonest” depiction of the Hindu/Sikh-Muslim camaraderie in pre-partition Punjab (Harrison 99). V. T. Girdhari remarks in this regard: “Khushwant Singh’s picture of Indian society in *Train to Pakistan* is like the state of Eden before and after the Fall. Symbolic Eden in Mano Majra and the date of the Fall is summer of ’47” (82). Singh elides the violence with a three-pronged goal in mind: to project the partition of Indian as undesirable, to highlight India’s commitment to secularism, and to salvage the battered image of the Sikhs severely criticized in some quarters for having matched the barbarism unleashed by the Muslims. Throwing further light on Singh’s third goal, Prafulla C. Kar comments that by representing the partition violence the way he does in *Train to Pakistan*, Singh tries to absolve himself and his community of all their partition-related sins:
The novel is indeed about the sense of guilt weighing heavily on the conscience of the community as well as individuals. Reviewing the book in *The New York Herald Tribune Book Review*, R. H. Glauber says: “Individuals redeem themselves, but the weight of guilt remains in the community.” Although Singh has not been personally affected by the partition in a major way, by being a Sikh and a Punjabi he could not possibly escape from the sense of guilt resulting from his awareness of the role played by the Sikhs in the communal frenzy. (92)

Khushwant Singh’s remission of the Sikhs’ malevolent participation in the partition violence adds a new dimension to the three common patterns that Saros Cowasjee identifies in Indian English partition fiction by the Sikhs: one, the presence of Sikh protagonists, two, documentary authentications from newspaper reports, and three, the justification of Sikh brutality against the Muslims as counter-violence (81-82). While *Train to Pakistan* conforms to the afore-mentioned patterns, it adds a new dimension to the Sikh representation of partition violence: a conscious foregrounding of the Sikhs as civilized citizens vis-à-vis the barbaric Muslims through the configuration of the protagonist, Juggat Singh after the supreme sacrifice of Mahatma.

Juggat Singh, alias Jugga, inhabits the village of Mano Majra located right at the border between India and the newly created State of Pakistan. Khushwant Singh presents Mano Majra, which is intended as the microcosm of India, as the archetype of a secular haven where people of diverse religions live in harmonious co-existence. Singh stresses the communal amity prevailing in the village through the reference to “a three foot slab of sandstone . . . the local deity, the *deo* to which all the villagers—Hindu, Sikh, Muslim or the psuedo-Christian repair secretly whenever they are in special need of blessing” (10-11). In particular, there exists a special relationship between the Sikhs and the Muslims—a relationship of the nature of the indivisibility between the nail and the muscle:
The mullah at the mosque knows that it is time for the morning prayer. He has a quick wash, stands facing west towards Mecca and with his fingers 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)

It is as if the Sikh priest’s morning religious prayer would remain unoffered without the mullah’s prayer. Besides, the Sikh temple performs a secular role: it functions as the venue where the Sikhs and the Muslims meet to discuss common problems. Given such inter-communal camaraderie prevailing in Mano Majra, the partition violence is only a freak occurrence, “as something removed from the general run of Indian history: a distorted form, an exceptional moment, not the ‘real’ history of India at all” (Pandey, “In Defense of the Fragment” 27).

By thus highlighting the secular state of Mano Majra even in the summer of 1947, Khushwant Singh conveniently forgets the Pakistan movement premised on the notion of cultural incompatibility. Rupinderjit Saini dubs Singh’s amnesia of the existence of the inter-communal merely a ploy “to mislead the reader” and finds the lack of communal conflict in Mano Majra “hard to believe” (107). As the Other of secular nationalism, (Pakistani) Muslims are stereotyped as barbarians in Train to Pakistan even though Singh claims objectivity in what can be said as the historical prologue to the narrative proper: “Muslims said the Hindus had planned and started the killing. According to the Hindus, the Muslims were to blame. The fact is, both sides killed. Both shot and stabbed and speared and clubbed. Both tortured. Both raped” (9). The so-called “artistic objectivity and detachment” turns out to be a phony balance as Singh cannot resist imaging the

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Muslims as the total other of the Hindus and the Sikhs. For example, Jugga tells his co-prisoner, Iqbal about the brutality of the evacuating Baluch soldiers:

... a truckful of Baluch soldiers ... were going from Amritsar to Lahore. When they were getting near the Pakistani border, the soldiers began to stick bayonets in Sikhs going along the road. The driver would slow down near a cyclist or a pedestrian, the soldiers on the footboard would stab him in the back and then the driver would accelerate away fast. They killed many people like this and were feeling happier and happier as they got nearer Pakistan. (83)

The Baluch soldiers come out as totally evil and completely irrational violence-mongers indulging in such cruelties of which even the much-maligned monsters in Hindu mythology would be ashamed. Singh continues in his Muslim-bashing as he keeps on pointing to the Sikhs' historical distrust of Muslims and holding up the latter's image as cruel, disloyal and lecherous savages:

The Sikhs were sullen and angry. "Never trust a Mussulman," they said. The last guru had warned them that Muslims had no loyalties. He was right. All through the Muslim period of Indian history, sons had imprisoned or killed their own fathers and brothers had blinded brothers to get the throne ... And Muslims were never ones to respect women. Sikh refugees had told of women jumping into wells and burning themselves rather than fall into the hands of Muslims. Those who did not commit suicide were paraded naked in the streets, raped in public, and then murdered ... These were reasons enough to be angry with someone. So they decided to be angry with the Muslims; Muslims were basely ungrateful. Logic was never a strong point with Sikhs; when they were roused, logic did not matter at all. (141-42)

Khushwant Singh's totally negative portrayal of the Muslims in the passage above, wherein he harps on the negativity to justify the Sikhs' counter-violence (euphemistically presented as anger) looks monstrous in the face of his gentle criticism of the Sikhs (as rash when roused to anger) tagged at the tail of the long passage. Interestingly, K. K. Sharma and B. K. Johri cite the same tagged sentence to sustain their argument about Singh's even-handedness in the representation of partition violence: Khushwant Singh
“holds up Muslim frenzy responsible for the cruelties, but at the same time he finds the Sikhs equally responsible for the massacre” (76). However, as the passage shows, Singh shifts almost the entire blame onto the Muslims for the massive violence that occurred during the partition of India. In this connection, even a recent critical verdict that *Train to Pakistan* “does not give in to the temptation to blame some violent ‘outsider’ as the motivation behind all evil, which is of course the easy fiction, the scapegoat that we offer for our own misdeeds” sounds untenable (Kaul 18).

Having identified the Muslims as the villains—the makers of the partition violence—he goes about eliding the violence in Mano Majra by attributing it to the criminals and outsiders: the dacoit gang of Malli and a young provocateur from outside the village. As Frances Harrison rightly remarks, “Singh acquits the masses from the charge of premeditated, organized arms build-ups and he depicts them as the victims of manipulation, fiery rhetoric and anger of the moment” (101). The narrative of *Train to Pakistan* toes the veiled nationalist line that instigators and outsiders misguide the innocent masses living in peace with their religious Other. Like the nationalist history wherein partition is metaphorically likened to a natural disaster removing the violent event from the domain of human agency, the violence of 1947 is represented in the novel “in terms of philosophic determinism” in which human deliberation and agency get effaced at the expense of “the idea of Karma as total surrender to a deterministic world” (Kar 97-98).

One may see the same pattern of eliding the violence in Khushwant Singh’s description of the ghost train that, however, turns out to be his *tour de force*. Taking a cue from Saadat Hasan Manto, who deftly masks the gruesomeness of the violence
without losing its intensity and pointedness in his partition stories in general and the ironic capsule stories in particular, Singh considerably conceals the violence aboard what is by now known as the “death trains” while at the same time enabling his readers to form vicariously a graphic picture of the macabre dance of violence aboard the trains. Though Singh fails to match the inimitable ironic style of Manto, his treatment of the railways in *Train to Pakistan* is not unironic. The clue to Singh’s irony lies not only in his “prose that is dry, bare and laconic” (Cowasjee 86), but also in the shocking contrast that the narrative of *Train to Pakistan* builds up between the ghost trains loaded with dead bodies and the goods trains that acted as nighttime “lullaby to lull them [the Mano Majran children] to sleep” (93). Besides holding the mirror up to history, through the use of the train as the marker of modernity in and the bearer of communal violence to Mano Majra, Khushwant Singh ironizes the claims made on behalf of modernity and secularism:

> The nexus represented by the railway between the community, the nation and modernity, already well-established by the point of independence, gained another layer of meaning during Partition. As refugees clamored for spaces on the train, they placed their trust in the sanctity of that space. The railway offered itself as a national space that through a secular modernity transcended religious enmity and violence. These were spaces sanctioned by modernity and secularism, yet within them 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 allegiances), were anything but safe. . . This breakdown of the “railway space,” represented as a “ghost train” in Khushwant Singh . . . represents the recoding of national/local space of the railway, now as modern secular/communal space as well. (Aguiar 102-103)

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2 For example, the capsule story “Hospitality Delayed” from *Black Margins* tr. Mushirul Hasan, *Inventing Boundaries: Gender, Politics and the Partition of India*, ed. Mushirul Hasan (New Delhi: Oxford UP, 1995): “Rioters brought the running train to a halt. People belonging to the other community were pulled out and slaughtered with swords and bullets. The remaining passengers were treated to halwa, fruits and milk. The chief organizer said, ‘Brothers and sisters, news of this train’s arrival was delayed. That is why we’ve not been able to entertain youlavishly—the way we wanted to’ ” (295).
Through the blurring of the boundary between the national and the local spaces, *Train to Pakistan* exposes the contradictions within the national project. More specifically, the depiction of the degeneration of the national space into the space of communal bloodbath, which shows the betrayal of the trust that the hapless people had placed in the (modern and secular) national space, invites Singh’s ironic scorn.

It is the betrayal of the trust and the apathy of the leaders to the victims of partition violence that fire his animus at “the Gandhi-caps in Delhi [who] know [nothing] about the Punjab . . . What is happening on the other side in Pakistan does not matter to them” (31). It is in this ironic vein that Singh ridicules Jawahar Lal Nehru’s famous “tryst with destiny speech” delivered at the august moment of India’s independence from the British colonial rule through the following words he puts in the mouth of the Commissioner of Police, Hukum Chand: “Yes, Mr. Prime Minister, you made your tryst. So did many others—on the 15th August, Independence day” (201). The tryst of partition victims contrasts ironically with Nehru’s own tryst and the tryst of the Indians he visualizes. The contrasting classes of people that Singh’s irony here reveals have been noted in the revisionist history of the Partition of India as “a ‘ruling’ (privileged) class celebrating independence and a ‘refugee’ class unable to do so” (Pandey, *Remembering Partition* 125). To the latter in particular, Mahatma Gandhi represented “a Hindu-hater, a Muslim lover—an enemy” because he had blocked them from meting out a similar treatment to the Muslims of northern India in order to compensate for the loss of their family members and property in Pakistan (Malgonkar 12). What, however, strikes as significant in *Train to Pakistan* is that Khushwant Singh does not direct his ire at
Mahatma Gandhi whom he, through the remark of the Muslim priest, not only commends as being religious and yet secular but he also invokes him as a Deity:

“All the world respects a religious man. Look at Gandhi! I hear he reads the Koran Sharif and the Unjeel along his Vedas and Shastras. People sing his praise in the four corners of the earth. I have seen a picture in a newspaper of Gandhi’s prayer meeting. It showed a lot of white men and women sitting cross-legged. One white girl had her eyes shut. They said that she was the big Lord’s daughter. You see, Meet Singha, even the English respect a man of religion.” (63)

By completely effacing the refugees’ negative view but by maintaining the nationalist valorization of Gandhi as a leader committed to religious tolerance and secularism, Khushwant Singh prepares the ground for modeling the sacrifice of the Sikh protagonist after that of the national hero. In the configuration, however, instead of privileging the doctrine of non-violence, Singh highlights the protagonist’s unshaken belief in Sikhism even at a time when it is being grossly abused in the tit-for-tat business. After his release from jail, on learning that the train carrying his beloved, Nooran and the fellow Muslims from Mano Majra to Pakistan is to be sabotaged, Jugga runs to the Sikh temple where the priest, Bhai Meet Singh reads him from Guru Nanak’s morning prayer which, among other things, stresses the oneness of humans and religions. This heightened sense of oneness, initially triggered by his love for Nooran and cemented by Nanaka’s message, makes him come forward in the defense of the Muslims. The novel ends with his heroic act of foiling the sabotage of the train to Pakistan and in the process getting himself killed. His self-sacrificing intervention, which “breaks the rule of the jungle, ‘an eye for an eye, a tooth for tooth’ ” (Patel 52), recalls Gandhi’s death which “wiped out the blaze of Hindu-Muslim violence in such a way that the “‘the world veritably changed’” (Pandey, Remembering Partition 145). Jugga’s somatic sacrifice, besides upholding
India's secularism, marks the triumph of Sikhism as a secular religion, and in this sense Singh's artistic transmutation of partition violence blends his Sikh perspective with the nationalist representation along the lines of which Jugga, like Gandhi, suffers the wrong himself rather than inflicting it on others. Juggat Singh, however, in contrast to the protagonist(s) of Waiting for the Mahatma, neither comes to the fore as a truly Gandhian follower nor is there a "sufficient foregrounding" in the narrative to make his heroic sacrifice look credible (Kar 98).

Unlike Khushwant Singh's half-hearted patterning of the protagonist in Train to Pakistan, Balachandra Rajan, in The Dark Dancer, casts the heroine, as "a 'female Gandhi' " figure (Lewis Gannett qtd. in Verma 138). While practicing active non-violence which, to quote Gandhi himself, "postulates the conquest of the adversary by suffering in one's person," Kamala embraces death fearlessly in an effort to stop the avalanche-like partition violence out to engulf the Indian Muslims at Shantipur in Punjab (114). Balachandra Rajan pits her against Cynthia, the British temptress threatening to snatch her husband, Krishnan, who is going through a crisis of identity after a decade long stay in England, away from her. Unlike Cynthia, who disagrees with Krishnan's praise of the role of non-violence in procuring India's freedom and who reduces non-violence to a philosophy of "resignation" rather than "pacifism" (126), Kamala sees the Gandhian weapon as "a moral discovery" (49) and an ever-falling drop of water which "wears down injustice, to the very stones of conscience" (50). Like Gandhi, she sees the cause of the partition of India not so much in the divide and rule policy of the British in

the form of communal electorates—a position held in the novel by Krishnan—as in the moral degradation of the Indians. Kamala tells Cynthia:

It isn’t really in anything that your people did. You couldn’t have brought it out if it wasn’t in us. It’s all in us, in the many, many years of occupation, submission to the State, obedience to the family, every inch of our lives completely calculated, every step, down to the relief of the grave. And if we wanted to protest, there was only the pitiless discipline of non-violence. Then all of a sudden the garden belongs to us, and we reach up into the blossoming tree to pluck ashes. (74-75)

Kamala not only sees the Gandhian non-violent campaign against the British essentially as a moral war directed against the mindset of enslavement, dehumanization, oppression and injustice but she also credits the securing of the garden of independent India to the non-violent power in action. The fruit of freedom is there to be enjoyed, but for the moral degradation of the people coming to the fore right at the time of plucking, it is reduced to ashes of the partition. Unlike many of her compatriots, Kamala, a true Gandhian does not have even a streak of the moral degradation; she believes that by refusing revenge, she can change the heart of the opponent and that by practicing non-violence one can live in peaceful co-existence with other people. Staying true to her convictions, she goes to the riot-torn Shantipur to provide the much-needed healing touch—an action that seeks to stem the tide of the barbarism of violence.

Balachandra Rajan, however, does not show the triumph of non-violence without bringing in the radical Hindutva view, which had constantly questioned its validity in the wake of what it alleged as the Muslim-perpetrated violence on the Hindus and the Sikhs in 1946-48. Rajan problematizes the viability of non-violence in the face of armed aggression through the Medical Officer’s taunting of Krishnan and Kamala, who persuade him not to use the revolver against the rioters descending on the hospital.
Teasing Krishnan in particular, the medical officer says, “If a tiger walked into this office you’d reason with it until somebody else shot it or it died of old age” (236). The officer here echoes those Gandhi-baiters who find the Mahatma’s stickling upon non-violence morally wrong when counter-violence remains the only option left “to ensure survival and justice” against a resolute enemy (Elst 141).

Balachandra Rajan similarly problematizes Kamala’s sacrificial death, which occurs while trying to save the honor of a Muslim girl. At one place, he describes Krishnan’s taking her death in a language reminiscent of Nehru’s speech at the time of Gandhi’s death: “... it was only when the light went out that one suddenly recognized there could be no shining” (276). Rajan invests Kamala’s death with special significance in a way that allows the fictional and historical matrices of the novel to coalesce with each other in unique way. Kamala’s death, which demonstrates to Krishnan that she, like Gandhi, “died as she had lived, holding fast to her principle no matter what it cost, gives him the much-needed self-knowledge that makes him see the solution to the crisis of identity with which he is faced right from the beginning of the novel. For the bereaved but now enlightened husband, the wife’s murder, like Gandhi’s assassination,

more than any single event, served to stop the communal violence surrounding partition. It achieved this in the same way as his fasts, by causing people to pause and reflect in the midst of their fear, anger, and enmity: to ask themselves if the cost was worth it. A mixture of motives

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1 Mushirul Hasan, John Company to the Republic: A Story of Modern India (New Delhi: Roli Books, 2001), quotes Nehru’s address to the nation at Gandhi’s death: “The light has gone out of our lives... yet I was wrong. For the light that shone in the country was no ordinary light. The light that has illumined for these many, many years will continue to illumine the country for many more years” (141-42).

5 See, for example, Kalpana Wandrekar, The Ailing Aliens: A Study of the Immigrant Psyche in Six Indian Novels (Gulbarga: Jiwe Publications, 1996), wherein the author remarks: “Watching Kamala’s death struggle brings Krishnan’s mind to peace and he finds meaning in it. Krishnan the inside outsider who reacted to his land as “unreal” at the beginning finds the reality in it” (60).
was probably at work, merciful and rational as well as grief-stricken or
guilt-ridden. But somehow a determination came to stop the killing. If
Gandhi’s assassination had resulted, as so many assassinations have, in an
increase of violence and recrimination, then it may be deemed a tragic
comment on the futility of nonviolence. As it happened, in the eloquent
words of a prominent Muslim politician: “His assassination had a
cathartic effect and throughout India men realized with a shock the depth
to which hatred and discord had dragged them. The Indian nation turned
back from the brink of the abyss and millions blessed the memory of the
man who had made redemption possible.” There was no higher tribute to
his life than the impact of his death, his final statement for swaraj. (Dalton
167)

But the medical officer, as above, disagreeing with Krishnan, reads Kamala’s sacrifice
differently: the physician does not attribute the cessation of the violent hostilities in
Shantipur to Kamala’s death but to people’s tiredness, which he puts as people having
“satisfied their appetite” (282). Rajan, however, ensures that the readers do not go by the
physician’s line of thinking, for he finds the doctor’s deconstruction of Kamala’s death a
“response, being human, had to be corrupt” and coming from a man from the outer world
bereft of the insight to see a pure act as totally pure (293). In the penultimate page of the
novel, Rajan, through Krishnan’s categorical assertion that Kamala died to uphold “what
was right,” once and for all sets at rest any doubts whatsoever about the novel’s
nationalist line that Kamala, like Gandhi, has uncompromisingly adhered to the doctrine
of non-violence (307).

That Balachandra Rajan does not allow the Hindutva perception of partition and
Gandhi to crystallize in The Dark Dancer is unequivocally underscored at the end,
wherein the author quotes from the Bhagavad-Gita to celebrate Kamala as the Gandhi-
incarnate who brings hope through a Gandhi-like demonstration of her staunch belief in
absolute non-violence. That he completely rules out Savarkar’s rebuttal of “the Gandhian
reading of ancient texts and consequent understanding of the Hindu religion as revolving
around *ahimsa*, satya and God” is ostensible from his choice of the quote from the *Bhagavad-Gita* referring to Krishna’s extremely hopeful words which, interestingly, leave out the Lord’s refutation of Arjuna’s pacifist arguments (Puri 155). Rajan shows Krishnan as having made up his mind to refashion his life in line with the following words of Krishna to Arjuna:

> He who seeks freedom  
> Thrusts fear aside,  
> And puts off desire:  
> Truly that man  
> Is made free forever.  
> When thus he knows me  
> The end, the author  
> Of every offering  
> And all austerity,  
> Lord of the worlds  
> And the friend of all men  
> O son of Kunti  
> Shall he not enter  
> The peace of my presence? (308)

It is a portion like this one from the *Bhagavad-Gita* which receives central treatment in Gandhi’s interpretation of the scripture to justify his advocacy of the doctrine of non-violence and *satyagraha*—the two cornerstones of his concept of freedom. For example, in language that echoes some of the keywords in the quote above, Gandhi writes in *Young India*: “*Himsä* is impossible without anger, without attachment, without hatred, and the Gitā strives to carry us to the state beyond *Sattva, Rajas and Tamas*” (qtd. in Bose 170). By thus foregrounding non-violence as the theme of the *Bhagavad-Gita* and, conversely, by downplaying the very *raison d’être* of the divine exhortation—the need to take up arms for upholding righteousness and *dharma*—, Rajan valorizes Gandhian non-violence
as a viable alternative to end the partition fratricide. Renewed in the belief of non-violence through the message of the Bhagavad-Gita and its use in action by Gandhi in the historical matrix and Kamala in the fictional matrix, Balachandra Rajan finally closes with a highly optimistic remark about Krishnan: “He walked back slowly to the strength of his beginning” (308). Krishnan, like India after Gandhi’s martyrdom, walks back to the strength of non-violence, tolerance and secularism. The optimism, with which the novel ends, falls in line with the thrust of the central symbol of Nataraja—the Dark Dancer—standing for both destruction and creation. The duality implicit in the symbol beckons to Krishnan that “the portion of history that has taken a heavy toll of life . . . will soon yield to a restorative phase of creation” (Verma 147). The return to the restorative phase is indicated even earlier on right in the middle of the violence in Shantipur when the narrator of The Dark Dancer compares the sleeping foundling—a survivor of the partition violence being raised by Kamala—to Krishna:

In the center of the storm the child lay naked, its ambiguous pose ready to kick and to welcome. Krishnan thought of Lord Krishna, the infant doomed to death by the tyrant king, carried into the safety of a different storm, into the welcoming of a different torrent. Perhaps this foundling had a destiny also. One day, perhaps, it would grow up into justice, into the playing of mischievous music to milkmaids, one day into the captivating of the truth. (253)

The comparison of the foundling to Lord Krishna on the one hand expresses the hope that beauty will survive the ugliness of partition violence and on the other hand that the violence relegates to the domain of unreason, which forms exceptional rather than regular moments in the development of Indian civilization.

K. D. Verma, The Indian Imagination: Critical Essays on Indian Writing in English (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), comments: “Krishnan sees the partition of India as reenactment in history of the senseless Kurukshetra fratricide in which the blood of thousands of innocent people was split for a cause that did not have any moral justification” (142).
To wrap up, all three novelists discussed above configure their novels after Gandhi’s assassination. Whereas *The Dark Dancer* not only dramatizes how the shock of Gandhi’s murder turns the Indian Nation back from the brink of the abyss but also throws light on Gandhi’s uncanny ability to put theory into practice through the character of Kamala, *Waiting for the Mahatma* makes no secret of R. K. Narayan’s deep admiration for Gandhi, portraying him as a Deity in a hagiographic mode. Khushwant Singh, like Narayan, evokes Gandhi as the Deity, but he keeps the Mahatma only lurking in the background of the narrative of *Train to Pakistan* so as to be able to pattern his protagonist’s sacrifice after the supreme sacrifice of Gandhi in an effort to refurbish the image of the Sikhs in particular and the image of India in general. In all these novels, partition violence remains elided, figuring as something removed from the general run of Indian life.
Nailing Gandhi for Cracking India in Manohar Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges* and Raj Gill's *The Rape*

As the previous chapter shows, the nationalist history of modern India and its literary counterpart of the 1950s elide violence by crediting the attainment of freedom from British rule in 1947 largely to the non-violent campaign of the Indian National Congress and by patterning the accompanying partition riots after the supreme sacrifice of the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi. In sharp contrast to the nationalist discourse, the Hindutva history of modern India such as Savarkar's *Six Glorious Epochs of Indian History*, while underplaying the role of the Congress, attributes the loss of British hold on India to a number of factors, most prominent of them being the violent tactics of the underground elements including those led by the fire-brand leader, Subash Chandra Bose (467-475). The Hindutva view, in the words of Ashok Singhal, explodes "the myth [created by the Congress that] the country won its freedom by the weapon of Ahimsa" to glorify their leader" (5). In this view, the barbaric violence perpetrated on the Hindus and Sikhs by the Muslims, which is appropriated to the overall role of violence in securing independence in 1947, becomes the subject, the object, the instrument, and purpose of the partition-marred independence (4). Whereas the privileging of the Muslims' barbarity on the Hindus and Sikhs becomes the *raison d'être* for revenge, Gandhi—the votary of non-violence—is held as a "'murderer'... and 'a traitor.'"

This chapter argues that, like the right wing history which pins the blame of the partition of India on Gandhi, Manohar Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964) and Raj Gill's

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1 A Sanskrit word meaning “non-injury” but widely translated as “non-violence.”

The Rape (1974) nail the Mahatma for cracking India in 1947. It also shows that while A Bend in the Ganges, with its total dismissal of Gandhian ahimsa (non-violence) in the wake of partition riots and its dexterously developed theme of revenge, conspicuously but artistically encapsulates the Hinduvta view of partition, The Rape, which hovers between a right wing view that calls for revenge and conversely a tempered, secular line accentuating forgiveness, turns out to be structurally flawed. Gill’s tendency to draw on the language of nationalist historiography in the midst of justifying the Sikhs’ atrocities on the Muslims only worsens his use of the prose of otherness, making The Rape a literary disaster. Whereas Gill’s effort to force a balance backfires, Malgonkar’s unambiguousness helps him succeed as a novelist.

A Bend in the Ganges, however, has received a mixed critical reception. Chosen as the best novel of 1964 by E. M. Forster, it was summarily dismissed as a novel presenting “a ludicrous and contemptuous image of our [Indians’] Freedom Movement” by a celebrated Urdu novelist, Quarrtualian Hyder (qtd. in Asnani 71). Another renowned novelist, Khushwant Singh, however, hails A Bend in the Ganges as one of the few novels that “are samples of good writing by Indian writers writing today” (qtd. in Dwivedi 68). At the heart of the sharp critical differences found in the critical reception of A Bend in the Ganges lies Malgonkar’s representation of Gandhian non-violence. Critics anticipating the usual deification of Gandhi get disappointed at finding the novel an “unreliable [...] study of the ideology of non-violence or its operation on men” (Amur

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3 Gyanendra Pandey, “The Prose of Otherness,” Subaltern Studies VIII: Essays in Honour of Ranjit Guha, eds. David Arnold & David Hardiman (New Delhi: Oxford UP, 1994) 188-221. In the essay, Pandey criticizes the use prose of otherness, which depicts a community attribute the violence to the other in an attempt to project itself or its people as being civilized vis-à-vis the barbaric other.

Pro-Gandhian critics find fault with Malgonkar’s objectivity. Asnani, for example, finds Malgonkar “being biased and influenced by his own predilections when he discredits non-violence” (91). Similarly, Sundaram points to the novelist’s lack of objectivity in “show[ing] the failure of non-violence in Punjab, but not its success in Bengal largely due to Gandhi’s presence” (37). N. S. Pradhan goes to the extent of chiding K. K. Sharma for interpreting A Bend in the Ganges as suggesting Gandhi’s culpability in the partition of India as “a rather inept version of . . . [the] view” that rejection of the Gandhian concept of non-violence is the theme of the novel (149). While Malgonkar’s indictment of Gandhian non-violence has raised some critics’ hackles, it has gone down quite well among those who have approached the novel with an open mind. R. S. Singh, for example, lauds Malgonkar for “correct[ing] a lop-sided view of the history of the freedom struggle” (129). Padmanabhavan, in a recent full-length study of Malgonkar, hails the deviation from the norm—the courage to interrogate the Gandhian non-violence on the one hand and to spotlight the Terrorist Movement of the 1930s on the other—as the novelist’s “unique distinction” (4). While including A Bend in the Ganges in the canon of Indian English fiction, Professor Iyengar seizes the novel’s deviation thus: “The shame and agony of the partition, the glory and the defeat of the hour of freedom: the “tryst with destiny” that was the death-trap fashioned by the malignant Time Spirit: the horror and the humiliation, the terror and the pity of it all are the theme of Malgonkar’s novel” (431-32).

The deviation seems to have been actuated by Malgonkar’s belief in the philosophy of the ideologue of Hindutva, V. D. Savarkar. Savarkar’s influence on Malgonkar in writing *A Bend in the Ganges* does not seem far-fetched if one considers his choice of the title, which refers to an episode in *The Ramayana* wherein Ram, Laxaman and Sita pause at a bend in the Ganges to look back at the land of Ayodhya they were leaving, and the constant presence of Lord Shiva inspiring revenge in the narrative in light of Savarkar’s total disapproval of “the Gandhian reading of ancient Hindu texts and consequent understanding of the Hindu religion as revolving around *ahimsa*, satya and God” (Puri 155). *Hindutva*, which Savarkar wrote chiefly as a rebuttal of the Gandhian ideology, constructs “a Hindu-centric conception of the Indian identity. That identity drawing heavily from images of courage and valor in the ancient Hindu texts to build up a militant Hindu persona capable of facing the colonizer on violent terms” (156). Unlike the Gandhian interpretation of Hindu epics in terms of forgiveness and non-violence, epics such as *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata*, in Savarkar’s interpretation, promote “virtues such as honour, dignity, heroic courage; and values such as war fought in a just cause and even terrible violence in the pursuit of ‘rightful,’ restorative vengeance” (162). For Savarkar, justice for the Hindus lies in redressing the balance—the wrongs suffered at the hands of the aliens whether the British or the

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7 Quite a few critics have related the Shiva symbol in *A Bend in the Ganges* to the motifs of violence and revenge. C. M. Mohan, for example, in *Manohar Malgonkar and the Portrait of His Novels* (New Delhi: Reliance Publishing House, 1993), writes: “Malgonkar implies in using the symbol of Shiva that life is full of contrasts like non-violence and violence and it is up to us to live with them. Sometimes violence is justified to root out evil forces. In the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna says that he incarnates himself again and again to destroy evil” (74). However, S. Z. H. Abidi, in “Call of Blood: Theme of Revenge in Manohar Malgonkar’s *A Bend in the Ganges,*” *Panjab University Research Bulletin, Arts* 14.1 (1983), finds the symbol’s connection to the notion of violence and revenge a bit over-stretched, but even he concedes that “it is possible to relate the suggestion of a divine justice meted out to a perfidious friend as a possible interpretation of the use of the Shiva myth in the novel” (78).
Muslims. The reference to the episode of *The Ramayana* and the use of the Shiva symbol in *A Bend in the Ganges* should be seen as legitimatizing the notion of taking arms for righteousness or *dharma*. G. S. Amur, however, takes the text’s validity of the notions of violence and revenge as one of its “blemishes” (121). But he throws further light on Malgonkar’s use of Savarkar in *A Bend in the Ganges* thus:

... his account of the life of the convicts at the Cellular Jail and his description of the Jaora feast owe quite a lot to the extended treatment of these themes in V. D. Savarkar’s *Black Waters* (*Kale Pani*), published in 1937. The influence of Savarkar’s Marathi novel can be seen even in minor details like the secret khobri that Ghasita the Ramoshi, who has a family resemblance with Rafiyuddin of Savarkar’s novel, has at the back of his throat, or the details of the flogging to which Debi Dayal is subjected. One suspects that Malgonkar found his blueprint for the Debi Dayal-Sundari-Gian relationship in the Dolkati-Malati-Kishan relationship in Savarkar’s novel . . . . (117)

The use of Savarkar as pointed by Amur and the references to *The Ramayana* and Lord Shiva in a novel which has been almost unanimously interpreted as dramatizing the validity of violence and revenge bear out the influence of Savarkarism on Malgonkar who, to quote Asha Kaushik, places Gandhism “in a comparative context” in *A Bend in the Ganges*—right at the center of the debate between Gandhi and Savarkar, between *Hind Swaraj* and *Hindutva* (“Partition of India” 44).

That Malgonkar subjects the much-vaunted Gandhian doctrine of non-violence to a critical scrutiny becomes ostensible even from the “Author’s Note,” which he places before the narrative proper gets underway, and wherein he foregrounds his awareness of the irony of the white fabric of independence being stained with the blood of the partition Victims: “What was achieved through non-violence, brought with it one of the

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8 J. Lalitha, “Politics of Freedom: Gandhi in *Kathapura & A Bend in the Ganges*,” *Kakatiya Journal of English Studies* 10 (1990), comments that “the author’s note appended to the novel explains lest we misread the novel . . . It is clear that Malgonkar meant this novel to be a study of the paradoxical and ironic turn that Gandhian creed of non-violence has taken in the end” (30).
bloodiest upheavals of history: twelve million people had to flee, leaving their homes; nearly half a million were killed; over a hundred thousand women, young and old, were abducted, raped, mutilated.” In the narrative proper, Malgonkar further undercuts the non-violent movement. He identifies the relentless pressure exerted by the terrorists and the British reverses in the Second World War, rather the Gandhian non-violent campaign as being the primary contributory factors to the attainment of freedom. The long Gandhi quotation in which the Mahatma himself doubts the efficacy of non-violence and which is placed before the “Author’s Note” sets the mood of the novel:

   This non-violence, therefore, seems to be due mainly to our helplessness. It almost appears as if we were nursing in our bosoms the desire to take revenge the first time we get the opportunity. Can true voluntary non-violence come out of this seeming forced non-violence of the weak? Is it not a futile experiment I am conducting? What if, when the fury bursts, not a man, woman, or child is safe and every man’s hand is raised against the neighbor?

The epigraph, manifesting Gandhi’s self-doubt and self-questioning, sets the tone of the ineffectiveness of non-violence. Malgonkar, however, dramatizes the ineffectualness in a comparative way amidst the bloody backdrop of the partition violence; his tour de force lies in interweaving an intense dialectic between non-violence and violence in the narrative-fabric of A Bend in the Ganges.

Malgonkar introduces the dialectic early on in Gian Talwar’s encounter with Shafi masquerading as a Sikh and known by the pseudo name of Singh. Gian, attracted by Gandhi’s non-violent campaign, wears khaddar, the rough homespun clothes of Indian peasants to proclaim himself as a Gandhian soldier committed to the cause of freedom. The dialectics is set into motion as soon as Singh startles Gian by accusing Gandhi of being “the enemy of India’s national aspirations” (11). If for Gian a patriot is only one
who is a follower of Mahatma Gandhi, for Singh even a non-Gandhian like himself qualifies as a patriot. If Gandhi, to Gian, is "like a god" who "alone can lead us to victory... Through non-violence" (12), to Singh the Mahatma is a hypnotist who has done incalculable harm with his hypnotic power [because there is not even] a single instance in history, of just one country which has been able to shake off foreign rule without resorting to war, to violence" (12). If Singh takes non-violence as "the philosophy of sheep, a creed of cowards" (12), Gian takes it as "the noblest of creeds... [which] takes greater courage; non-violence is not for the weak" (13). Debi Dayal, like Singh, believes that non-violence is a creed for the cowards. However, after his varied experiences and especially his perception of the mounting communal violence on the eve of independence, he develops self-doubt. When he learns from Basu of the violence unleashed by the Muslim League, he tells the terrorist-turned-Hindu Mahasabha activist that "non-violence is perhaps the only answer" to the on-going communal madness (284).

The activist, however, dismisses non-violence with scorn:

Non-violence is merely a pious thought, a dream of a philosopher. I shudder to think what disillusion confronts them; what Gandhi will feel when he sees the holocaust that will engulf this country. He will die a thousand deaths, I tell you, he will suffer for each single man that suffers, Hindu or Muslim, but will he ever recognize that mankind is not prepared for true non-violence—will never be prepared? No! No! He will go on living and preaching his dream. Would you remain non-violent if someone threw acid at the girl you loved?—Would Gandhi? (284-85)

To Basu, the reality of the communal killings leaves no room for non-violence to succeed in such a surcharged atmosphere. He believes that recourse to non-violence at this time of Muslim fury will once again make the Hindus a slave race within weeks of deliverance from the British rule. Non-violence, according to him, is an ineffective weapon against brute force: "Non-violence is all very well if the other party too plays by the rules. It
may prove an effective weapon against the British because of their inherent decency. How far would it have gone against Hitler? Yes, tell me, what would non-violence do against brute force?” (285). Basu believes that the popularity of non-violence among the Hindus will put them at the receiving end of the Hindu-Muslim riots: “For every Hindu that had to die, five will die because of the way the doctrine of non-violence has caught on. More women will be raped, abducted, children slaughtered, because their men will have been made incapable of standing up for themselves” (286). In a world of mounting violence Basu sees Gandhi’s reliance on non-violence and his fast unto death sit-ins in Bengal and Bihar as failing to avert the bloody division of the country.

Basu’s denunciation of the principle of Gandhian non-violence, which looks logical and which wins out in the dialectical conflict,\(^9\) recalls Savarkar’s “denouncing of the doctrine of absolute non-violence not because we are less saintly, but because we are more sensible!” (Keer qtd. in Trehan 108-109). Basu’s dismissal of Gandhian non-violence echoes Malgonkar’s own stance, for even in *The Men Who Killed Gandhi* which privileges the point of view of the assassins, he foregrounds the Gandhian doctrine as being utterly ineffectual in the theater of the naked dance of violence at the time of the partition of India:

The truth was that Gandhi’s non-violence had lost out to violence; no one else believed in his ‘ahimsa’ any longer, inside or outside the Congress. Whatever its force in normal times, these were not normal times; and to censure the refugees for having fled from Pakistan and to exhort them to go back was to many a form of perversity if not madness; or the action of a saint bent on martyring his flock in a grand gesture of idealism. (17-18)

\(^9\) Dayanand James, *Manohar Malgonkar* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1974), notes that *A Bend in the Ganges* tells the story from the point of view “of the violent revolutionaries or terrorists who had no faith in the Gandhian technique of nonviolence” (123).

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Malgonkar’s worldview in *A Bend in the Ganges* draws on Savarkar’s sophisticated discourse of Hindutva as found in his writings and speeches including *Six Glorious Epochs of Indian History*, wherein his political perspective, which approximates to the stereotyped notions of the impotent Hindu “Self” and the hyper-sexual, hyper-aggressive Muslim “Other,” finds virtue as a perversion, which is shown to have been injurious to the Hindu nation on numerous occasions. In this view, even the chivalrous attitude of Hindu heroes like Chattrapati Shivaji and Chimaji Appa to the daughter-in-law of the Muslim governor of Kalyan and the wife of the Portuguese governor of Bassein is condemned as a perversion because it did not permit a tit for tat action, that is, it did not allow them to avenge the unutterable atrocities and oppression and outrage committed on us by the Sultans and Muslim noblemen and thousands of others, big and small. Let those Sultans and their peers take a fright that in the event of a Hindu victory our molestation and detestable lot shall be avenged on the Muslim women. Once they are haunted with this dreadful apprehension, that the Muslim women, too, stand in the same predicament in case the Hindus win, the future Muslim conquerors will never dare to think of such molestation of Hindu women.” (179)

Besides the Hindu attitude of chivalry to womenfolk, Savarkar also takes Hindus’ tolerance as perverted virtue. In this connection, Purshottam Agarwal comments, “the self-image of a tolerant Hindu is arbitrarily constituted and then, it is contrasted with the ferociously intolerant ‘Other’ and the tolerant Hindu is invited to become equally ferocious” (47-48). It is Savarkar’s philosophy of paying the Muslims back in the same coin, which is at odds with the political thrust of the Congress, that makes him denounce the Congress, Gandhi and non-violence. Purshottam Agarwal’s citation of Savarkar’s hagiographer Dhananjaya Keer’s following remark throws further light on the Hindu ideologue’s call for Hindu revenge of the Muslim atrocities in the context of partition.
violence: “He (Savarkar) said that Pakistan’s inhuman and barbarous acts such as kidnapping and raping Indian women would not be stopped unless Pakistan was given tit for tat [, which alone would make it] realize [ . . . ] the horrors of those brutalities” (43). It is this Hindutva logic which underlines Basu’s denunciation of Gandhi in *A Bend in the Ganges*. Gandhi deserves to be convicted because he advocates “a moral barrier for the construction of baser instincts as the valid political mode” (Agarwal 52). By thus contextualizing the novel’s indictment of non-violence in Savarkar’s call for revenge against violence unleashed by the Muslim League, Malgonkar contests the notion of sanity and moral value implicit in the deification of Mahatma Gandhi.

Malgonkar shows the ineffectualness of non-violence not only at the macro level but also at the micro level—in the splitting of the Big House in two.¹° Dispute over the land of Piplooda leads to the murder of Hari, Gian’s brother at the hands of Vishnu Dutta of the Big House. At the time of murder, Gian is with Hari, but he fails to save his brother’s life. Failure to save his brother raises doubts about non-violence in Gian’s mind: “Was that why he had embraced the philosophy of non-violence without question—from physical cowardice, not from courage? Was his non-violence merely that of the rabbit refusing to confront the hound?” (44). Gian’s non-violence, which indeed camouflages his cowardice, “crum[ble[s] the moment it [meets] a major test” (122). He kills Vishnu Dutta with the same axe with which Hari had been killed. As Rajagopalchari rightly remarks, Malgonkar has “deliberately shaped Gian in order to reveal with pitiless irony the gap between precept and practice” (58).

¹° Professor Iyengar comments in this regard: “Like a prologue to the main act, this story of family feud—suspicion, rivalry, hatred, vindictiveness, murder—is to be viewed as the advance micro-tragedy foreshadowing the macro-tragedy on a national scale in the year of the partition” (433).
Malgonkar casts Gian as a foil to Debi Dayal, a member of the nationalist terrorist group headed by Singh. These two sharply contrasted characters make the readers not only look closely at their character-sketches but also scrutinize the values they represent. The contrast itself is founded on whether they live by a code or not. In this regard, Uma Parmeswaram comments: “Malgonkar seems to say that those who live by a code have the making of hero, while those who have no code are of an inferior mold... in *A Bend the Ganges*, Debi has a code, Gian does not” (333). Gian comes out at best as merely a pseudo Gandhian, as one for whom the Gandhian movement is “merely a face-saving device to shelter his cowardice and poverty behind its tenets” (Sood 201). Unlike Debi who hates the English and fights against them with terror and violence, Gian holds all Englishmen in high admiration. After killing Vishnu Dutta in the micro-tragedy matrix of *A Bend in the Ganges*, Gian lands up in the Andamans where, to his jail inmates, he becomes “the most despised man in the colony” because of his allegiance to the jail superintendent Patrick Mulligan. His lie gets Debi in real trouble in the jail, and the latter dismisses him as “scum... the sort of man through whom men like Mulligan rule our country, keep us enslaved” (192). In the Andamans, while Debi Dayal always thinks of escape to wreak violence upon the English in order to force them to quit India, Gian entertains no desire of leaving the island since he thinks he has nothing to go back to. Circumstances, however, force Gian to return to India. After the return, he lies

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11 G. S. Amur, *Manohar Malgonkar* (New Delhi: Arnold-Heinemann, 1973), after noting that the principal structural pattern in *A Bend in the Ganges* is one of parallelism and contrast, remarks that the novel “derives its form from the contrasting careers of Gian and Debi Dayal which are thematically balanced in terms of their symbolic content” (119).

12 A. Padmanabhavan, *The Fictional World of Manohar Malgonkar* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2002), quotes historian Bipin Chandra to make the point that Gian’s unabashed eulogy of the British is a case of an indoctrinated mind lapping up the propaganda that the British are the moral force of India—“the Mai-Baap [Father and Mother] of the common people of India” (63).
without scruples to make Debi’s father give him a decent job and to come intimately close to his sister, Sundari. Sundari, who deliberately develops a sexual relationship with him to avenge her husband’s affair with Malini, calls him “a male whore” (324). The narrative shows Gian as a thoroughly negative character as even the narrator reduces him to “a leper in a world of criminals” (182). The whole point of Gian’s negative portrayal is to highlight the hiatus between his belief in *ahimsa* and his practice of it. Gian acts in complete violation of the principle of *ahimsa*, the practice of which “involves abstaining from physical injury as well as injury to the soul, as we might say; genuine *ahimsa* is incompatible with the demands of the ego. To use a person only as a means is to do him a moral injury” (Puri 167).

However, Gian’s dash from Delhi to Duriabad to rescue Sundari and her parents from the looming attack of the Muslim rioters constitutes what S. C. Sood calls “only one of his moments of strength when he can redeem himself” (209). Critical opinion about this moment of strength varies sharply, with some critics taking it as a moment of glory for Gian while others condemn him for letting it go by. Dayanand James interprets the climactic scene to project Gian as “‘Initiation hero’” (123). Gian, according to him, “undergoes a change; he experiences for the first time “unselfishness,” accepts the world for what it is and emerges as a triumphant victor over falseness” (130). N. S. Pradhan, likewise, endorses G. S. Amur’s estimate that “the Gian who survives is not the Gian who built his life on falsehood, but a morally degenerated individual” (144). Disagreeing completely with the above assessment of Gian’s character, R. S. Singh writes: “This seeming act of kindness was a calculated move to lay the trap for Sundari. Apparently, his success was symbolical of the triumph of the nationalist movement but in
reality it was, as Basu evaluated it, "even a greater failure than the anarchist movement" (130).

Singh's judgment, though seeming to be a little harsh on Gian, is very suggestive of the allegorical value of the rescue act as narrativized in the last five paragraphs with which *A Bend in the Ganges* ends:

> 'What's wrong!' a forlorn voice bawled at them. 'Get a bloody move on! You there! You!—Gian Talwar!'
>
> Gian blinked. He found himself sweating. It couldn't be. He was staring into the face of Patrick Mulligan; the teddy-bear shape wedged into the front seat of the jeep, crowned by the red face, the pale grey eyes unblinking, the voice of authority hoarser than ever, more commanding.
>
> 'What's that? Hell, Miss, we can't wait all day for him! Move on, will you!' he ordered Gian. 'We can't hold up the convoy for someone's old man!'
>
> For a second or two, Gian hesitated. Then he started the engine and threw the car into gear while Mulligan kept motioning him forward with his arm. Then, without looking at Sundari, he released the clutch. The Ford leaped forward. (376)

While Mulligan’s giving the driver’s seat to Gian allegorizes the British handover of power to Jawaharlal Nehru, “the final image of an obedient Indian (Gian) driven towards a free India by his former British jailer is certainly far from an image of pride or hope” (Narayanan, “British Fathers and Indian Sons” 217). Gian’s near paralysis, manifested in his sweat and his wait for guidance from Mulligan, anticipates Malgonkar’s candid treatment in *The Men Who Killed Gandhi* of Nehru’s indecisiveness and his looking for guidance from Lord Mountbatten as compounding the crisis in terms of the partition victims, the appeasement of Pakistan and the Kashmir war that followed. His failure to save Sundari’s mother, who has been invoked as Mother India figure,13 and his desertion of her father tantamounts to the dismemberment of Mother India through partition and

the (Congress) government's abandonment of the fleeing Hindus and Sikhs from Pakistan. Looking at the ending as an allegory as it has been intended by Malgonkar, it is apparent that Gian hardly grows; till the end he remains what he is at the outset: a dubious, indecisive, servile and shallow person. Gian, unlike Debi who lives by a code and who stays steady in his convictions and determined in his mission of life, does not possess any code and he remains cowardly, unsteady and undependable till the end. Through his character, Malgonkar discredits the Gandhian philosophy of non-violence and truth by showing that these ideals are not practicable, as they are contradictory to the facts of life.

Malgonkar’s rejection of Gandhism in favor of the unremembered, uncelebrated but glorious and gallant freedom fighters that fought the English with terror and violence is symbolized in Debi’s positive portrayal. Debi is depicted as being steadfast in his conviction of violence as a valuable tool to take revenge. After utilizing it successfully to an extent against the British in return for the attempted rape of his mother, he utilizes it subtly but most satisfyingly by choosing to hit the lascivious Shafi where it hits him the most, that is, by buying his favorite prostitute, Mumtaz. In a civil war that was played out on women’s bodies, Debi’s method of revenge falls in line with the call for revenge as outlined in Six Glorious Epochs of History. Debi comes out as a martyr in the cause of Mother India—whether that cause is to oust the British or to fight the Muslim

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14 Uma Parmeswaram, “Manohar Malgonkar as a Historical Novelist,” World Literature Written in English 14 (1975): 333-34.

15 Mohan Jha, “The Theme of Communalism in Indo-Anglian Novels,” The Indian Journal of English Studies 21 (1981-82), comments: “It is obviously in a mood of revenge and retaliation that he [Debi] carries Shafi’s mistress, Mumtaz, away from him with a view to causing real and profound distress to him” (127). Unlike Jha, critics generally unhappily with Malgonkar’s scapegoating of Gandhi in A Bend in the Ganges criticizes Debi’s method of revenge. Amur asks if the revenge that Debi chooses is “a measure of his fall from the ideal of violence” (111). Similarly, Narayanan finds Debi’s revenge “curious” and as not adding anything “to his stature” (“British Fathers and Indian Sons” 216).
divisiveness. That Debi has been cast as a martyr becomes ostensible from the way Malgonkar describes his death, ‘investing the event with poetic and symbolic overtones. The last thing he ever saw was “the rising sun in the land of the five rivers on the day of their freedom.” ’ (Bhatnagar 111). It is largely because of “Debi’s individual caliber, as a freedom fighter” that Malgonkar finds some cause for pride in the heroes of terrorism (Narayanan, “British Fathers and Indian Sons” 216). By thus valorizing the terror and violence of the freedom fighters in contradistinction to Gian’s shallow practice of non-violence, Malgonkar celebrates their unnoticed heroic role in the independence of India, and in this sense *A Bend in the Ganges* revises textbook history wherein the violent campaign remains largely absent. Malgonkar’s valorization of the violent campaign, however, does not mean that he is uncritical about it. Clarifying the novelist’s position on violence in *A Bend in the Ganges*, Saros Cowasjee writes: “What he is trying to show are the hidden well-springs of evil in man which cannot be checked by lip service to non-violence. He goes a step further and says that violence is a fact of our existence—and we must recognize it as such as. In practical terms we may be no better off in doing so, but it would be, to use his own words, ‘honest and manly’ ” (91). *A Bend in the Ganges* suggests that since violence is a bitter reality, a willful renunciation or negation of it, as Gandhi sought to do, is nothing but a blissful blindness, which brings a bigger disaster than its bold cognizance.

Malgonkar, however, does show the terrorist campaign degrading from the level of national solidarity to communal hatred and violence. The terrorist campaign, as Ranjit Sen points out, did not “permit disunity. This ethical concept of struggle was the surest guarantee against partition” (230). But the disunity does come about through Shafi’s
unethical betrayal of Debi. Shafi after letting himself be convinced by Hafiz Khan that the Indian Muslims will be overwhelmed by the Hindu majority in the absence of the British, turns beastly and communal with such a fanatic passion that contributes significantly to the ferocity of the partition violence. In this connection, Rupinderjit Saini remarks: “Malgonkar believes that the Hindus and the Muslims were united by a negative force, by their common hatred for the British and their desire to throw them out. With the political changes in the country, the latent discord surfaced and changed the very hue of India’s struggle” (108). It is in Malgonkar’s diagnosis of the disintegration of the terrorist campaign and in his portrayal of Shafi Usman that his othering of the Muslims is seen. H. G. S. Arulandrum summarizes Malgonkar’s description of the rise of Muslim communalism on the eve of independence: “It was their [Muslims’] firm belief that they were born to rule and not to be ruled over. Unable to adjust themselves to the changing demands of history, they lingered in the aristocratic memories of the Delhi Sultanate and the great Moghul empire and were afraid, mortally afraid of becoming a minority-nobody in India” (14). Malgonkar’s ascribing of the rise of Muslim communalism to their psychology of being the conqueror of the Hindus and hence, as the narrative of A Bend in the Ganges puts it with reference to Shafi’s line of thinking, “unquestionably a superior race,” constitutes the Hindu perception of the enemy other (288). In this Hindu perception, the whole Muslim history of India becomes “a catalogue of conquests and cruelty,” of the barbarism of the Muslims’ violent temperament and their perversely licentious character (Pandey, “The Civilized and the Barbarian” 13). It is Malgonkar’s foregrounding of Shafi’s serpent-like deadliness, hyper-aggressiveness and hyper-sensuality which constitutes the thrust of the chapter, “To Fold a Leaf,” in which
the villain is portrayed. B. P. Engade encapsulates Shafi’s portrayal in *A Bend in the Ganges* in a way that reveals a total othering of the Muslims as barbarians: “In order to achieve their aim, characters like Shafi Usman not only desert and betray their Hindu companions, but turn hostile and violent. From that part of Pakistan in *A Bend in the Ganges*, Shafi Usman and his gang operate with the sole aim of driving away the Hindus to grab their women and property. They might behave like vultures and savages—but that was the culture of violence, plunder and destruction that Babar brought with him” (119). While the attack on Sundari and her parents lends credence to Malgonkar’s portrayal of Shafi’s character, it contrasts so clearly with Debi’s gradual love for Mumtaz whom he decides to even wed. The contrast forms an important part of Malgonkar’s overall design of pitting the barbarian against the civilized, of making the recalcitrant Islam that dismembered Mother India “with fire and steel, and the prick of the spear” look monstrously irrational (289).

With the enemy now being the monstrously irrational Muslims, *A Bend in the Ganges* sees the stickling upon non-violence as emasculating the Hindus and as coming in their way of standing up to the virile enemy. In spite of the presence of Gandhi and the so-called “civilized” Britain, the Indian independence turned out to be a bloodbath, subjecting millions of Indians to one of the worst barbarisms humanity has ever committed. When the barbarism grips the nation in its octopus-like tentacles, Debi Dayal asks pertinently: “Who had won, Gandhi or the British? For the British at least had foreseen such a development. Or had they both lost through not having allowed for structural flaws in the human material they were dealing with?” (349). Debi’s is “a fundamental question, and a legitimate one, raised by Malgonkar, which should serve as a
corrective to the political myth of non-violence often projected as an unquestioned creed during the nationalist struggle” (Kaushik, “Partition of India” 46). Having thus questioned the effectiveness of non-violence in the wake of the barbaric brutality unleashed by the Muslim League, Debi’s reflection on the alternative to non-violence in the same scene underscores Savarkar’s influence on Malgonkar: “Yet, what was the alternative? Would terrorism have won freedom at a cheaper price and somehow still kept the Hindus and Muslims together? Perhaps not. But at least it would have been an honest sacrifice, honest and manly—not something that had sneaked upon them in the garb of non-violence” (349). Terrorism may not have succeeded as a counterforce to communalism, but it would have definitely left the Hindus better prepared to fight back, to pay the brutal Muslims back in the same coin: blood for blood. To quote Asha Kaushik again, the call of blood “is as much Malgonkar’s answer as of Debi Dayal to one of the most vexing questions of India’s nationalist history” (“Partition of India” 47). Malgonkar’s valorization of the call of blood remains interwoven in the fabric of each major episode in A Bend in the Ganges. It is his unambiguous treatment of the theme of revenge, which in the words of S. Z. H. Abidi, “gives a unity of focus to A Bend in the Ganges which it would otherwise have lacked” (78-79).

Unlike Manohar Malgonkar’s open call of blood in A Bend in the Ganges, Raj Gill’s The Rape (1974), which finds a place in the canon of Indian English partition fiction, hovers between a radical political Sikh view and a fictional human view—with the aesthetic representation of the human dimension conceding the ground to the documentary representation interspersed with a flurry of politico-communal

16 K. K. Sharma and B. K. Johri, The Partition in Indian-English Novels (Ghaziabad: Vimal Prakashan, 1984) 120. Also see Cowasjee 83.
editorializing. The novel captures the partition drama from May 1947 onwards and the fictitious action gets underway with the initiation ceremony of the eighteen years old protagonist, Dalipjit. The ceremony, as the narrative stresses, is invested with "a special significance . . . a call to rise in faith and fight the Muslim tyrants and fanatics who were perpetrating the massacre of the non-Muslims . . . . There is a Sikh legend that at the First Initiation some sparrows happened to drink amrit prepared by Guru Govind Singh. The timid sparrows were instantly infused with such boldness that they pounced upon a hawk and tore it to shreds. The miracle was to be brought about once again" (11). Unlike the personal narratives of Rawalpindi massacre figuring in recent feminist reconstruction of the Punjab violence in 1947 wherein the thrust is on the human dimension even as it carries a critique of the masculinity of the violence perpetrated, Raj Gill merely refers to the Rawalpindi riot, which reminds him "of the terror of Aurangzeb and the wrath of Nadir Shah" in a brazen attempt to spur "the frightened Sikhs and Hindus . . . [towards] a crusade after the Initiation and stem the tide of hatred, arson, murder and loot set off by the Muslim League" (11). He cites the barbarism of the Muslims against the Sikhs in Rawalpindi and Multan not only as the main reason for the Sikh’s decision to stay out of Pakistan (29 & 64-65) but also as a justification for their call for Muslim blood—their resolve "not [to] sleep on a bed till the holocaust was over, till the death of every innocent was avenged" (30).

Raj Gill also justifies the violent tactics of the Sikhs as their helplessness arising from the Sikh leaders “losing the game” (70). He is particularly harsh on Sardar Baldev Singh who, as he alleges, “did not even grasp the situation and was completely blank about what was happening around him” (70). He mentions that “a general trust and over-
confidence was being reposed in Giani Kartar Singh and Master Tara Singh” (70). These two Sikh leaders were in the forefront of floating Azad Punjab Scheme, which, as Prithvipal Singh Kapur writes, “called for the detachment of Muslim majority states so as to create a new province in which the Sikh population was maximized and no single community constituted a majority in the proposed set up” (67). As Raj Gill insinuates, the inflexible attitude of these firebrand leaders did not make solid headway because of Congress’s insistence on non-violence: “The Sikh community was caught in a dilemma. Its leaders were all out for fight and violence to have their way, but the Congress leaders were not caring much for the threat” (69). Let down by their leaders—both the Akalis and the Congress, the Sikhs in self-defense, maintains Raj Gill, “started preparing with guns and spears not to obtain what they were denied but to hold on to what they had, to meet the onslaught by the Muslims which they vaguely knew would break upon them and which was to be fought back if they were to survive” (70).

Gill’s justifying Sikh violence against the Muslims as having arisen out of helplessness and the need for self-defense forms part of his strategy of othering the Muslims as barbarians. He falls back on newspaper headlines such as “Muslims perpetrate limitless cruelties. Women’s breasts chopped off. Nude women made to lead a Muslim procession” (29). He describes the fall-out of the reprisal by the Hindus and Sikhs in East Punjab as inviting State atrocities on the evacuees in Pakistan: “Army tanks were used in Sheikhupur to mow down the non-Muslim population sheltering in the cotton mills. Armed forces connived at the general shooting of the Sikh and Hindu refugees awaiting evacuation in the Lyallpur camp. Police constabulary was employed in the senseless killing of the departing Hindu population in Jhang and Multan” (158-59).
The othering of Pakistan as a barbaric nation takes on a definite edge when Gill describes how Pakistan Army tricked the caravan for two days: “The Baluch regiment of the tall sturdy Muslims was all smiles and sympathy and concern for the refugees. They said the bridge was small and so they would allow disciplined small parties of one hundred carts each at a time. They divested men of the arms, women of ornaments and slaughtered the whole lot and threw them in the river where most of the bodies did not even submerge properly” (195). By so implicating the State of Pakistan in the victimhood of the evacuees, Gill intends to project the Muslim-perpetrated violence qualifying as genocide.17 The othering becomes total when Kartar Singh tells Dalipjit that he does not believe his own Muslim servants even though they swear by their Prophet to affirm their loyalty to him: “Muslims are always disloyal, undependable. Their history is full of such instances. Did they not turn against their own Prophet? And the Mughals—dethroning the father, the brother. In fact these Muslims aren’t what their Prophet Mohammed wanted them to be. I tell you, brother, if you know what the Prophet Mohammad taught you’d want to be a Muslim yourself. But these are pigs, deceivers, and betrayers” (67). Such a demonization of Muslims in general and the subcontinental Muslims in particular turns out to be a highly inflammatory description—a description in which the intolerable other, to quote Stanley Tambiah’s words, “is so exaggerated and magnified that this stereotyped ‘other’ must be degraded, determined and compulsively obliterated” (Author’s emphasis. qtd. in Nandy, “The Invisible Holocaust” 320). Such a brazen use of the prose of otherness makes Raj Gill’s representation of the partition violence crudely partisan. After objectifying the Muslims as the total other, his deliberate attempt to

match Muslim atrocities with Sikh-Hindu ones turns out to be an obvious artifice—what Veena Das and Ashis Nandy dismiss as “inauthentic literature” (88). Unlike the documentary representation of the violence in West Punjab, the language that Raj Gill uses to represent the violence on the Muslims in East Punjab shuns graphic descriptions and condemns the violence in only general terms. In an attempt to disown the memories and locate the violence outside normality—beyond the domain of the civilized society of the Sikhs and the Hindus—, he shifts the focus to the loss of the value of human life in a period of “witches’ sabbath” (191).

Dalipjit, however, cannot disown the memories; he is caught in a dilemma: whether to dissociate himself from the sabbath or to forget and forgive or to commit suicide. The vacillation between revenge and forgiveness continues right from the initiation ceremony in which he says he had participated “to join Jasmit (his beloved) in taking an oath of their abiding love” (14). Loyalty to his family and obligation to his community demand him to bay for Muslim blood but the emotion of love forbids him to do so. The emotion of love ultimately prevails over his equally strong other two emotions, thereby not only persuading him to forbear the provocations of his bete noire, Santokh, but also making him recoil from taking Muslim lives on two occasions—the first time sparing the throat of Jalal and the second time the head of Leila’s father. Dalipjit’s capacity to show humanity at such junctures make K. K. Sharma and B. K. Johri see Raj Gill as “fervently plead[ing] for forgiveness and appear[ing] to echo Shakespeare’s message in The Tempest that virtue lies in forgiveness, not vengeance” (135). The theme of forgiveness in The Rape, however, remains muted under the weight of the narrator’s call for Muslim blood “as a pure fraternal gesture towards those
belonging to their religion and community” (208). Even Dalipjit’s capacity to forgive turns out to be as fake as the phoney balancing of the violence in two Punjabs, given his anger, which prevents him from “dwell[ling] on the need to forget. He merely decides to forget, wipe off his past and alienate himself from the polluted generation” (Narayanan, “Indo-Anglian Novels” 46). As the narrative of The Rape states before the evacuation, Dalipjit remains “lost in vicarious thoughts of participating in riots, leading his people safely through the carnage and killing a hundred thousand Muslims in chastisement of their fanaticism” (146).

The suppression of the urge for revenge, which manifests in Dalipjit’s vicarious participation of the genocide of the Muslims, also shows up in his imaginative killing of Mahatma Gandhi: “How could Gandhi be shot dead? He was not living. He had shot Gandhi long back, years ago. They could not shoot a dead Gandhi. It was nonsense. He chuckled to himself in his unchallenged superiority over the men around him who were gullible enough to believe in someone’s claim who just craved the credit that he already held. He chuckled again and swam around gleefully in his ocean of warmth” (288). In his semi-conscious state while recovering from the pneumonic fever, Dalipjit claims to have killed Gandhi because of his hatred of the Mahatma for the latter’s betrayal of the Sikhs and Hindus residing in the West Punjab. Like Godse, he holds Gandhi guilty of partition in which “the guts of the innocent [became] the offering, the blood of millions the oblation to the independence which was thought to have been won without the sword and the fire, with non-violence, understanding, and by turning the other cheek to the enemy” (129). The imaginative parricide of the so-called Father of the Nation does not come all of sudden. Right from the beginning, Dalipjit shows his strong disagreement
with Gandhi’s “fakir’s ways” (25). His aversion represents the anger of the Sikhs in the West Punjab at Gandhi’s double game and his “incomprehensible, implicit antagonism of their community” (69). In this connection, Chitrabrata Palit quotes historian Michael Edwards who “concludes that ‘after independence, the orthodox Hindu political parties were to attack Gandhi violently for having played a double game and it was such attacks which led finally, though indirectly, to his assassination by a Hindu extremist in January 1948’ ” (58).

By paralleling the protagonist on the lines of Nathu Ram Godse, Raj Gill undermines the message of forgiveness with which he interweaves the fabric of the narrative at the end by underlining “that the cycle of revenge must be liquidated through love, sympathy, kindness, understanding, restraint and forgiveness” (Sharma and Johri 135). It is precisely Dalipjit’s motive of revenge, which faces a definite roadblock from Gandhi’s policy of non-violence, that makes him criticize the Mahatma’s absorption in the “spiritual world to [the extent that he does not] realize the practical implications of things gone wrong” (241). The criticism echoes Godse’s pinning the responsibility for the partition of India on Gandhi, who, according to the assassin, “wanted to protect his personal saintliness, if not leadership, at the cost of the country” (qtd. in Palit 59). The Rape fails as literature: it remains structurally flawed with the theme of forgiveness suddenly seeming to win out at the end while consistently losing its ground all through the narrative in its tug of war with the theme of revenge. With the motive of revenge remaining to the extent that Dalipjit has to turn a Nathuram Godse, the strong streaks of mercy and forgiveness in the protagonist seem to have been super-imposed.
Unlike Raj Gill, however, Malgonkar gives a sophisticated treatment of the theme of revenge by aesthetically transmuting his rejection of *ahimsa* through an intense dialectic between violence and non-violence, between Gandhi and Savarkar. In so far as both Malgonkar and Gill look upon Gandhi’s doctrine of non-violence as perverted in the face of what they see as Islamic terror, *The Rape* and *A Bend in the Ganges* enunciate a view at odds with the nationalistic (Congress) representation of the partition of India. The cumulative lesson emerging from these novels is not to believe in the treacherous Muslims and to tolerate no more any intolerance to the Hindus and the Sikhs—a message that is music to the ears of the likes of Ashok Singhal and Praveen Togadia.¹⁸ Such a narration of history, which enacts the construction of an internal enemy, in the words of Sankaran Krishna “has corralled our entire future into a box labeled ‘the Unfinished Business of Partition’” (194). Both *A Bend in the Ganges* and *The Rape* strongly suggest the adoption of violence to finish the unfinished business of the partition of India.

¹⁸ Leaders of the right wing Hindu organization “Vishwa Hindu Parishad.”
Politics of the Language of Partition Violence in Chaman Nahal’s *Azadi* and Bapsi Sidhwa’s *Cracking India*

Violence at the height of the partition crisis in 1947, what Gyanendra Pandey calls the “the third partition,” was the bloodiest among, as he puts it, the other two partitions of the partition of India—the demand for political division, culminating in the Lahore Resolution of 1940 and the partition of families and communities after the call for Direct Action by Jinnah (*Remembering Partition* 21-44). The third partition entailed violent uprooting and indiscriminate killing while migrating, especially in Punjab. The singularly violent character of the third partition, which was unparalleled in both scale and method, was genocidal in nature. Anders Bjørn Hansen takes the massive forced migration “as an example of ethnic cleansing, i.e. the altering of the demographic outlook along the ethnic/religious affiliations” (17). However, the national histories of both India and Pakistan naturalize and normalize the third partition: whereas Indian historiography portrays it as a minor setback to the triumphant march of the nation along its modern, scientific and secular lines, Pakistani historiography forgets it altogether in order to maintain 1947 as an occasion of supreme joy, symbolizing the birth and fruition of a century old Muslim aspirations. In recent years, revisionist historians of 1947, especially those who have adopted the history-from-below approach, emphasize the need to scrutinize the historical discourse and its ability to represent a violent struggle with its traumatic aftermath even as they turn to literature to write back the pain of the victims in the history of the partition of India. Except for a few writings such as those of Saadat Hasan Manto, an allowance of nationalist bias rather than the momentum of neutrality characterizes the treatment of partition violence in the massive literature on partition.
produced in India and Pakistan. The basic problem with South Asian partition literature appears to be its configuration along the national histories of India and Pakistan. Apart from attributing the cause of the violent partitioning of the nation to the machination of the decolonizing British and the barbarism of the criminals, South Asian partition literature locates the antagonists in the barbaric Muslims or Hindus-Sikhs. As implied in recent historiographic reformulations such as those of Gyanendra Pandey, much partition fiction fails to rise above the syndrome of “Us versus Them” in its representation of the brutal violence that surrounded the partition of India in 1947.¹

In line with the insights gained from historiographic reformulations, I propose to unravel the politics of the language of violence in Chaman Nahal’s Azadi (1975) and Bapsi Sidhwa’s Cracking India (1987; originally published as Ice-Candy-Man). This chapter argues that even though both novels significantly swerve away from their respective national historiographic positions, both also use the prose of otherness, which depicts a community attributing the violence to the other in an attempt to project itself or its people as being civilized vis-à-vis the barbaric other. Sidhwa, in particular, shows that for the Pakistan nation that claims to be civilized under its forward-looking leader, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, violence lies outside its borders, the implicit proposition being that it is out there in the barbaric Sikhs and Gandhi, the so-called apostle of non-violence. The attribution of violence to forces outside the immediate boundaries of the community or the nation, in an attempt to project a civilized Lahori (Pakistani) Muslim community, significantly limits the representation of violence in the bloody events of 1947 in Cracking India. While Nahal also succumbs to the nationalist bias here and there even as

he looks both inwardly (India) and outwardly (Pakistan) in his representation of partition violence, Sidhwa looks mostly outwardly (India) in a brazen attempt to uplift Pakistan and to “give[] them (Pakistanis) a little self-esteem” (533).

*Azadi* excels in depicting the meaning of the riots for the survivors by dramatizing the pain of violence, displacement and resettlement with compelling vividness:² “Nahal shows that drawing lines on a map is easy, but uprooting men from their homes is difficult. Lala Kanshi Ram remembers his childhood passion for eating earth, and when about to leave Sialkot the urge assails him again” (Sundaram 34). The traumatic experience and resilience of the West Punjab survivors, “whose lives were changed almost overnight when history catapulted them from the land of their origin to a new one that was destined to be their home and nation,” come to the reader through the central unifying consciousness of Lala Kanshi Ram (Pande 119-20). A sharp sensation of loss, brought on by the transformation of his age-old Punjabi identity into the sudden identity as a refugee that replaced the age-old identity of a Punjabi and the callousness of the Indian rehabilitation officials, lying at the center of Lala Kanshi Ram’s consciousness, rather than any heady feeling of gaining freedom constitutes a marker of the consciousness of the West Punjab Hindu and Sikhs. Lakhmir Singh acclaims *Azadi* as a classic partition novel “for depicting the trauma of partition, for its superb delineation of the anguish of the people, for revealing the gradual erosion of the Punjabi consciousness, as also for showing the communal frenzy in its worst aspects” (241).

Episodes such as the violent procession of the jubilant Muslims in Sialkot, the parade of naked Hindu women in Narowal and that of the naked Muslim women in

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² C. N. Srinath, “The Writer as Historical Witness: Khushwant Singh’s *Azadi,*” *The Literary Criterion* 25.2 (1990), takes the novel as “projecting what partition has meant to an individual and his family” (66).
Amritsar, the raids upon both the Hindu and Muslim refugee-convoys respectively in Pakistan and India stand out by their realism. Prima facie, he maintains objectivity in delineating the Muslims’ atrocities on the Hindus in Pakistan and those of the Hindus and Sikhs on the Muslims in India. As he implies in his interview with Bhagwat Goyal, he remains conscious of not allowing his “bitterness” to color his rendition of the personal experience of the partition violence (67). He balances an act of violence by Muslims in Western Punjab with a similar act by violence by Sikhs and Hindus in Eastern Punjab in an attempt to be even-handed. It is in line with Nahal’s desire to be immune from the nationalist bias that he makes Lala Kanshi Ram, in spite of the protagonist suffering a spate of traumatic experiences, declare: “‘I have ceased to hate . . . Yes, I can’t hate the Muslims anymore . . . What I mean is, whatever the Muslims did to us in Pakistan, we were doing it to them here! . . . We’re doing the same—exactly the same’” (author’s emphasis, 338). Nahal lets Kanshi Ram go even further: “‘We have sinned as much. We need their forgiveness!’” (author’s emphasis, 340). Critics of partition historiography and aesthetics such as Veena Das and Ashis Nandy, however, refuse to be deceived by what they call inauthentic balance:

Most of this literature (autobiographical in inspiration) remained inauthentic, because it tried to reduce the violence to the language of feud in which violence from one side was equally balanced with violence from the other. Thus, the description of violent, inhuman acts perpetrated upon those traveling by a train coming from Lahore would be matched by another description of similar, gruesome acts to which travelers coming from Amritsar were subjected. (189)

At the heart of the inauthentic balance lies the writer’s conscious attempt to sweet-coat his controlled shifting of the major portion of the blame to the other side for the barbarism committed.
In Nahal’s case, however, the phony balance comes about not because of any deliberate tactic by the writer but because of the Hindutva ideology of his age unconsciously intruding into his discourse of the partition violence. The intrusion, which brings about a “mixing up of the point of view of the protagonist, Lala Kanshi Ram and that of Arun, [and] which destroys the unity of impression,” is traceable to the contest between a strong Hindu consciousness and the secular nationalism of the Indian National Congress in Punjab as well as to the anomaly arising from the affiliation of the protagonist, Lala Kanshi Ram, to the *Arya Samaj*\(^3\) on the one hand and Nahal’s own belief (represented by Arun) in secular nationalism of the Indian National Congress on the other (Naik 232). As a result, we see a viewpoint at odds with the nationalist discourse emerging at the beginning, but it is not allowed to evolve so as to subvert the nationalist discourse. The contrary perspective tantalizes the reader with the inkling that communal unrest is not an exception but a rule in Indian history: “All said and done, the British had brought some kind of peace to this torn land. Think of the Sikhs after Maharaja Ranjit Singh—or the Marathas. Think of the Muslims in Delhi or in the Deccan. When had this country ever been united? Who let down warriors like Porus or Prithvi Raj Chauhan? For that matter, who let down the Moguls in their fight against the British? Always our own men, our own kith and kin!” (18). As the narrative pays a left-handed compliment to the British for bringing peace and unity to the split land, it even

\(^3\) *Arya Samaj*, founded on April 7, 1875 at Mumbai by Maharishi Dayanand Sarwasti, was very active in Punjab in pre-independence India. While its declared purpose was to move the Hindu *Dharma* (religion) away from all the factitious beliefs by stressing the teaching of Vedas, the movement had sought to fill the psychological void of the Hindus by endeavoring to relate their Aryan world with the realities of the British rule and to safeguard it against the inroads made by the dominant Muslims in Punjab. Nonica Datta, “Partition Memories: A Daughter’s Testimony,” *The Unfinished Agenda: Nation Building in South Asia*, eds. Mushirul Hasan & Nariaki Nakazato (New Delhi: Manohar, 2001), remarks that “the Arya Samaj shaped the political attitudes of Punjabi Hindus giving them an interpretation of India’s past and providing a vision of [... ] pride in the Hindu nation” (21).
puts under erasure the spearhead of Indian nationhood: “And the British had somehow made a nation of us. Or was it Gandhiji who had done that? Lala Kanshi Ram was confused about this point, but he did not let that interfere with the drift of his argument. There had been less bloodshed in India in the two years of British Raj than in any similar period in the past” (18).

The contrary view, which goes counter to the general run of Indian history that bloodshed is an aberration and absence, leaves the reader with the teasing question—who is at the core of India’s emergence as a nation: the British or Gandhi? Lala Kanshi Ram initially even holds Gandhi responsible for partition:

And the Congress leaders—what trust could you put in them? Didn’t Gandhiji and Rajaji themselves as much offer Pakistan to Jinnah in 1944? They were the ones who put the idea in his head, if you ask me. Take a section in the East of India and a section in the West, they said. Only let’s us have a common defense and foreign policy. Until then Jinnah had talked of Pakistan, but he did not quite know what he meant by it. Gandhi, by going to him, not only gave Pakistan a name, he gave Jinnah a name, too. (40)

After examining Gandhi’s representation in Indian English partition fiction, Asha Kaushik even goes to the extent of linking Nahal’s criticism of Gandhi to Malgonkar’s right questioning of “the unqualified ‘saintly politics’ of Gandhi” (“Historical Knowing and Aesthetic Cognition” 133).

However, the ending of Azadi, through the varying reactions of the refugee-characters in a make-shift hut in Delhi, refuses to endorse Gandhi as the scapegoat for the partition of India. Bibi Amar Vati, who has lost her only son, husband and property, reacts bitterly to Gandhi’s death: “‘Well, it’s a good thing he is gone. He brought nothing but misery to us’” (366). Kanshi Ram agrees with her to the extent that partition

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has ruined them, but he adds: “‘Yet his death hurts’” (366). Sunanda, her hapless granddaughter buts in: “‘It does hurt, mother. Men like him come once in centuries’” (366). Unconvinced, Bibi Amar Vati repeats her criticism of Gandhi: “‘It all happened because of the partition. And it was Gandhi who sanctioned the partition’” (367). Then the college-going son of Lala Kanshi Ram, Arun silences Bibi Vati by telling her that she is wrong: “‘That’s not true . . . It was the Congress leaders, like Nehru and Patel . . . In the final days, they did not listen to him’” (367).

Bibi Amar Vati represents a sizeable number of people in India who hold Gandhi responsible for the partition. They accuse Gandhi of not making a sincere effort towards averting the break-up. What baffles them is why he did not use his moral power, which he had utilized to make independence possible, to force the British to transfer power not to the Congress, but to the Muslim League if he was convinced that making Jinnah the prime-minister would preserve the unity of the nation. In their opinion, Gandhi bears the responsibility for partition as he made only a half-hearted attempt to avert it, that is to say, he did not make use of what Lala Sumsher Bahadur of Azadi calls his “shakti, [the unique] inner power” (20)—the moral force and the capacity for mass mobilization to change the shape of history. Non-Muslims living in the Muslim majority states of Bengal and Punjab had looked upon Gandhi as their savior, as one who would not let them be drawn into the vortex of partition. Nahal shows the expectation of the people living in Sialkot through the apprehension and self-assurance of Lala Kanshi Ram on June 3, 1947 in the evening of which an address to the nation over All India Radio by Viceroy Mountbatten was feared to contain the concession of the demand for Pakistan:

For the last thirty years, since that wizard Gandhi came on the scene, it [the Congress] had taken the stand that India was a single nation, not two.
And Gandhi was not only a politician, he was a saint. He had his inner voice to satisfy, too. Would that nagging voice of his let him accept the slaughter of so many. That is what it would mean, if Pakistan did come into existence. And Gandhi was shrewd—surely he saw it all. He wouldn’t give in to such misery. If nothing else worked, his fasts unto death always did. (48-49)

What the critics of Gandhi find particularly enigmatic is why Gandhi developed the cold feet when it mattered the most, that too at a time when the British withdrawal from India was a near certainty. One such critic of Gandhi, Professor M. M. Sankhdher judges him harshly:

Freedom would have come to us anyway but that it brought in its train wholesale massacre by communal forces and the biggest migration in history is something for which future generations will not forgive the leadership. How is it that when the whole of India was opposed tooth and nail to Partition Gandhi did not launch a satyagrah to vindicate the cause so near to his heart? Is it not true that though in principle he rejected the two nation theory, in practice he accepted it? His generosity in giving a blank check to Jinnah proved to be the most expensive power game that this country could have ever afforded. (139)

An anti-Gandhi line raises the visions of an enunciation of the right wing perception of partition in Azadi, but Nahal’s secular nationalism does not let it crystallize. He tries his best to keep Azadi as part of the larger nationalist discourse by invoking Nehru’s mourning speech in which the Indian Prime-minister spoke of “a most extraordinary flame . . . going out of their lives” (362). Nahal even shows, like a textbook historian, Gandhi becoming a martyr to the cause of Indian nationhood and the symbol of the nationalist essence, a substitution of the people pitted against the colonial rule. Lala Kanshi Ram’s family by refusing to light the fire to cook food mourns the death of Gandhi, as is the wont in a mourning Hindu household at the death of a family member. Even the people in the bazaar mourn the Mahatma’s death: they “all looked crestfallen, as if the death was a personal loss” (368). The crowd’s and his own
spontaneous and open feeling for the dead leader makes Lala Kanshi Ram feel the
blessing of independence: he “raised his head with pride and stretched back his
shoulders. He was unrestricted now, he was untramelled” (369). In his own way he pays
homage to Gandhi for procuring freedom for the Indians. It is, however, not that Nahal
suddenly becomes oblivious to the other face of freedom: the pain of partition that
marred the joy of independence—ironically implied in the title, Azadi (Independence)—
is played out at the end too. For Nahal tries to balance Kanshi Ram’s mood of optimism
and pride with the protagonist’s traumatized and pessimistic frame of mind. Kanshi
Ram’s feeling of “standing before a [long] tunnel” . . . [and] “the ability to communicate
with his family” creates a depressing effect on the reader, which in political terms may
mean that the refugees, unable to overcome the trauma, abandon the task of carrying
forward Gandhi’s work of a better, secular and more peaceful society (369). Yet, as K.
C. Belliappa points out, Nahal, the affirmationist, “shows how suffering, pain, and death
is only a prelude to new life, full of affirmation and hope” (70). The last three paragraphs
of Azadi, which describe Sunanda’s sewing machine “running at top speed” (370) and
producing a whirring sound that makes “the door of both the rooms [shake] with its
vibration” (371) turns out to be a powerful symbol of determination, hope and life. No
longer a submissive victim, the young widow is stitching up her own torn and tattered
life. In political terms, the optimism and determination may suggest that with Gandhi
gone, people take over the Mahatma’s work and they move forward, without succumbing

“is a novel of epical dimensions worthy of its theme. ‘Bliss was in it that dawn to be alive,’ but in the very
temple of delight, veiled Melancholy had her sovereign shrine, and the fruit was discovered to be rotten ere
it could be tasted. Was this the face for freedom for which a thousand agitations had been launched?
Tagore’s ‘heaven of freedom’ had imperceptibly degenerated into the ‘other place.’ Azadi effectively
brings out this irony which is at the root of the novel” (145-46).
to the trauma, to build the just and the ideal society that the slain leader had envisioned in *Hind Swaraj*: “Azadi closes with the affirmative vision that a nation, resolved to persist with her quest of identity, outlives even annihilating tragedies” (Kaushik, “Historical Knowing and Aesthetic Cognition”133).

The militating of the opposite strains of secular nationalist and Hindutva discourses—seen in the two opposing representations of Gandhi—also seems to complicate Nahal’s representation of the Muslims. Although Nahal tries his best to strike a balance between a Muslim Leauge diehard Abdul Ghani and Congress supporter Chaudhary Barkat Ali, the Hindutva othering of the Muslims as lascivious, predatory men out to rape Hindu women surfaces in his dramatization of the hunting of Sunanda by Captain Rahmat-Ullah Khan and her rescue by Arun who shows his guts by killing the rapist. Such a stereotypical representation of the Muslims has potentiality to stoke the fires of dormant hatred in many of Nahal’s readers as it becomes even clearer from his description of the parading of Hindu and Sikh women in Narowal—a description in which the despicable other is so extravagantly blown up that this pigeon-holed other must be condemned, controlled and compulsorily exterminated, easily legitimatising a retaliatory violence against an entire community:

The procession arrived. Arun counted them. There were forty women, marching two abreast. Their ages varied from sixteen to thirty, although, to add to the grotesqueness of the display, there were two women, marching right at the end of the column, who must have been over sixty. They were all stark naked. Their heads were completely

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6 Nonica Datta, “Partition Memories: A Daughter’s Testimony,” writes that in Arya Samajist Punjab, the Muslims, who carried the stereotypical image of a “masculinized Mussalman” eying Hindu women with “the lascivious Muslim eye,” had to be deterred from making the Hindu women “the victims of ‘Muslim lust’ and aggression” (19-25).

7 Sashi Joshi and Bhagwan Josh point out that Savarkar would often invoke the stereotype of the Muslim as hypersexual rapists of Hindu women in order to provoke the gutless Hindus to show guts in defending their women against the Muslims (197).
shaven; so were their armpits. So were their public regions . . . The bruises on their bodies showed they had been beaten and manhandled. Their masters walked beside them and if any of the women sagged or hung behind, they prodded her along with the whips they carried. At the head of the procession marched a single drummer with a flat drum, thumping heavily on it and announcing their arrival.

The procession moved through the bazaar, and along with the procession moved a rover of obscenities—foul abuses, crude personal gestures, spurts of sputum, odd articles like small coins, faded flowers, cigarette butts and bidis that were thrown at the women. As soon as the women came near, the section of the crowd became hysterical. ‘Rape them.’ ‘Put it inside of them.’ ‘The filthy Hindu bitches.’ ‘The kafir women.’ Some said worse things. Then came the shower of spittle. Almost everyone spat, and hundreds of tongues were pushed forward inside of their teeth and hundreds of uplifted faces canon-like fired the saliva. Bits of the saliva fell on the crowd ahead, but no one minded, so long as the main salvo hit the women. Many men in the front rows of crowds lifted their lungis to display their genitals to them . . . And almost to the last man, whether they spat or shouted or threw thing or just stood with their mouths open, they stared at the pubic regions of the women. Through indelicate exposure, those areas had lost their glory, lost all magic, and there was only a small, slippery aperture you saw there. But men’s eyes were settled on these apertures. And the moment the women had passed ahead, the eyes were settled on the bruised buttocks. (260-262).

Whereas here in Narowal, Nahal’s powerful expulsion of the ethnic enemy from the domain of a civilized society would even shame a barbaric, his description of the parading of Muslim women in Amritsar is, as the following passage bears out, considerably toned down, completely shorn of the lurid details:

Lala Kanshi got restless and wanted to know why the tongas had stopped. Both the tonga drivers had disappeared, and Lala Kanshi Ram asked one of the passers-by. ‘They are taking out a procession of Muslim women through the bazaar,’ was the saucy reply. He spoke as if this was routine here; he showed neither surprise, nor curiosity. The women in the tonga colored and looked down. They knew what kind of procession it must be. Lala Kanshi Ram stared at the man. Arun thought of the afternoon in Narowal when Suraj and he were together. He saw the dome of the Golden Temple in the background and wondered if any Sikh there was weeping for these women. (289)
The phony balance, however, does underscore the element of likeness that Muslim other shares with the Hindus and the Sikhs, and the imbalance implicit in the inauthentic act of balancing only reinforces the commonality in the sense that since one shares the enemy’s otherness, one must banish him from oneself as the total other.

Though stressing the need to forget, forgive and be forgotten, *Azadi* unconsciously justifies an exchange of violence through the language of feud, which Veena Das and Ashis Nandy define as “a pact of violence between social groups in such a way that the definition of the self and the other emerges through an exchange of violence” (178). In *Cracking India*, Bapsi Sidhwa, unlike Chaman Nahal in *Azadi*, uses the prose of feud consciously in the sense that she does not try to strike a balance in the representation of violence on both sides of the border. Whether it is the violence in West Punjab or East Punjab, the Pakistani identity, as it emerges from *Cracking India*, is crucially dependent on the presence of the Sikhs as the enemy other. Hindus, by implication, also form part of the same demonology. The demonology, however, remains deftly disguised under the sophistication that obtains out of the valorization of an overarching gynocentric perception of the partition violence narrated from the child’s point of view.

Lenny’s view of the gasping hours of the British rule in India from the margin of the miniscule Parsee community to which she belongs helps her expose its patriarchal and bourgeois underpinnings. Lenny, “from behind [the] veil of [the] marginality [of being] female and physically handicapped, offers a uniquely subaltern view of the bloody birthing of Pakistan. This view is as strong as an indictment of patriarchy as it is of colonialism” (Bharucha 174). *Cracking India* shows the protagonist, the Ayah
transcending her subalternity and by so doing reordering South Asian history from the female point of view. The text, though seemingly a hero-oriented novel as its original title of *Ice-Candy-Man* indicates, “subtly and effectively subverts the ingrained elements of patriarchy, privileging female will, choice, strength along with the feminine qualities of compassion and motherhood” (Chandra 177). Those who exhibit moral strength in the novel are all women who also offer hope for the redemption of mankind, while most of their male counterparts wallow in violence and wreak havoc.

The gynocentric view of the communal furies of the partition riots told through what happens to Lenny focuses on a consequence of power struggle. What the growing child learns ultimately is that “women do not resort to violence to solve problems; men do” (Ross 184). The choice of innocent, naïve Lenny as the narrator helps Sidhwa present a fairly credible account of the politics and havoc of the partition. In this regard, Lenny resembles Chaucer’s persona in *The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*, persuading the readers with her observation, reporting and judgment by being a part of their consciousness. About Lenny as a child narrator and her penchant for truth, Sidhwa reveals in an interview with David Montenegro that she is “doing two things here. I’m establishing a sort of truthful witness, whom the reader can believe. At the same time, Lenny is growing up—learning, experiencing, and coming to her own conclusions—one of them, that truth, truth, nothing but the truth can lead to a lot of harm, too. And in understanding the nature of truth, its many guises, she gradually sheds her innocence and understands the nature of men” (519-20). As the political events unfold with unrelenting speed at the time of independence and the impending partition, Lenny invariably loses her naivete as she gets initiated into the world of experience. Sidhwa paves the way for
the double perspective of the narrative by bringing in the second narrator (Sidhwa herself), who represents political maturity, occasionally at the end of chapters. "The authorial voice, in this case the powerful voice of hindsight" (Crane 54) speaks for the first time at the end of Chapter Nine of *Cracking India*, when she poses the question: "Is that when I learned to tell tales?" (88). This "I" does not refer to Lenny but to the authorial voice looking back on a moment in childhood, thereby giving rise to "a sense of hindsight which strengthens, adds authority to the immediacy of the intimate first person narration, and draws together past and present" (Crane 56). At the end of Chapter Ten of *Cracking India*, the authorial voice speaks fully and forcefully: "It wasn't until some years later—when I realized the full scope and dimension of the massacres—that I comprehended the concealed nature of the ice lurking deep beneath the hypnotic and dynamic femininity of Gandhi's non-violent exterior. And then, when I raised my head again, the men lowered their eyes" (96). Through the use of the word "ice" here, Sidhwa reduces the sanitized Gandhi to the degrading level of the shifting Ice-candy-man, who slips from the role of a popsicle-seller to birdman and to a phony Muslim mystic man duping the gullible masses. The charge of manipulation imputed to Jinnah in Indian historiography is shifted to Gandhi through his likeness with the Ice-Candy-Man.

Gandhi-baiting in *Cracking India* forms an important cog in the novel's wheel of elevating Pakistan's image as a civilized nation vis-à-vis India. And in order to do so, Gandhi has to be brought down from the high pedestal given to him on the one hand, and Pakistan's father, Muhammad Ali Jinnah has to be exalted on the other. Sidhwa trivializes Gandhi's fast-untto-death sit-in amidst the massacre of the Muslims in Bihar: "Inspired by Gandhijee we launch a more determined fast... Col. Bharucha gives us
calcium-and-glucose injections. If they want to get Gandhijee to eat the next time he fasts they should send for Muccho and Electric-aunt and Mother and Col. Bharucha” (112). The good-humored irony gives way to denunciation when at one place Sidhwa tentatively calls the Mahatma “a demon in a saint’s clothing? (94) and just two pages later an “improbable toss-up between a clown and a demon” (96). As Sidhwa admits in an interview with Niaz Zaman, her anger at Gandhi springs from his Hinduizing the independence movement: “Gandhi really sowed the seeds of partition and turned the whole independence struggle into a Hindu movement. It’s hard for people in the west, where he is deified, to regard Him as a petty manipulative politician.” (112). In Cracking India, Bapsi Sidhwa lets the butcher, one of the Muslim admirers of the Ayah, “butcher” the Mahatma: “That non-violent violence-monger—your precious Gandhijee—first declares the Sikhs fanatics! Now suddenly he says: ‘Oh dear, the poor Sikhs cannot live with the Muslims if there is a Pakistan!’ What does he think we are—some kind of a beast? Aren’t they living with us now?” (author’s emphasis; 100).

While Sidhwa criticizes Gandhi for suggesting that Sikhs cannot live together with the Muslims, she does not seem equally critical of Jinnah’s speech, in March 1940 at the Muslim League’s most momentous annual session, in which he sought to justify the partition on the basis of cultural differences between the Hindus and the Muslims: an extract from Jinnah’s speech in a leaflet floated after the Lahore Resolution of 1940, quoted in Gopal’s Indian Muslims, reads, “even our diet and dress are different” (270). If Cracking India textualizes a strong denunciation of Gandhi for his dubious role in partition, it good-humoredly tones down Jinnah’s diabolical idea of division on the grounds of superficial Hindu-Muslim cultural differences through the butcher’s mockery

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of the Hindu vegetarian diet: “‘You Hindus eat so much beans and cauliflower. I’m not surprised your yogis levitate. They probably fart their way right up to heaven!’ He slips his armpit and, flapping his other arm like a chicken wing, generates a succession of fart-like sounds” (105). In her interview with David Montenegro, Sidhwa makes no secret of her siding with Jinnah:

And they [her daughters after watching *Gandhi*] felt that they, as Pakistanis, had been personally hurt by the way Jinnah had been treated in the movie. He was caricatured as a stick figure, as very stiff villain of the piece. And I felt, in *Ice-Candy-Man* [the original title for *Cracking India*], I was just redressing in a small way, a very grievous wrong that has been done to Jinnah and Pakistanis by many Indian and British writers. They’ve dehumanized him, made him a symbol of the sort of person who brought about the partition of India, a person who was hard-headed and obstinate. Whereas in reality, he was the only constitutional man who didn’t sway crowds just by rhetoric, and tried to do everything by the British standards of constitutional law. (532).

In *Cracking India*, at the end of Chapter Twenty, Sidhwa even quotes Sarojini Naidu to upstage the portrayal of Jinnah as a monster in films about Gandhi’s and Mountbatten’s lives and, conversely, to present him, in Naidu’s words, as a man whose “accustomed reserve masks, for those who know him, a naïve and eager humanity, an intuition quick and tender as a woman’s, a humor gay and winning as a child’s” (171).

However, merely by exchanging the tables—giving a positive portrayal to Jinnah and a negative one to Gandhi—, Sidhwa’s ideological goal of salvaging Pakistan’s image as a civilized nation cannot be credibly realized. For the call of what is known as “Direct Action” by Jinnah was after all primarily responsible for setting in train a ferocious wave of communal violence, genocidal in nature, that extended much beyond the division in August 14-15, 1947. Opposed to Jinnah’s culpability, which borders on the barbaric, Gandhi’s civilized response elicits commendation even from some of Gandhi’s harshest
critics including Manohar Malgonkar: “Gandhi has been called a saint, a villain, a politician, a statesman, a fool, a knave, a charlatan, an astute tradesman, a naked fakir and many other things, but the few words he now said at the urging of the Mallas of the Mehrauli shrine are enough to show that, whatever else he might have been, he was, above all, a truly civilized man” (142).

By merely exchanging the tables, the image of the Pakistanis as fanatic, barbaric and backward-looking people in contrast to the image of secular India as modern, progressive and science-oriented country in Indian historiography cannot be upstaged. In order to refurbish the tarnished image, partition violence in West Punjab has to be naturalized, justified and even elided. That the riot took place in Lahore cannot be left unmentioned, but it can be pointed out that Muslims react to Sikh provocations and attacks:

Suddenly a posse of sweating English tommies, wearing only khaki shorts, socks and boots, runs up in the lane directly below us. And on their heels a mob of Sikhs, their long hair and beards rampant, large fevered eyes glowing in fanatic faces, pours into the narrow lane roaring slogans, holding curved swords, shoving up a maniac wave of violence that sets Ayah to trembling as she holds me tight. A naked child, twitching on a spear struck between her shoulders, is waved like a flag: her screamless mouth agape, she is staring straight up at me. A crimson fury blinds me. I want to dive into the bestial creature clawing entrails, plucking eyes, tearing limbs, gouging hearts, smashing brains: but the creature has too many stony hearts, too many sightless eyes, deaf ears, mindless brains and tons of entwined entrails. . . .

And then a slowly advancing mob of Muslim goondas: packed so tight that we can see only the tops of their heads. Roaring: “Allah-o-Akbar! Yaaa Ali!” and “Pakistan Zindabad!”

The terror the mob generates is palpable—like an evil, paralyzing spell. The terrible procession, like a sluggish river, flows beneath us. Every short while a group of men, like a whirling eddy, stalls—and like the widening circles of a treacherous eddy dissolving in the mainstream, leaves in its center the pulpy flotsam of a mangled body. (144-45).
As in Chaman Nahal’s othering of the Muslims in the parade scene in *Azadi*, Sidhwa’s magnifying of the stereotyped other is also total. If the Sikhs emerge as the most virulent kind of a beast, Muslims, who react, react not as an organized army but as “goondas.” That the Muslim mob consists of underground elements that can be found in any civilized city is Sidhwa’s ploy to elide or consign the violence to outside the boundary of the community. Besides, the other way, whereby Sidhwa assigns the violence to the realm of outside is by integrating it to Nature. As Gyan Pandey asserts, “The assimilation of violence to natural disaster helps to remove it from the domain of human deliberation and agency” (“The Prose of Otheness” (201). Sidhwa keeps herself on the same othering spree even while talking about the violence in East Punjab, especially while relating Ranna’s story, which is an insertion of a testimonial fragment. That Sidhwa fails to incorporate any testimony of a Sikh or Hindu victim points eloquently towards her nationalist bias. Her representation of violence in Punjab looks only outward: both in Lahore and East Punjab (Indian side) the perpetrators of the violence can be only the Sikhs and their Hindu provocateurs.

The othering that we see in Sidhwa and in Nahal is an attempt to secure the life of the community or the nation. Sidhwa reveals herself as stating, through *Cracking India*, that Lahore/Punjab did witness partition violence but that the pattern of the outbreak pins the responsibility to the Sikhs’ barbarism to which the Muslims of Lahore/Punjab had merely responded. The extraordinary character of the partition violence as emerging from Sidhwa’s representation is that violence takes place in Lahore outside the boundary of the civilized community of Lahori Muslims.
A constitution of the community through a discourse of eliding and naturalizing the violence and ascribing it to the other as found overtly in Sidhwa but available implicitly in Nahal, however, has led to the alignment of community and perpetual hostility in South Asia. In Urvashi Butalia’s discussion with Bapsi Sidhwa and in subtle reference to *Cracking India* itself, it is this kind of the shockingly biased representation, which assigns the worst kind of stereotypes to both the Indians and the Pakistanis, that Butalia calls “a chauvinist history masquerading as nationalism, or rather chauvinism masquerading as nationalism” (238). The politics of the language of violence in such celebrated classics as *Azadi* and *Cracking India* raises the question: what kind of language writers of partition and communal violence should employ that neither reduces the specificity of the experience nor nullifies the possibility of co-existence? The answer lies in developing a humanistic, critical consciousness: “Instead of saying, “These are two warring ethnic identities, simple opposition, immemorial feuds, hatreds.” We rather. . . say, “These are two communities of suffering.” Then one can resolve in some way the problem by looking at the possibilities of co-existence, not the notion of separation and partition” (Said 19).
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