

**A TIME TO KILL**  
**A STUDY OF THE PSYCHODYNAMICS OF VIOLENCE**  
**IN SELECTED PARTITION FICTION**

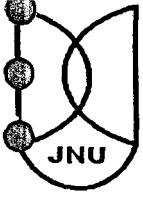
*Dissertation Submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University*  
*in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements*  
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**Master of Philosophy**

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**CERTIFICATE**

July 21, 2005

Certified that this dissertation entitled *A Time to Kill: A Study of the Psychodynamics of Violence in Selected Partition Fiction*, submitted by Ms. Deepti Laroia to the Centre of Linguistics & English, School of Language, Literature & Culture Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy**, is her original work and has not been submitted, in part or full, for any other degree or diploma of this or any other university or institution. This may, therefore, be placed before the examiners for evaluation for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy**.

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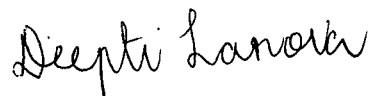
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This dissertation entitled *A Time to Kill: A Study of the Psychodynamics of Violence in Selected Partition Fiction*, submitted by me to the Centre of Linguistics & English, School of Language, Literature & Culture Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy**, is an original work and has not been submitted, in part or full, for any other degree or diploma of this or any other university or institution.



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## *INTRODUCTION* *A Time to Kill!*

Yeh daag daag ujala, yeh shab gazida sahar  
Vo intezar tha jiska, yeh vo sahar nahin<sup>1</sup>

For many, more than freedom, Independence signified ‘taqseem’ – a gruesome event, which left behind indelible scars upon the sub-continental consciousness. “At the stroke of midnight” while India awakened and prepared itself for its “tryst with destiny”<sup>2</sup>, an altogether different tryst awaited the men and women of Punjab and Bengal; for their long awaited dawn of Independence was blanked out by the darkness of Partition. In the wake of these two mutually exclusive events, which ironically arose out of the same historical process, what ushered in for these people was a dark dawn of murderous upheaval and displacement – a displacement in which about ten million people were rendered homeless as they fled for safety across the newly created border (leaving behind their homes and hearths), a tenth of them brutally slaughtered, another forty-five thousand severely wounded<sup>3</sup>, along with nerve-wrenching atrocities inflicted upon women, who in ways other than one, turned out to be the “chief sufferers”<sup>4</sup>. Thus, coupled with this mass exodus, which turned out to be the single largest planned transfer of human population that history ever saw, unleashed unanticipated terror, loot, arson, torture and a haunting visceral ferocity. Such was this unimaginably painful birth and such was the unprecedented shape of xenophobia, that many would not cringe from considering “Partition and riots (to be) synonymous”<sup>5</sup>.

Ironically men at the helm of affairs had acceded to the League’s clamour for a separate state so as to avert a ghastly civil war following the August anarchy<sup>6</sup>. But, this unfathomable massacre, which Gyanendra Pandey labels as the “naked parade...of violence”<sup>7</sup>, turned out to be even worse. Thus came to the fore, the unfortunate storms, which defied and outraged all logics of sanity, nationalism and civilized behaviour to create two “imagined communities”<sup>8</sup>, based on the seemingly rational logic of a common religion. The logic behind this though is debatable, because ironically again, soon after, in 1971, “the Two-Nation theory, formulated in the middle-class living rooms of Uttar Pradesh, was buried in the Bengali

countryside”<sup>9</sup>, as history witnessed yet another Islamic state (Bangladesh) being culled out of this allegedly all-Muslim state. Thus, challenging all stated truths of community, nation, power of religion etc. and leaving behind only one reality of death and deadly slaughter, which sends shudders down one’s spine.

In the light of such bizarre events there are numerous queries that confront one in the face. Was Partition unavoidable? Who is to be blamed for it? Whose interest did this ‘bargaining counter’<sup>10</sup> serve? How did the common man become a part of it? What role did he have to play, if any? And the list is endless. Literary shelves are crammed with literature debating over this issue. However, one finds that till recently most literature on Partition, dealt with the event shabbily, superficially and cursorily. All that got featured in such volumes was the stark statistics, which flabbergasted one in the face, but failed to capture the human side of the tragedy. Such an insensitive mention of these ‘stern reckonings’<sup>11</sup> merely gives an impression of a history lived and enacted by a few chosen ones, while the suffering and traumatic voices of the commoners just seem to get dissipated somewhere in these high-minded debates. This anguish and lack is poignantly voiced by Gulab Pandit, an ordinary social worker, in *Borders and Boundaries*, when she states that “Itihas mein sirf naam aur taarikh sahi hoti hai, baaqi nahin”<sup>12</sup>.

And this indeed is true, because till quite late, most of the academics did deliberate upon Partition as “a man-made catastrophe brought about by hot headed and cynical politicians who failed to grasp the implications of division along religious lines”<sup>13</sup>. Such is its representation, that to an onlooker Partition might appear to be an outcome of bitter controversies, persistent uncertainties and protracted negotiations centred around the chief political actors who seem to have presided over the destiny of millions without their mandate. The common-man, his participation, nature of involvement and experience seems to be merely insignificant. The two odd words like ‘trauma’ and ‘loss’ seem to be sufficient markers of the rest. The real face of the gory event and the dynamics and repercussions of “the callous haste with which Partition was pushed through more strikingly than the last minute arrangements to demarcate the border”<sup>14</sup> seem to be comfortably elided.

This “bureaucratic and theoretical attitude”<sup>15</sup> towards violence and loss of life is often attributed to the sensitivity of the issue especially in the wake of the

communal, conflict-ridden, post-Partition subcontinent. It may have also been because of the urge to bury the Hindu-Muslim conflict and work towards building up a secular, sovereign, democratic Indian nation. Post Independence, the endeavour was to paint a rosy picture, whereby what required to be foregrounded was a much-needed spirit of unified nationalism. It is perhaps for this reason, that amidst all this death and devastation, there were numerous attempts to shrug off Partition as almost a “non-problem”<sup>16</sup>. In fact as a part of the act of “selective amnesia”<sup>17</sup>, it was an (in)voluntary decision to carefully weed out the horrors and unbearable pain of this brutal massacre. Ashis Nandy describes this as:

Nothing less than a form of self-denial, a flight as it were, a tendency to run away from the harsh realities of the past.<sup>18</sup>

In certain ways this sort of escapism continues till date, as voiced emphatically by Mrinal Pandey who highlights this callous attitude on the part of those at the helm of affairs. She laments:

There is, to date, no formal ceremony or a national day of mourning, by which the two nations would remind the coming generations of the dangers of communal hatred and of the self destructive venom that xenophobia generates.<sup>19</sup>

One finds this even in the history textbooks, which cursorily mention the colossal human misery and displacement. Accounts merely skim through the trauma of the millions who were, wounded and bereaved, rendered destitute and homeless, went hungry and thirsty – and worst of all, left desperately anxious and despairing about their future. Concern regarding the same is even voiced by Suvir Kaul, who questions this unspoken horror of Partition by analyzing how school children too are taught a “‘no faults’ nationalism” which he labels as “hollow patriotism” and describes as a fallacious vision in which:

The founding fathers of our nation could do no wrong, just as the founding fathers of Pakistan, the ‘anti-nation’, could do no right.<sup>20</sup>

It is due to such an “easy refuge in political posturing or moral and religious sermonizing”<sup>21</sup>, that the real face and dynamics of the event get submerged.



However, such comments and challenges by the above-mentioned scholars, though transcending the canonical spaces and indulging in liberal talks on issues of communal violence in general and Partition in particular, too are denied any serious spaces. In fact, they are alleged to be inconsequential. This is because they often arouse accusations of indulging in emotional balkanization, which posit serious threats to the ongoing process of nation building. Many years later also, such talks are often perceived as dangerous when viewed in the light of sporadic outbursts of conflicts and tensions between the Hindus and the Muslims. These then become stifled voices, which “cannot be harnessed into the metanarratives of progress and unity”<sup>22</sup>. Hence, the unsaid silence around talks, which might act as potent threats to integration, and an unsaid consensus to perceive Partition as an aberration and the tabooed “other”<sup>23</sup> of Independence.

However, a counter to such jingoistic logics is found in creative writing and oral narratives where a stark representation of this “nationalism gone awry”<sup>24</sup> finds elaborate space. It is the need for challenging this inadequacy of the numerous official narratives on Independence and Partition that calls for what, Mushirul Hasan terms as “a foundation for developing an alternative discourse”<sup>25</sup>. It is in this alternate space that the sordid experiences and harrowing grief of the chief sufferers and the actions of the perpetrators of violence are suitably transcribed. It is in such literature, that the unelaborated words of displacement, violence and resettlement are mirrored in an endeavour to discover and uncover the true face of what Butalia labels as the “other side of silence”<sup>26</sup>. More so, because despite all efforts to maintain official silence about this mayhem, the strained Hindu-Muslim relations continue to cast their appalling shadow even today (as is evident in the sporadic outbursts of Hindu-Muslim riots post Independence). And in the wake of this Partition “(jo) jari hai”<sup>27</sup> (continuing Partition), as many scholars view it, it becomes even more pertinent to grapple with this complex Hindu-Muslim debate in all its kaleidoscopic dimensions, rather than the myopic endeavours that have been the case till very recently.

In one such attempt to rewrite this history from the margins, scholars have repeatedly emphasized the centrality of personal narratives, testimonies and eyewitness accounts which help in offering resistance to the kind of history which Gyanendra Pandey states is a mere:

celebratory account of the march of certain victorious concepts and powers like the nation state, bureaucratic rationalism, capitalism, science and progress.<sup>28</sup>

In this effort to jolt an over-cautious academia out of inertia and recover a people's history, scholars like Urvashi Butalia, Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, Sukeshi Kamra, Alok Bhalla and many more have engaged in crucial archival research. A significant contribution has been made by these scholars whereby in the absence of official records, they have gathered personal testimonies of the various agents, agencies and recipients of violence and displacement, to foreground what Butalia calls crucial yet "hidden histories"<sup>29</sup>. Though these play a key role in the revisionist historiographer's task of reconstructing an alternative history to Partition, nonetheless such tasks too, as pointed out by Gyanendra Pandey and Huma Ibrahim<sup>30</sup>, carry along with them, the perils of being emotional, sentimental and bearing imprints of bias, distortion and even exaggeration.

It is here that literary narratives play a crucial role. In the current phase of subaltern and postcolonial discourses, as pointed out by Sukrita Paul Kumar<sup>31</sup>, they act as a useful technique to foreground reasonably realistically, yet aesthetically and without being melodramatic, the human dimension of Partition. Through creative writings on Partition the task of recovering the history of the people achieves a dynamic vision as these works represent the dark and compelling experiences of the time.

These literary representations function as an important step in the arduous process of making contact with the silenced voices, primarily because they often "engage in a dialogue with personal testimonies"<sup>32</sup>. Most of these writers have either encountered or suffered the event, and if not this, have heard and grown up on the tales of the same. Furthermore, through this "intertextual dialogue between personal stories and fictional representations, they provide meaningful frames that function as sources of knowledge about the unknown stories of Partition"<sup>33</sup>. It is this achievement of literary texts on Partition, that Nandi Bhatia further highlights:

Through the literary techniques of storytelling, dialogue, flashback and description they weave meaningful stories in which they debate and discuss questions of violence, agency and communalism.<sup>34</sup>

One can say that since the focus is not necessarily on the political stalwarts but also on ordinary men and women, the latter's experiences, within the specific sociological frames, also become voices to reckon with. It is in such voices, where insights into the nature of individual experiences are explicitly offered, that one finds critical tools for reconstructing the fragmented histories. The sense of pain, shock, loss, disbelief and resentment, along with acts, which have blunt associations with sexual sadism and necrophilia and a bleak future that seems to be suppressed under the patriarchal discourses, now find a place through such means of recovery. And it is from within these that I shall find means to challenge the existing overarching paradigms, which are normally used to describe the violence that accompanied a catastrophe of such cataclysmic dimensions. These literary texts on Partition then become crucial to my analysis, whereby through my readings of these "repository(ies) of localized truths, sought to be evaded and minimized by the dominant discourse on the Partition"<sup>35</sup>, I intend to enhance the understanding of a phenomenon as complex as Partition violence.

Now, the common tropes in the representation of this cartographic violence depicted in literary texts are, pain, anguish and resentment. However, another pertinent thread that runs through most of these works is violence. Be it against a man or a woman, be it inflicted by an external agency or self-inflicted, violence serves as a leit-motif in most of the creative works on Partition. This is what Alok Rai terms as the "pornography of violence"<sup>36</sup>. This significant dwelling on violence in Partition literature is due to the fact, that indeed its face was unbearably grim and maddening. Hence, the same madness that finds a privileged status in the discourse on Partition, when leaders were often heard complaining that "Our people have gone mad"<sup>37</sup>, is brilliantly captured in a nightmarish landscape of random violence in such texts dealing with Partition. Though of course in some texts one finds an explicit exposition of it, in others, it is merely referred to without many visual elaborations.

This very violence, which caused an utter devastation that the "whole of Punjab, East and West was becoming a graveyard of destruction and death"<sup>38</sup>, has been of tremendous interest not just to fiction writers, but to literary critics and social

scientists as well. This interest is well reflected in the huge quantum of critical and non-fictional work available in the area.

For the sake of convenience, I shall classify all these works into two categories – one, which deals with the perspective of the victims of violence, and the other, which deals with that of the victimizer. A lot many scholars have dealt with the former, where along with describing the nature of the inhuman acts of violence, the trauma, loss, hopelessness and the pain is poignantly presented. Numerous accounts transcribe the permanent scars and utter confusion at the sense of displacement and relocation that accompanied Partition. Thereby they offer scope for an analysis of the stands of the commoners, which express resentment over the futility and damage of Radcliffe's meaningless operation. Hence, those voices of the victimized, which initially would have been conveniently stifled, now find a meaningful place in the corpus of literature dealing with Partition and its trauma.

At the same time much research has also gone on to figure out the perspective of the perpetrators of a violence whose intensity was such, that Gandhi is reported to have confessed to “a sinking feeling at the mass madness which can turn man into a brute”<sup>39</sup>. Scholars have tried to find answers to questions like: What is it that compels the ordinary man into such acts of violence? Is man essentially violent? Is it so easy to kill one's neighbours? Did men kill only in the name of religion? Was it just one temporary madness that seemed to grip all, or are there more shades to it? These deserve deliberation because the violence that accompanied Partition did not confine itself to certain sects, belts, gender etc. Ordinary men and women from diverse strata and strands became agents of this violence.

While endeavouring to explain such individual acts of violence and providing suitable answers to such queries, theorists attribute violent acts to self-defence and retaliation. The concept of retaliation then has a tendency to be complicated a little further, as majority of the scholars elaborate upon this concept of retribution (and attack too in some ways) in the light of theories of mob psychology and collective violence. But, before explicating these, it becomes essential to describe crowd or a mob. Crowd is a “temporary collection of people reacting together to (a) stimulus”<sup>40</sup>. There is a state of rapport amongst the members, and when such a group of men gets aggressive and directs its collective action towards an unreasoned objective, it

becomes a mob. In fact, 'mob' is the short form of 'mobile vulgus', which in Latin means 'common people (vulgus) on the move (mobile)'.

Now, one of the most popular theses to describe such mob behaviour and collective violence is propounded by Gustave Le Bon who in his seminal work *The Psychology of Crowds*<sup>41</sup> chalked out a hypothesis to describe the logic behind an ordinary individual's violent participation in a riot. His ideas were further picked up and extended upon by numerous sociologists, the most significant being Blumer, in his theory of the "active or aggressive crowd"<sup>42</sup>. Together all these are listed under the comprehensive category of Contagion Theory<sup>43</sup> to describe mob psychology. Most of the existing commentaries to describe Partition violence subscribe to this thesis. According to this theory, the idea advanced is that when men find themselves in crowds, a collective consciousness emerges and supplants their individual consciousness. This collective consciousness is nothing but the existing dominant emotion, impulse or mood of a crowd, which Le Bon labels as the law of mental unity of crowds. Once individuals experience the sense of anonymity in a crowd, they are transformed. This contagion is further attributed to situational stress and other existing amplifications like milling and rhythm as well, which diminish one's individuality to even more extended limits. Hence, men think, feel, and act quite differently than they would, when alone. They acquire a crowd mentality, lose their characteristic inhibitions and become highly receptive to group sentiments. And this happens primarily because of certain pathological repressed desires, which tempt a man to become part of such a group. Concern for proper behaviour or norms disappears in the face of an exciting event and individuals give up their personal moral responsibility to the will of a crowd. When this happens, the crowd becomes a social entity far greater than the sum of individual parts.

In other words, the basic premise is that individuals primarily get influenced by some group dynamics, which snatch their power to think as they lose self consciousness and get carried away by the dominant impulse.

Such theses have done various rounds of academic circles and have been contextually flavoured to explain various forms of violence, including those that accompanied Partition. Sudhir Kakar explicates the complex Hindu-Muslim relation in the light of this very thesis. He describes that during a tense period or a moment of

crisis (Partition being one such moment) group identities, which normally lie dormant, come to the fore. This concept of group identity is also linked with the Ericksonian concept of 'community in mind'<sup>44</sup> and a latent Jungian 'collective consciousness'<sup>45</sup>. And these are then, further used by Kakar to describe a collective cultural memory, which in the context of the Hindu-Muslim relations comprises of violent memories of the past where each has inflicted pain and suffering upon the 'other'. It are such group identities, which eventually assume violent proportions. Kakar states:

In times of heightened conflict between the two communities, the Hindu nationalist history that supports the version of conflict between the two assumes pre-eminence and organizes cultural memory in one particular direction.<sup>46</sup>

And when he states Hindu-Muslim group identities, what he implies is, that an essential homogenization takes place where the individual does not remain an entity, but becomes either a Hindu or a Muslim. Then it is not a person who attacks or is attacked, but a Hindu or a Muslim. He also focuses on the precipitating incident and in the light of his current context, labels them to be "Muslim violence towards the cow", which acts against Hindu sentiment, (and Hindus conversely playing with those of the Muslims by placing pigs before mosques) or "disputes over religious processions"<sup>47</sup>, where bodily and multiple sensory communications further heighten the blurring of individual ego and signal the emergence of a group consciousness (something like the milling and rhythm propounded by Le Bon).

In the light of this heightened group consciousness, Kakar even endeavours to explain certain specific acts of the perpetrators of violence. According to him, this hatred for the 'other' finds expression in the cutting off of breasts or male castration which he examines as a "more or less conscious wish to wipe the hated enemy off the face of the earth by eliminating its means of reproduction"<sup>48</sup>. Similarly, rape of 'the other's woman' is perceived as glory upon one's own-community whereby the man plants his seed into the enemy's womb. This according to Kakar, is assumed to be glorious, because as a part of the phallogocentric vision:

To penetrate the other, whether a woman or another group, is to be superior, powerful, and masculine; to be penetrated is to be inferior, weak, and feminine.<sup>49</sup>

This emphasis on collective identity, whereby acts of violence are perceived not as individual but collective acts, is further explored by other significant commentators on Partition violence as well. Urvashi Butalia<sup>50</sup> too views violence inflicted upon the bodies of women as having symbolic and political significance. According to her, rape, assault, abduction and humiliation of women during Partition are actually attributed to the fact, that the body of the women becomes the contested site for victory groups. She elaborates the stance whereby forcible conversion and marriage are seen as an outrage to both family and community honour as well as to religious sentiments. Menon and Bhasin too voice the same idea when they interpret violence on the bodies of women as:

Simultaneously an assertion of identity and humiliation of the rival community through the appropriation of women.<sup>51</sup>

The logic behind honour being linked to the bodies of women is that women are looked upon as “men’s inner private chamber”<sup>52</sup> in the ‘ghar/bahir’ dichotomy of Partha Chatterjee’s nationalist discourse. Hence, the woman’s body becomes the sacred site for conquest whereby nearly every man is a soldier fighting for his homeland, and women can be seen as territory to be occupied<sup>53</sup>. Further going by the norms of patriarchy, rape is seen as an effort to “demoralize and defeat rival men in a patriarchal society”<sup>54</sup>. This is in sync with what Susan Brownmiller<sup>55</sup> proposes when she describes the age-old concept of rape as a tool of war, which consciously maximizes the intimidation of a conquered enemy.

However, these positions explain both abduction and recovery of women in the name of collective honour and not as individual acts of aggression. While rape then becomes emasculation of collective honour, recovery (even if forcible) would be an undoing of what meant “a kind of collapse, almost an emasculation of their own agency,” with the state as the “central patriarch,” providing “coercive backing for restoring and reinforcing patriarchy within the family”<sup>56</sup>.

Though such theses do manage to explain numerous facets of the making of a riot, there are also numerous lacunae in them. This is because, to my comprehension, such theories of collective consciousness and group identities, whereby the individual egos become non-entities and get completely drowned, seem problematic. Such theses

coupled with those of 'Contagion' unnecessarily overemphasize the irrational elements of mob behaviour. Fallacies of such a nature become still more obvious in the light of various case studies.

One such study elaborates how indulgence in violence on the part of the various members of the crowd is perceived as a conscious, target-oriented task and not a mere expression of repressed impulses (in the case of Partition these repressed impulses may be perceived as the bloody collective memory of a group where each has suffered at the hands of the other). Oberschall (1968) and Berk and Aldrich (1972)<sup>57</sup> studied the 'ghetto riots' of the 1960s and found out that they were not indiscriminate and senseless outbursts of irrational and infantile rages. Private homes, public buildings and agencies serving the people of the area were generally spared, while those offices, which were perceived as exploitative, were looted and burnt. In fact, one does not have to go so far. Manto himself, in his typical black humour, vividly portrays in "Black Margins," one such incident. In one of the "one minute stories"<sup>58</sup> titled 'Dawat-i-Amal' ('An Enterprise'), Manto narrates:

Fire gutted the entire mohalla. The hoarding on the shop  
that escaped the flames read:  
    'A complete range of building and construction  
materials sold here.'<sup>59</sup>

All is razed to the ground except a shop, which bears the insignia of construction material. Though intended to be bitterly ironical, it does capture that intelligent and conscious streak of an allegedly irrational crowd, which normally is perceived to be a mere collection of pathological 'non-egos,' merely giving expression to repressed impulses.

Similar to this is Marx's concept of an "issueless riot", which arises not from any grievance, ideology or social protest but for the sake of "fun and profit"<sup>60</sup>. What else can one call the "blackout looting"<sup>61</sup> in New York in 1977? Looting began within minutes after a widespread power failure, as the inner city poor saw a chance to get for free, the things they wanted. In fact Curvin and Porter (1979) and Wilson and Cooper (1979)<sup>62</sup> who studied these events state that although spontaneous and unplanned initially, the looting soon became systematic and organized. Thus one observes that in such crisis-like situations people may do things (for personal aggrandizement primarily), which they ordinarily would never do. Also, a crowd does



only those things that most of its members would do. In the blackout too, all those who wished to get rich overnight got together and did what their dominant urge said. Hence, a reported estimate of about 60 million dollars exchanging hands! Wasn't Partition too one such blackout?

Furthermore, numerous theorists also believe that if an individual has attitudes and habits, which are fundamentally opposed to those of the crowd, he will not follow the crowd<sup>63</sup>. In other words scope for rational individual behaviour also fully exists. This I shall highlight in my central argument as well.

From all these elaborate discussions, what I wish to bring to the fore is that simplistic explanations to a complex phenomenon like mob violence are completely fallacious. And these particularistic single factor explanations of complex human behaviour need to be challenged with other tangible validations, which do hold ground in such moments. It is in the light of such arguments that I propose a stand, whereby I do not endeavour to debunk one in favour of the other, but seek space for multiplicities which would help make explanations more comprehensive, inclusive and dynamic. It is by such means that there would become available, scope for the allegedly marginalized voices too, to be heard and not perceived as stray deviants to be ignored.

My aim is to delve still further into the psychological perspective of those who indulged in acts of violence during Partition. I want to thus find out as to whether these acts were out of only innocent self-defence or collective retaliation. Were they out of mere vengeance and anger against the 'other' community? In other words, did such acts take place only at the collective and not a very selfish individual level? Could it not be possible that Partition became a facade or a mere excuse for many to satiate their deeper passions and desires? Hence I propose my central hypothesis, whereby through exploring ~~into~~ the psyche of the perpetrators of violence, I would try and locate ulterior motives of these seemingly sane men and women who all of a sudden indulge in seemingly senseless and inhuman violence. Thus, the purpose is to figure out whether all such acts are merely at the level of the collective. Could they not be well-calculated plans to satiate vested interests when the time is ripe?

Why I am stating this is because, during a period of crisis, like Partition, when time is in a flux and all norms of a normally decorum laden society are flouted, a lot of people do get an opportunity (a so called permit) to fulfil desires and instincts they would not otherwise be able to appease easily. Hence, such moments become available opportunities to accomplish some deeper interests, which otherwise, go unmet due to the individual's social conditioning and stature in the social paradigm.

Such explanations as I have proposed are not completely far fetched, as one finds explications of these, both in personal testimonies, eyewitness accounts as well as obliquely through certain sociological and psychological researches in and around the area. Eventually I shall try and provide validation for this through my data as well, whereby I shall trace such psychodynamics of violence in the literary narratives that I propose to study. But before elaborating upon my methodology, I shall try and lay down a theoretical paradigm, which becomes crucial to the validation of my argument.

I have already stated certain lacunae in the existing theories, which credit deviant behaviour during a crisis to some pathological release of repressed unconscious desires and getting carried away in the dominant surrounding ethos. Hereby, by means of various case studies, theses and arguments of psychologists and sociologists, I shall try and construct an argument that validates extremely personal, conscious, target oriented individual interests finding expression in such moments of crisis.

While describing aggression (which finds expression in violence) theorists have posited varied explanations. Against the category of ethnologists, who link aggression to certain innate drives which are normally redirected and sublimated, but find explicate and overt manifestation under certain tense situations, the environmentalists take into consideration the environmental situations such as poverty, slums, etc. that instigate aggressive activity. This aggression further takes the shape of violence in moment of crisis<sup>64</sup>. Now, as per my comprehension, these external circumstances when linked to certain innate desires and needs, produce exciting dynamics.

The interesting argument is that while some basic needs are often latent as they might not be able to seek expression due to certain external constraints of civilized conducts, tables turn under moments of crisis. This is because these are moments of transition when one world-view gives way to the other and things are in flux. Hence, providing enough scope for things to go wayward and topsy-turvy. Now, to explain why this occurs, I shall pick up a few seminal theses from the realm of psychology, suitably arrange these, form a link or a chain which then might throw some light on how such phenomena, as listed just above, seek scope and expression.

Here the first major argument that needs elaboration is the fact that there are certain needs, which are universal and inherent in all men and women irrespective of all other variables. Their nature and intensity might vary, but they are there in all human beings. But considering various environmental factors and paradigms, not all of these can be met. Now, what needs exploration is what happens when these needs go unmet due to the numerous external factors. If I were to extend Freud's theory of aggression based upon an obstruction of the pleasure principle<sup>65</sup>, it obviously leads to frustration. Hence frustration is the natural outcome if needs are unsatiated.

This when linked to the exploration by a group of psychologists at the Institute of Human Relations at Yale University in 1939, who propounded the frustration-aggression hypothesis<sup>66</sup>, provides an explanation for aggression. They proposed that frustration produces a state of readiness to aggress, which could then lead to violence as well. Hence it can be stated, that frustration, which arises out of a state of unsatiated needs, could lead to violent behaviour. This key argument has been proven by numerous other case studies as well, whereby it is stated that "man has basic needs if unmet, may cause, the person to commit a violent act"<sup>67</sup>.

But before proceeding further, for the sake of a greater and sounder knowledge in the area of violence, it becomes imperative to isolate some major variables (which are significant to the study of Partition narratives as well), which if unsatiated could lead to violent acts.

The most obvious thesis, which comes into focus at this juncture, is Maslow's 'hierarchy of needs'<sup>68</sup>. Maslow viewed man as being motivated by a number of basic needs, which according to him are species wide, apparently unchanging and genetic or

instinctual in origin. In his schema, as the lower needs are satiated, other higher needs emerge and dominate the organism. And when these in turn are fulfilled, still higher ones emerge. It is this that helps one understand that at a specific moment, varied people could have varied needs.

Other than this chief schema there are also independent studies, which spot certain immediate needs, which if unmet, cause aggression. Adler recognized a fundamental tendency in man which he called the 'will to power'<sup>69</sup>. This, if unsatiated, according to him leads to abnormal aggression. May, in his seminal work *Power and Innocence*<sup>70</sup>, also saw power (which is the ability to cause or prevent change) as one of the basic needs in man. He proposed that there existed, today, more than ever before, a feeling of powerlessness, a feeling that one cannot influence others, that one is not in control of the situation. It is this feeling of powerlessness, according to him, that provides the essential situation that leads to many acts of violence. This idea is espoused by Sullivan<sup>71</sup> as well.

Another major study conducted by Crawford and Naditch<sup>72</sup> recognized the importance of high and low discrepancy in an individual's distance from his ideal life style. According to them, persons who felt a high discrepancy between 'needs' and 'haves' and who also felt that their life style was fated or was out of their own control were more willing to engage in violent actions and those of militancy. This concept was also elaborated by S. J. Tambiah, who in his study of South Asian rioters, believed the hidden agenda behind violent acts to be desires to level inequalities and gaps between what one wants and what one has vis-à-vis his social status. This entire activity he labels as a type of levelling, when he states:

property destruction and looting are not fickle, momentarily dictated "irrational" actions but are integral and repetitive feature of ethnic riots, linked to levelling objectives and tendencies.<sup>73</sup>

This idea is propounded by D. Parthasarthy too, when he states that "conflicts arise as groups strive for upwardly mobility and status"<sup>74</sup>.

Thus what stands forth is the hypothesis that there are certain needs in all men (based on inherent as well as environmental factors as discussed above in the concept of gap). These if unsatiated, could lead to aggression and violence. Thus, all human

beings have an inherent propensity to indulge in violence. The degree of course varies according to the gap in unmet needs and basic inclinations and their intensity, as proposed in varied theories of motivation.<sup>75</sup>

Furthermore, the interesting observation is that normally such aggressions mediate through reasonably acceptable or a little jarring forms. But in moments of crisis when the state is out of order, these unmet needs get an opportunity to satisfy themselves fully. To justify this I shall employ a potent argument, which will throw some light to explicate aggression and violence in tense moments of transition. Dollard and Miller<sup>76</sup> asserted that the strength of inhibition of any act of aggression increases with the amount of punishment anticipated as consequence of that act. Thus in crisis, when vigils, states and police are missing and fear of punishment is almost negligible, violence finds a livid expression.

This hypothesis is also supported by other investigators like A. Bandura and R. Walters<sup>77</sup> who felt that if the youngsters are frustrated by the situations surrounding them, they still might develop response tendencies incompatible with aggressive behaviour. And the reason for this abstinence from violence can be attributed to what May calls 'pseudoinnocence'<sup>78</sup>, which again can be linked to the fear of pain or punishment. Thus corroborating the stand that with fear of punishment, violent tendencies decline and when the opposite happens, the same tendencies, which lurk close to the surface, boil to the fore.

Hence, it is not merely the socially maladjusted and emotionally unstable who give reckless expression to some repressed desires or latent collective memories. When opportunity comes, seemingly ordinary men and women too can resort to violence in an endeavour to seek gratification of certain vested interests and basic desires which otherwise go unmet.

In fact, a chief ingredient of the otherwise problematic theory of Contagion too, can be appropriated to suit the current arguments. The concept of anonymity<sup>79</sup> as highlighted by Le Bon can be linked to Miller and Dollard's concept of lack of punishment. Researches suggest that individuals are less reluctant to join a lynching party than to commit murder on their own. The explanation would lie partly in the fact that the action seems more defensive and safe when carried out by a group because of

individual responsibility being blotted out. The participants remain anonymous and there is no one particular agent who bears the onus of the offence. This condition, in which members of the group are not identified as individuals leads to reduction of inner restraints and more expressive behaviour. In the same paradigm this has been labelled as 'deindividuation'. Lang too describes this as a collective defence against anxiety<sup>80</sup>, which is possible only in the crowd. In the current context of Partition as well, one finds such a conscious escape from any kind of punishment. Hence, such an open participation in a reckless and morbid behaviour.

Furthermore, another argument, which supports this idea, is the concept of novelty<sup>81</sup>, i.e. desire to experience something unusual and to get a break in the routine. This, coupled with the idea of no punishment, increases the motivation to indulge in such violent acts. All these attain further conceivable grounds in the light of the Emergent Norm Theory<sup>82</sup>, whereby the belief is that it is not the crowd situation that produces unusual behaviour, but rather a collection of certain kinds of people that are predisposed to certain kinds of action. Hence, though the members might have different motives for participation, they acquire a common standard. And once they indulge in these, they can shed all inhibitions and restraint.

During Partition too, varied men had varied needs (greed for power, wealth, lust, sadism, fun, etc.), but their norm was one-to kill the alleged 'other'. Though, upon further insight, this 'other' too became a façade to actually satiate their needs. Hence, what stands true is what Martin Luther King said, when he pronounced that "violence has been (the) inseparable twin of materialism"<sup>83</sup>.

To conclude, it can be stated that while traditional sociologists have held the participants in collective violence as anti-social and deviants, who act spontaneously and are a part of the marginal disorganized population, later studies by historians and sociologists have shown that riot participants are often ordinary citizens who act deliberately and perform planned acts of violence. Thus supporting Thompson (1971) and Lynch's (1988) idea of rioting as a rational action<sup>84</sup>. Within the Indian context as well, such ideas often find place. P. R Rajgopal too, while commenting upon the Hindu-Muslim violence states:

While we do shun violence as a general principle, we do not fail to take recourse to it if it helps us to realize our selfish aims and goals.<sup>85</sup>

And this especially happens when the time is ripe. This is my central argument, which finds validation in both the personal accounts of sufferers as well as those of eyewitnesses. In their portraits one finds a gory representation of a very selfish lust for material gains, power and sexual gratification; thereby shattering the myth that violence always comes 'from' and 'for' the 'other'. This I shall further validate through a close reading of Bhisham Sahni's *Tamas* (1974), two short stories by Saadat Hasan Manto namely "Cold Meat" ("Thanda Gosht") and "Open It!" ("Khol Do") and Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man* (1988) in the three subsequent chapters of this dissertation (each dealing with one author).

Though the corpus of literary texts on Partition is fairly large, to me the ones of central concern were those narratives, which presented a naturalistic, realistic and explicit face of violence. Furthermore from within this above-mentioned type as well, to make my study fairly spread out, I have chosen one suitable author each from the realm of Hindi, Urdu and English literature on Partition.

Rather than looking into the stereotypical parameters and existing dominant perspectives, I shall try and go for a re-reading of these texts – a re-interpretation - where I shall read between lines, look at themes and hunt for reasonings that validate the primary arguments elaborated explicitly in the 'Introduction'. Hence, I'll try to posit a perspective whereby as Claude Markovits states:

Attitudes towards Partition and Pakistan were determined more by considerations of personal advantage than by religious sentiments.<sup>86</sup>

The 'more' though, I have replaced with 'also'.

## *CHAPTER – II*

### *Dark Deeds in the Darkness of Night*

Born in 1915 in a middle class business family of Rawalpindi, Bhisham Sahni grew up in a pre-divided India fighting for the cause of Independence. In an interview with Alok Bhalla<sup>1</sup>, he explicitly describes his rigorous involvement with the Indian National Congress as he actively participated in activities like attending general body meetings, 'prabhat pheris', etc. However, like millions whose lives went in for a somersault, little did he know that the euphoria of Independence for which one had been ardently struggling, would be coupled with the trauma of Partition. Never did he anticipate that he would be forced to evacuate the land of his birth (which he did on August 13, 1947) due to the miscalculations of those at the helm of affairs. And millions would have to pay the cost of this decision, many even with their life and blood.

Such realities formed a part of his bitter memories as he witnessed the country steep into bloodshed, violence and the worst ever carnage of its kind, suffered and caused by men and women across both sides of the border. The immediate impact of this colossal tragedy was a dreary blank. However, years later these wounds were once again to be ripped open as Sahni witnessed horrible outbursts of communal violence in the 60s and the 70s. It was perhaps then, that he considered the time ripe to expose the till then latent and searing wounds to the world in the form of his much-acclaimed novel *Tamas*. The novel met the public eye in 1974, twenty-seven years after the initial shock of Partition, and its popularity is evident in the singular critical accolades that the work attracted, including the reputed Sahitya Akademi Award in 1975.

Referred to as "semi-autobiographical"<sup>2</sup> in tone, through the novel, Sahni has brilliantly transcribed what he witnessed and understood of this traumatic period called Partition. He poignantly presents an insight into this holocaust, when the entire state of Punjab succumbed to an unleash of horror and violence; when members



across religions, castes and classes seemed to cast aside all norms of civil society and came under the grip of the worst ever catastrophe of its kind.

Before moving towards the central issue of concern, there are three interesting observations that I would like to make. First, Sahni has not culled out the exact location of the geo-political spaces that he introduces through the narrative. Obviously it is quite clear that the place is somewhere in Punjab because the chief actors are Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. Perhaps, this is a deft stroke on the narrator's part to foreground the fact that this phantasmagoria was not confined to isolated sections or belts. Instead, it gripped Punjab in general.

Secondly, the novel has an episodic structure. Sahni has not made use of a single narrative with a central protagonist around whom the story revolves. Through the number and variety of characters that find a place in the narrative, readers catch glimpses of the multiple hues of human character and personality, thus obtaining a multi-dimensional insight into the understanding of an event as bewildering as Partition.

Thirdly, this presentation is not a depiction of heroes, leaders or martyrs. Instead, it primarily delineates the experiences of ordinary men and women across religions, classes and castes who became both victims and victimizers during the baffling course of events.

All these prove crucial and reasonably spread out data for the analysis of my hypothesis whereby I endeavour to understand how ordinary people stoop so low and become perpetrators of such obnoxious violence. However, one thing that I would like to clarify right at the outset is that there is no singular definition to describe this kind of mob-violence, particularly that which deals with the perspective of the perpetrators of violence. Multiple possibilities operate and have been worked upon as well. Of these, the two most prominent ones are those of self-defence and retaliation. These further get linked with religious instigation, whereby men are believed to be mobilized into committing such horrendous acts of violence in the name of community and its honour (also see Introduction).

My hypothesis however, endeavours to be an addition and an extension of these ideas. Hence, before elaborating my hypothesis, it becomes essential to state some of the dominant and acceptable theses regarding *Tamas*.

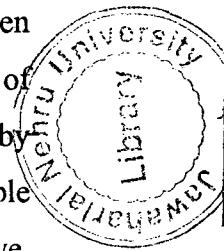
It would not be far-fetched to state that *Tamas* itself expounds a theory of communalism that runs in the form of a narrative. Though it elaborates numerous indicators and factors that go into the breeding of communal hatred, there are certain concepts that obviously stand out. These stem from the central observations made by Sahni as well as the numerous critics who have commented upon *Tamas*.

Most of these observations believe in the ideology, whereby economics and other vested interests are assumed to play a major role in heightening communal tensions and divides. They elaborate how men at the helm of affairs, who indulge in the politics of communal hatred, are primarily driven by financial motives, which further become a means to attaining power. These selfish and powerful men then instigate the so-called ignorant masses to fight amongst each other in the name of religion. Sudhir Kakar<sup>2</sup> in his thesis has explicitly described the role played by religious propaganda and the use of religious and cultural symbols for inciting people towards safeguarding the sanctity of their community, which they are made to believe, is potentially under threat. But of course, all these, in most of the cases are false alarms, which make use of rumours, hoax calls or threats and help foreground a tense collective consciousness (i.e. a past shrouded in terror, panic, violence and danger) in favour of individualities which tend to get lost under such circumstances.

It is here that I would like to deliberate a little further. Such theses very simplistically state that the ordinary man becomes both a victim and a victimizer in the name of religion, because in a moment of crisis the dark "cultural memories"<sup>3</sup> come to the fore. Though such propositions cannot be denied altogether, I would assert that multiplicities exist. Singularly and independently, such theses are rather unconvincing. At this juncture too, other debates are possible and these I would like to deliberate, elaborate and corroborate through my reading of *Tamas*.

But moving back to the novel's existing commentaries, one is already aware of the secular vision of Bhisham Sahni. A rapid read of *Tamas* offers no confusion

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regarding the same. In fact, it is common knowledge that the novel has often been subjected to criticism labelling it as cheap communist propaganda.<sup>4</sup>

Actually, it would not even be incorrect to say that a cursory read of the novel reminds one of Bipan Chandra's *India's Struggle for Independence*<sup>5</sup>. It almost appears as if the history textbook has been narrativized. The paradigm is somewhat as follows: The members of different communities essentially have no real differences. But the rulers (the British) manoeuvre and manipulate situations and promote communalism to suit their vested interests. In this process, their efforts are supplemented by regional fundamentalist groups, who use the guise of religion to facilitate and satiate their selfish desires. As an outcome of all this, the ordinary people succumb to such instigation in the name of religion. Each of these elements is not very hard to perceive in the narrative.

Very early in the novel a pertinent point is strategically and simplistically stated whereby members of different religions are described as essentially belonging to the same racial stock. And that too voiced by the British officer, Richard, who is cunningly practicing the policy of 'divide and rule'. He mentions to Liza a so-called historical fact:

The first wave of migrants who came from Central Asia three or four thousand years ago and the band of invaders who came two thousand years or so later, both belonged to the same racial stock. The former were known as Aryans and the latter Muslims. But both had the same roots.<sup>6</sup>

This very stance is further corroborated symbolically, when in the narrative, Sahni heightens the confusion that Liza experiences while trying to distinguish between a Hindu, a Muslim and a Sikh. In fact in an almost comic fashion, often stooping into black humour, it is foregrounded that it is merely the social indicators and a very superficial physicality that distinguish members belonging to different religious communities, e.g. the cut of the beard, the foreskin, the hair, the eating habits and certain other cultural symbols. And ironically all these are completely negotiable in men and even more conveniently in women; as in the case of Iqbal Singh who in a span of about half a day becomes Iqbal Khan after his hair is cut and

foreskin removed, or Prakasho who is simply lifted by Allah Rakha one day, married on the second day and hence becomes a Muslim.

Further, Richard too is actually a symbolic representation of the clan of colonial rulers who cleverly follow 'divide and rule'. In the initial couple of pages itself he explains to his wife Liza how it is in the interest of the ruler to divide the subjects on frivolous grounds like caste, colour, religion, status, etc.:

Darling, rulers have their eyes on differences that divide their subjects, not on what unites them.<sup>7</sup>

And what he states so succinctly, he practises throughout the narrative.

To supplement the activities of these colonizers are described the fundamental activities of warring factions like the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha. The Murad Alis of the former and the Vanaprasthis of the latter offer scope for a frontal attack on the selfish leaders of such communal organizations who had a crucial role to play in the Partition of India. Even the granthis of the Singh Sabha are no exception to these.

However, to criticize this representation as propaganda or a simplified or distorted version of facts is unfair. This is because the novel actually is Sahni's understanding of the trauma of Partition viewed in retrospect, twenty-three years before he started penning the novel. What is being stated will become clearer upon reading Govind Nihalani's commentary on *Tamas*. Nihalani who picturized the novel into a tele-serial for the Doordarshan, justifies Sahni's stand in the 'Introduction' to the Penguin edition of *Tamas* (1988), where he states:

A traumatic historical event usually finds the artistic/literary response twice. Once, during the event or immediately following it and again after a lapse of time, when the event has found its corner in the collective memory of the generation that witnessed it. The initial response tends to be emotionally intense and personal in character, even melodramatic. On the other hand, when the event is reflected upon with emotional detachment and objectively a clearer pattern of the various forces that shaped it is likely to emerge. *Tamas* is the reflective response to the Partition of India – one of the most tragic events in the recent history of the Indian subcontinent.<sup>8</sup>

This idea is further corroborated by Nandi Bhatia when he counters Gyanendra Pandey's attack on *Tamas* as an act of generating "collective amnesia"<sup>9</sup>. Bhatia states:

Contrary to Pandey's claim, I would like to argue that *Tamas* is a critique directed at the writing of a history that consciously engages in censoring the human side of the tragedy.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, through this novel, in a rather detached and objective fashion, Sahni has tried to put forth his understanding of the calamity, as he viewed and witnessed it. And surely, it would be untrue to say that his principles and what he presents are not conceivable at all. What is of concern to me instead is, that along with these, there is much more that goes on behind, beneath, under, over and above this presentation, which further needs deep contemplation. Indeed, it is very convenient to say that the ordinary men and women are merely interpellated into violence; that they either acted out of a sense of self-defence or retaliation, or hatred for the other community in whose hands they or their co-religionists had suffered. However upon a closer reading of *Tamas*, especially of its various sub-narratives, one may reach a couple of observations which would definitely add more shades and subtleties to the above mentioned hypothesis, complicate the arguments a little further, and perhaps even steer the hypothesis in a different direction.

There are numerous interesting points, which are of significance, if one endeavours to read the subtexts of these sub-narratives. But before elaborating these, there are a couple of narratives that I shall like to highlight.

The novel opens in 'media res' with Nathu posed with a temptation. He is a poor 'chamar' perpetually short of money. Taking five rupees for an act, which is apparently insignificant to him (considering the fact that it is his profession to remove hides of dead animals), seems quite harmless. He merely has to steal a pig, lead it to a hut and slaughter it. This pig would supposedly then act as 'mere' data for a veterinary surgeon's experiment.

Though the author has tried very hard to pose Nathu as an innocent creature, who is naïve, ignorant and unaware of the real statistics, one can view this whole incident from a different perspective altogether. If one refocuses attention and starts

overlooking the significance of the act in terms of guilty or innocent, a new shade appears. What then becomes a matter of concern is not the act but the situation - a situation where for personal gains one succumbs to a temptation. Here one must also keep into consideration the fact that the intensity of needs, drives and desires is relative. What might not be of any concern to a comfortable, well-placed businessman might be of immediate consequence to a poor beaten untouchable. Surely degrees keep on varying, but the pertinent observation is that man succumbs to them – each according to his degree and each according to his need. In other words in some the heart desires wealth, power in others, food in some and status in others. And it is in man's nature to be a slave to these (see Introduction).

Now what throws light on this are Nathu's numerous soliloquies through which the reader is exposed to the typical dilemma he is caught in. Nathu voices his anxiety of losing out on work from an influential agent like Murad Ali in case he refuses to accomplish the task entrusted upon him by this 'man of contacts'. Perhaps by doing so, Sahni, very strategically, wants to highlight how the common man is tricked into the wrong by means of games played by men in power. In fact, it almost appears that Sahni is ostensibly arguing Nathu's case as he strives to engender pity and sympathy for the poor 'harijan' caught between the devil and the deep sea.

However if one looks a little deeper into the narrative, things may not appear so simple. There are numerous occurrences which could suggest otherwise. If one leaves behind this pre-conceived sympathy for Nathu, one realizes that it was not all that hard for Nathu to refuse Murad Ali. It is not as if Nathu had no other alternative. If he had wanted to, he could have sneaked out of the situation and Murad Ali would have roped in another Nathu. Nathu himself asserts this possibility:

Tomorrow I shall hand back the five-rupee note to Murad Ali and with folded hands tell him that I couldn't do the job, that it was too much for me. The fellow will be cross for a few days but I shall manage to bring him round.<sup>11</sup>

The reason why he agrees to do the job instead is the money he earns, which is a very big charm for a very poor man. This is very poignantly mentioned in the novel:

Nathu had stood with folded hands. The rustling five-rupee note that had gone into his pocket had made it impossible for him to open his mouth.<sup>12</sup>

Later too, in the narrative, his desperation for money is stated:

Even if he had put an eight-anna piece on the palm of his hand, saying that the rest would be paid later, he couldn't have refused, the poor skinner that he was.<sup>13</sup>

Hence, in the light of such situations it can be stated that if the heart desires, the head provides the explanations and validations. In fact, it would not be incorrect to state that the head and the heart are nothing but extensions of each other where the former is that version of the latter which helps diminish social ostracism, which indeed can be very painful. Hence, every individual is a bundle of desires where some desires surmount and are more pressing than the others e.g. in this situation, Nathu's heart desires money which would then be a source of fun and joy for him, at least temporarily. At the same time, his head knows the risks involved in stealing a pig and then killing it. Simultaneously exist his desire and the risks involved in indulging in the same. But, the former seems to be more pressing and thus the self works out its own explanation.

Furthermore, it can be argued that just as Nathu could not have said no to a man with a stature as towering as that of Murad Ali, the latter (whose acts I shall discuss in a moment) perhaps had his own boss. Just as Murad Ali was a considerable source of income to Nathu, what is the guarantee that the vet was not the same to Murad Ali? To my comprehension, these suppositions are not so far-fetched. The only difference remains that Nathu was ignorant while Murad Ali was informed and conscious regarding what he did. But then, considering that times were strange, one surely cannot be confident of an absolute 'no' from Nathu even if the latter had known the consequences well and clear!

I am highlighting all this, because to merely view Nathu as an innocent helpless victim who has to execute unwillingly the order of a powerful man, as has been done till date, would be naïve. On the contrary, he is placed with two options and to make a choice is his prerogative. And he chooses what gives him money, which of course is his ticket to satisfying all other desires.

Now, once Nathu has the five-rupee note rustling in his pocket, it is very hard for him to refuse Murad Ali. Of course, it can be argued that Nathu was unaware of the stakes and had he been introduced to them, the decision might not have been so rapid. This is quite true, because the moment Nathu directly confronts the truth/lie of Murad Ali, he begins to get restless. But again, what is worth analysing is the exact nature of the uneasiness that he experiences upon the big discovery. Uneasiness could be a manifestation of numerous emotions. And in this case, one wonders, whether what he is posed with is guilt or fear.

Those who have seen Govind Nihalani's film version of *Tamas* might find it easy to believe in the former. In the movie, which significantly departs from the novel, Nathu is truly presented as the central protagonist. Some may not even find it hard to describe him as the hero who feels terribly hurt and experiences pangs of guilt as he holds himself responsible for the entire breakdown. He even seems to atone for his 'sins' by dying a heroic death. Incidentally, the central importance accorded to Nathu is evident from the fact that the cover of the novel *Tamas* (2001) too features Nathu carrying an ailing aged lady on his back while on their journey to the refugee camp. It is in fact in these camps, that Nathu's widow is provided refuge by the heroic couple Harnam Singh and Banto, while he is killed on the way. Many have even viewed this death to be some kind of a penance on his part. To my comprehension, this over-sympathetic attitude, whereby he is accorded central importance, too is perhaps a product of the image that has lingered from the picturized version. This is because in contrast, in the novel this journey is not even mentioned. After Nathu's restlessness is depicted, the next one hears of Nathu is only in the last few pages where it is simply stated that he too died in the riots that engulfed the city.

In other words, in the novel, if one reads between the lines, other possibilities also exist. This is true because the second time the reader encounters Nathu is when the reality of the whole incident has dawned upon him. He definitely feels sorry and indeed very anxious. But the primary cause behind this restlessness seems to be fear, even more than guilt - a fear similar to the one he experienced in the first scene where he stole the pig for slaughtering. There too the fear was not directly stated, but suggested through the agitation that Nathu experienced when he simply seemed to be finding the act deplorable, for no conclusive reasons. Similarly, here too opinions



regarding restlessness being generated out of guilt can be altered significantly if one digs into the connotations of the following extract:

To tell my wife can be risky. Suppose, in an unguarded moment, in a casual conversation, she blurts out what really happened. What then? No one will spare me. I may be put behind bars. The police can put me under arrest and take me away. What will happen then?<sup>14</sup>

Such are Nathu's anxieties and fear - there are no pangs of guilt or thoughts of moral retribution. His primary endeavour is to protect his wife and his own self from attack and damage. Later too, his constant interactions with fellow men to discuss developments are not really to discuss the damage or loss. Instead, his endeavour is to find out whether anyone has discovered his folly/act. Getting petrified upon seeing a stranger outside his home further corroborates the fact that he is mortally scared. He is of course remorseful about the fact that the incident ever happened, but all his energies are directed primarily towards safeguarding his own self, just as initially they were towards satisfaction of the same self. At this juncture, what needs to be remembered is that safety<sup>15</sup> too is one of the primary needs of man.

In between these two, there is yet another telling instance where the readers catch a glimpse of Nathu satiating his desires. That is when, with the five rupees rustling in his pocket, he consumes 'kabaabs', and alcohol, and decides to visit Motia, the prostitute. Though thoughts about returning to his extra loving and caring wife and buying something valuable for her do come to him, ultimately he wastes the whole money on satisfying himself.

Hence it can be stated, that in the novel, Nathu comes across not as an ideally moralistic, conscientious person. On the contrary, he appears to be a typical husband from an uneducated, very poor 'chamaar' community, who loves dominating his wife, is fond of eating, drinking and making merry whenever he can. In other words a very ordinary fellow living primarily on the physical plane, guided by the ordinary human desires and their appeasement.

Now this whole description might appear out of context and irrelevant to the central hypothesis. However, upon a closer analysis, it is of tremendous symbolic significance to the entire structure of the narrative. One can read this incident as an

allegory – even a foreboding of what is going to happen in the novel; a brief summing up of the entire narrative – dark wishes surmounting in the darkness of the night and dark deeds done in this very darkness. And rightly so because soon enough in the novel, this darkness begins to feature as a metaphor. It does not merely represent a part of the day when the sun goes down. Instead, it stands for that part of the day when the vigil goes down, patrol gets weaker, the police is sleeping and rules can be flouted. The whole of Partition was one such moment when heinous deeds occurred with no real state or police to chargesheet the guilty. Temptations were handy, law was nowhere to be found, so it was party time for many. Hence nothing short of a metaphorical “tamas”. In fact, Sahni himself in an interview with Alok Bhalla labels the era of Partition as one such period of “tamas, of blank darkness”<sup>16</sup>. Thus, what stands out is an overarching paradigm of man indulging in dark deeds when time is ripe and the custodians of law are off duty. Nathu is one such example of any ordinary man placed in the darkness of the night amidst temptation, and he does the maximum that his status in society and the times permit him. Murad Ali’s pedigree and the uncertain time during Partition allow him to pursue his own desires. And so stands true for the rest of the characters in the novel as well. Therefore as per my comprehension of the schema, this act of Nathu acquires metaphoric proportions and then reverberates throughout the narrative.

Moving a step further in the narrative, while Nathu’s temptation, according to his standard, is five rupees, Murad Ali has other aspirations. Murad Ali’s opportunism immediately and obviously stands out. From the first mention of his name to the last glimpse that one catches of him, he is perceived as a shrewd, cunning man who manipulates the circumstances around him to gather a leap forward. He is a Muslim who is supposedly fighting for his ‘qaum’. He is supposed to be the preserver of Muslim heritage, which apparently stands endangered before the Hindus and the Indian National Congress (which is allegedly a party of, for and by the Hindus). And it is apparently people like Murad Ali, who in association with other members of the Muslim League, would preserve the sanctity of their race! Though ironically by committing a taboo that their very religion forbids (because in the true sense of the term the pig is actually murdered by Murad Ali)! This is because though the deed is finally accomplished in Nathu’s hands, it is first committed in Murad Ali’s mind. Much before the pig is actually slaughtered, Murad Ali kills it in his ‘mind’s eye’.

Nathu merely executes this murder. A close look at these words uttered by the man himself highlights this attitude of his. He tells Nathu to quietly lead one pig to the house where it can be butchered, which then according to him would not be a hard task:

There are any number of pigs roaming about on the other side of the cremation ground. Just catch one of them.<sup>17</sup>

Actually, it would not be far fetched to state that this is what humans too mean to Murad Ali - pigs waiting to be caught and brought to the cremation ground where Murad Ali and the vet, who too is nothing but an extension of Murad Ali, can engender their experiments. And indeed this 'surgeon's' experiment is successful as one sees him merrily sitting in the 'peace' van, after the riots have subsided. The Murad Ali, who would cross streets on his feet, now sits on the front seat of a van. But he has toiled hard for this as he went about establishing and maintaining contacts along with carefully <sup>AN</sup>exerting cleverly chalked out selfish plans:

Besides, Murad Ali was a man of contacts. There was hardly a person, connected with the Municipal Committee, with whom he did not have dealings...was a common sight in the town.<sup>18</sup>

Similarly, while power matters to Murad Ali, Prakasho matters to Allah Rakha who kidnaps her and forces her to marry him. One can obviously argue here, that this act of the man could be an exercise of humiliation to the other community. But what I really wonder is whether as a part of this humiliation, a perfect rehabilitation like marriage could be a possibility? However, on the other hand, marriage of such a kind can be argued as a permanent humiliation, whereby the masculinity of the men of the other community is challenged (see Introduction). But here things are not going to be so simplistic. A read further suggests something else:

As a matter of fact, Allah Rakha had had his eyes on Prakasho for quite some time. Prakasho too had time and again, sensed it, while going about in the village drawing water from the spring or washing clothes. Allah Rakha would tease her, pass all sorts of remarks and, on the sly, throw pebbles at her.<sup>19</sup>

Hence, it would not be unfair to state that Allah Rakha has used the guise of communal hatred to possess a lady whom he had been eying for a considerable period. Such incidents, in fact, often find a mention in Partition literature and other narratives of the time. To mention a few – ~~Ruro~~ in *Pinjar*<sup>20</sup> or Ayah in *Ice-Candy Man*.<sup>21</sup> In both these cases, men use the garb of communal hatred to satiate their own lust.

Now, as detailed above, needs are varied - money for some, power for others, lust for some and ego for still others. While a description of the former three has already been provided, the narrative focuses on a vain display and satiation of the last as well. Ranvir, the young representative of the fundamental Hindu wing is throughout the narrative found terrorizing and hurting defenceless and weak men as a sheer display of his might. If he goes around boosting his ego by means of an eager use of “his newly acquired skill of taking a life after he kills a hen”<sup>22</sup>, his friend cum colleague, Inder is no exception. The latter mercilessly butchers an old harmless perfume seller not in the name of honour, but simply to display his grit and skill to his friends and associates. Hence, both seem to be using the facade of religious bigotry to satisfy their ego and sense of being powerful. They express their masculinity and potency by killing without shaking or shivering. It is through such vain acts that they satisfy their distorted self-esteem, by means of establishing their superiority over the other boys who have not yet attained such moments of glory!

There are numerous other examples in the narrative which explicitly manifest the idea that people merely used that terrible time – that ‘tamas’ - as an excuse to satiate their vested interests and desires. And at this juncture one needs to remember that these are all simple ordinary folk, not any leaders or representatives. Hence, pertinently debunking paradigms, which propose only significant men to be behind such dark deeds.

With regard to this, another potent image that comes to mind is the dilapidated state of the Congress Working Committee. Under the façade of serious social service, one encounters numerous references to solid self-service. All that one is witness to, is a mockery where most of the members are busy casting aspersions on each others’ integrity and indulging in petty squabbles and tiffs. Most of the so-called workers seem to be merely interested in using the guise of community work for either

fulfilling monetary purposes or attaining power and prestige. Be it Shankar's accusation against Mehtaji using his title and position as a senior member of the CWC to make contacts and sign deals for his part time insurance business, or Sethi who tries to woo Mehtaji with money to the tune of fifty-thousand rupees for a desirable position in the Committee, or even Desraj and Master Ram Das who are supposed to be religiously participating in 'prabhat pheris', but are invariably late for them, with ridiculous, often ludicrous excuses like the cow not milking in time. Ram Das, a Brahmin, even refuses to clean the gutters as he deems the task below his dignity. According to Bakshiji, these two are mere consumers of salary without making any real contribution to the task of community service. Towards the end of the narrative as well, hints of corrupt activities in the rescue/refugee camps organized by the CWC are highlighted, where there are hints of embezzlement of funds and other resources.

However, such references are not really of much consequence to the central hypothesis whereby the primary objective is to study the psyche of the perpetrators of violence. And an analysis on the part of the acts of the Congress workers would merely be speculative. Though it can be stated that their behaviour corroborates the stand: that a lot of them are primarily acting out of vested interests, and that it is in human nature to primarily execute various selfish desires, whenever the times permit, and especially in such feasible times when all scrutiny is amiss and there is no fear of being found out.

Similarly, the leaders of the Singh Sabha, including even the chief granthi, do not appear to be clear in their endeavours. Shady deeds shroud each of these people. Incidents occur where had they acted earnestly, tensions between them and the Muslims could have subsided and subsequently even been avoided. One gets a feeling that they too are not genuinely honest and upright in their dealings. Teja Singhji, the chief granthi, is reported by his informer, Gopal Singh about the intentions of Muslims to give up all arms in case the Sikhs cloistered in the 'gurudwara' do the same. Now, instead of acting justly and carrying on meaningful transactions with the League, he chooses to ignore this and further accentuates feelings of mistrust and fear in his flock. Anything could have been the cause behind such a stance – lack of vision, fear of a loss of power, position, money or even religious threat. Though later references to transactions to the tune of two lacs, make the last cause appear highly

improbable. When the chief granthi is reported of this demand of two lacs by the Muslims, instead of paying the due, he casually escapes the situation:

“You alone can pay two lakhs, Teja Singhji, if you so desire. You have amassed quite a fortune.”

But Teja Singhji thought it fit to ignore the comment.<sup>23</sup>

In other words, they too are no exception to the vets and the Murad Alis of the League or the Vanaprasthis of the Hindu Sabha.

Other than the fact that ordinary men are busy taking care of personal gains and making use of the opportunity to the hilt, there is another significant observation worth mentioning. Most of the members who are acting as representatives of the clan, themselves in the first place, are those who are possessors of some wealth, power or privilege. Be it the Singh Sabha where all the members of the War Council, “Sardar Mangal Singh, goldsmith, Pritam Singh, cloth merchant and Bhagat Singh, general merchant...”<sup>24</sup> are comfortably placed in life, or even the Hindu gathering headed by the very powerful religious leader, the Vanaprasthi and mainly the influential and educated personnel:

Most of the members present were elderly businessmen, a couple of them lawyers or men in service.<sup>25</sup>

Thus, it can be stated, that it is normally such financially sturdy and intellectually emancipated people who head these gatherings. However, another possibility for the same could be that in such turbulent times of transition, it is such people whose concerns are the maximum - their gains, in case they win, and losses, in case they lose, are the greatest.

Not only the aggressors, but even the ones who are attacked, and those whose lives are most exposed to danger, are the ones who possess considerable material wealth. Be it Harnam Singh who owns a tea shop and possesses tremendous wealth which the reader later encounters in Ramzan's house as a part of the booty he loots in Dhok Ilahi, or his son Iqbal Singh who too is a wealthy cloth merchant, or Lala Raghu Nath (Ranvir's father) and even the rich Sikhs who “were financially better off”<sup>26</sup> than the Muslims of the area. In fact, there is even a mention of trouble first erupting in the cities and then proceeding to the villages as Lala Raghu Nath states this

information regarding “the trouble (is) spreading to the villages too”<sup>27</sup>. This is perhaps because a major chunk of wealth and power concentrates in cities. This further corroborates the functioning of personal drives like money and power, and it being human to succumb to such open temptations.

However, beyond these, the most significant observation that stands out in each of these narratives is that in majority of the cases the identities of the attackers and aggressors stand concealed. In the narrative, this concealment motif manifests itself in various shapes and forms.

The first and the most obvious is the hiding of identities by covering faces. When the first onslaught of violence is witnessed, the man running after the cow to slaughter it has his face covered with a cloth. This is no different from the observation that the identity of the pig’s killer is protected. Later too when Shah Nawaz is crossing a locality to meet the family of Lala Raghu Nath, who are in hiding, there is a potent description of a group of men armed and with faces covered. They are headed by Shah Nawaz’s friend, Maula Dad. A close examination of the following description goes on to hint that perhaps they too are marauders waiting for a call. And it would not be shocking if one states that they might even be paid for their participation in acts of violence:

Maula Dad was standing at the turn of the road, which led to Babarkhana. Behind him, on the projection of the shop sat five or six people with lathis or lances in their hands, their faces half-covered...<sup>28</sup>

The lathis in their hands of course are indicative of imminent violence. It can be argued that the lathis might even be for self-defence, but danger to Muslims in a Muslim dominated locality seems highly unlikely. And in all probability, these young men would be the Muslim accomplices of the Muslim, Maula Dad who appears as almost their boss. Besides, upon seeing Shah Nawaz, while Maula Dad comes to greet him, the rest do not move even a bit. This may be because of the fact that they have been invited from somewhere else and hence are strangers to Shah Nawaz. In other words, even literally outsiders from another city, who are being paid for their actions!

Rumours too, can be perceived as another manifestation of hiding. If an ‘outsider’ is somebody who does not truly and rightly belong to a place, then a

rumour too in some fashion is similar, because it carries with it the baggage of the alleged deeds of some strangers or outsiders. And so are deeds, which might not be much acceptable to the sensibilities of the 'insiders' who belong. Hence, an 'outsider' need not necessarily mean a person from another geo-political space. Instead, it could be someone or even something (like an act) which consciously or unconsciously does not identify with the ethos and value system of a place. What else would one label 'insiders' like Murad Ali?

In the narrative, the potency of these rumours in a crisis is well represented in the numerous references to the conspicuous role played by them. Since violence and terror was rampant, people had started enclosing themselves in houses and their only contact with the real outside world was through rumours:

Information about the killings was largely based on rumours. Residents of Gawaḷmandi said that many people had been killed in Ratta, while those in Ratta said that a lot of killing had taken place in Committee Mohalla.<sup>29</sup>

A similar incident takes place in another village where the chief residents are Sikhs and Muslims. To save themselves from the intended attack of the local Muslims, the Sikhs congregate in the local gurudwara. The cause behind this panic is the information that falls on their ears regarding the attack on a Khalsa school where the peon has allegedly been injured and his wife taken away by Muslim attackers. To pacify people, Sohan Singh puts forth a clarification whereby he pronounces the whole episode to be nothing more than a foul rumour. He exposes the lie and the misinformation and further explains to them that it were not the local Muslims who attacked, but outsiders from Dhok Elahi Baksh. He further urges:

We should not forget that we are being incited against the Muslims, and the Muslims against us. Due to rumours of all kinds, tension is mounting and tempers are running high. On our part we should try our best to maintain contact with the Muslims and continue to interact with them, and see that violence does not break out.<sup>30</sup>

But this appeal falls on deaf ears as violence does break out. This is because neither do these so called leaders pay heed to Sohan Singh's advice of interacting sensibly with the Muslims, nor does the only so called singular interaction of their



representative Gopal Singh bear fruit. In this mock-comic episode, which only actually has very grave ramifications, Gopal Singh is sent to spy upon the Muslims. While hiding in a dark corner he creates some noise, which disturbs an old Muslim who too is incidentally present at the same spot. In the darkness of the night, he misperceives the old man's cry of help to be a threat to his life, though ironically the supposed victimizer is an old, paralysed, blind Muslim who is actually there to merely release his bladder. Gopal Singh creates an uproar, which causes tension and anxiety amidst both sects. Though rather simplistic as it might appear, the conception of even this situation too, could be perceived as nothing but a symbolic manifestation of a rumour and its functioning.

Other than these two manifestations, the most obvious presentation of this 'outsider' motif would be very literally in the outsiders themselves, who act as blatant agents of violence. They are strangers whom no one really recognizes in a particular locality. Before one comes across a visual description of such men, two significant characters, in two pertinent sub-narratives, voice concerns regarding these outsiders. The first is when Harnam Singh's neighbour warns him in an anxious tone to vacate his home and shop, for the better. To this, the latter shows his reluctance and even adds that it would be really hard for anyone in the place to cause him any damage because of the old associations he has had with them. Upon this, the Muslim neighbour replies with immediacy:

Local people will not do you any harm but it is feared that marauders may come from outside. We will not be able to stop them.<sup>31</sup>

Rightly so, because the next moment the reader comes face to face with Ramzan and his men looting his home and shop callously.

The second instance is when Sohan Singh, the communist, advises his fellowmen in the gurudwara not to fear local Muslims as he expects outsiders to spark off the violence. In an endeavour to pacify the situation, he voices his concern thus:

Allow me to speak. It is the ruffians from another village who will do the mischief. We should try our best to see that no outsider comes into the village.<sup>32</sup>

This speculation too turns out to be absolutely true, because very soon the place is crowded with outsiders and the exploit is spearheaded by none other than the 'mujahids' or paid goons who seem to be out on a rampage killing and looting across the entire Punjab.

Now, interestingly in both the above-mentioned cases, it seems highly unlikely that these men who unleash violence are acting in the name of religion. The connotations of the following descriptions suggest contrary notions.

Harnam Singh's house is first looted symbolically, in the door of the shop being pulled down by miscreants. When the marauders arrive, he and his wife do manage to get out unscathed. But, while trying to wriggle out of the situation, a dog begins to bark at them, while they are in hiding. Though Banto, the wife, expresses her fear of being tracked down, Sahni makes a very pertinent comment:

Even if the dog had attracted their attention they might not have cared to pursue the old couple, since there was so much in the shop for them to lift.<sup>33</sup>

In such instances one wonders as to whether it was safeguarding their religion that such men were interested in or the loot. In case it were the former, then should not have pursuing the 'kafirs' been their primary objective? Here on the other hand, money seems to have been a more solid incentive because about forty pages later, this very booty becomes a part of Ramzan and Ehsan Ali's household:

Suddenly, Akran's voice was heard, talking and laughing loudly. Harnam Singh understood that the male members of the family had arrived after their night-long outing.<sup>34</sup>

Sahni indeed, here has made use of an interesting word 'outing', which henceforth reverberates throughout the narrative in almost symbolic proportions. This is because outing it indeed turns out for these men who, become rich overnight, as do the mujahids who attack the Sikhs in the 'gurudwara'. In a heart-rending description these men present a gory picture of "their exploits and experiences to one another"<sup>35</sup>. In a very casual fashion they narrate to each other their (mis)deeds, in a tone almost reeking of sadism, while one of them:

laughed a hollow kind of laughter, and turning his face to one side, spat on the floor.<sup>36</sup>

In fact, even their description of whimsically dealing with women - raping some and killing others – are indicators of elements of thrill. It appears as if acting in a detached manner, they are out on an official errand, which in turn is their key to wealth. And while in job, they try and make the most of it. The vision that one gets of them is of “adrenaline-pumped adventurer(s)”<sup>37</sup> killing, looting and raping allegedly in the name of religion, but actually for very selfish gains.

Close to this description would be that of Satish Gujral, who, while describing some of his personal experiences during Partition, mentions a group of ‘kabailis’. This was a group of cold-hearted men who created violence and panic wheresoever they went:

These tribals who were bound for Kashmir had been lured by the Pakistani army with promises of loot and women; their sentiments were further fired with zeal for ‘jihad’ against infidels.<sup>38</sup>

But the real motive of these men, describes Gujral, was nothing beyond satiation of their vested interests. In other words, they are something like the paid goons that Sudhir Kakar<sup>39</sup> exemplifies in his treatise on violence. In fact, who can deny the possibility of Ramzan and Nur Din too being one of these?

Hence, what stands out is the idea that often in such instances of violence, religion or community’s service does not seem to act as the sole towering motive, but it is a pretext, or an excuse for many. What actually drives some/many people into acts of violence is something very basal lying dormant in their own selves, which when turns aggressive, manifests in the shape of violence. And this basal propensity varies from person to person; else why are all ends in all cases not the same?

I shall elaborate this later in my discussion. But before that, there are certain junctures in the narrative which can lend useful corroborations to the above stated hypothesis. I shall begin with an incident where religious identities seem to be playing a potent role. Mid way through the novel, Iqbal Singh is caught by a band of young Muslim fellows. Being a Sikh, he becomes their target. Now here, the selection of words is extremely suggestive. First of all, Ramzan and his friends who go out on the

rampage are labelled as “freebooters” who are “returning from the exploits in Dhok Elahi Baksh and Muradpur. Chatting and laughing, and carrying their booty”<sup>40</sup>. It is here that a very interesting incident occurs. They spot a Sikh:

When they set their eyes on him, they were greatly excited as though they had found a sport. ‘Ya Ali’ Ramzan shouted and all the fellows... ran after him.<sup>41</sup>

What stands out here are connotations of game and fun. Significantly, Sahni here has juxtaposed the motif of sport with that of religion, though apparently the two are mutually exclusive. While the former is all fun, the latter all serious. And to use the Freudian terminology<sup>42</sup>, the former deals with desire, instincts i.e. the ‘id’, the latter with moral bindings, norms and regulations i.e. the ‘superego’. Hence, two variables with conflicting tendencies are shown to coexist. It could even be interpreted symbolically as a representation of the human destiny where, societal pressures clash with basic human instincts i.e. the morality principle obstructs the pleasure principle. Now under normal circumstances, forcibly or without obvious coercion (may be ideologically) the latter emerge victorious. However, when times are those of transition, something else happens.

When they spot the young Sikh, they immediately start pursuing him and eventually all his endeavours to escape fall flat. He is sighted and captured by these young Muslim lads who begin hurling at him humiliating comments of the like:

‘O Sikha ! Vadi Trikha!’ shouted Nur Din at which there was a guffaw of laughter.<sup>43</sup>

While embarrassing him to the hilt they seem to be deriving certain cheap thrills, which a few pages later finds an even more stark visual demonstration. They agree to spare his life in case he agrees to convert to Islam. He agrees to this and after reading the ‘kalma’ he becomes Iqbal Khan and is taken to the village. While he is being led to their village, Nur Din gives him a push and he falls on his face. When he makes an appeal to be treated decently, as had been promised before his conversion, the boys merely treat him as a laughing stock, hurling insinuating remarks at him. Throughout the path, they go about shoving him, teasing him and then laughing and winking at each other. Later too, when the religious ceremonies for conversion are

being performed, he is subject to crude banter and is made the butt of their vulgar jokes.

Now one could illustrate this event as hatred against the other community whereby humiliation to its members is perceived as some kind of victory. In fact, here Sahni too provides a commentary whereby "Hostility and hatred cannot turn into sympathy and love so suddenly"<sup>44</sup>.

True that it might appear, there are other possibilities too that might exist. E.g., it might just be the thrill of the moment that drives these men crazy, and religion in turn becomes an excuse. Otherwise why is it, that at that very moment the mullah intervenes and scolds them for "being flippant on a pious occasion"<sup>45</sup>? One wonders as to whether these young men are acting out of mere anger for the other community or are having a strange, macabre kind of fun, which cannot be had under normal circumstances. I definitely have my reservations against them being guided purely by religious motives. It is important to note that ironically the elders, especially the 'mullah', object to such a shoddy treatment of Iqbal. Going by the obvious logic, the elders are thought to be more religious and conscious about the traditional paradigms of communal honour. Sometimes even to the extent of being fanatical. Perhaps they might even have suffered at the hands of the alleged 'enemy' community. Then why do the youth seem to be more charged with communal frenzy? And why is it that the elders do not enjoy such a treatment meted out to the 'other'? And this happens not just in one incident alone. Prior to this as well, when Harnam Singh and his wife Banto are searching desperately for a rescuer, it is the elderly lady of the house who offers them refuge, while the young daughter-in-law Akran, expresses contrary wishes.

Furthermore if religious animosity forms a part of the collective consciousness which is common to all members of a community and which comes to the fore in a moment of crisis, as has been theorized by numerous sociologists and psychologists (see Introduction), then why is it that everybody does not deal with members of the other community in a similar fashion? Surely there is scope for other variables to operate as well, which can help elucidate the occurrences of incidents like:

Twice Ramzan raised his pickaxe to strike, but both times he let it fall. It is one thing to kill a kafir, it is

quite another to kill someone you know and who has taken shelter in your house. A thin line was still there which was difficult to cross, despite the fact that the atmosphere was charged with religious frenzy and hatred.<sup>46</sup>

The reason why Ramzan could not kill Harnam Singh was because once in the past he had stopped at the latter's shop for tea. His father Ehsan Ali too, a moment before this decides he cannot cause harm to the old couple, as he too had interacted with Harnam Singh a couple of times when times weren't tense. In other words, Harnam was one with whom these men had associated and hence was not a stranger to them; not an 'outsider' but very much an 'insider'.

Later again this very Ramzan is initially excited at the prospect of harassing a young Sikh on the run. But this is only till he realizes, that the fellow is none other than Harnam Singh's son, Iqbal Singh. The moment this stranger becomes an acquaintance, this very Ramzan cannot indulge actively in putting the fellow through hell, though he does not stop his friends from doing the same. This is something similar to Khuda Baksh telling Harnam Singh that no localites would cause them any harm, but he would not be able to protect them from 'outsiders'.

In all the above-mentioned descriptions, there is one common observation that stands out: The people who are the perpetrators of violence are mostly strangers or 'outsiders' in one way or the other. Notably this 'outsider' as a category is not stable/fixed, but is a negotiable category. The 'outsider' sometimes becomes the 'insider' (as in the case of Ramzan and Ehsan Ali) and vice versa (as in the case of Murad Ali). In fact even more blurred is the case of Shah Nawaz, a Muslim, who on the one hand rescues his Hindu associates, Lala Raghu Nath and his family, and on the other brutally murders the servant of their family, Milkhi, who too like his masters considers Shah Nawaz to be a close associate and believes that the same would be his protector. Shah Nawaz simply kicks Milkhi, who goes crashing down the stairs, injures his head and dies:

How and why this happened cannot be easily explained - whether it was the chutia on Milkhi's head, or the grieving crowd of people he had seen in the mosque or the funeral procession...or what he had been hearing on the last few days....<sup>47</sup>

Hence, there is a complex handling of one who is and 'insider' and 'outsider' at the same moment. Though no clear logic is provided, in all probability this act of Shah Nawaz can be attributed to anger against the 'other'. This is because upon a closer reading of the text one finds, that what precedes the act is an oblique reference to Muslim sufferings at the hands of Hindus, which symbolically gets contained in Milkhi's 'chutia'. But what is ironical is that this act is simultaneously coupled with another gesture of help towards another Hindu, Lala Raghu Nath. Though no definite, clear-cut conclusive explanations to these questions are available, yet these are chinks in the paradigm/theory of the collective unconscious, which provide scope for a multiplicity of factors to operate behind every action. One such factor could even be the fact that Shah Nawaz and Lala Raghunath are associates of the same 'class', while Milkhi belongs to the class of servants. Hence, he is inferior, less powerful and dispensable in the eyes of Shah Nawaz, who on the other hand cannot extend the same treatment to the Lala. With the latter he needs to still live up to his so-called image, which too could be perceived as some sort of a vanity.

Further, in an endeavour to understand these categories psychoanalytic theory might prove useful. According to Freud<sup>48</sup> all individuals are nothing but a bundle of desires and instincts, which he labels as the 'id'. One of these instincts is the desire to possess the mother. However, such instincts, which operate on the pleasure principle are repressed by the norms of the society. According to the ethical codes of society, sex with the mother – incest – is taboo and sinful. The mother is possessed by the father, who thus becomes the object of envy. But he is also feared because of his dominant position; the individual fears castration at the hands of his father. The father figure becomes the patriarchal voice of society and in Freudian terminology, this is the 'superego', which represses the 'id', that seething cauldron of dark desires and instincts. The individual, seeking approval and freedom from the dread of the father, thus represses his 'id' and identifies himself with the 'superego' i.e. the voice of society, law, order etc. It is by means of this identification, that he cathexizes his desire/instinct to possess the mother. This then, is his initiation, in the conditioning towards the dos and donts of the society which comprises man's 'superego' (operating on the morality principle as opposed to 'id's' pleasure principle).

Further all the men and women of society too, metonymically acquire the stature of moral/social policing. It is for this reason that when one is face to face with a known/associate/'insider', one is obliquely face to face with one's own 'superego', which forbids him from committing the wrong. With 'strangers/outsideers', such a question of ethics is not so starkly poised. This is because in his face, one does not observe the codes of the society so conspicuously. And this provides the reason why it becomes easy to kill a stranger in a period of upheaval when literally and symbolically all social norms, vigils and sanctions are absent. In fact, the otherwise dominant 'superego' relatively recedes in such moments of transition, and the otherwise repressed desires of the 'id' lurking very close to the surface, come to the fore. One could even state that the dominant 'superego' is replaced with a new superego, which then is the voice of the aggression.

Thus, in times of social turmoil, when justice /retribution seems to have gone on a long break, and when, unlike in normal/normed times, there is no one to discover or penalize their deplorable acts, men conceal their identities and go on the prowl. For this is the time to let loose the repressed, unconscious 'id', and do what one would ordinarily not even 'think' of doing. This is the time when all the Jarnails (an extension of age-old values and principles of decent conduct in the society or the manifestation of 'superego') are dead, or more so, are done away with:

The Jarnail was killed. Whimsical as he had always been, he set out to quell the riots, marching military style, with the cane tucked under his arm. No one was any the wiser for his thoughts, but his heart certainly surged with emotions and also perhaps a crazy whim, that what was happening the town was deplorable...<sup>49</sup>

Thus, indeed comes true Jarnail's Gandhian call of "Pakistan over (his) dead body."<sup>50</sup>

However, another variable that is significant at this moment is that it is not as if all individuals make the most of such times. While there are some who do not all together succumb, there are still other more interesting happenings. Here a close look at one such instance might prove beneficial. While normally in such clashes the desires take control of men, at the same time sometimes a compromise too takes place e.g. Ramzan does not directly harm and humiliate Iqbal, but silently, obliquely and indirectly enjoys and participates in the act. When Iqbal is being harassed by the mob



of Muslim lads despite being promised a better treatment in case he agreed to convert, he makes an appeal to Ramzan whom he perhaps recognizes as an acquaintance. To this Ramzan's reaction is "Don't push oi!" shouted Ramzan, and looking at his associates, smiled and winked."<sup>51</sup>

How does one address this occurrence where, when face to face with a known, one does not directly participate, nonetheless obliquely enjoy? Couldn't this variation in individual behaviour be attributed to the extent to which each individual allows his 'id' to come to the fore? After all, each individual has his own identity, comprising his own reactions/responses to the world around him. Even in the so called 'mob mentality' there are variations – there are leaders and the led. Perhaps though time is ripe, Ramzan is not 'bold' enough to totally ignore the voice of his original 'superego' and to go 'all out' in letting loose the 'id'. And hence occurs a classic compromise of the two. These variations in individual reactions in fact add to the richness of the text and indicate a range of possibilities, widening the parameters of the theories of 'mob mentality' during Partition.

### *CHAPTER III*

#### *Some Called it Partition, Some a Feast*

Son of the second wife of Moulvi Ghulam Hasan, Saadat Hasan Manto was born in 1912 in a middle class family in Samrala, Punjab. Under an authoritative and domineering father's tutelage, he was expected to be a lawyer like his father and three elder step-brothers. However, Manto was cut out for a different world altogether. At a very early stage, he started showing an inclination towards the dynamic world of literature. Despite discouragement, the talented young man took to the art initially for pleasure and eventually as a profession, contributing significantly to the finest corpus of literature in Urdu.

With a genuine flair and passion for writing, coupled with his unique sensitivity and talent, Manto managed to capture the zeitgeist through the brilliant strokes of his pen. Fortunately for him, the time was ripe for such endeavours. A group of writers, who belonged to the tradition called the Progressive Writers Movement, took up the cudgels of reforming the world through their revolutionary short stories in which they dealt unconventionally with middle class values and tried to expose the maladies prevalent in society. Early interactions with these men of letters at the Aligarh Muslim University, where he was a student, had a tremendous influence on the young Manto who honed and chiselled his skills under the impetus provided by this body of writers, who had already made their presence felt in a big way. Thus, right at the outset, Manto started writing in the realist tradition and due to these early experimentations in his career got linked to this coterie of progressive writers who endowed upon themselves the momentous and significant task of presenting the men and women of the times in their multiple hues and complexities.

However, this link with the progressives was soon to be abandoned on charges of obscenity, melodrama and vulgarity. His stories created a huge uproar. They were castigated for excessive use of sleazy sex to heighten sensationalism. As a result of such charges he soon "was unceremoniously expelled from the fraternity of newly emerging progressive Urdu writers"<sup>1</sup>. But the popularity and fame of this master craftsman, who was subjected to bitter criticism and severe penalizations during his lifetime, was only to rise with every passing year. And this is evident in the rapid

escalation of critical works on Manto and his art in the recent couple of years itself. Interestingly, his fame has even outgrown that of his so-called better contemporaries. Barring Ismat Chughtai and Rajinder Singh Bedi, most of the names of that era and group do not even arouse concern of late. This is highlighted in the pertinent comments of Shamim Hanfi who, while comparing Manto with the other members of the Progressive Writers Movement, states:

All of them...were better educated than Manto. They led secure, comfortable lives and lived longer than him. But today, we either do not talk about them at all, or if we do, we refer to them as figures shrouded in history's mist....Many of them may be considered great writers but they are not read any longer.<sup>2</sup>

One only needs to read the volumes of critical commentaries on Manto to gauge his popularity, which seems to know no bounds. And perhaps this popularity of his lies in the fact that he did not really concern himself with mere "learning, beliefs, ideology or trickery"<sup>3</sup>. Instead, as Shamim Hanfi states:

His strength is not his scholarship and ideas but his genuineness and truthfulness, his experience and understanding. His story never tells lies and is thus disconcerting for the reader. Truth acquires in his story a new and amazing dimension.<sup>4</sup>

At the same time, he was not really interested in the inane and stereotypical facets of life. Instead he chose to represent what was unusual and did not fit the conventional bill. He himself explained in *Dastavez*, how the ordinary did not excite him sufficiently:

When a woman in my neighbourhood gets beaten by her husband every day and then cleans his shoes, she gets no sympathy whatsoever from me. But I feel a strange kind of empathy, for a woman in my neighbourhood who fights with her husband, threatens to commit suicide and then goes away to see a film, keeping her husband on tenterhooks for two hours.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, with sincerity and tremendous realism, he etched out a dynamic world of the so-called nobodies and no-where men and women, as they existed and thrived in their diverse spatial boundaries. In fact he is once reported to have stated that it was his sense of hurt upon watching the margins and their stifled voices that got

transformed into the various narratives that he churned.<sup>6</sup> It is for this very reason that through his unusual narratives, with utmost honesty he ventured to spark off debates revolving around the maladies prevalent in the times. But interestingly, while doing so, he never operated within ideological blinkers. Nor did he ever shirk from hitting out at the hypocrisy and complacency of the men of his times. This is further highlighted by Gopi Chand Narang, in his commentary on Manto, where he states:

His way of telling a story may well appear to be simple, but the treatment of his subjects and themes, and the light he shed on human nature was marked by refreshing, rather devastating originality. His stories, one after the other, sent shock waves through complacent minds.<sup>7</sup>

In short, it is his denial of the otherwise existent spurious idealism that stands out at every stage of his art. And this was his philosophy indeed, as he himself once wrote in a letter to Ahmad Nadeem Qasmi, where he stated the purpose of literature and his writing thus:

Life should be presented as it is, not as it was, or will be or ought to be.<sup>8</sup>

Thus one observes that the uncommon yet sincere treatment of his subjects and themes and his keen understanding of man's nature were the hallmarks of his talent which knew no bounds and which continues to excite rich debates and discussions even today.

It is due to his this very penchant for the unconventional, that during his lifetime he was considered a reactionary and a pervert. He often had to present himself before courts in defence against his so-called lewd stories, which attracted a lot of flak. However, the defences that he presented regarding his short stories testify to his unflinching faith in the nature and quality of his work. In fact while defending charges of playing rashly with the sanctity and decorum of a civil society, he is once reported to have stated:

Why should I take off the 'choli' of society, it is naked as it is, of course I am not interested in covering it up either, because that is the job of tailors, not of writers.<sup>9</sup>

Hence, one observes that Manto not only had the capacity to perceive and examine the bitter truth, but also the courage to express it in its shocking starkness

without any camouflage. He never compromised at any level – neither with his themes, nor with the form, not even in the choice of his words. This merit of Manto's art is stoutly voiced by Ashok Vohra, who, while commenting upon his stories states:

Nothing is hidden, nothing is exaggerated. Everything, however obscene or unsayable it may be, is said in the most straightforward manner, that is, without subterfuge or exaggeration. There is no attempt at philosophizing or artificial theorizing.<sup>10</sup>

Thus on the basis of all the ensuing commentaries it could be stated that Manto's aim in writing was to catch the pulse of a nation or community, which in his opinion could be felt by exploring the human world in all its multiplicities, along with a special interest in the margins.

But within this category of the marginalized as well, there is yet another sub-category of narratives, which in the recent past, has attracted much concern and deliberation. These are his narratives dealing with the Partition, where he has poignantly captured the intense terror, pain and hopelessness that accompanied the calamity.

However, the trauma of Partition initially shook him to a sudden numbness of complete inaction, which often has been labelled as a "literary limbo"<sup>11</sup>, whereby he could not immediately produce narratives or talk about the tragedy. He himself talks about this blank in his autobiographical treatise, *Dastavez*, where he has described explicitly his movement from Bombay to Pakistan. This transition, which too is often perceived as an impulsive reaction, is supposed to have confounded him totally. Recalling those days of tremendous confusion and crippling dilemma, he states:

For three months, I could not decide anything. It seemed as if a number of films were being projected onto the same screen at the same time. All mixed up: sometimes the bazaars of Bombay and its streets, sometimes the small, swiftly moving trams of Karachi, and those slow-moving mule carts, and sometimes the noisy humdrum of the restaurants of Lahore. I simply could not make out where I was. The whole day I would sit on my chair, lost in thought.<sup>12</sup>

However, after a considerable time, Manto started transcribing these experiences and his understanding of the cataclysmic event in his short narratives. Of

this body of Partition narratives, Manto is best remembered for “Toba Tek Singh”,<sup>13</sup> where he depicts the senselessness of the calamity. Along with this, in his body of writings on Partition, he has brilliantly managed to portray a grim vision of the horror, brutality, violence and trauma that accompanied the event in all its entirety. He has ruthlessly unmasked the hollowness, meaninglessness and sordid aspects of Partition with tremendous telling effects. Without taking sides he has reconstructed the spectacle of Partition as he witnessed the country seep into the worst-ever carnage of its kind. Talking of this merit of Manto, Alok Bhalla states:

Manto’s concern is not with laying blame on a particular community, but with trying to record a world in which anyone can drift into cruelty and slaughter.<sup>14</sup>

In short, brutalized by the calamity himself, he has sensitively etched out the horror of the times through his ingeniously constructed short stories, where merciless violence stands unleashed and analysed. He is not really interested in blaming a particular community or trying to equate the tragedies inflicted upon different communities, but in transcribing what Niaz Zaman calls the deepest “depths of despair”<sup>15</sup> in a most striking fashion. Based on his understanding of man’s character and human destiny, his endeavour apparently is to try and comprehend the phenomenon of Partition along with scrutinizing the human nature in all its multiple hues and dimensions. In fact, Keki N. Daruwala while commenting upon his stories on Partition, states:

Saadat Hasan’s commitment to truth was so passionate and complete, that it had to go unchallenged. His worst enemies can’t accuse him of sectarianism. And he was totally unselfconscious about his impartiality towards the Hindu and the Muslim – there was no deliberate attempt to match Sikh atrocities with Muslim ones to arrive at some phoney balance. He was above such obvious artifice.<sup>16</sup>

Hence, one observes that like in his other stories, even in the narratives on Partition he never endeavoured to mitigate, the impact of the calamity, and at the same time strove to delve deeper into the human mind, which is obvious from the Freudian structures he uses in his narratives. Though many have attacked his work on grounds like sinking low into extreme melodrama, currently most critics agree that his entire

oeuvre of Partition stories would primarily find a place in the paradigm of social realism.<sup>17</sup>

Out of his corpus of stories on Partition, for my analysis, I have selected the following two: “Cold Meat” (“Thanda Gosht”) and “Open It!” (“Khol Do”). These are of concern to my central hypothesis whereby I endeavour to dwell upon the common man’s connection with violence in moments of crisis. These narratives carry well-crafted situations whereby ordinary men and women, acting as perpetrators of violence are delineated and therefore these become of central interest to me.

Of, the numerous short stories that he wrote on Partition, one of the first to see public eye was “Cold Meat” (“Thanda Gosht”). Banned on charges of obscenity and excessive unaesthetic depiction of sex, the story actually presents an insight into the mad violence that was let loose during Partition. This frenzy engulfed men and women across religions, classes and castes, as they stooped to the level of beasts perpetrating hair-raising violence. Though what also finds a place is that sometimes towards the end, the readers do catch a glimpse of not an absolute robbery of humanity. But, what are of concern to me immediately are the ulterior motives behind the violence that the central protagonists indulge in, and not necessarily the repercussions of such acts of violence. A pithy short story with a very terse narrative, the story is spread over a span of about half a night and traces the relationship of a couple – Ishar Singh and his young and beautiful wife Kalwant Kaur. With the husband not being able to satisfy her sexual desires, Kalwant Kaur suspects him to be romantically entangled elsewhere. It is when Ishar Singh is not aroused despite a very passionate and intensely violent foreplay, that the wife loses her peace of mind. Insecurity grips her hard. As a result of this very anxiety, she imagines the lack of her husband’s interest in her to be the result of some other woman, who she speculates has managed to entice him. Her ego is terribly hurt and she turns extremely violent both in her words and actions. Her wrath then surpasses norms of humanity as she attacks her husband with a ‘kirpan’, causing him a serious wound which begins to bleed profusely. Still dissatisfied and burning with jealousy, she is desperate to know the whereabouts of the concerned “another woman”<sup>18</sup>. Her verbal exhortations however, lead to a still deeper reality and out erupts another tale of horror, laden with morbid violence and macabre consequences.

Ishar Singh narrates to his wife an account of his involvement and active participation in mob attacks where along with his mates, he stormed into various houses to gather tremendous loot and booty. In fact, while narrating his experiences to his wife, Ishar Singh himself describes his errand thus:

When the looting was going on in the city, I joined in along with the others. I handed over to you all the money and jewellery that I could lay my hands.<sup>19</sup>

Though ultimately one does get an inkling that the particular houses he attacked were those of Muslims, what is very interesting here is that Ishar Singh makes no reference to safeguarding any religion or community. In fact, what appears to be the sole stimulant here is the money and the jewellery that he becomes a possessor of, through such attacks. This is significantly put forth by M. Asaduddin too, who in his commentary upon the story states:

Ishar Singh's abysmal lust for wealth and bloodshed motivated him to become a member of the frenzied mob that went on a killing spree.<sup>20</sup>

And such actions were fairly rampant during Partition. In fact, almost no representation of Partition goes without sketching a brutal portrait of such a loot. Literature on Partition is replete with such sketches of men indulging in rampage, collecting whatever they could lay their hands on.

As a part of Manto's own creation, "Black Margins" is another brilliant portrait that captures through "one minute stories"<sup>21</sup>, this very looting and pillage. Be it 'Mazdoori' or 'Ta'awuin', 'Taqseem' or 'Jaiz Istemaal', 'Ishtirakyat' or 'Karamaat', Manto has superbly painted scenes of rampant loot and pandemonium where articles ranging from sugar to rice to sewing machines to muslin and the more profitable jewellery and cash are robbed and lifted. Nothing from the significant to the trivial is spared. And ironically, the potent metaphor that Manto uses for this easy loot is of "mazdoori"<sup>22</sup> i.e. hard-earned money after tremendous efforts and endeavours. Hence, one finds a visual demonstration of one thing, which is surely in operation - arousal of vested interests amidst open temptations.

But what then follows Ishar Singh's callous loot is even more unbearable and macabre. He describes how upon one such encounter he managed to hit upon a house



of Muslims. There he slaughtered six of the seven occupants of the house. While he was about to extend the same treatment to the seventh member, he stopped erratically. The poor soul was actually a very attractive and beautiful girl. Seeing her, his more elemental lust rose to the fore. After having quenched his lust for wealth, he decided to rape her before the final kill. He carried her to the side of a canal. But the classic turn of tables occurred when he realized that he had been copulating with a corpse. When the reality dawned upon him, he was rendered impotent with the shock.

Before bringing in the subtleties and shades, which complicate debates, there are certain general observations that need address. The one fundamental principle that stands out in this narrative is that, the basic human desires motivate most human endeavours; whether they operate in normal or in adverse circumstances, pressing desires await satiation. And of these, the two desires that find a potent manifestation in this story are the hunger for wealth and lust and their fulfilment at all possible costs. In fact, Manto too, while discussing the subject matter of his literature, highlighted the potent role played by human greed. He believed that any literature was linked to two most basic needs which he labelled as the “hungers of human life”<sup>23</sup>. This point is elaborated further by Harish Narang who, in his analysis of Manto’s philosophy states:

The first one is for food and the second for the proximity and possession of the opposite sex. All human activities, Manto observed, could be reduced to these two kinds of hunger and two types of relationships, spawned by these hungers, namely, one between food and the human stomach and two, between man and woman.<sup>24</sup>

It is these two hungers, which find a poignant manifestation in the narrative as well. Lust, of course, features explicitly in the relations of Ishar Singh, first with his wife, which falls within the so-called acceptable limits, and then his desire for the Muslim girl, whom he rapes. The latter, of course, does fall beyond the normal acceptable social boundaries. The greed for food, on the other hand is not stated obviously. Instead, it is obliquely referred to in the very significant metaphor of wealth and jewellery which Ishar Singh has managed to procure for his own household. This cash and jewellery in turn could then become means to satiate the other basic hunger, of man in general and Ishar Singh in the current case.

Also vis-à-vis this presentation, the even more pertinent point that is foregrounded is the satisfaction of these hungers. Interestingly, what Manto has highlighted through the narration is the tendency towards the fulfilment of man's desires at all possible costs – be they in normal circumstances through socially sanctioned forms or in adverse circumstances through force and trick. Whatever be the stakes, man goes to all possible extents to observe their satiation. Now if one closely observes these possibilities, the significant concept that stands out is that Manto strategically transcends various dominant ideological parameters that have a possibility to operate in crisis situations like the Partition. This is because Ishar Singh's treatment of his wife, Kalwant Kaur, and the young Muslim girl, his alleged enemy's daughter, is similar. Under such circumstances, debates revolving around concepts of religious mobilization stand questioned. What stands out instead is human nature and the beast within, which does not care for social indicators. All it cares for is maximum gratification, for which sometimes it even indulges in making use of violence.

Connected to this, then, is the significant recurring motif that stands out in the narrative, i.e. violence. Violence acquires almost symbolic proportions in the story where not only does it feature in some form or the other in every possible relationship presented, but its manifestation and drives are also reasonably alike. In fact M. Asaduddin in the 'Introduction' to his translations of Manto's short stories, states with particular reference to "Cold Meat", that "Violence lies at the core of the story"<sup>25</sup>. This violence appears intermittently and is strategically accentuated in degree with every subsequent stroke. In other words it lurks dangerously throughout the narrative and leads to interesting dynamics between the multiple relations that operate in the story – be it the relation of Ishar Singh with his wife Kalwant Kaur or that of him with the different members of the Muslim family.

Ishar Singh's act of violently slaughtering the six men of a Muslim family is bone-chilling. He is allegedly doing so in the name of attacking members of another community. But what is interesting, as discussed above, is that ironically it is the desire for something more elemental that actually drives him to such violent proportions. These drives in the current case could be money, power or ego. To a certain extent it could even be thrill when analysed vis-à-vis the behaviour meted out

to the seventh member of the group. No different from these is Kalwant Kaur's act where she violently hurts her husband with a 'kirpan' when her female ego is hurt. All such violence against the backdrop of religious fanaticism goes on to broaden the base and widen the possibilities of violent acts being performed without religion acting as the prime motive. In other words, such acts taken symbolically prepare the path for forms other than religious violence to operate and hence expose and debunk the paradigm of violent acts performed in moments of crisis, only in the name of religion (see Introduction). This is because in none of the above-mentioned cases does religion seem to act as a significant impetus, thereby opening the scope for a non-religious type of violence also, to operate in moments of heightened tension. Not less worth mentioning is the fact that such violence spares neither man nor woman. It is not just Ishar Singh who is capable of it, but Kalwant Kaur can be equally bitter in her attacks. Thus, what stands out is that Manto is playing on a different plane altogether, whereby he endeavours to focus instead on the relationships between unmet desires and violent manifestations. Very articulately at such a juncture of religious tension, he refocuses on altogether alternate schemas. And these dynamics assume still more exciting dimensions, when analysed via other manifestations of violence in the other relationships of the narrative. Thus, the focus here shifts specifically to man, his desire for the erotic, and violence and its manifestation.

While making love, Ishar Singh and Kalwant Kaur are equally violent with each other. Though obscene to middle class sensibility, it falls within the parameters of socially accepted norms. It is for this reason, perhaps, that this violent manifestation of sexual desires has connotations of fun, arousal and excitement. But to my comprehension despite being outside the parameters of social constraint, Ishar Singh's rape of the Muslim girl too is no different. Howsoever one might try and justify the act to be a product of religious bigotry, where the endeavour was to rape the other community's prestige, to me the connotations suggest otherwise (see Introduction). Though the violence in the relation between Ishar Singh and the Muslim girl definitely defies the norms of a civil society (considering it as rape) and acquires macabre proportions, the writer has deftly made use of the same metaphor of playing a game of cards to depict the sexual act as was used to describe the sexual encounter between the couple. The same metaphors of "shuffle" and use of the "trump"<sup>26</sup>, which defined his sexual encounter with his wife lends similar

connotations of fun and play to Ishar Singh's encounter with the Muslim girl. Thus by equating the two, very skillfully, Manto has manipulated emotions, whereby both these physical encounters acquire similar representations and proportions.

If one analyses a step further, both these acts with two different women appear obscene to the sensibility of a normal civil code because in both the erotic acquires violent proportions. By doing so, what Manto has foregrounded is a very interesting relationship between violence and the erotic. It is here that one needs to deliberate a little further. What definitely becomes a matter of concern is whether it is the erotic getting violent as in the sexual encounters, or anger, hatred and violence taking the shape of eroticism. Upon further contemplation this reveals interesting paradigms. Logically speaking and going by the ideological structures and parameters, it should be the latter. It should be a sense of anger against the other community, which then acquires macabre forms like rape. In most theses, the explanation for rape of women of the other community is normally that the woman's body becomes a contested site for the enemy. This is elaborated upon by Shashi Joshi in her thesis dealing with the stories of Manto. Hers and many other such theses believe that the relationship between perceptions of collective cultural power, the symbols of cultural visibility and the cultural stereotypes in daily life is a complex yet close one. It is within such parameters that the body becomes the "repository of cultural symbolism because cultural visibility is possible only through the body....cultural power gets concentrated and deposited in the signification of collective visibility and this visibility is concretized in the body"<sup>27</sup>. It is for such reasons that the violation and destruction of the body is perceived as making the culture of the other's collective invisible, which then disintegrates cultural power and makes it disappear. The mutilation and extermination of the body therefore is deeply determined by notions of 'self' and 'other', and the power-play between these.

Since cultural power is closely linked to cultural visibility, the former is maintained, asserted and negated by means of the latter. Furthermore, this cultural visibility is inscribed on the body through cultural stereotypes both on and in the body. Hence, the violation of the body is often perceived as the destruction of cultural power.

In the light of this relationship between cultural visibility, cultural power and honour to castrate the masculine 'other' and to conquer the 'other's' women both become techniques of asserting cultural superiority and they immediately negate the cultural visibility of the 'other'. However while destruction of the male destroys cultural visibility, it cannot altogether wipe the potential for its resurrection. For this reason it also becomes pertinent to possess or destroy the women who further carry the seed of this cultural power. It is precisely for this reason that the metaphor 'beejnash', as pointed by Shashi Joshi<sup>28</sup>, acquires potency in such tussles.

The woman's body becomes the site for the most brutal contest and women in turn become trophies of victory and blotches on the collective honour. Likewise, they become the greatest threats to man's stereotype of masculinity – the biggest chink in his armour. In this manner, when controlled by man in his domain, she transgresses all codes of colour, race, religion and caste and "it is in the laboratory of her body that the real mixing of blood is accomplished."<sup>29</sup>

In other words violation of the women of the other community would then be what Sudhir Kakar implies, when he describes rape as an act of planting the seeds into the enemy's womb.<sup>30</sup> (also see Introduction)

However, in the current case the connotations seem to be entirely different. When Ishar Singh first casts his eyes upon the lovely Muslim lass, his immediate desire that is aroused is lust and not religious bigotry or animosity. This idea is evident from the writer's deft strokes whereby very tactfully he highlights the beauty of the girl, further hinting at a sexual arousal. Ishar Singh voices this fact twice while narrating the incident to his wife. Thus, again obliquely hinting at the idea that perhaps it was the concept of the woman (she being tempting) that moved Ishar Singh and not that she was a Muslim girl. She was just a potential temptation – a beautiful girl leading to a testosterone shoot. This idea acquires even more potent forms in the following soliloquy of Ishar Singh:

Ishar Saiyan, you enjoy Kalwant Kaur everyday... why  
not try this new dish today?<sup>31</sup>

Hence, indicating that the primary driving force was actually his carnal lust. And this is suggested in the connotations of the word 'dish' – obliquely hinting at

some feast in action. Or for that matter even to the hungers that Manto talks about. Incidentally here the two strands are coupled brilliantly. One is stated to describe the quality of the other - hunger for lust. In other words, a party where palatable and succulent dishes are at man's disposal. To me, such a description seems quite contrary to the seriousness that should have accompanied an act, allegedly as pious as safeguarding the sanctity of one's own religion or community. This juxtaposition of the serious with the fun only suggests a movement towards my central hypothesis whereby religion is merely used as a garb, or a pretext to otherwise satiate the basic desires in man. In fact, the original version of the story has such implications stated even more potently when Ishar Singh tells himself:

Ishar Singh, Kalwant Kaur ke to har roz maze lootta hai.  
Aaj ye mewa bhi chakh dekh.<sup>32</sup>

From all the above, to me it appears that Ishar Singh seems to be not serving some higher goal of communityhood. Instead he has been exposed to the brilliant opportunity of tasting an exotic dish - a luxury for a very ordinary, perhaps lower middle class fellow whose fate otherwise is 'daal-bhat' and not 'mewa'. This does not mean that religion and honour have no significance in the life of this Sikh. But of course that comes only after the other desires have been satiated. Manto himself stated this in 'Kasauti' (*Dastavez*):

It is only when man is tired of bread, woman and power  
that he thinks of God whose nature is much more  
mysterious and difficult to grasp than any of these.<sup>33</sup>

And of course, the very ordinary Ishar Singh who in all probability belongs to the lower strata of society and has perhaps just started making a life of his own, cannot have wearied of all these so early! Especially not in times when otherwise also, all norms are flouted and there is an open temptation for even the repressed desires to come to the fore. Partition surely was one such strange time.

This assumption being not too far fetched becomes even more obvious upon a close analysis of what Ishar Singh tells himself. Out of a sense of shock, within a space of about ten lines, twice in the narrative he states that "Man is a strange mother-fucking creature"<sup>34</sup>.

Of course this comment could be perceived as an outburst due to a sense of remorse, indicating a final reclaim to humanity. However to me, at this juncture too, what is of pertinent concern is an insight into the bestiality in man, the violent act, its motivations and manifestations and not really its aftermaths or repercussions. In other words the genesis of a violent act in a crisis like Partition is what I am significantly interested in for my understanding of the phenomenon, and explanation of my central hypothesis.

Considering all the above-mentioned observations, it can be stated that violence on the other woman is no different from that on one's own woman. Even the metaphoric descriptions of sexual intercourse vis-à-vis the game of cards goes on to corroborate the same. In such a context one can definitely question the validation of religion as the sole cause behind such an outburst.

Interestingly, another metaphor that acquires significant connotations is the 'kirpan'<sup>35</sup> which in the current case is endowed with contradictory principles and elements. This weapon, which is one of the five cultural and religious insignias of the Sikhs, is also a symbol of protecting and safeguarding the honour of the community. But here it is not used as a weapon of aggression against the enemy. Instead, it is ironically used to enforce satiation of the basal physical and elemental desires and longings. This is something similar to the game of cards where again 'shuffling' and using the 'trump card' foreground the playful and carnivalistic aspects, rather than making any serious references to religious feelings or those of community-hood.

Hence, on the basis of my readings, the pertinent principle of a prima erotic taking the shape of violence appears a more justifiable supposition. This is because though here the woman happened to be a Muslim, the more significant question is whether his behaviour would have been any different had she been a Sikh or from any other community. If all theories of women being the site of possession stand true, then would he have meted out the same treatment to a Sikh woman? To me the possibility appears viable. And this is because through numerous suggestions in the narratives, Manto is trying to transcend all communal barriers and is talking on more elemental and basal planes. Thus it could be stated that the woman's body becomes a site for possession irrespective of her being a Hindu, Muslim or Sikh. She is nothing but a lump of flesh, 'gosht', for the man whose carnal instincts await satiation.

This is brought forth even more emphatically in “Open It!” (“Khol Do”), where allegedly even more macabre and scandalizing perspectives boil to the fore.

“Open It!” is often considered as one of the most grim and terrorizing pictures of the Partition. A master-stroke of Manto’s pen, the short story presents a hair-raising account of the inhuman phenomenon called Partition. Its stark realism and grim portrayal shocked the sensibilities of the civilized, because in a biting satire, Manto has very intelligently stirred the whole debate on the process of civilization and blurred the thin line between the civilized and the uncultured. Banned in Pakistan, incidentally and ironically for “breach of public peace”<sup>36</sup>, the story poignantly presents the plight of a young innocent girl, Sakina, who is brutally raped by members of her own community.

As the story opens, brutality and bestiality hit one in the face. The readers catch a searing glimpse of separation, violence, pain and trauma. Sirajuddin, a desperate middle-aged man, who has just lost his wife in an unleash of communal violence, tries to search for his young and beautiful daughter, Sakina. He has barely recovered from a sense of shock and trauma as he tries desperately to evade the sight of his dead wife. But he attempts to pull together the strands of his life and hopes to recover at least Sakina. The daughter is someone very precious and dear to a man, more so after the loss of his wife, as she now remains his sole hope.

In this endeavour, he manages to come in contact with voluntary rescue workers, in all probability Muslims, whose task is to try and recover men, women and children who have been left behind, on the other side of the border:

At great risk to their lives they went to Amritsar. They rescued many men, women and children and took them to safety.<sup>37</sup>

They reassure the father and after taking down the description of this young girl, who has a mole on her cheek, they venture out on their ‘noble’ errand. The father prays hard for the success of these eight young lads who endanger their own lives to safeguard in all probability their ‘religious brethren’. Early in the narrative, by means of a reference to such men rescuing endangered lives, the readers, upon an extension of thought, can obliquely picture the helpless Sakina perhaps suffering at the hands of the ‘other’ community. And interestingly the image that comes to mind is of her



suffering because of having been left behind in the 'enemy's territory'. This tension is further heightened as Manto very strategically refers to the efforts of the rescue workers. Though they do not meet their desired goal, nevertheless their efforts are described as desperate and sincere. It is explicitly stated that upon the behest of her suffering father, the workers allegedly keep a special eye and remain on the watch out for Sakina. However, disappointment is all that comes the way, as it is described that "(But) even after ten days they could not find Sakina"<sup>38</sup>.

The 'but even after', escalates anxiety on the part of the readers and like Sirajuddin the readers too pray ardently for her safe return. When Sakina's father expresses a sense of adoration for these eight swarthy men, they become heroes in the eyes of the readers as well. Like Sirajuddin, the readers too wish for the victory of these 'good Samaritans'.

However, after mentioning this, in a veritable anticlimax, all hopes come crashing to the ground, because indeed these boys do 'keep a special eye' on Sakina! Through their 'endeavours' the readers do come face to face with Sakina. The next scene that Manto presents is that of Sakina wandering in the streets of Punjab. The youths spot her "by the roadside near Chuhrat"<sup>39</sup>. Though the exact nature of her suffering is not described, but one gets a fair idea that the poor girl has been through really harrowing experiences – without food or water, and that too all alone. The rest is left only to the imagination. Manto has very cleverly not gone further in his description, leaving it open to speculation. No mention or reference is made to her having been subject to any kind of physical or sexual assault. Not even by the men of the alleged 'other' community. In fact, Manto describes:

As she felt uncomfortable without her 'dupatta' she was vainly trying to cover her breasts with her hands.<sup>40</sup>

This shame of the fourteen year old innocent Sakina, especially when contrasted with her last act whereby she involuntarily opens the strand of her 'shalwar' to be raped, acquires interesting parameters. By doing so and against the backdrop of not directly referring to a sexual assault by Hindus or Sikhs, the bestiality of the alleged Muslim lads, who subject her to repeated rape, acquires even more morbid connotations. The brutality of their violence is so terrible, that "her relationship with language has become so tenuous that henceforth the phrase 'khol do'

(open it) will carry just one meaning for her to the exclusion of all others”<sup>41</sup>. In other words, the poignancy of the situation stands heightened even more, especially if the supposition is true, that Sakina’s violators are no other than the members of her own community, as stated by M. Asaduddin in the ‘Introduction’ to his series of short stories on Partition.<sup>42</sup>

Thus the brutal rape of Sakina at the hands of the members of her community, and that too in the garb of social/rescue workers, makes all assumptions of poor Sirajuddin fall flat. This is because then neither religion nor humanity seem to be acting as good enough safeguards. What supersedes instead is an inhuman tyrant indulging in lowly bestial behaviour.

In fact, according to most theories on communalism and the making of a riot, no explanation offers a comprehensive understanding of such bizarre incidents. One can actually question as to how these men (so called rescue workers) are any different from those on an open rampage. In fact, one can at least be on guard against scoundrels openly on the move. This is what Sakina initially does, when they try to stop her. She too “went pale. She didn’t answer them”<sup>43</sup>.

Ironically, normally one needs to be scared of strangers and outsiders. In this particular case the fact that these men are aware of the whereabouts of Sakina, is the cause of her doom. In retrospect, one might speculate that she might have escaped this trauma, had Sirajuddin not given the description of her daughter to these fellows. Though of course, what is stated above is not really a guarantee because a poor helpless girl possibly did not have much scope for escape before men who are brutal and inhuman to such incomprehensible extents. However, one thing is definitely true, that this ‘inside’ information makes things much more convenient for them. And then the guise of the rescue operation adds to the opportunity they are provided with. So, once again, as described at length in the previous chapter dealing with *Tamas*, the readers come across the same paradigm whereby the ‘outsider’ strikes. What else would one call persons who do not espouse ideals and principles of a community and do not share its concerns? Not only this, one even finds the same blurring of categories, as discussed in the previous chapter. Here too, on the face of it, Manto has provided them with all elements of being ‘insiders’ – they are Muslims, are rescue workers and, to top it all, obliquely known to Sakina. However, in continuation with

the already discussed divide between the 'insider' and 'outsider' as being negotiable, despite being 'insiders', the eight Muslim lads are no less than 'outsiders'. They are those 'outsiders', who defile the norms of civil society, when one finds the animal lurking within them come to the fore at the opportune time. But what also needs to be remembered is that the time was right!

Thus, a close look at the narrative suggests that the story transcends many ideological debates whereby a gross event with terrorizing connotations is described. Actually, one can perceive this whole act to also have connotations of a game, a play where Sirajuddin prays for the victories of the young rescue workers. Ironically, however, here the victories are in games played with human desires, emotions and sentiments. Victories in a battle, where the evil self beats the better one. How else would the rape of a woman, that too belonging to one's own community, be addressed? Rape of women of the other community was rampant as has been elaborated earlier in the chapter. The point has been dwelt upon fairly well, whereby raping a woman of another community becomes a source of humiliation to the masculine ego of the enemy. But rape within one's own community, that too at times where the dominant ideology is to safeguard one's women from the 'other', can possibly have one basic explanation, i.e. sheer lust, a very basal physical desire. And a repeated subjection to the same further highlights a hyperactive lust in times when all is topsy-turvy; a lust and its violent manifestation, which would have otherwise not been feasible under normal circumstances, when all was well. However when norms go helter-skelter, it gets a chance to manifest itself in full swing.

Also the fact that these men had gone to Amritsar on the "same mission"<sup>44</sup> makes one merely wonder what their mission is! Whether it is social service or self-service, protection of the community or satiation of the self. And the fact that it is the 'same' raises doubts regarding the attacks of these men. It would not be far fetched to state that these men are in collusion and have indulged in such acts before as well. In fact this guise of social service might even be perceived as being a prime section of their 'modus operandi' whereby without being exposed to much dangers and suspicions, they are in a position to satiate their elemental instincts and drives.

In addition to all this there are two potent metaphors that stand out in this narrative. One, of course, is that of the lorry. Each time we come face to face with the

rescue workers, they are sitting atop it. With regard to this, the men too metonymically acquire the stature of these lorries. The status of the rescue workers too is mechanical like the machine they sit on top of – i.e. they too become nothing more than machines. Though here, they are ‘desiring machines’<sup>45</sup> devoid of compassion and humanism, mechanically satiating their carnal lust and perhaps even other desires like wealth, power, ego, etc. under the facade of their participation in rescue operations.

And, of course, the second even more potent metaphor of ‘rescue’, which brilliantly operates on two planes. One is the very superficial and obvious plane where men are ‘ardently’ employed in rescue operations of the weak and ordinary men and women. Normally in moments of crisis, women and the old are potential targets, as both are relatively physically weaker. And here in the story too, the obvious images of those to be rescued are the woman Sakina and her old helpless father Sirajuddin. Indeed they are to be rescued, but in a biting irony, they actually need to be rescued from their supposed rescuers! This then connects to the second more scandalizing plane on which the metaphor operates. What acquires haunting proportions is the rescue workers trying hard to rescue their very selfish, repressed but pressing instincts by means of easily exploiting the readily available weak, Sakina and her father Sirajuddin. The latter too is indirectly exploited through the information that he releases regarding Sakina, which unfortunately acts as a potential for her doom. And his as well, for he too does not escape the trauma.

The brazen bestiality and ruthlessness of these ‘rescue operators’, especially when seen in stark contrast to the innocence, anguish and helplessness of the father and the daughter, corroborate my central hypothesis whereby men use the garb of religion to fulfil certain basic desires and urges, which otherwise might not be possible under normal circumstances. What Manto seems to be saying is that religion really has not much to do within the existing parameters.

The desire and lust for sexual fulfilment, for money, power, etc. is paramount in man and these primeval urges often take precedence when the barriers of civilization are let down and hell breaks loose. Thus his tale becoming a telling epitaph of the death of civilized norms. Where is religion in this scheme of things?...

Religion too is exploited and used to satisfy man's lust. In fact, Manto too is once reported to have stated that, "the only secular space is the urinal"<sup>46</sup>.

Hence, through my readings of Manto, the significant thesis that stands out is that when the time is ripe and temptations are potent, it is possible for men to succumb to them. And it is the expression and satiation of these desires in such moments of transition, when vigil is missing, that often assume violent proportions beyond ordinary human conceptions and sensibilities.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### ***(Un)Holy Wars in the Name of ‘?’***

A Pakistani Parsee by birth, Bapsi Sidhwa grew up in the Lahore of undivided India, eventually witnessing the bizarre and obnoxious face of violence that shrouded the city in the wake of Partition. Semi-autobiographical in tone, *Ice Candy Man* (1988) vividly etches her memories of those unfortunate times when hatred, terror and bloodshed enveloped the panic-stricken cities of Punjab. Along with her own troubled images are transcribed the traumatic tragedies suffered by a friend cum associate, Rana Khan, whom she thanks profusely in her ‘Acknowledgements’:

I thank Rana Khan for sharing with me his childhood experiences at the time of Partition. He lives in Houston and still bears the crescent-shaped scar on the back of his head and innumerable other scars.<sup>1</sup>

And the unfolding of whose tale we witness in a brief yet significant section of the novel that Sidhwa titles ‘Ranna’s story’.

By means of her sensitivity and great talent as a writer, Sidhwa has managed to depict graphically one of the grimmest phases of human history. The deft strokes of her pen go about capturing one of the worst catastrophes of its kind where millions suffered and lost everything – identity, land, world and many even their lives.

To present a realistic account of this sour calamity, Sidhwa has very strategically used as her mouthpiece Lenny – an eight year old, polio ridden Parsee girl. Though she labels this as an unconscious decision whereby she “didn’t think of it in so many words, but when I was imagining and beginning to write the story, suddenly the narrator’s words came out as this child’s voice”<sup>2</sup>, she definitely acknowledges the merit of such a function. She states:

As a child, you lack prejudices – the hatred and biases you learn as you grow up....I found it was working perfectly. Lenny is an innocent, bewildered child; when you see things through her eyes, the atrocities are in a way more chilling.<sup>3</sup>

This idea is reinforced by Nandi Bhatia who, while commenting upon the autobiographical voice of the eight year old Lenny, praises its merit as follows:

(it) functions as a self-consciously deployed tool that mediates the process of remembering and provides an interpretive meaning to historical events.<sup>4</sup>

Through Lenny's eyes the readers capture the frame which encapsulates, fairly realistically, the bewilderment and transition of a bunch of commoners whose world transforms from one of peaceful co-existence (if not harmonious concord) to one of painful and futile discord. The objectivity that Sidhwa claims comes from the fact that Lenny is twice detached from the event (just as she was when she herself witnessed the catastrophe called Partition). One, because she is a Parsee, which apparently was a neutral party to the entire calamity. While Hindu, Sikh and Muslim households burnt, not one torch was raised to light a Christian or Parsee home. Therefore, though the Parsees lived through the event, they were not directly affected. And the second distancing happens because of the fact that the narrator is a very young girl, not old enough to colour, tune or fine-tune events. Through her eyes, all remains a stark representation with little scope for personal biases influencing the narrative. In all innocence, almost with the accuracy of a photographer, Lenny presents whatever the lens of her eye captures. In fact, very tactfully, Sidhwa presents the narrative in a fashion, where without attempting much of an analysis, Lenny merely states what she sees, sometimes even giving an impression of not comprehending situations, yet naively stating whatever the eye catches. All such techniques obviously reflect the lack of tuning of a young amateur vision, which captures only that which falls upon it, though what falls on it is a lot because of her constant companion, her Ayah. Hence, very intelligently, Sidhwa makes the girl appear detached and yet attached to the central plot, lending a subtle charm to the narrative, which flows uninterrupted.

The young Lenny's harrowing narrative unwinds in the present tense and first person as she unravels the experiences of her beloved Ayah and her coterie of friends and associates whose lives were forcibly churned and twisted in the tumultuous waves of Partition. These she presents by means of the day to day accounts of the girl, which as a strategy, works brilliantly for the structure of the narrative. Like a daily diary entry, Lenny presents her true accounts, not bothering to sift, analyse, sieve or structure them. Going by the order of the day and time of the clock, comes scene after

scene, without any clubbings or categorizations. No backgrounds are formed, upon which structures are built. In fact, it appears more like events being hurled in one's face – imbued in love one moment, hatred the very next; concern one moment, jealousy the very next. To the extent that the comic to the child's eye, against the immediate backdrop of events, is black humour to the readers. Excitement to the young ones in the story, is tragedy to a mature eye, because of what immediately precedes or succeeds an occurrence. All such wonderful techniques employed by Sidhwa, help to further enhance the realism in the narrative because what the reader then experiences is nothing but an uninterrupted and unmitigated tale of sound and fury told by a pair of innocent eyes.

However, for my analysis it becomes integral to transcend the linearity of the narrative, pick up beads, and systematically form a string of plots and sub-plots. There are numerous motifs that recur in the narrative along with multiple characters and incidents, lending the structure a unique vibrancy. Yet of these, there are a couple of strands that acquire significant proportions. One obviously is Lenny's Ayah's tale of woe. Similar to hers is Ranna's tragedy whose village Pir Pindoo undergoes the same demolition and then reconstruction as Ayah's Lahore, whose face too changes after its serious encounter with Partition. And then of course is the significant and momentous representation of the Parsee community. However, of these, the former two are of central concern to me. Very significantly while Ayah's tale is lived and enacted in the city (Lahore), Ranna's is in a small, distant village named Pir Pindoo, away from the din and noise of the city. The tiny hamlet manages to remain unscathed of the 'colours of violence' only initially, because soon the 'garam hawa' of the city casts its spell on the village and villagers as well. Thus highlighting the fact that none could stay isolated and the trauma gripped far and wide, across the entire state. Though here too, as discussed in the previous chapter dealing with *Tamas*, the trouble initiates in the city and travels to the villages. And the logic behind this, as already discussed, could in all probability be the concentration of wealth, power, funds, etc. in the cities. Nandi Bhatia too poignantly puts across this facet thus:

On an emotional level Ranna's life is inextricably bound up with Lenny's own childhood memories.... Sidhwa inscribes the narrator's narrative into her own literary representation to emplot, through this



intertextuality, Ranna and numerous others subjected to a similar fate.<sup>5</sup>

Of these two also, the more significant one and the one that can be labelled as the central paradigm is Ayah's story. This is also because, to my comprehension, Ranna's story can be viewed as a supplement to this central structure. In fact, upon a deeper insight, it even acts as a filler, filling in that bit which escapes Lenny's eye. By virtue of the fact that she is a very young Parsee girl, her eye does not act as a chief witness to the true quality and nature of violence. However, what remains absent, becomes a presence through Ranna's account as he personally witnesses the whole massacre. In other words it augments, and in fact gives a visual demonstration to what is merely hinted and obliquely referred to in Lenny's account. If Lenny mentions killings taking place in Lahore, in Pir Pindoo, Ranna witnesses people being massacred and in fact narrowly escapes a brush of it. If Lenny mentions the cries of women she hears from the adjacent ground, Ranna can actually explain and describe the cause behind it. If Lenny is told of the presence of the fallen women, Ranna has seen the fall with his very eyes. Hence, while I shall make oblique references to fifteen odd pages that comprise Ranna's story, I will focus primarily on the story which acquires paramount interest; that of the Ayah.

Right at the outset Ayah is described to be an awfully attractive young girl with an exquisite sensuality. All and sundry fall prey to her charms as she saunters in the streets of Lahore:

The covetous glances Ayah draws educate me. Up and down, they look at her. Stub-handed twisty beggars and dusty old beggars on crutches drop their poses and stare at her with hard, alert eyes. Holy men, masked in piety, shove aside their pretences to ogle her with lust. Hawkers, cart-drivers, cooks, coolies and cyclists turn their heads as she passes...<sup>6</sup>

And this general sort of a description of her stunning looks and charm finds a tangible and vivid description in her coterie of admirers with whom she is in contact, and primarily the ones with whom she whiles away her evenings in Queen's Park. All are included – Ice-candy-man, Masseur, Butcher, Lion keeper, Sher Singh, Hari, Sharbat Khan, the Pathan who sharpens gadgets, Chinaman and to shock the list,

Imam Din, the sixty year old cook at Lenny's home. Imam Din too, irrespective of his age, joins the bandwagon, gently endeavouring to woo her with what he is best at:

He plies her with beautifully swollen 'phulkas' hot off the griddle, slathered with butter-fat and sprinkled with brown sugar. He prepares separate and delicious vegetarian dishes for her. In fact he is, to a large extent, responsible for her spherical attractions.<sup>7</sup>

So is the case with all the others, who try and flatter her with whatever they are capable of. In return they get to be around her, sometimes genially flirt with her, and occasionally even take liberties. For the latter though, they are casually yet proportionately reprimanded and snubbed. Be it for Imam Din's gentle flirting:

Rather, Ayah scolds and Imam Din only protests and pacifies affably. I don't know what the argument is about, but I can guess. Imam Din must have attempted with some part of his anatomy the seduction Ice-candy-man conducts with his toes.<sup>8</sup>

Or Ice-candy-man's tricks and explicit sexual advances:

Sometimes a toe smacks out and zeroes in on its target with such lightening speed that I hear of the attack from Ayah's startled 'Oof!'<sup>9</sup>

But right at the outset, the readers are also made aware that of all these, the two significant admirers are going to be Masseur and Ice-candy-man. They are the ones who are going to play a significant part in the shaping of her life, other than of course, the contingent circumstances she is embedded in. While all men pay attention to the Ayah, she attends significantly to the endeavours of these two. Though all men try and woo the lady, it is Ice-candy-man whose persuasions are the most ardent and it is Masseur's advances that she most obviously responds to. It is this attention and prime focus, in Ayah's life, vis-à-vis which these two, men who acquire a towering presence in the narrative, which ultimately culminates in a love triangle. In fact, it is this triangle, then that forms the central plot in and around which most of the action revolves despite numerous critics' attempt to describe Lenny and the depiction of the Parsee community as the central schema. On the other hand, to my comprehension, Lenny's is chiefly the central eye which views the above mentioned central paradigm where along with the three central protagonists, yet another chief motif that stands out

is violence. In fact, Sidhwa herself while commenting upon the purpose of the novel states:

I was just attempting to write the story of what religious hatred and violence can do to people and how close evil is to the nature of man. Under normal circumstances people can be quite ordinary and harmless; but once the mob mentality takes over, evil surfaces. Evil is very close to the surface of man.<sup>10</sup>

This evil and violence is reflected in the numerous representations of ordinary men in the novel, which then becomes a rather interesting cause for study: the dynamics of ordinary men caught in the web of susceptible conditions and succumbing to an unleash of violence. It is this transition that I wish to look at in detail.

The first glimpse that the readers catch is that of all these men circling the Ayah, passing a languid and pleasant evening in Queen's Park. Other than a series of silly and genial banter, there is no significant clash as these men in the company of Ayah (and Lenny) discuss relentlessly the commonplace of life. They seem to be housing no personal grudges or vendetta as they go about casually discussing the times. In fact, ironically, till quite a few meetings they keep on valorously making tall claims of fraternity, as they vow to remain affable and agreeable towards each other even in the most adverse of circumstances. Though gradually the readers do find them debating political issues of concern, yet neither do their talks employ any serious business, nor are they perfectly well informed about these very debates. Their talks appear to be nothing but hastily and shabbily scrambled droppings, apparently gathered to create more of a presence than an impact. They go about casually commenting upon leaders of the like of Gandhi, Jinnah, Nehru or Master Tara Singh, without having any deep insight into the events. They perhaps do not even understand the true implications of the events. All that they get to hear and then spout is based on half cooked news and hearsay. In other words, half concocted, half based data. None of them seem to have much to do with any of the party leanings till the point when the germ of Partition becomes a reality. It is when this idea assumes living proportions that the wind changes its course, and that too, not in every case. Despite Partition becoming a reality there are men like the Masseur, Imam Din, Yousaf and the Sikh granthi Jagjeet Singh (of Pir Pindoo) who have the propensity to remain neutral and

retain the pre-Partition ethos in their daily conduct and dealings with members of the 'other' communities. While numerous other characters undergo a change as well, what is of central concern to me is, why this transition happens. Now, while most of these are merely stated without much of insight, there is one movement that Sidhwa concentrates on and most keenly elaborates - that of the Ice-candy-man. For my analysis as well, this particular transformation vis-à-vis its relationship with the Ayah assumes extremely dynamic connotations.

Right at the outset Ice-candy-man is presented as having an extreme liking for Ayah. The fact that he visibly enjoys being by her side is made obvious in innumerable episodes. He constantly tries to charm her and tries his level best to derive passion in response. The trickster that he is, we witness him put on various garbs, sometimes the ice-candy-man, sometimes the bird seller, sometimes the tantrik/prophesizer to finally the pimp cum artist/poet. And every time he tries umpteen tricks to win her. From making sexual advances:

Things love to crawl beneath Ayah's sari. Ladybirds, glow-worms, Ice-candy-man's toes. She dusts them off with impartial nonchalance.

I keep an eye on Ice-candy-man's toes. Some times, in the course of an engrossing story, they travel so cautiously that both Ayah and I are taken unawares.<sup>11</sup>

to making ardent appeals of being with her:

"Talk to me for a while...Just a little while," pleads Ice-candy-man....<sup>12</sup>

to treating her to good food after a handsome profit at sales:

And if the sale has been quick and lucrative, as on this Saturday afternoon just before Christmas, he treats us to a meal at Ayah's favourite wayside restaurant at Mozang Chungi.<sup>13</sup>

to even blackmailing her:

If you don't go to the cinema with me I'll drop him. (Lenny's brother and Ayah's responsibility)<sup>14</sup>

Though here this blackmailing is more of a genial flirting, later in the narrative this very blackmailing assumes macabre proportions.

Thus, he leaves no opportunity of being with her and appeasing her, go waste. However, all this seemingly harmless persuasion is well till the time his patience is tried. And this even includes his ogles, which later in the narrative assume dangerous proportions as he tracks every movement of Ayah.

Now, this pertinent transition transpires because all this attention, care and love is never returned. To make matters worse, not only is Ayah left untouched by his amorous advances, instead her heart beats to different tunes – those of the Masseur's. This turn in the narrative is the first turn in Ice-candy-man's trajectory. Once it becomes clear to him that Ayah responds to the passions of Masseur, his presence becomes more of a dangerously lurking one. It is the former whose presence in Ayah's life becomes more significant, but Ice-candy-man's becomes a more haunting one:

While Masseur's voice lurks Ayah to the dizzy eminence of one minaret, it compels Ice-candy-man to climb the winding stairs to the other minaret. On the river bank I sense his stealthy presence in the tall clumps of pampas grass....he has as many eyes, and they follow us.

In the evenings he visits Ayah and squatting like an ungainly bird in his cotton shawl astounds her with his knowledge of our wanderings.<sup>15</sup>

Not only does he keep account of her meetings with his rival, soon, he even expresses most obviously his jealousy for the same. Upon being questioned about his wife being alone back in the village, and his insecurities regarding her eloping with another man, he visibly expresses his contempt for the Masseur. In what he replies, reflects blatantly an undercurrent of biting hostility:

Lenny : 'What if she runs away?'

Ice-candy-man: 'She won't. They have no tailors in the village. No masseurs either...with their cunning fingers taking liberties!'<sup>16</sup>

And one really needs no further clarification regarding the nature of this sarcastic comment, and also for whom it is intended. Now what is intriguing is why Ice-candy-man describes at length and lets Ayah obviously learn of his jealousy for Masseur. What is he trying to prove by expressing so openly, his bitter animosity

towards Masseur? Is he trying to warn the both of them, and more so Ayah, about severe consequences in case she does not accommodate his wishes? Does all this serve a purpose? The purpose becomes clearer in what follows. While his contempt for Masseur is met with no serious concern on Ayah's part (as perhaps was intended), henceforth the games and tricks he plays with her become exceedingly foul in nature.

In the wake of all the above mentioned happenings in his life, one does observe a significant change in his temperament. But interestingly, at this juncture Bapsi Sidhwa very intelligently places another event which often creates confusions and complexities. His change of character becomes even worse in the light of the various mishaps that take place in his life. His entire family and relatives that he expected from Gurdaspur in a train are ruthlessly butchered and all he receives are "gunny-bags full of women's breasts"<sup>17</sup>. This is enough to curdle blood in one's veins. And this is what happens to him as well, as he indulges in thoughtless and nerve wrecking violence, including the one that he inflicts upon Ayah, as he joins the violent mob in killing, slaughtering and looting the hated 'other'.

But interestingly, all the violence that he becomes a part of, is attributed to time turning tyrant on him. And the frustration of an unrequited love merely mingles in this unfortunate personal tragedy, which acquires supreme proportions. Hence, there is a tendency to attribute and view his acts more in the light of a retaliation than any initial aggression. This is how most would want to look at it. This stance cannot be outrightly rejected as well. But there is yet another incident that deserves focus, whereby debates get further complicated.

Even before the news of the slaughter of his relatives arrives, there is one act of the man which needs to be addressed. While the situation in Lahore gets tense, communal violence erupts. Though men like Masseur are visibly alarmed, Ice-candy-man (whom we had till then seen trying to pacify group members and inspire feelings of harmony) takes a different stand altogether. Strangely he expresses immense thrill upon seeing 'shalmi' set ablaze. The grim massacre on the streets and the soulless murder of the Banya, whereby his legs are tied to the ends of two jeeps and he is ripped apart, leaves Ayah, Lenny and Masseur aghast. But the same seems to turn Ice-candy-man on. He stoutly spouts his excitement. Unlike others in his proximity, he

expresses no qualms about this inhuman torture. Instead, he flaunts openly his experience of thrill upon the defeat of the Hindus at the hands of the Muslim:

Ice-candy-man stoops over us, looking concerned: the  
muscles in his face tight with a strange exhilaration I  
never again want to see.<sup>18</sup>

With perverse grins on his face, he further seeks the Ayah to become sturdy and stout hearted. What is worth mentioning is that he had till then not been hurt by the above mentioned personal tragedy. Then, what is it, that this till then supposedly non-communal man, becomes so communal all of a sudden? Is it mere frenzy and mob mentality that quickly envelops him and he gets carried away? Does he merely lose his individuality to the collective? Though this theory of “collective consciousness” coming to the fore in a moment of crisis is a feasible explanation, to my sensibility this needs sound deliberation, because other explanations are also possible. At this juncture, what arouses my curiosity is another pertinent query. Why doesn't this collective consciousness which is common to all the members of a particular community, not arouse similar reactions in all men? If all possess such a consciousness, why are some behaviours allegedly against the so called common reactions? Why are there men like Masseur, Jagjit Singh, Imam Din or Yousaf who express dismay for such violent acts of members of their community and concern for those of the alleged 'enemy' community? Why does Ice-candy-man, a Muslim, enjoy the maltreatment meted out to Hindus and Sikhs and Masseur, another Muslim, does not? Can Ice-candy-man not be having other interests and concerns? Things are not going to be so simplistic, and this I shall elaborate through my reading of Ice-candy-man's character and actions. Though it can be stated that there are lots like the Ice-candy-man whose directions of life too change upon such a bloody crisis, in the novel such change in trajectories are merely stated with no obvious explanations or even detailed descriptions. However Ice-candy-man's transformation is dwelt upon by Sidhwa. And it is this transition that will lend support to my central argument, whereby many a men use the guise of communal tension to satiate vested interests. This then becomes another explanation for man's indulgence in bestial acts in troubled times. Hence complicating singular arguments whereby man stoops so low, because in tense times rumours and insecurities pervade and religious identities come to the fore. Hence, forcing one to reconsider the paradigm according to which men

engage in morbid violence in the name of the honour of the community. (also see introduction)

I shall begin with a careful deliberation of one particular speech of Ice-candy-man. This occurs when the Muslims of the area have burnt Shalmi and outbursts of violence begin openly on the streets and it is primarily the Hindus and Sikhs that are at the receiving end of this violence. While Ayah and Lenny stand stupefied on the terrace of Ice-candy-man's house, watching pillars and posts go down in ashes, Ice-candy-man comments:

‘What small hearts you have,’ says Ice-candy-man, beaming affectionately at us. ‘You must make your hearts stout !’ He strikes his out-thrust chest with his fist. Turning to the men, he says: ‘The fucking bastards! They thought they’d drive us out of Bhatti! We’ve shown them!’<sup>19</sup>

Now this to me is particularly interesting. Why does he ask Ayah to make her heart more stout? What are the implications of what he states? And what exactly is he hinting at? Here one must not forget the fact that it was he who had brought these two timid ladies to watch this gory sight knowing fully well that such an event would take place:

And Ice-candy-man hustling Ayah and me up the steps of his tenement in Bhatti gate, saying: ‘Wait till you see Shalmi burn!’<sup>20</sup>

It is quite obvious, that he is well aware of the entire plan of the Muslims as he frequently keeps on commenting upon occurrences. Not only this, he even predicts some of them. For such a shabby display of behaviour he is even snubbed by Masseur and the Butcher. They reprimand his foolishness of bringing Ayah and Lenny to the place in such sensitive and dangerous times. It is at this juncture that one explanation for this act of his becomes worth deliberating. In order to analyse as to why exactly he brings them to watch such events, let's operate by ruling out possibilities. The possibility of he being unaware of the entire schema of things does not arise at all. It surely cannot be for increasing their general knowledge. Nor can it be for fun. Surely he wants to warn Ayah. But to my comprehension it is not just any ordinary warning out of genuine concern, or in an endeavour to make her rise and sit up to the events. He surely wants to show Ayah the future that awaits her; wanting to explain to her



that being a Hindu in a Muslim dominated locality, the fate that awaits her is going to be no different from that of her counterparts in the streets. And indeed, it does turn out to be the same as the narrative progresses! Yet to me, the warning appears to be one imbued in danger coupled with anger and frustration. In other words, an act intended to make her even more restless, anxious and make her further seek not just his advice but also his assistance. Thus by making her aware of the ground realities, is he not trying to make her position even more vulnerable for him to exploit? And further, considering his indirect background, could his advice to her not be something like succumbing to his desires? Something like marrying him (a Muslim) to escape all this trauma and religious prosecution. This indeed is a viable possibility for women. Ayah too does contemplate it. The only problem is that she considers marrying Masseur and not Ice-candy-man. Such designs of Ice-candy-man if understood in the context of his wandering eye, become even more conspicuous. One cannot afford to forget that it are the same eyes that keep track of every movement of hers, adores her and of late are even coloured with the pangs of jealousy. In short, by forcing Ayah to view all this massacre, indirectly he is trying to make Ayah's position weaker and his bargaining counter stronger in a deal which of course needs no special mention. I have already elaborated his attraction, even obsession for Ayah. And, since all this happens prior to his personal tragedy, the possibility of the acts to be an outcome of a frustrating, unrequited love affair and egoistic desire to accomplish his needs cannot be denied altogether. In other words then, they become desperate attempts of an obsessive man to possess the woman of his desires who unfortunately does not respond to his advances. However, he happens to live in a phase when time for him is ripe and suitable to satiate desires which otherwise would have gone unmet!

Henceforth, of course, occurs his direct participation in the riots as he personally declares his involvement in loot, arson, murder etc. His indulgence in such acts finds a vivid reflection in two descriptions. One when he describes his assistance to the Muslim tenants of Sher Singh, whereby the latter is forced to evacuate his house, which is then grabbed by the tenants. And the second more potent one, when he gets with him the gold coins the mob managed to lay its hands on, after scaring off the rich moneylender Kirpa Ram out of his home. Here too what cannot be ruled out is the possibility of him acting either out of frustration or for some cheap thrills or even for some vain ego.

Also worth deliberating upon is the fact, that while he is involved in such attacks on the members of the other community, his retributions are always partial and selective. While he has developed “a strange way of looking at Moti and Hari”<sup>21</sup>, the two Hindus, his treatment of the Hindu Ayah is very different. While he loots, robs and scares the former, he presents the Ayah with his fresh loot of coins. Hence, while a superficial read very interestingly would attribute all his acts to religious bigotry and vendetta against an enemy community, some other readings may not. While his nonchalant advice to Hari to convert, and cold approval of Moti’s conversion to Christianity might fit the conventional bill of religious animosity, Ayah’s case is a little more complex, though for her too he has neatly chalked out plans of marriage perhaps, which can help her convert to the safer religion. But the purposes and intentions in planning so are not religious in conception. To my understanding this act of Ice-candy-man is not grounded in any revenge for his killed brothers and sisters. He definitely is grieved upon such a brutal treatment of his relatives, but his intentions regarding his treatment of Ayah still stand questioned. Does he view this shabby treatment of Ayah to be an attack or a slap on the Hindu community? Or does he use communal propaganda merely as an excuse to satiate his vested desires? Thus, from a theory of communalism there is a switch to that of Freudian desires, frustration and repression. And this proposal surely is not a presumptuous plunge; instead it holds ground upon what follows still further.

If one is to assume that all the above mentioned acts were sound plans on his part, Ice-candy-man had planned well. Unfortunately however things do not shape the way he had wanted, because Ayah on the contrary, intends marrying Masseur. When Ice-candy-man realizes the intensity of this plan another mishap occurs. Masseur is brutally murdered. This entire episode too is shrouded in mystery. ‘Who kills Masseur?’, no one really gets to know. But if one tries to dig a little deeper, Sidhwa has dropped a significant hint:

The swollen gunny-sack lies directly in our path. Hari pushes it with his foot. The sack slowly topples over and Masseur spills out - half on the dusty sidewalk, half on the gritty tarmac<sup>22</sup>

It is possible that Masseur happened to be killed by just anyone from that area. But what shocks one is the fact that it is highly improbable for a Muslim to be

murdered in a Muslim dominated area (Lahore). Instead the victim should have been a Hindu or a Sikh. Though it cannot be ruled out altogether that he might have been murdered by a Hindu or a Sikh, normally under the circumstances which existed they would have been more interested in the means to get out of hell (as Lahore would have been for them), and not really complicating things still further for themselves. Further, one also needs to analyse why the dead body, needed to be put in a gunny-sack and dropped right in front of Lenny's house, despite the fact that Masseur was not even a resident of that area. An extension of thought would reveal the fact that though it is Lenny's house, but Ayah also lives there. In the light of all these, could it not be possible that Ice-candy-man killed Masseur and then cast away his dead-body on that path where the one person sure to know of it would be Ayah? Thus, putting an end to that last hope in Ayah's life. And who could have planned such vile tricks, but for the trickster Ice-candy-man? Surely, no one else seems to gain more from all this but for him. Because now if she has to escape this so-called religious persecution, her only guardian ceases to live and her next best option becomes the planner himself. In other words, I read the whole account as Ice-candy-man's endeavour to close all doors for Ayah so that the only alternative left for her would be to marry him. To me the whole schema appears to be systematic planning on a trickster's part, to possess the woman of his desires. This possibility cannot be denied altogether. What further heightens this validation is what follows, when things still do not happen as intended.

Instead of automatically falling into Ice-candy-man's arms, the Ayah nurses the wound of Masseur deep in her heart; always remembering him and being stuck to the memory of her only love. However even after this development, Ice-candy-man's persuasions remain insistent. He still tracks all her movements perhaps waiting for another opportune time:

While Masseur's voice haunts Ayah, it impels Ice-candy-man to climb the steep steps of the minarets after us. He prowls the hills behind the zoo lion's cage and lurks in the tall pampas grass. He follows her everywhere as we walk.<sup>23</sup>

But despite all this, the memory of her lover does not depart Ayah's heart. Though nothing is stated directly, by an extended analysis one can state, that the death of Masseur only takes Ayah further away from Ice-candy-man. Those flirtations and

passionate meetings whereby the latter would employ all sorts of tricks to woo her are in fact replaced by merely keeping track of her. He does not accompany her, instead follows her. Perhaps it is this distancing which gives rise to another vile trick on Ice-candy-man's part, a significant event, which Lenny labels as her betrayal of her Ayah. However, it is here that the real betrayal of Ice-candy-man comes to the fore. The antics that were till then being played quietly are henceforth performed openly.

On one fateful day a procession of "merchant looters"<sup>24</sup> stop at Lenny's house and demand for the whereabouts of all the Hindus and Sikhs in the house. Upon being told about Hari's conversion to Islam and Moti's to Christianity, they demand the Hindu Ayah to be brought forth. Lenny's mother with the careful assistance of Imam Din manages to camouflage the fact that she is hiding somewhere in the house. Despite repeated suspicions, the mob finally decides to revert. It is here that Ice-candy-man approaches the scene and plays another foul game with Ayah. For this he uses Lenny as a pawn. He takes her into confidence and extracts Ayah's secret, and passes on the significant information regarding Ayah's presence in the house to the crowd:

Ice-candy-man's face undergoes a subtle change before my eyes, and he slowly uncoils his lank frame into an upright position. I know I have betrayed Ayah.

The news is swiftly transmitted.<sup>25</sup>

Upon this revelation, Ayah is dragged out by these marauders and carried away. After many months it is finally revealed that after being carried away, she was put into a brothel where she was subjected to repeated rape:

I know Ayah is deeply, irrevocably ashamed. They have shamed her. Not those men in the carts - they were strangers - but Sharbat Khan and Ice-candy-man and Imam Din and Cousins's cook and the butcher and the other men she counted among her friends and admirers.<sup>26</sup>

Later through Godmother's conversation with Ice-candy-man one gets to know that while she stayed in the 'kotha' for a couple of months, she finally married Ice-candy-man in May. Hence, in one way he acted as her rescuer. But considering his background and his intentions, this act also requires further assessment. Why does

he first put her in a brothel and then help her seek a release? At this juncture, Godmother's question to him rightly becomes extremely pertinent:

'She was lifted in February and you married her in May? What were you doing all this time?'<sup>27</sup>

It is for this very reason indeed that this act of his needs scrutiny. Why did he first reveal her secret to the mob and then rescue her? Why did he allow her to be subjected to such humiliation and sexual assaults? Why did he finally marry her? Why at one moment he acted as her betrayer, her rescuer the next? Was it anger then, and some time later he had been purged of it? Or is this too another well-calculated plan? A possible interpretation to all this could be thus: He was extremely passionate about possessing her, and for this, he had tried all possible means. Apparently one of his last resorts was subjecting her to such terrible humiliation, that she would be left with no other option but to marry him. Indeed, being Ice-candy-man's legally wedded wife would any day be better than the rut of working as a prostitute in a 'kotha'. This is also obvious from the existing schema of things, where her act appears more out of compulsion than out of choice. Hence one could say that she moves from a horrible trap to a better one; a trap nonetheless. And this compulsion on her part becomes even more obvious from the fact, that the moment she gets a feasible opportunity, she evacuates the latter:

She looks achingly lovely: as when she gazed at Masseur and inwardly glowed. But the illusion is dispelled the moment she opens her eyes – not timorously like a bride, but frenziedly, starkly – and says: 'I want to go to my family.' Her voice is harsh, gruff: as if someone has mutilated her vocal cords.<sup>28</sup>

It is, at this juncture that Godmother's reasoning stands testified. In lifting her, Ice-candy-man had pushed her to the far extreme, from which she had very bleak possibilities of escape:

'Is that why you had her lifted off - let hundreds of eyes probe her – so that you could marry her?...You are a shameless badmash! Nimakharam! Faithless!'<sup>29</sup>

Hence, despite all logics of mob frenzy during Partition being an outcome of religious instigation, to my logic, this entire episode does not fit the above mentioned cast. Ice-candy-man's treatment of his Hindu Ayah is not engendered by hatred for

the Hindus or Sikhs. It is no retaliation for the treatment meted out to his women relatives despite his claim of “I want to kill someone for each of the breasts they cut off the Muslim women”<sup>30</sup>. And he might even have killed many for it. But then why did he need to murder Masseur, a Muslim fellow? And in all probability, he has murdered Masseur. Is it because Masseur was, till the very end helping out Hindus and Sikhs or because of personal animosity and jealousies? And if revenge against the enemy community was the only motive, why did he need to put Ayah through hell and then finally marry her?

Surely motives are different. From what I have gathered, he does all this out of his obsession for Ayah. This obsession is demonstrated visibly throughout his narrative in his persuasions and perusals. Even towards the end he pesters Godmother to plead with Ayah to forgive him and respond to his passion:

The poet's manner is subdued, his face drawn, apprehensive: and his eyes, red with the strain of containing his tears, hover caressingly on Ayah. They flit to Godmother in mute appeal.<sup>31</sup>

If this is not enough he even pleads with Lenny to do the same:

‘Please, Please persuade her...explain to her...I will keep her like a queen...like a flower...I’ll make her happy,’ he says, and succumbing to the pressure of his pent-up misery starts weeping...

...After what seems like hours he turns to me, swivelling on his haunches, and his beguiling eyes, weighed with insupportable uncertainties, plead his cause.<sup>32</sup>

And one witnesses the height of this obsession, in his persuasion, which finally culminates in tracking and following her to Amritsar disappearing “across the Wagah border into India”<sup>33</sup>.

Hence, through my entire reading of the subtext of the narrative, Ice-candy-man seems to be using the guise of Partition to possess the woman he worships. He could not have murdered Masseur so conveniently if all were well. Since times were topsy-turvy and laws out of order, he gets a golden opportunity to serve his vested interest of doing away with his rival in love. Similarly Ayah could not have been pushed to such quarters, if it had been normal times. Leave alone assistance, no one

would have ever associated with him in his vile acts. Even if his accomplices had wished for such a thing, they would never have dared to indulge in it so openly whether out of the conditioning, whereby one is expected to be civil, polite, decent and cultured, or out of fear of being penalized for defying the norms of a civil group. However, in such moments of crisis and transition, when one way of the world is giving way to another, when the vigilance and police is absent, all such endeavours assume tangible proportions. Such disguised acts then become convenient and feasible.

An extension of thought could further make anyone question the whole debate of man being an inherently innocent creature whose basic instincts are not necessarily evil as projected obliquely via numerous theories on mob-mentality. Theories like those of Le Bon or the Contagion Theory<sup>34</sup> on crowd behaviour, indirectly project the entire undoing to some obscure external causes, which compel a man to indulge in such acts of violence. They endeavour to create an image of man in such circumstances to be one of a helpless creature whose subjective identity in such times translates into that of the collective. While these theories do help to explain some forms of deviant behaviour, they are not fool proof validations for every act. For example, such an explanation would not be conceivable, if used to explain the treatment meted out to Ayah by Ice-candy-man. Nor situations where men like the Lala are ousted out of their homes and their wealth looted. Not even the act of the tenants of Sher Singh who merely seem to be using the opportunity to get back at him and hence settle very subjective and personal scores. Religious enmity is used only as an excuse. To my comprehension, in such situations the valid explanation then becomes what I have proposed as a part of my central hypothesis: many a men used the garb of Partition to satiate their primary interests which had nothing to do with community or religion, but which could not have been managed easily under normal circumstances. It becomes party time for many who manage to get away with sordid acts without necessarily being penalized for them. This is because the eyes of the state are shut, vigil and patrol are missing.

And such things did happen during Partition. Many men got an opportunity to become rich overnight. Many lifted the women of their desire. Many occupied the

land of their dreams. Many murdered men of their choice. All this is vividly depicted in numerous tracts on Partition. *Ice-Candy-Man* is no exception to the same.

We have the Ice-candy-man do so. He is not one of those men who merely got carried away by the tide, which when passed left him with nothing but remorse. On the contrary he was left with his jewel. And he is not the only one. Cities are systematically looted. Swarms of men indulge in robbery and pillage. Visual representations of rampant loot and arson are projected throughout the structure of the narrative. Be it the city of Lahore where:

Every bit of scrap that can be used has been salvaged from the gutted shops and tenements of Shalmi and Gowalmandi. The palatial bungalows of Hindus in Model Town and the other affluent neighbourhood have been thoroughly scavenged. The first wave of looters, in mobs and processions, has carried away furniture, carpets, utensils, mattresses, clothes. Succeeding waves of marauders, riding in rickety carts, have systematically stripped the houses of doors, windows, bathroom fittings, ceiling fans and rafters. Casual passers-by, urchins and dogs now stray into the houses to scavenge...hoping to pick up...any other leavings that have escaped the eye and desire of the preceding wave of 'goondas'.<sup>35</sup>

Though throughout the narrative, Sidhwa has repeatedly made use of the word 'goondas', she has not exactly described the true nature of these men. Whether they are localites or strangers cannot be stated clearly, though in all probability they are an amalgam of both, as was the swarm of men who paid a visit to Shankar's and Lenny's house. The group included both outsiders as is later described in the novel:

Not those men in the carts – they were strangers...<sup>36</sup>

as well as local men like Butcher or Ice-candy-man who stand to gain something out of the situation. In other words, all of them could be clubbed under the category of opportunists, who strike when the iron is hot and the time is ripe.

And such operations are confined not just to cities, but tension also escalates in villages. If Lahore witnesses it, Pir Pindoo does not lag behind:



he (Dost Mohammad) tells the villagers that the Sikhs have attacked at least five villages around Dehra Misri, to their east. Their numbers have swollen enormously. They are like swarms of locusts, moving in marauding bands of thirty and forty thousand. They are killing all Muslims. Setting fires, looting...<sup>37</sup>

Furthermore, such attacks appear no different from the assault of the marauders and 'mujahids' in *Tamas*, where too one witnesses a shoddy sight of rampant pillage. In fact, practically no communal riot goes without such robbing and looting. In the light of such massive and arbitrary loot, the nature of violence also requires a reconfiguration. There are numerous variables that need to be soundly deliberated and reconsidered. Is it a violence that is merely interested in the destruction of the other? And if it is mere destruction that such bands care for, then why do they simultaneously indulge in the construction of their personal houses? Surely the logic cannot be so innocent as merely utilizing what has been discarded and left over. It has to be more than that. Could it not be possible that many of these marauders join such organised gangs with this very intention? Their sole purpose being filling their own coffers. The other activities that such mobs indulge in, become just a price they have to pay for the final compensation. Narratives on Partition find numerous such references. And we have already met men like Ramzan and his mates in *Tamas*, where the only acts they are described to be indulging in are looting trunks, which soon become a part of their households. Similarly what is Ice-candy-man going to do with the 900 golden guineas he found in Kirpa Ram's house? Do he and his accomplices go and put all they loot in some joint fund of their community, which later is to be meaningfully utilized for the group? On the contrary he uses it for his personal interests and in making an impression on Ayah. What I intend to state is that though it can be said that such a loot is a result or an outcome of a communal riot, it would not be far fetched to suggest that this effect soon acts as a primary cause for the same. Numerous men then indulge in communal acts in the name of religion, while their primary motivation is realising vested interests and gains.

So is the case of Sher Singh's tenants. If the tenants with the connivance of Ice-candy-man torture Sher Singh's family out of their house, is it for the Muslim cause? Can it not be anger and retaliation where "the tenants had their own back!"<sup>38</sup>? Just as the Sikh with his men humiliated the women of the Muslim tenants, similarly,

when the opportunity is available, they (the Muslim tenants) do the same to Sher Singh's family. Not only do they humiliate him in a similar fashion, but more importantly, manage to occupy the house they were so unwilling to vacate. Hence, to my conception, the real agency behind such singular personal acts definitely needs to be segregated from those in the name of community. In fact these complicate debates which otherwise tend to be overarching and all-inclusive, killing the scope for multiplicities.

In the light of this, another aspect of violence deserves explanation. That is the one inflicted upon women. While theories regarding the same abound, most talk in terms of women's bodies being contested sites to humiliate the enemy community and such similar lines (see Introduction). However, simultaneously operates a perspective whereby it can be argued that cases of man's lust getting violent also exist. This was discussed at length in the chapter dealing with Manto's short stories and in *Ice-Candy-Man* too, one finds one man's obsession assuming violent proportions. Ayah is not abducted and humiliated by Ice-candy-man for any religious or communal purpose.

There is yet another interesting kind of violence upon women, where the women voluntarily inflict violence upon their own bodies. In an endeavour to foreground the agency of the women during Partition, numerous feminist historians, critics, etc. have quoted several such descriptions. Literary narratives and oral documentaries too are replete with such tales. The most poignant being Urvashi Butalia's vivid presentation of 'Thoa Khalsa', where, "90 women...who drowned themselves by jumping into a well"<sup>39</sup>, in order to preserve the 'sanctity' and 'purity' of their religion. Here again what needs to be questioned is the singular explanation for all such collective acts in the name of honour. To my comprehension, in an endeavour to glorify such violent acts in the name of religion, discrepancies too are often camouflaged. So towering is the desire to label all such acts under the comprehensive catalogue of martyrdom, that scope for anything else is completely obliterated. Thus, one finds that to describe female nature and agency too, there are singular arguments. Of course, there are a lot many women who kill themselves, to safeguard the name and honour of their community, but here too there are

multiplicities. I shall elaborate this, but prior to that, there is one incident in the novel that I shall like to highlight.

This occurs in Ranna's story where the readers catch a vivid glimpse of the violence unleashed by the Akalis on the Muslims of Pir Pindoo. Ranna narrates to Lenny gory scenes of attack. Along with this he also describes to her the pre-attack preparations where other than the men being given instructions regarding weapons and safety guards, the women too are instructed regarding their desirable actions. It is decided that:

Rather than face the brutality of the mob they will pour  
kerosene around the house and burn themselves.<sup>40</sup>

And the explanation for this is poignantly voiced in one of the comments of Godmother. While explaining to Lenny about the "fallen women"<sup>41</sup>, she explains how none of these women are being taken by members of their respective households because some folks "can't stand their women being touched by other men"<sup>42</sup>. This fear, coupled with honour of the community apparently compels women to take such a stand. Hence, they wilfully choose to die than to be humiliated variously. Most often explanations for such acts also provide similar arguments.

But, such death in the name of collective and personal honour too needs questioning, because not all women would react in a homogeneous fashion. If that be the case, after being subjected to such a lot of humiliation, Ayah should have committed suicide. It is not to say that such sexual assaults leave her unaffected. Of course it casts permanent scars on her soul, yet she nurses the hope of starting life afresh. Even though Godmother warns her of no future in Amritsar, she still desires to be united with her family.

Ranna narrates to Lenny another such encounter where a woman's claims are contrary to all expected and supposedly existing dynamics. While describing about his harrowing experiences at Pir Pindoo where the Akalis attacked the Muslims, he hears the "mullah's daughter" cry:

'Do anything you want with me, but don't torment  
me... For God's sake, don't torture me!<sup>43</sup>

In fact in *Tamas* too, during the exploits of the 'mujahids', one man while narrating his exploits gives a similar account:

'We caught hold of a bagri woman in a lane... "Don't kill me," she said, "All seven of you can have me as your keep."'”<sup>44</sup>

It is in the light of such incidents that one could question the ideological interpellation as well as the agency in such acts of self-inflicted violence. Hence, rather than having a towering theory to explain the agency and will of women, scope for other possibilities should operate.

Bringing together the debates that have been sparked off, one needs to re-question the concept of violence in moments of crisis to be an outcome of merely some 'collectives'. Instead scope for subjectivities should also be brought to the fore. Rather than simplifying matters, explanations for a phenomenon as complex as Partition violence, need to be further complicated and studied in its various hues and dimensions.

## **CONCLUSION**

### ***To Time a Kill!***

Marx once stated that religion is the opium of the masses.<sup>1</sup> Man can easily be motivated in its name. Such is its power! Such a theorization stands true in the light of communal violence as well. It is common knowledge that an overtly non-violent man too, in moments of crisis, can indulge in atrocious acts of violence in the name of the honour of religion and community (see Introduction). However, my basic contention is that such theses have been over-exaggerated, oversimplified and over-glamorized to the extent, that these often assume the cast of the 'real/true/best' explanation of the cause. What I have tried to validate through this dissertation is that a phenomenon as complex as Partition violence cannot possibly have simplistic singular over-arching explanations. On the contrary, if one needs to study such a flabbergasting face of violence (for nature and figures see Introduction) in its true hues, it is pertinent to open up debates and provide scope for multiplicities to operate. What Dennis J. Madden states while explaining collective violence in general stands true for Partition violence as well:

It seems that no one theory is complete in itself because man's violent acts do not stem from one cause alone but are rather symptomatic of multivariate deficits in the personality.<sup>2</sup>

However, the tendency in existing scholarship is to attribute Partition violence to a particularistic cause whereby a single schema acquires towering proportions. This overarching paradigm to explain man's entry into the dark domain of Partition violence is thus: Men across diverse religious communities are believed to be generally co-existing peacefully, even if one wants to avoid the word 'harmony'. In fact, numerous literary narratives often symbolically represent this 'peaceful co-existence' by means of a passionate affair between members of two different communities/religious sects. Another potent overt representation of this is by means of common cultural totems and even more significantly, in the joint 'panchayats', whose representatives comprise of (wo)men across diverse religious groups. These groups are represented as functioning effectively, where their members unanimously take decisions in the best interests of the collective local communities.

However, in the wake of certain decisions taken by those at the helm of affairs, gradually (sometimes even suddenly) the congenial atmosphere in such places begins to get tense. Invariably, news/rumours about communal conflagrations in other towns and cities begin to inflict this till then unscathed geo-political space. The rapid escalation of tension is primarily attributed to a bloody “cultural memory”<sup>3</sup>, whereby each has suffered at the hands of the ‘other’ and fears the ‘other’ to be a violent aggressor. This till then latent collective consciousness comes to the fore in moments of crisis. And when a “precipitating incident”<sup>4</sup> occurs in the backdrop of such events, all hell breaks loose and men end up killing, looting, raping, humiliating the feared ‘other’. Sometimes neighbours aren’t spared either. Hence, one act of drawing borders; and cords are snapped easily! Men are assumed to get mindless and unruly. And once the storm comes to a halt all that these men are left behind with is remorse, confusion and shock regarding their decline into the dark zones of violence.

It is here that I deliberated a little further. What I endeavoured to chalk out was, whether remorse was all that men were left behind with. Are all men such poor businessmen? Can all men be swayed only in the name of religion to such shockingly abysmal lows?

The interesting observation here is, that in all such occurrences, violence is always attributed to instigation from the ‘outside’. These external agencies could be both in the form of men as well as their deeds/acts, which then become symbolic representations of these very men. Hence, the dominant thesis proposes men being mobilized when their dark collective/cultural memory is aroused.

Now, if one were to believe the above-mentioned proposition to be the all-comprehensive explanation for all acts of violence, then what is intriguing is why different men’s reactions are not alike. Despite the fact that the collective memory and external variables are common in all, why are their external manifestations different?

In short, if despite the same instigation upon similar target areas, some men become perpetrators of violence and others abstain from it, it goes on to prove that the above-mentioned theses are inconclusive and insufficient. This indeed is true because human nature and mind are extremely complex and dynamic. Not to consider their multiplicities would only be to carry forth a myopic vision. It would then be nothing

but the anxiety to conveniently frame a so-called overarching paradigm, which then would be nothing but a reduced understanding of a complex phenomenon. While dealing with human mind and its actions, which are extremely complicated, the need thus arises to provide scope for multiple variables to operate. Thus, to consider other variables becomes imperative.

One such variable to my comprehension is the inherent disposition to commit a deed. If, despite the above-mentioned factors, some men act violently and others do not, it goes on to prove that men have also to be predisposed to committing such acts. Here too, many theorists would want to connect this inherent inclination to the collective or individual memories of how one has suffered at the hands of the other. But as per my comprehension, in the light of current debates, there could be scope for numerous other variables to operate as well. This according to me needs serious deliberation. It is in an endeavour to avoid a single-factor explanation, which unnecessarily oversimplifies matters, that I proposed the possibility of multivariate variables to explain Partition violence.

One such potent variable is human greed - the lust to satiate the innate needs of men. The range of these needs is diverse: power, wealth, distorted self-esteem, ego, sadistic pleasure, lust, etc. Not only their nature, even their intensity is varied in different men and women (see Introduction). In fact, against the backdrop of Partition, Manto too very aptly commented upon such inherent human tendencies. Ashok Vohra narrates this analysis of Manto thus:

Just as Manto believed in the perennial goodness of man, he also believed that there were certain aspects of human life which are universal and enduring. These according to him are "roti, aurat aur takht."<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, what is significant is that such needs seek satiation all the time. However, the ordinary circumstances of an individual often compel him to repress these hungers. But when existing norms of a society are flouted, and things are topsy-turvy, there is scope for the otherwise repressed needs of men to come to the fore. Partition was one such moment when all norms were flouted. It was a golden chance for unmet needs to meet their desired end. But things could not have been so blatant, which is the reason many indulged in these under the façade of Partition. This is what I strove to prove through this dissertation. And by means of an explicit analysis of the

various texts that I researched upon, I have depicted how many people used the guise of Partition to satiate certain vested interests and needs, which otherwise, under the ordinary schema of things, would never have been feasible. Partition just became an excuse for many; an open feast where succulent temptations were readily available and men succumbed to these.

This is not to say that no analysis on similar lines has ever been proposed. Even certain significant theorists commenting upon communalism have addressed the manifestation of these intrinsic variables and vested interests to a certain extent. Ashgar Ali Engineer states that:

Communal violence can never be explained in terms of religion alone. The religious factor is only apparent; but not real. Religion is being exploited by vested interests to suit their own ends....Religious and cultural differences indeed exist. But these differences assume antagonistic proportions due to conflicting political vested interests, which in turn are linked with economic motives.<sup>6</sup>

A similar stand is taken by S.K. Ghosh who, while commenting upon communalism in India, states:

The theories that the Hindus and Muslims hate each other and the hatred is rooted in the clash of incompatible cultures is patently absurd... Unfortunately, communal leaders and religious bigots have worked systematically to divide the two communities for their selfish ends.<sup>7</sup>

Bipan Chandra<sup>8</sup> too, in his seminal thesis on communalism, has argued in favour of the operation of vested economic interests, which propelled the violence that shrouded the streets of Punjab and Bengal in the wake of Partition. He attributes this phenomenon to the connivance of selfish politicians and the landed and powerful local gentry. Such men, guided by their local interests supported the leaders in this decision, which unfortunately took the shape of a catastrophe. And many more theorists too have taken a similar stand.

However, what needs address here too, is the larger picture, because Partition violence was not confined to isolated belts and sections. Instead, it gripped one and all. None seems to have gone unscathed by its wrath. Whether in the form of victims



or victimizers, all saw a grim face of this inhuman massacre. A pretension to be ignorant of their participation and to view this participation as insignificant would be a fallacy.

But what intrigues me about such theses is that they do not take into consideration the operation of this violence at the grass root level. They fail to address numerous queries, which gain ground with regard to these. Queries like: Where is the common man in the picture? Did he have nothing to do with whatsoever action or decision? And further, if prominent national or local figures can be guided by their vested interests, are the ordinary men any different? They too are equally human and their needs, inclinations and dispositions no different – be it the ‘Nathus’ of Sahni, or the ‘rescue workers and Ishar Singhs’ of Manto or even the ‘Ice-Candy-Men’ of Sidhwa. I look upon these above-mentioned men as symbolic representations of ordinary men who happened to witness and live through Partition. Even their attitude to Partition was no different from that of those that the above-mentioned theorists talk of. What Mushirul Hasan, states about significant men from feudal groups supporting the League’s insistence upon a separate state, applies to such ordinary men as well:

These men were not concerned with defending the Quranic injunctions, which they probably flouted every day of their life. Nor were they interested in the welfare of the poor Muslims, who were victims of their oppression and exploitation...<sup>9</sup>

In other words, such vested interests and selfish acts cannot be contained to certain specific groups and sections, excluding all others. In turn, they apply to all. And power and wealth are just two of their ‘guiding lights’. There is also scope for other lurking desires to come to the fore.

All this I have validated through the texts studied, whereby I have demonstrated the games people played under the façade of Partition to satiate their hungers. Be it ordinary men and women (like Ramzan, his associates, the ‘kabaili’, Ishar Singh and the like) looting houses for becoming rich overnight, or men (like Murad Ali, the vet, selfish local leaders of the League, Singh Sabha or Hindu Mahasabha) exploiting the situation for power. Be it young boys (like Ranvir, his friend Inder) satisfying some distorted self-esteem, or boys (like Ramzan, his friends etc.) who seem to derive some sadistic pleasure in torturing helpless innocent victims.

In fact, the inhuman treatment of women at the hands of men too can be linked to some sort of sadism; something that provided a kick to their ego. Such sexual assault of women practically escapes no narrative. Obnoxious and inhuman images of either humiliating the woman or possessing the desired woman is a recurrent feature of most narratives. Be it Ishar Singh's gory assault of the beautiful Muslim woman, or the brutal rape of Sakina by the eight Muslim workers; Ice-Candy-Man's shabby treatment of Ayah or Allah Rakha's abduction of Prakasho, or even the gross rapes by scoundrels on the move in both *Tamas* as well as *Ice-Candy-Man*. And in the course of demonstrating these, there is one such variable and paradigm that I have theorized upon at length. Through my analysis, I have elaborately discussed the 'erotic' getting out of control and assuming violent proportions as opposed to traditional paradigms, which blatantly pronounce the opposite.

As per my understanding of Partition violence, the aggression exercised during the sexual assault of women is not necessarily an outcome of religious bigotry. It could be aggression due to unmet needs, gap between 'wants' and 'haves', or even the desire to exercise power by violating the body of the woman and in turn satisfying one's ego. The latter has even been established through theories of power rape (see Introduction). And, what is crucial here is that surely, all such interests are not religious in nature. That is not to state that the scope for the opposite is altogether invalid. I am not denying the possibility that aggression due to religious causes too can lead to such offensive behaviour against women. At the same time the need is to open up debates because through my analysis of the various texts I have highlighted the scope for other non-religious variables to operate - selfish acts being performed under the guise of Partition. It would have been impossible for Ice-Candy-Man to rape and possess Ayah if all was well. For the rescue workers who raped Sakina it became still easier as they used the guise of both Partition and rescue work. So was the case with Allah Rakha and many more such men. Hence, under such circumstances, things became much more convenient and the buck was easily passed onto tokenisms like protecting religion. In fact, the fact that rapes and assaults are not merely confined to moments of communal tension, but also in the ordinary course of events, further corroborate my argument regarding the possibility of such acts and those of the like, emerging even out of secular conceptions. This is what I have tried to validate at length through this dissertation.

Further, in the wake of ensuing debates, even the intensity of these varied needs rapidly escalates due to a sharp decline in fear of punishment. (See Introduction). Hence, it would not be incorrect to assume, that during such moments of tension, the basic human needs which seek satiation, assert themselves even more violently. Since these are abnormal times when all barriers, norms, moral policing, etc. are absent, these suppressed desires, get an open opportunity to express themselves. What is forbidden normally becomes the law or the dominant 'superego' as many would want to put it.

Hence, one observes certain dispositions in men which otherwise lie latent, but come to the fore in moments of crisis. It is in the light of such intrinsic variables that I propose that the 'outside' too is nothing but an external manifestation of the 'inside'. This is because as per my comprehension, the 'outsider' is not merely a person or an act, but it represents an entire value system whereby profiteering by looting, raping, killing, etc. becomes the law of the land. And this is what the deeper selves of many obliquely desire. All men are desirous of wealth, power, lust, satiation of ego, etc.

Now, with this manifestation of a face of the 'self' in the 'outsider', all neat compartmentalization of the 'self' and the 'other/enemy' too stand debunked. The categories of 'outsider' and 'insider' too get blurred in the process. In turn, one often finds the 'outsider' become the 'insider' and vice versa (see *Tamas*). Hence it can be stated that all such blurring in categories further challenges the overarching paradigm of violence coming only from the outside or the hated other. In other words, corroborating scope for the functioning of multiple variables.

But I shall also like to emphatically warn that at this juncture itself, I am fully aware of the risk of taking any extreme stand myself. This is because within such open temptations as well, it is not all men who get carried away to make the most. During Partition also, despite such an open licence to indulge in acts that one desired, there were many who abstained, like the Jarnail of *Tamas* or Imam Din, Yousaf and Masseur of *Ice-Candy-Man*. These too are lone voices, which cannot easily be evaded, because if there are men bold enough to loot and kill, there are others who are strong enough to resist.

However, this too corroborates my central hypothesis that certain innate dispositions, which guide all acts of violence, are forces to reckon with and not merely to be elided conveniently. Thus, further debunking the scope for any overarching paradigm to describe acts of violence and especially those stemming out of instigation from the 'outside'.

And this connects to the next key argument of my dissertation, which becomes another significant variable in the wake of Partition violence. While I have discussed explicit and clear-cut participation (or non-participation) in overt violence, there is yet another representation which deserves deliberation. There even occur incidents where men do not directly participate, nevertheless they enjoy the slaughter of others. To give one example, the moment Ramzan realizes that Iqbal Singh is the son of an acquaintance, he no longer directly humiliates the latter. Nonetheless he does not stop others from doing the same. In fact, he enjoys it and derives some sadistic pleasure out of it. This complicates matters still more because one finds that not only are categories of 'insider /outsider' negotiable, but there is an in-between as well, where at one given moment, simultaneously one is an 'outsider and insider'. Not only in the case of Ramzan, even in the case of Shah Nawaz, the same complication operates. And so in the case of the eight rescue operators who despite being 'insiders', behave as nothing less than 'outsiders' who flaunt perpetually every norm of the concerned geo-political space.

In order to throw a little more light on this, a concept gains ground, which later acquires towering proportions in the analysis of the narratives. This pertinent observation is that this so-called symbolic category of the 'outsider' (see *Tamas*), in most cases is a stranger. A manifestation of the same is in the fact that most of the times, the true nature of the deed or the hand that commits the deed stands concealed. Be it the rumour which allegedly carries tales of (mis)adventure of unknown men and women, or even the symbol of the train<sup>10</sup> which even more poignantly carries the (mis)deeds of unknown men and women. Be it the alleged associates of Shah Nawaz who are ready to strike but whose faces are covered, or the Muslim attacking the cow in *Tamas* who too has hidden his face under a piece of cloth, or for that matter even the killer of the pig whose true identity stands concealed. It may also be the so-called paid goondas from other villages who attack Harnam Singh's house and shop. Of

course, later Harnam Singh turns out to be an associate, but the time when the deed is committed, Ramzan is definitely unaware about the details of the owner of the house he attacks. And the moment he gets to know the same, he immediately drops his axe.

All these validate the stand that normally the alleged 'outsider's' identity too is concealed. And if one connects this to what has been proposed earlier regarding the 'outside' as a manifestation of the 'inside', another interesting dimension boils to the fore. In Freudian terminology then, this facet of man, which is so bestial, needs to be concealed even from the self. It is for this reason that on another level this face conveniently fits the bill of the 'outsider', which allegedly is alien to man, but is actually his own vile image. And the moment this 'outsider's' identity is revealed, it does not remain so easy for the same self to attack. It is for such reasons that it is easier to attack/kill a stranger. And it is for this very reason that men do not blatantly attack neighbours, which then become representatives of the voice of their saner self. And if they still cannot deny the pressing instincts, a compromise between the wicked and the good self occurs, which in very simplistic Freudian terminology could even be labelled as the classic comprise of the 'id' and the 'superego'<sup>11</sup>. This is perhaps the reason why men like Ramzan abstain and yet participate obliquely.

In the layman's terminology this rational voice of the 'ego' could be labelled as the voice of the conscience, which nonetheless operates; irrespective of the claims of the dominant 'superego' to kill and slaughter.

Hence, the needs of men operating as significant variables too do not complete the paradigm. Because the satiation of these needs is neither a rule, nor a norm, not even an irresistible need. In turn, operates another variable. Between all madness, lurks a sane voice which then becomes another variable under operation. This is where the individuality and the individual self play a crucial role: an individuality, which is based on inherent needs and the motivation to satiate them. It could even be based on the degree of repression that an individual has been subjected to and hence a combination of both internal and external factors.

It is for this reason that some are bold and heartless enough to directly act, others merely become onlookers or indirect participants, while still others are strong enough to resist. But all this leads to one argument, that the need is to focus on the

'inside' of man as well, which then becomes the laboratory for the processing of horrendous acts of violence.

Through the analysis of the various texts that I have studied, I have validated all the above-mentioned arguments, though such interpretations are not confined to these texts only. But then, that would be beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, a cursory read of other creative works and oral narratives too would validate the same. In fact, it is here that creative writing often becomes a rich source of understanding the phenomenon of Partition violence. The superiority of literary writings on Partition is that most of them neither seek to simplify nor propagate particularistic standpoints. The endeavour essentially is to present a world in its true hues; to capture the sense of shock, loss and pain that accompanied this inhuman tragedy. This perhaps is the reason why the structure of most of these narratives is also episodic and the form is fractured and scattered. Be it the episodic narrative of *Tamas*, the scattered glimpses of Lenny's eyes in *Ice-Candy-Man* or the short single plot narratives of Manto. Here one finds a presentation of Partition in its multiple facets and dimensions. In these, one finds not just a vain display of simple religious instigation, instead numerous other variables too. Even if the latter are not explicitly stated, one can perceive them by reading the subtext where one shall find umpteen references to these. The one that I have endeavoured to foreground is that Partition became a guise for many to satiate their vested ulterior motives. Hence, what stands forth is a paradigm of unruly men waiting on the fringes to intervene and encash; going about looting, killing, raping. Be it 'halaal' or 'jhatka'<sup>12</sup>, what concerns them is the kill. Such are their acts, not guided by mere spasms of religious hysteria. Instead the opportunity for such men is ripe. It is time for them to kill.

## END NOTES

### INTRODUCTION

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