

## **English Literature beyond Political and Social Boundaries**

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### **Abstract**

*The Paper goes on to highlight how the memory of the Partition is preserved, and how the creative arts' relation to public memory and its place within the public sphere has changed through time. Also presents a nuanced understanding of how the experience of violence, displacement, and trauma shaped postcolonial societies and subjectivities in the Indian subcontinent through the literature produced by the writers of both sides of boundaries. History is not literature and vice versa, but both the genres complement each other. And where history takes rest, literature begins its momentum. Again when literature comes to a halt, from there the quest of history begins. The history behind the facts inspires the writers to create their literary imaginations. Fiction based on history is often symptomatic of the anxieties and dreams of people, which history fails to do. History is an ongoing cultural process and literature, a reflection of ceaseless revelations. Fiction is not just a story that someone spent a bit of time on, it is a bit of what that person has to share with the world, a piece of their light that is clearing up a piece of darkness for someone else. Undivided India, which freed itself from the colonial yoke, and the event of the Partition of the subcontinent are inextricably bound together. Thus, no post-colonial denizen of the subcontinent possessing a sense of history and living in the post-independence era can ignore the pervasive influence and impact of the Partition on contemporary life. Undoubtedly the most important determining factor in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh's destiny, the Partition is much more than a historical fact, however, it has served and continues to serve as a compelling literary theme that has engendered a substantial body of fiction on the subcontinent. Literature represents history better than historians. History has become inadequate medium of examining partition trauma and hence, the necessity of literature. They*

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‘Undivided India, which freed itself from the colonial yoke, and the event of the Partition of the subcontinent are inextricably bound together. Thus, no post-colonial denizen of the subcontinent possessing a sense of history and living in the post-independence era can ignore the pervasive influence and impact of the Partition on contemporary life. Undoubtedly the most important determining factor in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh’s destiny, the Partition is much more than a historical fact, however, it has served and continues to serve as a compelling literary theme that has engendered a substantial body of fiction on the subcontinent, fiction that is startling in terms of its diversity of focus, style and treatment.’ (Roy.2010) Moreover, literature represents history better than historians. Historians generally agree that literature represented Partition better. For example, Ayesha Jalal and Sugata Bose, in their book on South Asian history, opine that: The colossal human tragedy of the partition and its continuing aftermath has been better conveyed by the more sensitive creative writers and artists – for example in Saadat Hasan Manto’s short stories and Ritwik Ghatak’s films – than by historians. (2004) According to Prof. Mushirul Hasan, ‘Indeed, if the histories of partition are to be rewritten, there are several reasons why we must judiciously draw upon the intellectual resources made available to us by such creative writers. They expose the inadequacy of numerous narratives on independence and partition, compel us to explore fresh themes and adopt new approaches that have eluded the grasp of social scientists, and provide a foundation for developing an alternative discourse to current expositions of a general theory on inter-community relations. Their strength lies in representing a grim and sordid contemporary reality without drawing religion or a particular community as the principal reference point. In their stories, the experiences of each community distinctly mirror one another, indeed reach out to and clutch at one another. No crime, no despair, no grief in exile belongs uniquely to anyone.’ In the words of Krishna Sobti, whose best-known Hindi writings on partition are *Sikka Badal Gaya* and *Zindaginama*, the fiction written about that cataclysmic event preserved ‘essential human values’. (Sen.1994)

Partition, 1947 an event that is one of the darkest period in the sub-continent. It was a time, when humanity touched its lowest depth and lost its meaning in vicious throes of hatred. It was an age when religion became only means of survival. Partition was a cataclysmic event that scarred a generation and defined politics and nationhood. The partition

of the sub-continent led to one of the largest ever migration in the world history with population being exchanged across the border in Punjab and to a lesser extent in Bengal. Statistics fails to tell us the trauma of people, separated by the Redcliffe line. ‘When traumatic events smash and disfigure our lives, we often cannot remember what really happened. The past is profoundly distorted or denied, or fixed in time or covered or twisted, or burn.’ (2013. Preface) For the past sixty seven years, the two countries India and Pakistan remain entrenched in bitter animosity, fought four wars and even now fighting low intensity wars over Kashmir issue and drawing of boundaries in the high Himalayas. History has become inadequate medium of examining partition trauma and hence, the necessity of literature. Literature, specially the fiction creates a discourse for understanding the sentiments of various sides of the tale because the author is not bound to a superficial sense of historical objectivity. The fiction writer has the absolute ability to produce a greater comprehension of the events because s/he insets racial, religions, socio-economics and political biases in front of the readers to present an honest narrative account of partition. The early works on partition concentrate on high politics but this approach changed in the 1990s with emphasis being shifted to oral history, letters, and diaries of the survivors in understanding partition. They go into some of the finer points of history and depend on memory to study partition. The writers attempt to sensitize history to the pain and trauma of partition. Riots were not the cause of Partition, but Partition had caused riots. The riots were an opportunity for sectarian politics. Partition is not a bygone event, but a contemporary phenomenon that continues to influence the politics of identity in South Asia along with sub-continent’s attitude towards interweaving aspects of religion and culture on the one hand and the relationship between tradition and modernity on the other.

The memories of the pain suffered in those times, of the splits that fractured and re-fractured the subcontinent, the remembrance of the scale and the intensity of the human suffering that partition caused, are the dimensions that are taken as subjects in fictions and films. Fiction with its vast canvass to the creative genius transcends the horror and brutality of partition by giving a glimpse of the compassion and understanding about the trauma and suffering of the masses. The partition of the subcontinent profoundly affected human emotions and values to such a great extent that all the creative artists have come under its influence. ‘Memory can be juxtaposed with creative literature in partition narratives as both together articulate the totality of experience by combining the imaginative and autobiographical modes of expression in cultural texts like literature and films.’ (2013.xi) The events of partition have inspired a creative outpouring by writers and filmmakers. While

some creations depicted the massacres during the refugee migration, on the aftermath of the partition in terms of difficulties faced by the refugees in both side of the border. Even now, sixty Seven years after the partition, fictions and films are made that relate to the events of partition. Films still continue to be made on the subject, and attract wide audiences. Of the many writers who wrote about partition, the greatest is undoubtedly Saadat Hassan Manto. He was free from any communal bias. This is amply evident from the slim volume of sketches or vignettes called *Siyah Hashye* that he published soon after the division of the country. In this volume, except in one instance, none of the participants in the bloody drama of Partition is identified by religion, 'because, to Manto, what mattered was not what religion people had, what rituals they followed or which gods they worshipped, but where they stood as human beings.' (1997.xx) As Alok Bhalla rightly notes, 'Manto's stories about the partition are more realistic and more shocking records of those predatory times (than those of his contemporaries). They are written by a man who knows that after such ruination there can neither be any forgiveness nor any forgetting.' (p-20) (1994: xvii) The Urdu title *Siyah Hashye* which Manto gave his book means 'black fringe' in which he seemed to say, if Independence, was something bright and good, then it was fringed with black. His '*Toba Tek Singh*', a little tale of exchange of populations on religious lines between the lunatic asylums on both sides of the border, has created an enduring metaphor for the insanity of partition. His other stories on the subject, like '*Thanda Gosht*' (*Dead Meat*), '*Khol do*' (*Open up*) take an unflinching look at the brutality of partition and madness that reigned in the name of religion during those traumatic times. Another story of Monto that looks at the question of identity is '*Tetwal Ka Kutta*' (*The Dog of Tetwal*). The most obvious effect is evident in the statement that 'even dogs will now have to be either Hindustan or Pakistan'. His other stories '*Dhuan*' (Smoke), '*The return*', '*The Assignment*' etc. which are collected in '*Siyah Hashiye*' or '*Black Margin*' are the best piece of imaginative prose written about the communal violence of 1947. '*Kingdom's End and other stories*' (1987), a collection of the stories written by Manto Published by Penguin Books India is about Raj, partition and communalism.

Many other Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, English and Bengali writers have written memorable stories and novels about partition. Bhisham Sahni is a great writer of partition-saga in Hindi today. His masterpiece '*Tamas*' (*Darkness*), published in 1975 is one of the most powerful novel ever written on the subject i.e. communal riot. *Tamas* is the portrait of a West Punjab town in the grip of communal frenzy in pre-partition India. *Tamas* narrates the exodus of a Sikh and Hindu family to India, in the backdrop of riot-stricken Pakistan during the partition. It can be read to understand the nature of communal violence and how the

society can be insulated from it. *Tamas* not only studies the reasons behind communal violence, but also the anatomy of communal riots. The novel offers a peep into the eruption of communal violence and the role of various agencies played in it. The novel also delivers a stern warning that a man becomes a devil under the influence of communalism, so we should take stern measures to stop the eruption of communal violence. *Tamas* is constructed on the dichotomy of communalism. The communal elements which created the holocaust are still active today and the patterns too remain the same. The Partition affected whoever went through it. *Tamas* raises a voice of protest against the misuse of religion and the selfish political groups. The novelist warns people against those forces and groups, religious and political who are ready to float all norms of morality. '*Palli*' of the writer, a partition tale which tells a long story about a child who is lost to his Hindu parents during partition and then, adopted by a Muslims family. It could be compared with Manto and Ismal Chughtai's stories. His another story '*The train has reached Amritsar*' is set in a moving train whose passengers learn of the riots during their journey.

S.H.V. Agyeya's "*Muslim-Muslim Bhai-Bhai*" tells the story of Muslim women wanting to escape potential violence from Hindu neighborhood, are waiting for a train to take them to the newly formed Pakistan. They are however, not allowed to board the train because it is already full of upper-class Muslim women traveling to Pakistan. The irony is not only that class for them was more important than a religion on whose basis their new country was formed, but also that they may meet the same fate on the train as the women they left behind on the platform. In 1955, the Indo-Pak border was opened for the first time, when a friendly hockey match was played in Amritsar between the teams of India and Pakistan and thousands of people crossed the border on the occasion. Mohan Rakesh, in his Hindi Story '*Malbe Ka Malik*' (*The owner of Rubble*) has depicted the irony of ownership over a house ruined by the riot after the partition. Rajinder Singh Bedi's '*Lajwanti*' however, is a heart-wrenching portrayal of the gender aspect of the partition. The question of identity has been aptly depicted in Krishna Sobti's story '*Sikka Badal Gayaa*' or '*The new Regime*'. '*Kitnay Pakistan ?*' (2000) (*How many Pakistan?*) of noted Hindi fiction writer Kamaleswar is a story of unrequited love in the backdrop of the Pakistan. It deals with historical context on the based on the rise of communalism, the violence and bloodshed in aftermath of partition of India in 1947 and examines the nature and futility of divisive politics and religion. '*Hoshiarpur sey Lahore Tak*' (*Hoshiarpur to Lahore*) in Urdu is a true story based on a train journey from Indian city of Hoshiarpur to Lahore in Pakistan. It is written by a police officer who was with this train. '*Khak aur Khoon*' is a historical novel by Nasim Hijazi that

describes the sacrifices of Muslims of the sub-continent during the time of Pakistan in 1947. *'Toota Shisha'* (*The Broken Mirror*) a Hindi novel by Kirshna Baldev Vaid, portrays the psychological and sociological transformation in a West Punjabi village in the phase leading up to the partition, with emphasis on communal taboos and hardened community boundaries. *'Aadha Gaon'* (*Half a village*), a Hindi Novel by Rahi Masoom Raza, represents the experience of subaltern Indian Muslims in village Gangouli and their distinctive take on the vacuity of high politics. *'Basti'* by Intizar Husain is an Urdu novel that focuses on the partition as memory, through the lens of protagonist Zakir, a historian who seeks to terms with this memory in the context of the happenings in 1971 in Pakistan leading up to the formation of Bangladesh. *'Raavi Paar and other stories'* (2000) published by Harper Collins India is a collection of stories by Sampooran Singh 'Gulzar' that deal with the partition India and Pakistan. *Khak aur Khoon* is a historical novel by Nasim Hijazi that describes the sacrifices of Muslims of the Sub-continent during the time of partition in 1947. *Jhootha Sach* (*This is Not That Dawn*) by Yashpal is one of the most outstanding piece of Hindi literature written about the Partiton. Reviving life in Lahore as it was before 1947, the book opens on a nostalgic note, with vivid descriptions of the people that lived in the city's streets and lanes. Similarly, Amrita Pritam's Punjabi novel *'Pinjar'* (*skeleton*) is the story of an abducted women Puro in the period before the partition and how she brings about a change in the man who rapes her. Later, it is made into a film in the same name in 2003. Kashmiri Lal Zakir's novel *'Karamanwali'* represents the agonizing internal journey of that generation of women whose children were left behind while they migrated to India or Pakistan. It is based on a real incident of a mother looking for her son who experiences the dehumanizing conditions of a refugee camp. Similarly, *'Azadi'* is a semi autobiographical novel by Chaman Nahal. *Dharmputra* (1961) was first Hindi film to depict the partition of India, directed by Yash Chopra Yash Chopra. Kamal Haasan wrote, directed, and starred in *Hey Ram* (2000) film about the Partition and the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi.

*'A Bend in the Ganges'* is a English novel by Manohar Malgonkar that features some of the graphic violence that occurred during partition. *'The Dark Dancer'* is a novel by Balachandra Rajan that portrays the experiences of an Indian educated abroad who returns home to face the horror of the partition. *'Sunlight on a Broken Column'* is a novel by Attia Hosain which depicts the experiences of the protagonist, Laila, a young women from a taluqdari family of Oudh, in the years leading to up to the partition. While Vikram Chandra's 2006 novel *'Sacred Games'* is not about partition, it does contain a long and graphic chapter describing the main character's mother's flight as a young Sikh girl from what would become

Pakistani Punjab, during which her beloved older sister was abducted. Khushwant Singh's '*Train to Pakistan*' (1956) is a straightforward novel, perhaps a reflection of its naive villagers or the contained direct anger of its promise. The gruesome scene of violence that turned the Punjab into a wasteland has been vividly described. Singh's version of the partition is a social one, providing human accounts in a diverse, detailed character base where each person has unique points of view, pointing out that every one is equally at fault and that placing blame was irrelevant. As an honest chronicler the novelist probes deeper into the problems of communal frenzy and hold both, Hindus and Muslims equally guilty. It was adapted into a Hindi film by the same name by Pamela Rooks in 1998. Salman Rushdie's '*Midnight's Children*' (1980) is a famous surrealistic fiction full of satirical references to the event of Pakistan and independence. It was later adapted into a film by the same name by Deepa Mehta. The story of Rohinton Mistry's '*A fine balance*' (2001), is set in 1975, however, the partition plays a dominant role in the narrative. Bapsi Sidhwa's '*Ice-candy man*' (1988) or '*Cracking India*' is a metaphor for those who wield power and it provides an inventive and indirect way to explore the role of politicians played in the holocaust and bloody birth of Pakistan and new India. Later the story was made into a film called '*Earth*' by Deepa Mehta. *The Weary Generations*, an Urdu novel by Abdullah Hussein, tracks the prehistory of the partition through the experiences of the main character, Naeem, a veteran of the First World War who faces up to the futility and meaningless of the partition. Jhumpa Lahiri was awarded the 2000 Pulitzer Prize for fiction for '*Interpreter of Maladies*' (1999), a collection of short stories, some of which involved the aftermath of the partition. In '*Difficult Daughters*' (1998) by Manju Kapur the author presents the life of a young woman from Amritsar during partition, who struggles with family duty, educational aspirations and an illicit relationship with a married college professor. Manju Kapur uses the novel to criticize the politics of partition and post-partition events specially contemporary Indian issues raised during 1990s. Urvashi Butalia in '*The other side of silence*' voices from the partition of India, has invited the common people, mostly uprooted from their homes to record the hitherto unrecorded memories of the joint past. Apart from these narratives, Prafulla Ray's '*Father*', Samaresh Basu's '*Farewell*', Joginder Paul's '*Sleepwalkers*', Surendra Prakash's '*Dream images*' or '*Khayal Surat*' are of common notes of irreparable loss resounds across.

The human dimension of the partition of the Punjab and Bengal is well represented through various form of literary representatives which bring out the totality of the experiences often missed by historians. Most of the Punjabi fiction and the few available

poems by sectarian riots, are not by the actual philosophy of partition. Krishan Chander's story '*Peshawar Express*' ends with the murder of a Muslim girl in the train and with a message 'there will only be workers and human beings'. She dies with a book soiled with her blood. The title of the book is *Socialism: Theory and Practice* by John Strachey with this message. Anwar Ali's '*Gurh dee Bheli (The piece of cake)*' is a story of a Muslim priest Ahmad Deen who is dealing in oil and hides in Ludhiana, rose to be an influential politician in the new country of Pakistan. It is one of very few who shared the cake. In Illias Ghuman's '*Halakka*' (Rabies), the narrator kills a fellow Muslim affected with rabies out of mercy. Upendra Nath Ashq's '*Table Land*' (1948), an autobiographical story presents mutual mistrust and faith between Hindus and Muslims inherited through centuries. '*Godaria*' (*The Shepherded*) by Ashfaq Ahmed is undoubtedly the best story in Pakistan. The story through its main character Daujee, unfolds the complexities of the human mind, which at the moment of crisis loses its direction. Very few efforts have been made to record eye-witness accounts of the turmoil of Partition. Om Prakash, an obscure name in Punjabi literature, published his memoirs in Punjabi under the title *Panahageer* (The Refugees) and received critical acclaim. The book gives a disturbing and dispassionate account of age old love and hate relationship between different religious communities of his ancestral village in Gujranwala district during the first half of the last century, the riots, the plight of refugees and their struggle for survival amongst eastern Punjabis who were not so friendly with them. Giani Hari Singh's account of Muslims in Hoshiarpur district forcibly converted to Sikh faith and then murdered, leaves much more impact than the story '*Shaheed*' (*The martyrs*) written on the same event by his writer son Gulzar Singh Sandhu. Prem Prakash, probably the best short story writer today, has written memories of 1947 in the form of sketches.

However, the majority of literature dealing with Partition in India is set in Punjab, as one can see in the key 'Partition novels', where the authors also come from this 'western' side of Partition. Rarely do writers from 'the other side' of Partition, from Bengal or Bangladesh, hold such a privileged position. Many of the responses to Partition have come from the diaspora, particularly the more contemporary responses, from people who did not live through the period and in some cases who have spent little of their lives in South Asia. The distinctive features of the second partition of Bengal with respect to the partition of Punjab in 1947 is widely recognized. In recent time historians such as Diptesh Chakraborty, Partha Chatterjee and few others have acknowledged the presence of a larger body of narrative sources in the study of Bengal partition: memories, recollections, myth and forgetting etc. The best of the partition literature has been read as humanistic or nostalgic

testaments. Amitav Ghosh, who in three of his six novel (*The shadow lines*, 1988, *The Circle of Reason*, 1986; and *The Hungry Tide*, 2004) has dealt with aftermath of partition on the Bengal border. He has highlighted the continuing refugee problems on the Bengal border since 1947, which is considered as his unique contribution to Indian English literature is general and partition literature in particular. Bengali literature, unlike Punjabi, took some time in registering the event of partition and its aftermath. The first well-known, novel, on the subject, Narayan Sanyal's '*Balmik*' (part of a trilogy) was published only in 1955, but thereafter, it was followed by a spate of novels in the 1960s and 70's by among others Jyotirmayee Devi (*Epar Ganga Opar Ganga* -1967), Prafulla Ray (*Keya Patar Nouko*, 1970) Sunil Gangopadhyay (*Arjun*, 1971), Atin Bandopadhyay (*Nilkontho Pakhir Khoje*, 1971) and Gour Kishore Ghosh (*Jal pare pata nare*, 1978, *Prem nei*, 1981, and *Pra tibeshi*, 1995). *Purbo-Paschim* (East and the West) is an epic Bengali saga by Sunil Gangopadhyay. The narrative deals with a particular family that had to migrate from East Pakistan to West Bengal. The photojournalistic sources and the cinematic text such as Nemai Ghosh's '*Chinnamool*' (Rootless-1950), '*Meghe Dhaka Tara*' (Cloud-capped star, 1956), '*Komal Gandhar*' (E-flat, 1961) and Supriya Sen's '*Abar ashibo phire*' (way back Home, 2003) can be engaged for the purpose. Two Bengali plays written in first decade after partition namely Salil Sen's '*Nutan Ihudi*' and Tulsidas Lahiri's '*Banglar Mati*' can also be taken as the best examples of the topic. The plays depicted the desire to volourise the cultural unity of Bengal and propagated the rhetoric of Hindu-Muslim unity.

The best poems about partition probably capture the traumas and dilemmas even better than the most finely crafted novels. Faiz Ahmad Faiz's '*Subh-e-Azadi (Freedom's Down)*' translated from Urdu by V.G. Kiernan and W.H. Auden's '*partition*' (Cited in Bose & jalal.2004) which is about the work of Sir Cyril Redcliffe who gave the task of dividing the provinces of Bengal and Punjab between the newly created dominions of India and Pakistan are the best imaginations. Ramachandra Guha found a poem in the imperial war Museum, London of General Francis Toker, the Officer in Charge of the British Indian Army's Eastern command at the time Bengal and India were divided. Toker's book '*When memory serves*' is among the more widely quoted eye-witness accounts of partition. The poem was written on April, 1947 by a district officer in Bareilly faced with the prospect of a religious riot.

By reviewing the life, literature and politics of two countries it is observed that neither India nor Pakistan has recovered fully from the deep hurt suffered during partition. The writers rather too close to the areas of the woeful incidents, and had mostly observed the happenings as eye witness. Pakistani writings such as M.Asam's '*Raks-e-Iblis* (The devil's

Dance), Rasheed Akhtar Naqvis '*The Fifteenth of August*' and Qudratullah Sahab's '*Ya Khuda*' (*Oh God*) represent the pathos of human sufferings in their tales. They give the scenes of ruthless Killings and the life in refugee camps. But Manto was able to turn pain-giving events into the great literature. He remained impartial, took no sides and wrote with detachment and passion about the atrocities committed in a state of utter madness. The first ten years after independence were a period of hectic human activities and of movement of people in Pakistan. There was also the problem of settlement. Realism was the most effective instrument to capture the new mode of life. Hameed Akhtar's short stories '*La-Makan*', Qurratulain Haider's '*Housing society*', Ibraheem Jalee's '*Chor Bazar*' (*The underworld*) and Shaukat Siddique's '*Khuda ki basti*' (*The Blessed Dwelling place*) provide an insight into the making of a new social reality in Pakistan. Intizar Hussain's '*Chand Grehan*' (*The Lunar Eclipse*) and '*Dinn*' (*The Day*) published in 1953 and 1956 respectively. These stories were written on the experience of migration to Pakistan. The old home in Agra and Oudh is remembered not as a fit of nostalgia but as an invigorating source of inspiration in the new environment where the immigrant intends to build his new home.

Antoinette Burton has rightly said, 'Partition will never be over. It is destined to return again and again not just as memory, but as history, politics and aesthetics as well. And despite the power of memory in shaping Partition's recurrence, it is always already anachronistic: not simply out of joint or out of time but productive of the very tensions between the "here and now" and the "then and gone" that call it into being.' (2015. Foreword) According to I.D. Sharma, 'Such a novel never becomes a dated one because of its universal appeal.' (Introduction) Partition shocked the conscience of civilized people, destroyed human attitudes and transformed people into wild beasts who perpetrated extremely barbaric cruelties against their fellow beings. The novel also serves an important lesson to erring mankind not to allow history to repeat itself in such an ugly and disgusting manner. Partition was not division of nations but of communities, values, memories and dreams. It is a phase in history when Hindus won, Muslims won, colonial rulers won, freedom fighters won, political stalwarts won, but humanity lost. Erosion of human values that started prior to partition has corroded the social system further. After sixty seven years the situation is no better. Instead of bridges we build walls and seem to live happily in our compartmentalized lives. The novels provide voice and visibility to the communal divide and call for a better tomorrow where compassion is the word. Love and compassion are stronger than communalism and hatred. Let us not build nations within a nation. Let us not condemn ourselves to repeat history. Religion is meant for welfare, it is a catalyst for the merger of the soul with the

Ultimate. But the people in the novel start professing a strange religion that darkens their souls and the whole universe. They interpret religion to suit their own selfish motives. So it is important to control the beast otherwise nothing but darkness will prevail in this colourful world. The literature beyond boundaries are powerful warning against this beast that is the greatest challenge before our civilization.

‘The study of partition has moved from the ‘centre’ to the ‘margin’, by focusing on marginal groups, memory, recollection, remembrance, reminiscence have all been creatively employed by writers to uncover the unknown depths of the trauma of separation, displacement and accompanied violence.’(2013.Preface-x) Surely, ‘India belongs to all of us, and we have to live and die here. But why this partition and the exchange of population?’(Anis Kidwai) Why did a society with its splendidly plural heritage become the site of one of the most cataclysmic events in twentieth-century history? And last but not least, if the nineteenth-century Urdu poet Mirza Ghalib had been alive, he would have asked in his inimitable style:

‘When all is You, and nought exists but You

Tell me, O Lord, why all this turmoil too?’ (Hasan, Prologue,p.10)

Many historians are of the view that the foreign invaders who come to India only have a political victory, but culturally they were grossly overcome by the Indian nation, as well depicted in the famous poem of Dr. Mohammad Iqbal:

*Unani, Misri, Roman, sab mitgaye jahan se*

*Kuchh bat hai ki hastee mittee nahin hamaree*

*Sadiyon rahaa dushman daur- jahan hamaara*

(The Greek, the Egyptian, the Romans were all defeated

There is something within that prevents us from being defeated

Even though nations stood against us in enmity since ages)

The emotional and aesthetic effect of particular literature is immutable. These creative works certainly weave a fine tapestry of various strands of partition. A major refrain of the works is that in spite of the creation of two nations a bond of oneness can be clearly discerned among the divided. People cherish in their hearts a kind of nostalgia for the undivided past. The people to people interaction may hopefully lead to better relations among India, Pakistan and Bangladesh in future. The memories are imbedded in the consciousness and the realm of the intellect. These memories are expected to open the doors for future understanding among

these nations for the establishment of the age old Upanishadic principle of ‘*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*’- the whole world belong to one family or ‘*Yatra Viswa Bhavati Ek Needam* – Where the whole world rests in one nest.” I fully agree with Prof. Mushirul Hasan that if creative writings can still stir the individual and collective imagination of sensitive readers in the subcontinent, there is no reason why people on both sides of the Wagah border cannot share the anguish of Faiz Ahmad Faiz and at the same time, echo the optimism and plea of Ali Sardar Jafri in the following lines:

*Tum aao Gulshan-i Lahore se chaman bardosh*

*Hum ayehn subha Banaras ki roshni lekar*

*Himalaya ki hawaon ki taazgi lekar.*

*Phir uske baad ye puchhain ki kaun dushman hai?*

(You come covered with flowers from the Garden of Lahore

We bring to you the light and radiance of the morning of Banaras,

the freshness of the winds of the Himalayas.

And then we ask who the enemy is.) (Ctd. In Introduction, Mushirul Hasan p-40)

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- W.H. Auden, perhaps, best summed up the ironic role that Sir Cyril Radcliffe played in the story of Britain's final withdrawal from the subcontinent in his poem 'Partition', which runs in part:

Unbiased at least he was when he arrived on his mission  
Having never set eyes on this land he was called to partition  
Between two peoples fanatically at odds,  
With their different diets and incompatible gods.  
'Time,' they had briefed him in London, 'is short.  
It's too late for mutual reconciliation or rational debate:  
The only solution now lies in separation...  
He got down to work, to the task of settling the fate  
The maps at his disposal were out of date  
And the census returns almost certainly incorrect,  
But there was no time to check them, no time to inspect  
Contested areas...  
But in seven weeks it was done, the frontiers decided.  
A continent for better or worse divided.

(Cited by Sugata Bose & Ayesha Jalal (2004), in *Modern South Asia: History, Culture,*)

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