

10	Recovery, Rupture, Resistance: The Indian State and the Abduction of Women During Partition <i>Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin</i>	208
11	Businessmen and the Partition of India <i>Claude Markovits</i>	236
12	Hyderabad Today <i>Alec Reid</i>	259
13	Punjabi Refugees and the Urban Development of Greater Delhi <i>VN. Dam</i>	267
III. THE REPINING		
14	Black Margins <i>Saadat Hasan Manto</i>	287
15	An Unwritten Epic <i>Intizar Husain</i>	300
16	Remembered Villages: Representations of Hindu-Bengali Memories in the Aftermath of the Partition <i>Dipesh Chakrabarty</i>	318
17	Objectifying Troubling Memories: An Interview with Bhisham Sahni <i>AlokBhalla</i>	338
18	The Trauma of Independence: Some Aspects of Progressive Hindi Literature 1945-7 <i>AlokRai</i>	351
19	In the Heat of Fratricide: The Literature of India's Partition Burning Freshly <i>Jason Francisco</i>	371

## Prologue

### India's Partition Revisited

MUSHIRUL HASAN

*India's Partition: Process, Strategy and Mobilization*, published by the Oxford University Press in 1993, included a range of academic articles and political statements to explore the magnitude of events and forces that marked the prelude to partition. Reissued in 1999 in its fourth impression, the book has been widely read, discussed and reviewed. It was the first collection of its kind, bringing together various interpretations and interventions, including excerpts from the writings and statements of Gandhi, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Jawaharlal Nehru and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, historical essays focusing on the central leadership, political alignments and mobilization in the provinces and localities, and reminiscences of the Delhi-based historian, Mohammad Mujeeb, and the raja of Mahmudabad, Awadh's influential taluqdar and a key player in the Muslim League's revival in UP. 'Toba Tek Singh', a short story by Saadat Hasan Manto, the *enfant terrible* of Urdu literature, completed the 426-page book.

My principal aim in this collection is to supplement what appeared earlier and to reconsider a very old question, in a variety of settings in which it has some resonance or urgency, and from a variety of viewpoints. I could have broadened the scope of this book by including many more regions, themes and interpretations. But, as the historian G.M. Trevelyan once commented, even a millionth part of a loaf may be better than no bread. It may at least whet the appetite. Besides this prologue, the introduction tries to set the tone of this volume: it examines the more recent historiographical debates, evaluates old theories on how and why partition happened, and suggests areas of fresh research and enquiry.

The excerpt from B.R. Ambedkar's *Thoughts on Pakistan*, a book

published a year after the All-India Muslim League adopted the Lahore resolution in March 1940, is a major intervention by a leading and influential political figure. He wrote in his introduction:

I am not staggered by Pakistan. I am not indignant about it.... I believe that it would be neither wise nor possible to reject summarily a scheme if it has behind it the sentiment if not the passionate support of 90 per cent Muslims of India. I have no doubt that the only proper attitude to Pakistan is to study it in all its aspects, to understand its implications and to form an intelligent judgement about it.

Giving space to the three pamphlets may raise the eyebrows of several readers, who may not notice any novelty in the approach or interpretation of their authors. And yet they enunciate the views of young educated Muslims at Aligarh's Muslim University, the 'arsenal of Muslim India' (Jinnah), and reveal their passionate drive for securing a haven for Islam and Muslims. This is, in my opinion, a good enough reason for their inclusion in this collection. Although these were not 'the sole spokesmen' or the only voices among Muslims,<sup>1</sup> they also need to be heard loud and clear. The views of Dr Radha Kamal Mukerjee, 'M.A., Ph.D.' and a leading economist in Lucknow University, offer a sense of what was being debated then: was Pakistan a feasible proposition or not?<sup>2</sup>

Sajjad Zaheer, one of the founders of the Progressive Writers' Movement, echoes the Communist Party of India (CPI) view that there was not one single 'National Bourgeoisie' in India; there were two—the 'Indian National Bourgeoisie' and the 'Indian Muslim Bourgeoisie'. The Muslim League was characterized, in accordance with Lenin's Thesis' at the Second Congress of the Comintern, as the party of the Indian Muslim bourgeoisie and not as a 'stooge' of the British, which is how it had been described a short time earlier. The way was thus opened ideologically for the formula of Congress-League unity and a settlement with the British on the basis of a deal between the two parties that were the supposed bearers of the 'National Democratic Revolution'. In retrospect, the historian K.M. Ashraf believed that the Communist Party was 'misled by the slogan of self-determination and mistook Muslim communalism for something representing the organized expression of the Rerhi-Pak-Pathan Nationalities for self-determination.' It was certainly a distortion, 'because we conveniently forgot the whole history of British imperialism and communal politics.' Likewise, Khwaja Ahmad Abbas, prominent writer and political commentator, stated, 'India was killed by the Communist Party of India, which provided the Muslim separatists with an ideological basis for the irrational and anti-national demand for Pakistan. Phrases like

"homeland", "nationalities", "self-determination" etc. were all ammunition supplied by the Communists to the legions of Pakistan."<sup>4</sup>

In December 1947, free India's first Prime Minister stated in his hometown, Allahabad: 'the battle of our political freedom is fought and won. But another battle, no less important than what we have won, still faces us. It is a battle with no outside enemy.... It is a battle with our own selves.'<sup>5</sup> Part of the battle, so to speak, involved rehabilitating millions of displaced and dispossessed Hindus and Sikhs from Sind and west Punjab. Besides the massive scale of the operation (the population of Delhi increased by nearly 50 per cent), this was a painful and traumatic experience; in fact, Nehru told his chief ministers to remember 'the human aspect of this problem and not to consider it as a matter of figures and files.'<sup>6</sup> Though scores of official reports and personal accounts exist, V.N. Datta, a senior historian of repute, examines how the Punjabi refugees, having traversed very inhospitable terrain, sought and secured refuge in free India's capital.<sup>7</sup>

The part played by certain business groups,<sup>3</sup> by an educational institution like the Aligarh Muslim University, and by a premier organization of the *ulama*—the Jamiyat al-*ulama*—sheds light on certain themes that were not covered in *India's* Partition. Dipesh Chakrabarty's essay, located in a Bengali village, illustrates the growing interest in recalling and analysing partition memories.<sup>9</sup> Memory, as he points out, is a complex phenomenon that reaches out to far beyond what usually constitutes an historian's archives. But memory is also far more complicated than what historians can recover: it poses ethical challenges to the investigator-historian that appreciates the past with one injunction—tell me.<sup>10</sup> In the third and final section of this book I draw upon literature and literary sources to reveal, as it were, the other face of freedom.

Inventing Boundaries: *Gender, Politics, and the Partition of India* would have served a purpose if some of our students and colleagues take a fresh look on the literature on inter-community relations, partition, and national identity. If so, they may well conclude that it is perhaps no longer possible, in Lenin's phrase, 'to go on in the old way.'

Fire in the bosom, longing in the eyes, and the heartburn—  
nothing can solve the problem of separation.  
Where did the sweet breeze come from -and where did it vanish—  
the street lamp has no news yet.  
Even the night's heaviness is just the same;  
still the moment of salvation has not arrived  
for the heart and the eye.  
So let's press on as the destination is still far away.

(Faiz Ahmad Faiz)

## II

Ghalib died long ago, but I still remember  
 his constant questioning.  
 To everything he would counter  
 had it *been this way*, what would have been?"

Theories of nationalism have traditionally been divided into two main categories: instrumentalist and primordialist. The former conceived nationalism as a product of elite manipulation and contend that nations can be fabricated, if not invented. The latter see nationalism as a spontaneous process stemming from a naturally given sense of nationhood. Locating India's partition in this debate is a daunting task. In addition to the die-hards who regard the 'event' as imminent and inevitable, one has to contend with writers who have lazily settled for the two-nations theory, articulated not just by the Muslim League but also by sections of the Hindu right.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, while the government's part in stoking the fires of communalism is underscored, the 'divide and rule' policy is readily invoked, rhetorically, to explain 'Muslim separatism' rather than the overt manifestations of Hindu communalism.<sup>13</sup>

But the more fundamental difficulty lies elsewhere—in the overall direction and orientation of research on the Muslim communities that is still mired in traditional frameworks. Though some new voices are being heard, most academic exchanges involve a range of intellectual suppositions that rest on the belief that Muslims are an exclusive category, with a shared world-view, a common outlook, and a structure of consciousness in accord with the fundamental tenets of Islam.<sup>14</sup> This approach underlines the analytic primacy of culture and ideology, assigns a privileged place to Islam, and portrays the image of a community acting in unison. In other words, the emphasis is not on the stratified and differentiated character of the Muslim communities but on a monolithic conception of Islamic ideology and practice or a teleology dictating the actions of the Muslims; or a general acquiescence in the actions of a few. The mere fact of people being Muslims in some general sense is usually conflated with their adherence to beliefs and practices that are strictly described as 'Islamist' or 'separatist'.<sup>11</sup>

By now, the continued harping on such views has perpetuated the mistaken belief that the roots of partition or two-nations lie not in the 1930s or early '40s but in the late-nineteenth-century 'neo-Muslim modernist and separatist' tradition of Aligarh modernism and its spokesperson Syed Ahmad Khan.<sup>16</sup>

A misplaced emphasis on what Anthony D. Smith calls *ethnohistory*—the tendency to extol the heroic deeds of past national leaders and to provide a legitimizing historical perspective as the basis of the national project—is yet another problem that plagues partition studies. Hence the use, in the writings of some Pakistani scholars, of Saladin as a metaphor, a cultural construct, to compare him with Mohammad Ali Jinnah. The oddity of the comparison is apparent in the comment: 'Both Saladin and Jinnah took on the most renowned opponents of their age, almost mythical in stature. Saladin fought against Richard the Lionheart and Jinnah challenged Mountbatten, Gandhi and Nehru.'" Yet this is how partition studies are dignified as an academic speciality, not because they contain demonstrably special features, but because they allow the historian to identify with his heroes and 'his' event.<sup>18</sup>

Though the adulation of Jinnah is by no means exceptional in Pakistan, historians of all hues have painstakingly profiled national parties and their leaders for decades to construct the grand narrative of India's 'vivisection'. This exercise cannot be decried or considered unimportant: the Congress and the Muslim League were, undeniably, key players in the decade preceding the transfer of power. Introducing a volume in 1993, I referred to the complexities of the years 1937 to 1940 embodied in the three paradoxes—the League being catapulted to prominence after years in the political wilderness; Jinnah's transformation from a secular politician to an ideologue of Muslim nationalism; and the Congress acceptance of the partition plan with seeming alacrity, thus relinquishing its vaunted principles of national unity. Pointing to the intricacies of the conjuncture, I analysed the performance of the 1937-9 Congress ministries, including the interaction between class and communal tensions, in influencing the timing of the emergence of the Pakistan demand. I revisited the debates about the Congress truculence over a coalition ministry in the United Provinces (UP); examined the failure of the Muslim Mass Contact Campaign (1937); and mapped out the political consequences of the Congress refusal to join the war effort in 1939. "It was the war," wrote the historian Eric Hobsbawm, 'that broke India in two. In one sense it was the last great triumph of the Raj—and at the same time its last exhausted gasp.'<sup>20</sup>

I have since argued that concentrating only on the British-Congress-League negotiations cannot unravel the complex nature of the partition story. Similarly, individual pronouncements, party resolutions and manifestos, though a pointer to various crucial turns of event in politics and society, are not good enough. For one, they convey the impression that the subcontinental leaders occupied an unassailable place in deciding

the nation's destiny on the eve of the transfer of power. The reality, obscured by dense official papers and documents, was profoundly contrary to popular perceptions. 'Major' players in the high politics of the 1940s, though influential, were by no means free agents, able to pursue their own or their party's agenda. Some, if not all, of their initiatives were severely curbed by those sections of their following who were embroiled in communal campaigns and affected by changing political alignments in UP, Punjab and Bengal, the eventual storm-centres of the Pakistan movement. This explains, at least in part, why Nehru's brainchild, the Muslim Mass Contact Campaign, petered out long before the Lahore resolution was adopted amid cries of *Allah-o-Akbar*. It ran into serious trouble because district Congress committees, often dominated by Hindu Mahasabhis, girded themselves to ward off a 'Muslim influx' into the organization.<sup>21</sup> Likewise, in a different context but an equally important milestone in polarizing communal sentiments, local units of the League and their *ulama* collaborators, imbued with a misguided zeal to expose the 'wrongs' of Congress ministries, mounted ceaseless pressure on central leaders to celebrate 'Deliverance Day'. Amid the exuberant rejoicing and by the general expression of loathing for Congress, they demanded their pound of flesh for their 'sufferings' under a 'Hindu Raj'. 'Deliverance Day,' wrote one of Jinnah's admirers in Lucknow, 'was such a success that it was even celebrated in those quarters where the League is looked upon as a vile disease.... You have laid the foundation of a self-respecting nationhood for the Muslims. It (Deliverance Day) is the first concrete step that shows (sic) without ambiguity that there are not one but several nations in India.'<sup>22</sup>

Much the same energy was released, in a communally polarized environment, when it looked like a Congress-League rapprochement might be a remote possibility on the political landscape, though as most contemporaries observed, such a possibility was dimmed after the failure of the Gandhi-Jinnah talks in September 1944. Local Hindu, Muslim and later the Sikh leaders, infused with religious fanaticism and sensitive to escalating communal violence, sent out loud and clear signals to the Congress, League and Akali Dal representatives, many of whom were obliged to dispel the impression of a 'sell out'. 'So ends the second Simla Conference,'<sup>1</sup> wrote the viceroy in his Journal on 12 May 1946, 'with much the same fate as the first. I was always very doubtful about it, I have never attached the same importance as the (Cabinet) Mission to Congress and the League reaching agreement, as I was pretty sure that they never would.'<sup>21</sup> In the months following the Simla Conference, the lonely figure

of the Mahatma, forsaken by his Congress lieutenants and wilfully targeted by the Hindu right for 'appeasing' Muslims and helping to destroy Hindus and Hinduism, wrote in October 1946: 'I know that mine is today a voice in the wilderness.' As the 'vivisection of India' became imminent, his own sense of impotence increased. 'My writ runs no more.... No one listens to me any more.... I am crying in the wilderness.'<sup>21</sup>

Another instance of how the national leaders sometimes felt helpless and weak is illustrated by how, to begin with, both Nehru and Liaquat Ali Khan set their faces against any wholesale transfer of populations, but how events rapidly overtook them, and dictated the course of their policy.<sup>25</sup>

Although the pressure on national leaders came from various quarters, the constraints on their capacity to act freely and independently need to be probed in the context of the direction, thrust and *modus operandi* of the countrywide mobilization campaigns. Whether it was the Congress or the League, their initiatives often generated, new fears and uncertainties in many regions though in significantly different ways. They also enlarged, thanks to the structures created by the Raj to accommodate Muslims, areas of conflict and competition. This paved the way for religious and cultural bodies, some having been founded in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, to assume the mantle of community leadership and intervene stridently in national affairs. Although every single step in the process of devolution of authority, commencing with the Morley-Minto Reforms (1909), legitimized their operations, a good many 'reformist' movements—notably the Arya Samaj in Punjab or the *tabligh* and *tanzim* societies in the Indo-Gangetic belt—developed their ideas and support base outside institutional structures, colonial policies and influences. They derived sustenance from their own complex repertoire of ideas and concepts, from their own self-image and self-representation; from their apprehension of the intrusive influences responsible for contemporary decadence; and from their overall comprehension of where they stood in a world which, they believed, was dominated by the Other.

We need to know how and why this occurred; in fact, making sense of the occurrences outside the national and regional spheres requires a delineation of the local roots of Hindu and Muslim nationalisms. This is how we may perhaps establish how local interests, operating within sharply demarcated religious boundaries and using their linkages with Hindutva or Islamist movements, mounted pressure on all-India leaders to safeguard their special claims; and also how they opposed, sometimes violently, the occasional concession being offered to their adversaries as a price for reconciliation. Their profile, location and linkages may serve to explain

the reasons why they occupied a vantage point in Indian politics in the mid-1940s, and their ability (mostly in doubt in earlier decades), to prepare the groundwork for partition well before the Union Jack was lowered in Delhi and Karachi.

Two 'conflicting forms of urban solidarity' in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century north India served as the foundation for the growing nationalism and religious communalism, which so dramatically affected events in the twentieth century.<sup>26</sup> Sumit Sarkar noted, more explicitly, that 'the decisions and actions of [the] leaders cannot really be understood without the counterpoint provided by pressures from below.'" This is corroborated by the pattern of communal violence between 1905 and 1947: a transition from a phase of rioting which was relatively unorganized, less related to institutional politics and with a strong class orientation, to outbreaks connected with organized politics, exhibiting a higher degree of organization and overt communalism.<sup>28</sup> Sarkar has delineated, moreover, the process by which Hindu-Muslim divisions in Bengal evolved into a movement in the 1920s. As a result, the masses 'outstrip [ped] their leaders', while the 'specific features and collective mentalities' of the 'subaltern groups' involved became sharply defined in contradistinction to 'the domain of the elite politicians'. Popular notions began to define community not as a shared Bengali culture but as religious identity.<sup>29</sup> Much the same process can be discerned among the Urdu-speaking elite of UP in the last quarter of the nineteenth century,<sup>30</sup> the Sikhs in Punjab,<sup>31</sup> and the Jats in rural south-east Punjab in the 1920s and '30s.<sup>32</sup>

It is true that localities often mirrored the regional and all-India setting, hence the argument that the political pressures leading to the partition of Punjab and Bengal originated outside the province.<sup>33</sup> Yet the complex and intricate process of the formation of community-based solidarities, and how these spread their tentacles upwards, can be delineated in the 'public arena', the arena of public performance and of collective activities in public spaces'.<sup>34</sup> So it maybe that the untold story lies in the dusty lanes and by-lanes of towns and cities and not only or always in the faceless metropolitan centres; in and around the bustling vernacular newspaper offices, district courts, *thanas*, and municipalities; or in the seemingly benign *madarsas*, *pathshalas*, mosques, temples and Sufi shrines, the focal point of mobilization in Sind and Punjab;<sup>35</sup> and in the highly charged and volatile precincts of *shuddhi* and Gauraksha sabhas, the anjuman-i Islamia's, *tabligh* and *tanzim* outfits. These were, undeniably, the sites where myths, memories and divisive religious symbols were invented and propagated to heighten communitarian consciousness and perpetuate

the image of the Other. They were also the arenas where wide-ranging issues—some having breached the citadel of inter-community harmony towards the end of the nineteenth century—were passionately contested. Public discussions over cow-slaughter and music in front of mosques, conducted in the columns of newspapers and in printed tracts, pamphlets, journals and books, all added fuel to controversies of one kind or another.

The intricate nature of such processes can be traced to urban centres like Lucknow, Aligarh, Allahabad and Banaras in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as also to the rough and rugged rural south-east Punjab where the Jats, having been converted to the Arya Samaj, became the votaries of *shuddhi*, Hindi and cow-protection.<sup>36</sup> The urban-rural divide, having been partially bridged by the pan-Indian ideology of Hindu and Muslim revivalism, involved the separation from and rejection of earlier symbols of joint Hindu-Muslim culture; the definition and affirmation of newer communal symbols,<sup>37</sup> and the invention of a tradition which Christophe Jaffrelot, in the context of Hindu nationalism, describes as 'the strategy of stigmatisation and emulation'.<sup>38</sup> This was a new and, from the liberal-left perspective, an ominous development. There had after all, been, common traditions and common reference points in the pre-colonial past, but they had not necessarily developed into the consolidated solidarities which 'Islam' or 'Hinduism' in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries came to signify. Nor had they acquired a new socio-political dimensions.<sup>39</sup> Christopher Bayly has argued, quite rightly, that prior to 1860 there was perhaps no identifiable 'Muslim', 'Sikh' or 'Hindu' identity that could be abstracted from the particular circumstances of individual events or specific societies.<sup>40</sup> Accordingly, in her work on the interaction between Muslim, Hindu and Christian traditions in the south, Susan Bayly has identified a borrowing of symbols and ideas, a frequently shared vocabulary, and an interweaving of motifs within a common sacred landscape.<sup>41</sup>

Whatever the debate on the nature and depth of such interactions, it must be recognized that Islamization or the 'nationalization' of Hindu traditions was triggered by factors that not only converged, but also gained salience, at a particular historical conjuncture. It is therefore imperative to properly contextualize these trends rather than read them in the light of dubious theories on long-standing, irreconcilable Hindu-Muslim differences. I have no common ground with those who celebrate 'religious nationalism' or contest the pluralist/composite heritage in what has been one of the most multi-cultural societies in the world; on the contrary, the weight of evidence, some of it assembled by British historians and

ethnographers, points to a flourishing plural and synthetic civilization providing a hospitable framework within which different communities, cultures and religions have lived side by side and made their distinctive contribution.<sup>42</sup> Within the paradigms of secular historiography—nurtured by the liberal-left strands in Indian nationalism—my own concerns—far removed from the post-modernist discourses and the 'new' histories—are simple enough: why did a people, with a long-standing history of shared living, respond to symbols of discord and disunity at a particular historical juncture? Why was the innocence of the mind, in the words of a common man in Sakhua village in Mymensingh district, 'banished after so many days of living together? Why did the structure of the human mind change overnight?'<sup>41</sup> 'How could that land become somebody else's forever,' asked his/her counterpart in Bimyapher village! 'Just one line drawn on the map, and my home becomes a foreign country!'<sup>43</sup> Surely, 'India belongs to all of us, and we have to live and die here. But why this partition and the exchange of population?'<sup>44</sup> Why did a society with its splendidly plural heritage become the site of one of the most cataclysmic events in twentieth-century history? And last but not least, if the nineteenth-century Urdu poet Mirza Ghalib had been alive, he would have asked in his inimitable style:

When all is You, and nought exists but You  
Tell me, O Lord, why all this turmoil too?

Despite the recent breakthrough in scholarship on nation and nationalism initiated by Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983), these questions (as pertinent today as they were at the time of independence) need to be analysed afresh with the aid of historical and sociological insights,<sup>45</sup> and in the light of much fresh source materials now available in the libraries and archives of India, Pakistan and the United Kingdom.

To do so, it is important, first of all, not to read the present into the past; in other words, to shed our present-day prejudices and preconceived suppositions on communalism and not be guided by inter-community relations in post-colonial India. Scholarship, although stimulated by preoccupations stemming from the present, is never sufficient in itself to modify the conceptualization of a problem or an event. For this and other reasons, it is necessary to challenge commonly held assumptions of Islam and the Muslims, delineate the multiple ideological strands amongst them, and trace the evolution of a Muslim political personality not in doctrinaire terms but in the context of colonial policies and the exertions

of powerful Hindutva and Islamist forces. Their profound impact needs to be explored, as was fruitfully done by the 'Cambridge school' in studies on Indian nationalism in the regions and localities.

Islam, for one, can no longer be treated as a static point of reference. Contemporary scholarship has drawn attention to changing interpretations over time and the powerful pluralist visions that have shaped the Muslim (not Islamic) communities in India and elsewhere. Indeed, as historians and anthropologists have noted, the Islamic tradition has produced a repertoire of concepts that have been employed to validate and explain a wide variety of political, social and intellectual movements.<sup>46</sup> No longer can we assume, despite the rhetoric of the theologians and the publicist, the existence of a single, inalienable Muslim identity. 'I am against the identities built on religion,' stated Nawal El Saadawi, the Egyptian novelist,

because the history of religion was written in the endless rivers of blood flowing in the name of God... I am an Arab woman. But in my body run the rivers of Africa that flow through Africa from Jinja and Tana. I am African and Arab and Egyptian because my genes were drawn from all these, because my history goes back in Egypt for seven thousand years, to Isis and Ma'at and Noon."

Much the same sentiment was expressed, though contextualized differently, by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. In his presidential address at the Indian National Congress in 1940, he declared:

I am a Muslim and profoundly conscious of the fact that I have inherited Islam's glorious traditions of the last thirteen hundred years. I am not prepared to lose even a small part of that legacy... As a Muslim I have a special identity within the field of religion and culture and I cannot tolerate any undue interference with it. But, with all these feelings, I have another equally deep realisation, born out of my life's experience, which is strengthened and not hindered by the spirit of Islam. I am equally proud of the fact that I am an Indian, an essential part of the indivisible unity of Indian nationhood, a vital factor in its total make-up without which this noble edifice will remain incomplete. I can never give up this sincere claim.<sup>48</sup>

Generally speaking, identities in South Asian history and politics have seldom been unified; in colonial India they were increasingly fragmented and fractured. Indeed, they were not singular but multiple, and thus difficult to capture on a single axis. Constructed across different, intersecting and antagonistic sites, discourses, and practices, they are subject to a radical historicization, and are constantly in the process of making and unmaking.<sup>47</sup> Thus Nita Kumar focuses on the existential experiences, of the Hindu and Muslim masses based on their culture of everyday life, to argue that 'identity in Banaras has not been communal in the past nor

is it progressively becoming so. It is based rather on occupation, social class, and a city's tradition.<sup>50</sup> An interesting insight into the community of weavers in Banaras is also provided in the following comment in Abdul Bismillah's much acclaimed Hindi novel, *Jhini jhini Bini Chadaria*: 'There is a community of the world. There is a community of India. There is a community of Hindus. There is a community of Muslims. There is also a community of the weavers in Banaras. This community is in many *different ways different from other communities in the world*' (emphasis added)."

### III

'I thought we would stay by our land, by our stock, by our Mussalman neighbours. No one can touch us, I thought. The riots will pass us by. But a man attacked our village—Oh, the screams of the women, I can hear them still... I had a twenty-year-old brother, tall and strong as a mountain, a match for any five of them. This is what they did: they tied one of his legs to one jeep, the other to another jeep—and then they drove the jeeps apart...'

Mola Singh stands quite still. The men look away despite the dark. Their indignation flares into rage.

'God give our arms strength,' one of them shouts, and in a sudden movement, knives glimmer. Their cry, 'Bole so Nihal, Sat Sri Akal,' swells into the ferocious chant: 'Vengeance! Vengeance! Vengeance!' The old Sikh sinks to his knees.

Bapsi Sidhwa, *The Pakistani Bride* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1983), p. 16.

Interest in partition has grown by leaps and bounds over the last few years: its legacy looms larger than ever before, the scars having proven to be deeper than the healing touch of freedom from colonial rule." This revival of interest in India, according to the novelist Shama Futehally, began with the Babri masjid-Ramjanambhumi dispute, which 'made it impossible, so to speak, to keep the lid on partition any more.'<sup>53</sup> Thereafter, social scientists began recognizing, after having neglected the subject for decades, that partition is, indeed, the defining moment for understanding India's modern history and specially the current turmoil over religion.<sup>4</sup> Some even wonder 'why we didn't set up a museum to preserve the memory of partition', why 'we chose to live with communal hatred, rather than to objectify it.'"

The author Urvashi Butalia bemoaned a few years ago that 'the human history of partition has a lesser status than the political history.'<sup>56</sup> This is no longer so. Her own book, based on oral narratives and testimonies, illuminates the 'underside' of partition history.<sup>57</sup> In fact, the disconnection between the rarefied decisions leading to partition and the searing consequences in individual lives, remains one of the most powerful tropes that

has been carried from partition fiction into the work of historians and other social scientists.<sup>58</sup> So that, in part a response to the growing interest in 'history of beneath',<sup>1</sup> the task of restoring a human dimension to partition has received serious attention.<sup>59</sup> Alok Bhalla, editor of an anthology on partition stories, painfully wonders why religious conflicts destroyed the subcontinent's communal life. The stories he has put together reveal how 'we (emphasis mine) fell out of a human world of languages, customs, rituals and prayers into a bestial world of hatred, rage, self-interest and frenzy.'<sup>60</sup>

My own writings recount the trauma of those caught up in the politics of hate and violence, the anguish of the silent majority which was invisible in national or provincial arenas of formal and institutional politics." Moving further away from the meta-narratives of nationalism and communalism, I endeavoured to give a voice to the 'feelings and interests' of 'ordinary folks'. My aim was to emphasize the different meanings and perceptions of partition, a theme that to the best of my knowledge, had not been explored before and to underline the pluralist view in which religious community is just one rather than the sole source of identity. In particular, the two-volume anthology of short stories, poems, diaries, excerpts from autobiographical accounts, and interviews, serves as a reminder of how partition cruelly displaced millions, divided India's past, wrecked its civilizational rhythm and unity, and left behind a fractured legacy.<sup>62</sup>

Elsewhere, my concern, which I share with my colleague M. Asaduddin, has been to examine how the stories invoke and construct images of Muslims, articulate many intimate yet historically unfamiliar points of reference, and represent the lived experience of Muslim communities in different regions and socio-economic locations. It has been comforting to discover that, unlike so many historical accounts, literary representations of Muslims and the nature of their life reveal a wide variety of forms, style, language and symbol adopted by different writers. Neither the forms nor the lives they portray derive from a supposedly homogeneous and unbroken tradition.<sup>63</sup> Sadly, this simple but important fact is lost sight of in constructing the partition story.

Let me conclude this section with three axioms that have guided my research for nearly two decades. The first relates to the League's rhetoric, mouthed by the Jamaat-i Islami and a section of the Deobandi *ulama*, on Islam, *Muslim* nation, and the birth of an Islamic society. Their battle-cry, though spurred by some leading Muslim intellectuals—notably Mohammad Iqbal—and the resurgence of militant Hindu nationalism in

certain spheres, had more to do with the political and economic anxieties of various social classes than with a profound urge to carve out an Islamic society and polity.<sup>64</sup> This explains the conduct of, and reasons why, Muslim landlords and professional groups in UP, Bihar and the princely state of Hyderabad, together with the small but upcoming trading and banking communities in western India, hitched their fortunes to the demand for Pakistan. Muslim landlords of UP, having had no truck with the League until the 1930s and allied with their Hindu counterparts in their last-ditch battle against the Congress,<sup>65</sup> changed course once the Congress ministry, with its refurbished radical image, adopted the UP Tenancy Bill. Although they continued speaking in the name of Islam, their chief goal was to defend their landholdings, orchards, *havelis*, palaces and the nawabi paraphernalia built through the courtesy of their British benefactors. Their counterparts in Punjab, many of whom had been staunch supporters of the Unionist Party—a unique and successful experiment in class-based combination—also sensed the winds of change. They abandoned their erstwhile allies and adopted, by the end of 1945 and not before, the safe course of joining the League. Their strategy, one that suited the Raj during and after World War II, was to project the Congress and the Unionists, their perceived rivals in the political world, as a 'Hindu' party inimical to Islam. In a nutshell, the discordance between the League and the Congress politics in the final decade of the Raj was caused by 'the sense of exclusion from the dominant sentiment of Indian nationalism, and not religious zeal, devoid of all temporal considerations.'<sup>66</sup> In the words of the historian Mohammad Mujeeb, whose family split in 1947, 'the needs which found political expression were not the needs of the community as a whole but those of a class, which consisted of big and small landlords, and the lawyers, doctors, government servants who belonged to the families of these landlords.'<sup>67</sup> Once the League bandwagon rolled on, other aggrieved groups, such as the jotedars in Bengal and peasant proprietors of the eastern, and the ex-servicemen of the north-western districts in Punjab,<sup>68</sup> jumped into the fray as defenders of the faith. In neighbouring Sind, the influential Pirs, having received assurances that their social and economic interests would be protected, flocked to the League: it was primarily their position as local leaders that drew them into party politics.<sup>69</sup>

My second axiom, though obvious enough, is scarcely recognized in nationalistic historiography. Pakistan was neither everybody's dream nor was Jinnah the Quaid of the socialists and Marxists,<sup>70</sup> the Khudai Khidmatgars, the *ulama* of Deoband, the Momins,<sup>71</sup> the Shias connected

with the Shia Political Conference,<sup>72</sup> and scores of Muslim groups pushed to the periphery and surviving uneasily on the margins of mainstream national and provincial politics. Yet the standpoint of those, patronizingly referred to as 'nationalist Muslims',<sup>73</sup> is wilfully ignored because of certain misplaced assumptions about Islam and nationalism and the insistence on projecting the so-called monolithic world-view of Muslim communities. Represented as weak and ineffective by religious and political orthodoxies, their voices, which were by no means inconsequential, have been stifled by 'imperial', 'secular' and 'communal' histories written before and after independence. Thanks to active State patronage, we celebrate and valorize, Muslim/Islam-baiters and rank Hindu communalists, but relegate secular and liberal-minded Muslims—from Badruddin Tyabji's generation to that of Raft Ahmad Kidwai's—to a historian's footnote. I have been arguing for years that the historian of twentieth-century Indian nationalism should foreground the so-called marginal voices among Muslims to rewrite the histories of nationalism, communalism and partition.<sup>74</sup>

There is, finally, the need to come to terms with the fact that most 'Hindus', 'Muslims' and Sikhs had no feelings for national borders or the newly created geographical entities that were being laboriously created in 1947; the cartographic and political divisions constituted by partition are, quite rightly, 'the shadow lines' that the novelist Amitav Ghosh seeks to repudiate.<sup>75</sup> National borders, as argued elsewhere, were political constructs, imagined projections of territorial power. Although they appeared in deceptively precise forms, they reflected, at least initially, merely the mental images of politicians, lawyers, and intellectuals.<sup>76</sup> Their practical consequences, which worked out so differently in various regions and for different classes, must be disaggregated from State-centred academic historiography.<sup>77</sup> Even though the trains had started carrying people to their destinations, large numbers of them, uprooted from their homes in search of a safe haven, were unclear whether Lahore would be part of India or Pakistan; or whether Delhi, the erstwhile imperial capital of the Mughals and the British, would remain in Gandhi's India or Jinnah's 'moth-eaten' Pakistan. As the novelist Bapsi Sidhwa describes:

Hysteria mounted when the fertile, hot lands of the Punjab were suddenly ripped into two territories—Hindu and Muslim, India and Pakistan. Until the last moment no one was sure how the land would be divided. Lahore, which everyone expected to go to India because so many wealthy Hindus lived in it, went instead to Pakistan. Jullundur, a Sikh stronghold, was allocated to India...<sup>78</sup>

Such descriptions picture an existentialist reality—the separation of people living on both sides who had a long history of cultural and social

contact—and the paradoxical character of borders being a metaphor of the ambiguities of nation-building.<sup>79</sup> A lesser known but a highly gifted writer, Fikr Taunsvi (1918-87), has poignantly captured this theme in one of his stories. It reads:

A few astrologers in 1947 made the heavenly bodies revolve in such a scientific manner that instead of having one border between them, India and Pakistan had two. Actually the word 'two' had befuddled their minds in such a way that now neither the stars moved in an orderly manner nor did their predictions come true. Exasperated by this very 'two' and swayed by their animosity to 'one' they became oblivious of the fact that the new unit they were trying to create was itself a derivative of one....

The most interesting feature of the Wagah border was the shops set up for the organized sale of religion. A bearded Maulvi sat there with a huge pile of books, including the Vedas, Shastras, Granthas, Gita's and Upanishads.... Sitting next to him was a Sardarji who sold copies of the Quran, *Fiqh* and *Hadith*. and dozens of other writings in Arabic. All those books were a part of the loot that the two gentlemen had brought to sell. Otherwise, they would have been at each other's throats by now. But at Wagah they were selling their books peacefully.... If by selling religion one could have two square meals everyday, what could be better,...

I quietly took the army sentinel aside and asked: 'Well sir, a tree stood on the bank of the Wagah canal. Can you tell me whether it has been felled and thrown away or ...?'

The sentry pointed his bayonet at me and staring at me said: 'Who are you to interfere in this business that concerns the two governments?'

And in the core of my heart I said: 'Listen good man, after all I am a branch of the same tree.'<sup>80</sup>

Saadat Hasan Manto's stories, too, question the intellectual underpinnings of State-centred national histories: most of his characters, especially Toba Tek Singh, are not reconciled to borders being drawn and people being uprooted from their social and cultural milieu.<sup>81</sup> They remind us time and time again that, regardless of religious passions being heightened by the politics of hate and of the fragile nature of inter-community relations in the 1940s, most people had no clue whatsoever that their fate would be settled after Mountbatten's three days of 'diplomacy'; that a man called Cyril Radcliffe—whose credentials as an eminent British jurist are invoked to compensate for his lack of knowledge and experience of the subcontinent—would descend on Indian soil on a hot and sultry summer day and decide the frontiers in just seven weeks. Though diehard apologists of the Raj—H.V. Hodson, the Reform Commissioner in 1941, Philip Ziegler, biographer of Mountbatten, & Co.—and their intellectual allies in the subcontinent have a different tale to tell, a creative writer,

writing in the early 1980s, portrays the brutal consequences of a reckless though calculated imperial design:

Now that it was decided they would leave, the British were in a hurry to wind up...- Preoccupied with misgiving and the arrangements attendant on relocating themselves in their native land, by the agony of separation from regiments, Imperial trappings and servants, the rulers of the Empire were entirely too busy to bother overmuch with how India was divided. It was only one of the thousand and one chores they faced.

The earth is not easy to carve up. India required a deft and sensitive surgeon, but the British, steeped in domestic preoccupation, hastily and carelessly butchered it. They were not deliberately mischievous—only cruelly negligent! A million Indians died. The earth sealed its clumsy new boundaries in blood as town by town, farm by farm, the border was defined. Trains carrying refugees sped through the darkness of night—Hindus going one way and Muslims the other. They left at odd hours to try to dodge mobs bent on their destruction. Yet trains were ambushed and looted and their fleeing occupants slaughtered.<sup>81</sup>

Anguished by the communal riots, Nehru wrote in June 1947: 'It is curious that when tragedy affects an individual we feel the full force of it, but when that individual is multiplied a thousandfold, our senses are dulled and we become insensitive.'<sup>83</sup> This was certainly not true of creative writers, many of whom reveal the other face of freedom, the 'freedom drenched in blood and gore.'<sup>84</sup> They bring to light, in a way official chronicles do not, the plight of migrants, the woes of divided families, the trauma of raped and abducted women, and the nerve-racking experiences of those who boarded the train that took them to the realization of their dream, but of whom not a man, woman or child survived the journey.<sup>85</sup> Numerous texts, some having been analysed with much scholarly rigour in recent years, retrieve from silence the many untold stories of women that have died unspoken on the lips of their hapless protagonists.<sup>86</sup> Locating women at the centre (rather than the periphery) of discussions around partition, argues Ritu Menon, casts a rather different light on the event and its consequences. In an engaging discussion of government policy on the recovery of abducted women by India and Pakistan, she explores the relationship of women to community identity and to the State and citizenship. Adult women, according to Menon, were forcibly 'recovered' purely on the basis of religious identity and in violation of all rights of citizens in a secular State.<sup>87</sup>

All said and done, literary narratives, whether in Hindi, Urdu, Bengali or Punjabi, are an eloquent witness to 'an unspeakable and inarticulatable history'.<sup>88</sup> Evoking the sufferings of the innocent, whose pain is more universal and ultimately a vehicle of more honest reconciliation than

political discourse;<sup>89</sup> they provide a framework for developing an alternative discourse on inter-community relations. What lends greater credence to their creative imagination is their ability to unfold certain critically important dimensions without religion or community emblem as the principal reference point. This is illustrated in Manto's literary vignettes, *Siyah Hashye* (Black Margins):

PRAISE BE TO THE LORD

The dancing session was over. The clients went away. That is when *Ustadji* said, having lost everything (during partition) we came to this city. Praise is to Allah *Miyan* for having showered us with these riches in just a few days.

DOUBLE CROSS

Look buddy, you sold me petrol at black-market prices and not a single shop could be set on fire. Who are you?

A WARNING

The rioters wrestled hard with the landlord to drag him out of the house. He stood up, brushed his clothes and told them. 'Kill me for all I care. But I warn you not to touch my money—not a paisa.'

IV

Where do we go from here? asks the writer Bhisham Sahni.

Should people organise themselves on the basis of caste and community and fight collectively for their rightful demand? Or, should they ignore caste and community and fight on the basis of the deprived against the privileged, for there are both rich and poor among castes and communities? I believe the second course is still the right one, for it cuts across caste and community loyalties, and thereby weakens their stranglehold, and in consequence strengthens, in its own way, the pluralistic character of our polity. We certainly have a very long way to go.<sup>90</sup>

Today the historiography of partition is hampered, by mental laziness and pious rehashing even more than by political ideology. Surely, it is time to strip it of the elementary significations it has bequeathed to its heirs, and to restore to it another *primum movens* of the historian, namely, intellectual curiosity and the free search of knowledge about the past."

NOTES

I. V. N. Datta, *Maulana Azad* (Delhi: Manohar, 1990); Mushirul Hasan ed., *Islam and Indian Nationalism: Reflections on Abul Kalam Azad* (Delhi: Manohar, 1992),

and my introduction to David Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation: Muslim Solidarity in British India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996).

2. 'Hind Kitabs' ac 267 Hornby Road in Bombay, publisher of R.K. Mukerjee's statement, brought out a number of other pamphlets, planned by Allahabad's Progressive Club, in its 'New India Series'. Among them were Communal Settlement by Beni Prasad, Professor of Politics at the University of Allahabad, and *h Pakistan Necessary?* by V.B. Kulkarni.

3. Horst Kruger (ed.), *Kunwar Mohammad Ashraf: An Indian Scholar and Revolutionary, 1903-1962* (Berlin, 1966), p. 413.

4- K.A. Abbas, I am not an Island: An Experiment in *Autobiography* (Delhi: Vikas, 1987), p. 281.

5. Quoted in Sarvepalli Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography, vol. 2: 1947-1956* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 15.

6. To chief ministers, 18 December 1950, Letters to Chief Ministers, vol. 2, 1950-1952 (Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1986), p. 290.

7. See, for example, S.K. Kirpalani, *Fifty Years with the British* (Delhi: Sangam Books, 1993), and the oft-quoted works of G.D. Khosla. For a recent study, Dipankar Gupta, *The Context of Ethnicity: Sikh Identity in a Comparative Perspective* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996).

8. See also, Medha Malik Kudaisya, 'G.D. Birla, Big Business and India's Partition', in D.A. Low and Howard Brasted (eds), *Freedom, Trauma, Continuities: Northern India and Independence* (Delhi: Sage, 1998), pp. 215-34.

9. Nonica Datta, 'Partition Memories: A Daughter's Testimony' (forthcoming). This interesting account of Subhashini, the 84-year-old daughter of Bhagat Phool Singh, a leading Arya Samaj crusader in rural south-east Punjab, sheds much light on Hindu-Muslim relations before and after partition.

10. In his account of an event at Chauri Chaura, Shahid Amin points out how local and familial memories are often at variance with, but seldom independent of, judicial and nationalist accounts. Introducing a note of caution, he makes clear that his fieldwork was 'not intended to supersede the colonial and nationalist archive. Rather, it is placed in a complex relationship of variation in the official record.' Shahid Amin, Event, *Metaphor, Memory: Chauri Chaura 1922-1992* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 197.

11. Dr M. Asaduddin, my colleague at the Jamia Millia Islamia, has translated this verse for me.

12. It is common to connect the two-nation theory with the Aligarh reformer, Syed Ahmad Khan, and not his contemporary Dayananda Saraswati, the high priest of the Arya Samaj. The former appears to me to be far more tolerant, eclectic and broad-minded in his orientation and outlook than the latter. Beginning with the Arya Samaj movement and culminating in the writings of Veer Savarkar and Guru Golwalkar, the relentless search for a 'Hindu nation' and a 'Hindu identity' provided the underpinnings of the two-nation theory. Long before Jinnah appeared on the scene, Lala-Har Dayal stated in 1925: 'I declare that the future of the Hindu race, of Hindustan and of the Punjab, rest on four pillars: (1) Hindu Sangathan, (2) Hindu Raj, (3) Shuddhi of Moslems, and (4) Conquest and Shuddhi of Afghanistan and the frontiers.... The Hindu race has but one history and its institutions are homogeneous. But the Mussalmans and Christians are far removed from the confines of Hinduism, for their religions are alien and they love Persian, Arab and European institutions. Thus, just as one removes foreign matter from the eye, Shuddhi must be made of these two religions.' Quoted in Emily C. Brown, *Har Dayal: Hindu Revolutionary and*

*Rationalist* (Delhi: Manohar, 1975), p. 233. This characterization of Christianity and Islam led Savarkar to write that, 'when the Muslims penetrated India, the conflict of life and death began.'

13. Adding a fresh dimension to the debate, Sumit Sarkar points out that constructions of Indian nationalism, Hindu unity and Hindutva were partly related, though in different ways, to efforts to respond to counter 'pressures from below' in the form of lower-caste aspirations. Sumit Sarkar, *Writing Social History* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), ch. 9.

14. Increasingly, this view is being challenged by regional and local studies. For example, Tazeen M. Murshid, *The Sacred and the Secular: Bengal Muslim Discourses, 1871-1977* (Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1995), and the collection of essays in Mushirul Hasan (ed.), *Islam, Communities and the Nation: Muslim Identities in South Asia and Beyond* (Delhi: Manohar, 1998).

15. This point has been discussed at length in Mushirul Hasan, *Legacy of a Divided Nation: India's Muslims since Independence* (London: Hurst, 1997).

16. Gerald James Larson, *India's Agon over Religion* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 183-4.

17. Akbar S. Ahmed, Jinnah, *Pakistan and Islamic Identity: The Search for Saladin* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. xviii. Notice, too, his comment: 'When a leader who commands respect in the Muslim community appears, and can focus on a cause, Muslims are capable of moving mountains', p. xxi.

18. I have borrowed this idea from Francois Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 10.

19. Mushirul Hasan (ed.), *India's Partition*.

20. Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991* (London: Michael Joseph, 1994), pp. 219-20. Ian Talbot has examined the Punjabi Muslims' support to the Muslims in the context of the war. Punjab ana' *the Raj, 1849-1947* (Delhi: Manohar, 1988), while Anita Inder Singh argues that the outbreak of war 'saved' the League and made it a representative Muslim body. Her contention is that the British deliberately built up Jinnah's prestige at the all-India level for their war purposes, though at the provincial level they subordinated this objective to the prime necessity of operating the war machine with maximum efficiency. *The Origins of the Partition of India 1936-1947* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 238, 241-2. The provincial scene is best surveyed in Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

21. Mushirul Hasan, 'The Muslim Mass Contacts Campaign: Analysis of a Strategy of Political Mobilization', in Richard Sisson and Stanley Wolpert (eds), *Congress and Indian Nationalism: The Pre-Independence Phase* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1988).

22. Mohammad Amir Ahmad (brother of the Raja of Mahmudabad) to Jinnah, 29 November 1939, Shamsul Hasan Collection, Karachi.

23. Penderel Moon (ed.), *Wavell: The Viceroy's Journal* (Delhi: Oxford University Press edn, 1977), p. 267.

24. Quoted in Judith M. Brown, *Gandhi: Prisoner of Hope* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 369.

25. 21 September 1947, Alan Campbell-Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten* (London: Robert Hall, 1951), p. 201.

26. C.A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

27. Sumit Sarkar, *A Critique of Colonial India* (Calcutta: Papyrus, 1985), p. 116.

28. Suranjan Das, *Communal Riots in Bengal 1905-1947* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 207.

29. Sumit Sarkar, 'The Conditions and Nature of Subaltern Militancy: Bengal from Swadeshi to Non-Cooperation, c. 1905-22', in Ranajit Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies*, vol. 3 (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 272. Rafiuddin Ahmed has shown how religious preachers prompted the masses to look beyond the borders of Bengal in quest of their supposed Bengali Islamic past and attach greater importance to their 'Muslim' as opposed to their local or regional identity. This new emphasis, according to him, proved crucial to the subsequent emergence of a measure of social cohesion in a diversified and even culturally polarized society. Rafiuddin Ahmed, *The Bengal Muslims 1871-1906: A Quest for Identity* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 184.

30. Francis Robinson, *Separatism among Indian Muslims: The Politics of the United Provinces/Muslims, 1860-1923* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974).

31. The emergence of a corporate Sikh identity, according to Harjot Oberoi, was 'a sort of dialectical process', a response to what was happening to the Hindus and Muslims in terms of 'imagination, experience and cultural organization.' Historically, 'it is more precise to speak in terms of a simultaneity of religious identities rather than distinct, universal, religious collectivities.' *The Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 418, 424.

32. Nonica Datta's incisive study traces the emergence of Jat identity within the cultural context of rural south-east Punjab, arguing that identities are not just products of colonial institutions and economic changes but created by communities on the strength of inherited cultural resources as well as invented traditions. So that the Jats were active participants in the construction of their own identity. *Forming an Identity: A Social History of the Jats* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999).

33. For Punjab, see David Gilmartin, *Empire and Islam: Punjab and the Making of Pakistan* (London: I.B. Tauris 1988), p. 225.

34. Sandria B. Freitag, *Collective Action and Community: Public Arenas and the Emergence of Communalism in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990).

35. Sarah F.D. Ansari, *Sufi Saints and State Power: The Pirs of Sind, 1843-1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), and Gilmartin, *Empire and Islam*.

36. Nonica Datta, 'Forming an Identity, and her The "Subalternity" of Education: Gurukuls in Rural Southeast Punjab', in Mushirul Hasan (ed.), *Knowledge, Power and Politics: Educational Institutions in India* (Delhi: Roll Books, 1998); Kenneth W. Jones, *Socio-Religious Reform Movements in British India* (Delhi: Foundation Books, 1994), and his *Arya Dharm: Hindu Consciousness in 19th Century Punjab* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976).

37. See, for example, Christopher R. King, 'The Hindi Movement in Banaras, 1868-1914', in Sandria B. Freitag (ed.), *Culture and Power in Banaras: Community, Performance, and Environment, 1800-1980* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989).

38. Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics 1925 to the 1990s* (London: Hurst, 1997), p. 6.

39. For Hinduism, see Vasudha Dalmia, *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions: Bharatendu Harischandra and Nineteenth-century Banaras* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 1.

40. C.A. Bayly, 'The Pre-history of "Communalism"? Religious Conflict in India, 1700-1860', *Modern Asian Studies*, 19, 2, 1985, p. 202.

41. Susan Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings: Muslims and Christians in South Indian Society 1700-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), and Kate

Brittlebank, Tipu *Sultan's Search for Legitimacy: Islam and Kingship in a Hindu Domain* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995).

42. For an incisive analysis of Gandhi's views, also in the context of partition, see Bhiku Parekh, *Gandhi's Politics/Philosophy: A Critical Examination* (London: Macmillan, 1989).

43. Chakrabarty, 'Remembered Villages', in Low and Brasted (eds), *Freedom, Trauma, Continuities*, reprinted in this volume.

44. Anis Kidwai, 'In the Shadow of Freedom', in Mushirul Hasan (ed.), *India Partitioned*, vol. 2, p. 161.

45. For example, essays in T.N. Madan (ed.), *Muslim Communities of South Asia: Culture, Society, and Power* (Delhi: Manohar, rev. & enlarged edn, 1995), and his *Modern Myths, Locked Minds: Secularism and Fundamentalism in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997). Peter van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

46. Introduction to Imtiaz Ahmad (ed.), *Ritual and Religion among Muslims in India* (Delhi: Manohar, 1981), pp. 18-19; Barbara Daly Metcalf (ed.), *Moral Conduct and Authority: The Place of Adah in South Asian Islam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 15.

47. The Nawal El Saadawi Reader (London: Zed Books, 1997), p. 127.

48. Quoted in Syeda Saiyidain Hameed (ed.), *India's Maulana: Abul Kalam Azad*, vol. 2 (Delhi: Vikas, 1990), p. 161.

49. Mushirul Hasan (ed.), *Islam, Communities and the Nation*.

50. *The Artisans of Banaras: Popular Culture and Identity, 1880-1986* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 227.

51. Cited in Sudhir Kumar, 'Reconstructing the Nation: Image of the Nation in the Fiction of Muslim Writers', in *Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences* (Shimla), vol. 1, November 1994, p. 125.

52. Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 191.

53. *Indian Book Review* (Delhi), October 1993, p. 19.

54. Larson, *India's Agon* over Religion, p. 183. Historians, in particular, have taken the lead in challenging the old shibboleths dominating partition studies. As a result, we now have a better sense of, in the context of the transfer of power, the 'contradictions and structural peculiarities of Indian society and politics in late colonial India', 'the history that partition creates' and the impact and representation of partition violence. Some of the interesting works are: Gyanendra Pandey, 'The Prose of Otherness', in David Arnold and David Hardiman (eds), *Subaltern Studies VII: Essays in Honour of Ranajit Guha* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994); Shail Mayaram, 'Speech, Silence and the Making of Partition', in Shahid Amin and Dipesh Chakrabarty (eds), *Subaltern Studies IX: Writings on South Asian History and Society* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996); Ranabir Samaddar (ed.), *Reflections on Partition in the East* (Delhi: Vikas, 1997).

55. Krishan Kumar, *Times of India* (New Delhi), 10 February 1999.

56. Seminar (New Delhi), August 1994.

57. Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1998), p. 10.

58. David Gilmartin, 'Partition, Pakistan and South Asian History: In Search of a Narrative', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 57, 4, November 1998, p. 1069.

59. See, for example, Ian Talbot, *Freedom's City: The Popular Dimension in the Pakistan Movement and Partition Experience in North-West India* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1996).

60. Alok Bhalla (ed.), *Stories about the Partition of India*, vol. 1 (Delhi: Indus, 1994), pp. xxxii-xxxiii.

61. *Legacy of a Divided Nation*, ch. 4.

62. Mushirul Hasan (ed.), *India Partitioned: The Other Face of Freedom*, 2 vols (Delhi: Roli Books, 1997).

63. See Mushirul Hasan and M. Asaduddin (eds), *Image and Representation: Stories of Muslim Lives in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

64. Paul R. Brass, *Language, Religion and Politics in North India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974) argued that Muslims of UP had a larger share of government jobs than their 14 per cent of the population warranted, and that Muslim politicians created the myth of "Muslim backwardness" to protect their privileges and then selected divisive symbols to mobilize support for their own drive to power. Focusing on the land-owning class, the economic mainstay of the Muslim elite, Lance Brennan demonstrated that, 'by mid-1939 the Muslim elite of UP had lost their illusion: the foundations they had fought so hard to build were shown to be straw. It was from this time that they began to embrace a new separatism.... Previously, they had aimed at striking a set of bargains with the Hindus in the province—now their objective was complete separation from the Hindus.' 'The Illusion of Security: The Background of Muslim Separatism in the United Provinces', Mushirul Hasan (ed.), *India's Partition*, p. 360. Partha Chatterjee has, on the other hand, argued that Muslim politics in Bengal in the period 1937-47 had a great deal to do with the structures and processes of the colonial State machinery. 'Bengal Politics and the Muslim Masses, 1920-47', in Mushirul Hasan (ed.), *India's Partition*, pp. 174-5.

65. Peter Reeves, 'Adjusting to Congress Dominance: The UP Landlords, 1937-1947', in Sisson and Wolpert (eds), *Congress and Indian Nationalism*, pp. 160-69.

66. Ayesha Jalal, 'Ideology and the Struggle for Democratic Institutions', in Victoria Schofield (ed.), *Old Roads New Highways: Fifty Years of Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 129-30.

67. M. Mujeeb, 'The Partition of India in Retrospect', in C.H. Philips and M.D. Wainwright (eds), *The Partition of India: Policies and Perspectives* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1970), p. 410.

68. Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj*, p. 208.

69. Sarah Ansari, *Sufi Saints*, p. 122.

70. K.H. Ansari, *The Emergence of Socialist Thought among North Indian Muslims 1917-1947* (Lahore: Shirkat Printing Press, 1990).

71. Papiya Ghosh, 'Partition's Biharis', in Mushirul Hasan (ed.), *Islam, Communities and the Nation*, pp. 229-64.

72. Mushirul Hasan, 'Traditional Sites and Contested Meanings: Sectarian Strife in Colonial Lucknow', Violette Graff (ed.), *Lucknow: Memories of a City* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997).

73. I have argued against the use of this expression in *A Nationalist Conscience: M.A. Ansari, the Congress and the Raj* (Delhi: Manohar, 1991).

74. Those who got the worse of it, both in India and Pakistan, commented a well-known Urdu writer, 'were the honest, sincere Nationalist Muslims who, in the eyes of Hindus, were Muslims, and vice versa. Their sacrifices were reduced to ashes. Their personal integrity and loyalty were derided. Their morale was shattered like a disintegrating star; their lives lost meaning. Like the crumbling pillars of a mosque they could neither be saved nor used. India, for whose independence they had fought the British, refused to offer them refuge. So much so that they incurred the wrath of their own community. They were like that distant thunder which rises in the desert and then descends and disappears into the sand dunes.... For them the special day of

independence was unusual, spent in the seclusion of the four walls of their homes. The League had made them untouchables to their fellow-Indians; they were reduced to the status of harijans in India.' Shorish Kashmiri, *Boo-i gul Naala-i dil Dood-i Chiragh-i Mehfil*, cited in Mushirul Hasan (ed.), *India Partitioned*, vol. 2, p. 145.

75. The reference to the novel *Shadow Lines* (Delhi: 1988) is drawn from Priya Kumar, 'Testimonies of Loss and Memory: Partition and the Haunting of a Nation', *Interventions*, (London: Routledge), vol. 1, 2, 1999, p. 204.

76. Michael Baud and Willem van Schendel, Towards a Comparative History of Borderlands', in *Journal of World History* 8(2), 1997, pp. 211-42.

77. See my 'Memories of a Fragmented Nation: Rewriting the Histories of Partition', reprinted in this volume, and Ritu Menon, 'Cartographies of Nations and Identities: A Post-partition Predicament', *Interventions* (London: 1999. Rajinder Sachar, jurist and human rights activist who has spent a lifetime struggling with his memories of Lahore, recalled: 'One day I ran into a Muslim villager who had come to Lahore all the way from Sargodha looking for my grandfather, a well-known criminal lawyer. Poor chap he didn't realise that partition had taken place and that the Hindus had left. It just shows how long it took for the implications of partition to sink in'. Hindu (Chennai), 'India' (special number), 15 August 1998, p. 28, cited in Mushirul Hasan, 'Memories'.

78. Sidhwa, *The Pakistan Bride*, p. 4.

79. These lines are based on Baud and Schendel, 'Towards a Comparative History of Borderlands', in *Journal of World History*, pp. 211-42.

80. 'The Wagah Canal', in Mushirul Hasan (ed.), *India Partitioned*, vol. 1, pp. 250, 253, 255.

81. Notice the following: 'As to where Pakistan was located, the inmates knew nothing. That was why both the mad and the partially mad were unable to decide whether they were now in India or in Pakistan. If they were in India where on earth was Pakistan? And if they were in Pakistan, then how come that until only the other day it was India....'

Those who had tried to solve this mystery had become utterly confused when told that Sialkot, which used to be in India, was now in Pakistan. It was anybody's guess what was going to happen to Lahore, which was currently in Pakistan, but could slide into India any moment. It was still possible that the entire subcontinent of India might become Pakistan. And who could say if both India and Pakistan might not entirely vanish from the map of the world one day?

Just before sunrise, Bisham Singh, the man who had stood on his legs for fifteen years, screamed and as officials from the two sides rushed towards him, he collapsed on the ground.

There, behind barbed wire, on one side, lay India and behind more barbed wire, on the other side, lay Pakistan. In between, on a bit of earth, which had no name, lay Toba Tek Singh.'

82. Sidhwa, *Pakistan/ Bride*, pp. 17-18.

83. S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, second series (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1985), p. 180.

84. Anis Kidwai, 'In the Shadow of Freedom', in Mushirul Hasan (ed.), *India Partitioned*, vol. 2, p. 161.

85. I have discussed this in 'Memories of a Fragmented Nation'.

86. Deepika Bahri, *Telling Tales: Women and the Trauma of Partition in Sidhwa's Cracking India*, *Interventions*, 1999, p. 219.

87. Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India's Partition* (Delhi: Kali for Women, 1998), and Veena Das, 'National Honour and

Practical Kinship: Of Unwanted Women and Children', in her *Critical Events: An Anthropological Perspective on Contemporary India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 55-83.

88. Kumar, 'Testimonies', *Interventions*, 1999, p. 202.

89. Jason Francisco, 'In the Heat of Fratricide: The Literature of India's Partition Burning Freshly', reprinted in this volume.

90. Bhisam Sahni, 'Images of Communities: Reflections of a Writer', in *Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences*, 1, November 1994, p. 5.

91. Francois Furet's plea to the historians of the French Revolution makes very good sense in the context of partition studies. See *Interpreting the French Revolution*, pp. 10-11.

## Introduction

# Memories of a Fragmented Nation Rewriting the Histories of India's Partition<sup>1</sup>

MUSHIRUL HASAN

Today I am asking Wans Shah to speak from the grave,  
To turn the page of the book of love. Once the daughter of the Punjab  
wept, and you wrote endlessly.  
Today Lakhs [100,000] of daughters are weeping and they are imploring  
you Waris Shah.  
Get up, you who sympathise with our grief, get up and see your Punjab.  
Today there are corpses everywhere, and the Chenab is filled with-blood.  
Somebody has mixed poison in all the five rivers,  
The rivers we use to water our fields . . .

When I think of Lahore, I go back to the days of my youth just before the  
Partition. Life then was so romantic, slow, deep and beautiful. Really,  
they were good times, they were great times.<sup>2</sup>

I hope that one day . . . displaced families on both sides of the fence will  
at least be able to freely cross the borders and show their grandchildren  
where their grandparents had once lived and belonged. The day such a  
change comes about, I shall be the first to cross the Wagah or  
Hussainiwallah border posts to take my grand-daughter to Lahore, and  
show her the home of my youthful dreams—91, Garden Town.'

**T**he countdown to 15 August 1997, India's fiftieth year of independence, generated an extraordinary interest in plotting the history of partition.<sup>4</sup> One wonders why painful memories and traumatic experiences were revived on such an occasion, why the nostalgia and the celebration of the dead?<sup>5</sup> Was it because there was not much to celebrate?

Or did the occasion itself finally sensitize sections of the intelligentsia to the painful legacy of a brutal past? Amrita Pritam, the noted Punjabi writer who lived in Lahore before moving to Delhi in 1947 and whose celebrated poem quoted in the epigraph became one of the most influential and representative works of partition, recalled: 'What I am against is religion—the partition saw to that. Everything I had been taught—about morals, values and the importance of religion—was shattered. I saw, heard and read about so many atrocities committed in the name of religion that it turned me against any kind of religion.'<sup>6</sup>

Sure enough, a common refrain in popular and scholarly writings was that the country's division was a colossal tragedy, a man-made catastrophe brought about by hot-headed and cynical politicians who failed to grasp the implications of division along religious lines.<sup>7</sup> For a change, the focus was on the popular experiences of violence and displacement,<sup>8</sup> on the impact of partition on the lives of hundreds of millions, including the trauma of women,<sup>9</sup> and the great variety of meanings they attached to the upheaval in and around their homes, fields and factories.<sup>10</sup> Although one should not make much of this shift in emphasis, the inclination to sideline the tall poppies in partition debates was in large part an expression of the growing disillusionment with high politics and its post-colonial practitioners.

The mood reflected in popular literature was decisively against the leaders of the subcontinent and their inability to resolve their perennial disputes over power-sharing. Doubtless, the colonial government's role in heightening Hindu-Muslim rivalries and the 'communal' implications of Bengal's partition in 1906 were recounted. So also the political blunders committed by Wavell during his inglorious years at the viceregal lodge, the impetuosity of Mountbatten who revelled in his role as arbiter, the destiny of millions sitting light on him, the collapse of the law-and-order machinery which was kept in a state of readiness to protect the Europeans but not the hapless victims of a civil war, and, finally, the arbitrary demarcation of the border by a British jurist who had neither been to India nor shown interest in Indian affairs." 'Nothing could illustrate,' commented the senior journalist Ajit Bhattacharjea, 'the callous haste with which partition was pushed through more strikingly than the last-minute arrangements' to demarcate the border.'<sup>12</sup>

According to the same writer, the onus none the less rested on Indian leaders, many of whom were primarily interested in ensuring that the transfer of power was not delayed and were therefore 'unaware and uncaring of the human cost of cutting a border through the heart of populous provinces.'<sup>11</sup> Illustrating Jawaharlal Nehru's 'lack of touch with grassroots

reality' and his 'self-delusion' that Pakistan would be compelled by its limitations to return to the greater Indian fold," Bhattacharjea recalled what Nehru told the author Leonard Mosley. 'We were tired men', India's first Prime Minister said in 1960,

and we **were** getting on in years too. Few of us could stand the prospect of going to prison again—and if we had stood out for a united India as we wished it, prison obviously awaited us. We saw the fires burning in the Punjab and heard of the killings. The plan of partition offered a way out and we took it.... We expected that partition would be temporary, that Pakistan was bound to come back to us.<sup>15</sup>

With the focus on high politics, the same old story does the rounds with unflinching regularity. The engagement continues to be with the 'major' political actors of the 1930s and '40s, who conducted their deliberations lazily in cosy surroundings and presided over the destiny of millions without their mandate. One is still encumbered with the details of what went wrong and who said what from the time the first Round Table Conference was held in London in 1930. Thanks to the publication of the voluminous transfer of power documents and the works of Gandhi, Nehru, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Vallabhbhai Patel and Rajendra Prasad, the spotlight remains on the 'mystery' behind the protracted and tortuous negotiations triggered by the Cripps offer and the Cabinet Mission.<sup>16</sup> The acrimonious exchanges thereafter, which have all along dominated the historiography on nationalism, 'communalism' and 'Muslim separatism', continue to haunt present-day writers. The search for the 'guilty men', based on personal reflections/memories or the blunt testimony of the socialist leader Rammanohar Lohia and the guarded 'revelations' of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, goes on relentlessly." As a result, the historians' history of partition 'is not a history of the lives and experiences of the people who lived through that time, of the way in which the events of the 1940s were constructed in their minds, of the identities and uncertainties that partition created or reinforced.'<sup>18</sup>

These concerns are not so widely reflected in Pakistan, where it is conveniently assumed that the 'partition issue', so to speak, was resolved well before 1947 by the weight of the two-nations theory.<sup>19</sup> The result is for everybody to see. Although Jinnah of Pakistan has been elevated to a high pedestal by the Cambridge-based scholar Akbar Ahmad, he would remain, unless rescued from his uncritical admirers, a lonely figure in the pages of history and in the gallery of nation-builders. If the desire is to come to terms with his political engagement and explain his extraordinary success, it is not at all helpful to press him into service to establish

Pakistan's identity as an Islamic state. Likewise, the use of religious symbols, long forsaken by that country's bureaucracy and military establishment, can hardly serve as the starting-point for a meaningful dialogue on partition.

The engagement of several writers in India, though sometimes marred by a majoritarian perspective, centres around 'secular nationalism', the main inspiration behind much of liberal-left activism from the 1920s. Their chief concern, though nowadays pooh-poohed in the 'post-modernist' discourse, is to examine why the secular elite and their ideologues, whose presence is grudgingly recognized across the ideological divide, failed to mediate between those warring factions/groups who used religion as a cover to pursue their worldly goals and ambitions. While detailing the cynical games played out on the Indian turf by the British, the League and the self-proclaimed 'nationalists' of every variety, they do not spare the Congress stalwarts, Gandhi, Nehru and Patel included, for their failure to guide the movements they initiated away from the forces of reactionary communalism.<sup>20</sup> They marshal a wide array of sources to comment on Hindu communalists disguising themselves as Congressmen and preventing the national movement from becoming truly inclusive. They point to Gandhi's role in introducing religion into politics, the anti-Muslim proclivities of the Hindu right, led by Patel in the 1940s, the Hindutva agenda of the Hindu Mahasabha, the Arya Samaj and the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh), and Nehru's arrogance and haughtiness in dealing with Jinnah and the Muslim League. At a time when the League was flexing its muscles, India's first Prime Minister is said to have jettisoned the plan for a Congress-League coalition in 1937 and dimmed the prospect of an enduring Hindu-Muslim partnership in Indian politics. Thus the mainstay of the argument is that the country's vivisection could have been avoided had Nehru acted judiciously at this and other critical junctures in the 1940s.<sup>21</sup>

Though such impressions rest on questionable assumptions, they cannot be brushed aside. "The real difficulty lies with the grand narrative itself and the tendency to generalize on the basis of the actions of a few. While the grand narrative illuminates several facets of the Pakistan story, it fails to incorporate the complexities and subtleties of institutional and structural changes introduced by the colonial government, as also the impact of socio-economic processes on caste-class and religion-based alignments. One does not, moreover, get a sense of why the two-nations theory was floated in March 1940 and not earlier, why and how different forms of identities and consciousness got translated into a powerful campaign

for a separate Muslim homeland, why partition created ten million refugees, led to the death of over a million people, and resulted in sexual savagery, including the rape and abduction of 75,000 women. Finally, the grand narrative does not reveal how the momentous happenings in August-September 1947 affected millions, uprooted from home and field and driven by sheer fear of death to seek safety across a line they had neither drawn nor desired. Clearly, the issue is not whether a million or more died or whether only 33 per cent of the country's population was affected by the communal eruption. The essential facts, as pointed out by the chief of the governor-general's staff, were that 'there is human misery on a colossal scale all around and millions are bereaved, destitute, homeless, hungry, thirsty—and worst of all desperately anxious and almost hopeless about their future.'

In order to explore these aspects and probe those areas which directly or indirectly impinged on the sudden and total breakdown of long-standing inter-community networks and alliances, it is necessary to locate the partition debates outside the conference chambers. Without being swayed by the paradigms set by the two-nations theory or the rhetoric of Indian nationalism, it is important to examine why most people, who had so much in common and had lived together for generations, could turn against their neighbours, friends and members of the same caste and class within hours and days.

Such tragedies have taken place in the former state of Yugoslavia, but it is unclear why they have gone unnoticed at research centres in the subcontinent, especially in areas worst affected by gruesome violence and migration. Is it because the ghosts of partition should be put to rest and not exhumed for frequent post-mortems? Or, is scholarship on the subject itself so woefully inadequate and contentious that it fails to excite the imagination of young graduates?

The perspective and attitudes on such vexed matters are bound to differ, though scholars in Pakistan tenaciously adhere to the belief that the creation of a Muslim nation was a legitimate act, the culmination of a historical process. Perhaps, it is hazardous to contest such inherited wisdom in a society where nationality is still defined, often clumsily, in purely Islamic terms, and religious minorities, Hindus and Ahmadiyyas (Qadianis) included, are left to stew in their own juice. Perhaps, partition does not convey the same meanings in Lahore and Islamabad as it does to some people living in Delhi, Lucknow, Calcutta and Dhaka. It is not bemoaned, for understandable reasons, as an epic tragedy but celebrated as a spectacular triumph of Islamic nationalism. After all, why should people

inhabiting the fertile districts of western Punjab or the rugged Frontier region mourn the break-up of India's fragile unity or lament the collapse of a common cultural and intellectual inheritance.<sup>7</sup> Some beleaguered *muhajirs* may still want to recall their Friendships and associations in Hindustan (*guzashata bada-paraston ki yaadgaar koi*), trace their intellectual and cultural links with Lucknow or Delhi, and occasionally revive memories of a bygone era by dipping into the writings of Saadat Hasan Manto, Ahmed Ali, Josh Malihabadi, Qurratulain Haider and Intizar Husain.<sup>21</sup> Yet the nostalgia for what has already become an imaginary homeland or the identification with Lucknow's grand *imambaras* or with the Sufi shrines of Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti's shrine at Ajmer and Nizamuddin Auliya in Delhi is gradually fading away with the passage of time and the passing of a generation. The Badshahi mosque, standing majestically as a symbol of India's secular dream, is as distant and remote as the *Masjid-i Qaraba*, the theme of Mohammed Iqbal's melodious poem. Aminabad in Lucknow or Ballimaran in old Delhi are far removed from the imagination of a generation that has grown up in a different social and cultural milieu.

The differences in approaches and perspectives should not, however, stand in the way of developing a common reference point for rewriting the *histories* of an event that cast its shadow over many aspects of State and society in the subcontinent. Despite decades of mutual suspicions and antipathies that have led to a mindless arms build-up and contributed to the backwardness and appalling poverty of the region, it is still possible for the peoples, rather than the governments, to make sense of the poignant writings of creative writers and poets and to reflect on how and why a generation was caught up in the cross-fire of religious bigotry, intolerance and sectarianism. Such an exercise can be undertaken without calling into question the legitimacy of one or the other varieties of nationalism.

For the initiative to get off the ground, it may be useful to revisit the old-fashioned theories on the syncretic and composite trajectory of Indian society and detail, as the writer Krishna Sobti does in her recent interview, the shared values and traditions that had enabled diverse communities to live harmoniously for centuries.<sup>24</sup> It is not necessary to be swayed, as is often the case, by the 'nationalist' historians who portrayed an idyllic picture of Hindu-Muslim relations during the pre-colonial days in order to strengthen intercommunity ties during the liberation struggle. It is none the less important to underline, despite valiant attempts to uncover the 'pre-history of communalism', the fusion and integration of the Hindu and Muslim communities at different levels and the value they attached

to religious tolerance and pluralism in their day-to-day living.<sup>25</sup> In so doing, one can put to rest those speculative theories that are designed to lend respectability to British colonialism and offer a corrective to the distorted Islamist or the Hindutva world-views which have, in equal measure, created widespread confusion in the minds of the common people and, in the process, caused incalculable damage to State and civil society.

The conclusions flowing from such formulations are bound to differ, yet the urgency to underline the commonality of interests amongst large segments of the population must be felt in India where Hindutva could well be the new mantra of civil society in the foreseeable future, and in neighbouring Pakistan, where ethnic and sectarian strife, combined with deep-seated regional and linguistic cleavage, reveals the limits of an agenda that is tied to wild and imaginary notions of Muslim/Islamic brotherhood or solidarity.

## II

The following three impressions are drawn from a period when Hindu-Muslim relations had reached their lowest watermark. The first is of Malcolm Darling, a civil servant in the Punjab for many years. During his travel in 1945-6, he found much similarity between the Hindu and Muslim communities in the tract between the Beas and Sutlej and the Chenab and Ravi rivers. He noticed, something he would have done on numerous occasions during his long career as a British civil servant, how often Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs had a common ancestor in a village, how a Hindu from Karnal proudly announced that the Muslim inhabitants of the fifty neighbouring villages belonged to his clan and were prepared to return to the Hindu fold on the one condition that the Hindus would give them their daughters in marriage. Although the condition was refused, Hindus and Muslims of the area continued to interchange civilities at marriage, inviting the mullah or the Brahman, to share in the feasting. Malcolm Darling wondered how Pakistan was to be fitted into these conditions. 'What a hash politics threatens to make of this tract,' he observed, 'where Hindu, Muslim and Sikh are as mixed up as the ingredients of a well-made *pilau* (rice cooked with fowl or meat).'<sup>26</sup>

Mohammad Mujeeb, once vice-chancellor of Delhi's Jamia Millia Islamia, had a similar experience in Bihar soon after the orgy of violence had taken a heavy toll of human lives. While visiting the grave of a Sufi saint on the bank of the river Ganges, he found that the Muslims living in the shrine had already abandoned the place. But soon a group of Hindu

women appeared. They performed the same rituals their ancestors had observed for generations. It appeared 'as if nothing had happened that affected their sentiments of veneration for the tomb of a Muslim saint.'<sup>27</sup>

Finally, consider the reports of Phillips Talbot, written for the Institute of Current World Affairs in New York on the eve of independence and published recently in the daily newspaper, *The Hindu*. For one thing, Talbot was struck by the countrywide expression of Hindu-Muslim cordiality during the independence celebrations.

For twenty long and bloody weeks after 16 August, 1946, Hindus avoided entering Muslim neighbourhoods and vice versa. Communal clashes and deaths were daily occurrences. Yet at the climax of Independence celebrations this week, Hindus and Muslims mixed together freely. Many Hindus visited mosques on the 18th and distributed sweets to Muslims who were observing their Id festival. ... It was a spectacular truce, if not a peace treaty, between the two communities. Similarly, in Delhi and Bombay I saw Hindus and Muslims playing hand in hand. Reports of the same nature came from most places except the still-troubled Punjab.<sup>28</sup>

Talbot's own explanation was that the political parties desired peace and friendship between the communities, though he laid greater stress on 'the popular revulsion against the constant dislocation and actual fear of life during the last year.' 'Terror,' he added,

is an enervating emotion. I've seen neighbourhoods so distraught by the medieval lack of personal security that they could think of nothing else. I think that people everywhere used the excitement of the celebrations to try to break the vicious cycle of communal attacks and retaliations. How permanent the change may be is yet to be seen.<sup>29</sup>

Such impressions need to be drawn into the discussions on partition so that the past is not judged through our recent encounters with Hindu-Muslim violence in India. It is just as important to delineate the multiple strands in the Muslim League movement, underline its complexity, assess its ideological orientation afresh, and explore the mobilization strategies adopted by Jinnah after he returned from his home in Hampstead to plunge into the humdrum of Indian politics. In addition to having greater access to source materials, this is an opportune moment, fifty years after independence, to revise and reconsider established theories on partition, introduce a more nuanced discourse, and stay clear of the conventional wisdom that we, the generation born after independence, have inherited on the theme of 'communal' politics generally and the Pakistan movement in particular. As 'old orthodoxies recede before the flood of fresh historical evidence and earlier certitudes are overturned by newly detected contradiction,' this is the time to heal 'the multiple fractures which turned the promised dawn of freedom into a painful moment of separation.

For example, one of the points adequately documented, though not sufficiently considered in secondary literature, is that not everyone who raised or rallied around the green flag was uniformly wedded to or inspired by a shared ideal of creating an Islamic society. The reality is that many were pushed into taking religious/Islamic positions, while many others, especially the landed classes in Punjab and the United Provinces (UP), used the Muslim League as a vehicle to articulate, defend and promote their material interests. In fact, the intensity of emotions expressed in the 1940s, which is so often invoked in the subcontinent to create popular myths and stereotypical images, had more to do with the political and economic anxieties of various social classes than with a profound urge to create a Sharia-based society. Today, the issue is not the legitimacy of a movement but to place in perspective the dynamics of power politics in a colonial context. In fact, a rounded picture of the Pakistan movement is possible only if we contest the exaggerated claims made in the name of Islam, then and now, by the Islamists and the proponents of the two-nations theory.

In sum, the clamour for a separate nation, though pressed vigorously in the post-war years with much popular backing and enthusiasm, was raised not so much by the Muslim divines, many of whom were waiting on the fringes of Indian politics to intervene on behalf of Islam, but by the vociferous professional groups in UP, Bihar, the princely state of Hyderabad, and the small but upcoming trading and banking communities in Gujarat, Bombay and Calcutta. Interestingly enough, the Muslim landlords of UP were the first to raise the banner of revolt against the League; in fact, the Nawab of Chattari and Nawab Mohammad Yusuf of Jaunpur broke away from the Muslim League Parliamentary Board in April 1936 in order to revive 'a mixed party in preference to a Muslim communal organization'. They changed course once the Congress ministry adopted the UP Tenancy Bill and Nehru and his comrades became more and more strident in their socialistic pronouncements. 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. Their chief goal is reflected in the following conversation between Saleem and his father Hamid in Atria Hosain's (died in January 1998) celebrated novel *Sunlight on a Broken Column*:

Saleem was saying, 'In the final analysis, what you are facing is the struggle for power by the bourgeoisie. It is not really a peasants' movement, but when it comes to a division of spoils even class interests are forgotten. For example the

four hundred or so *Taluqdars* insisted the British should give them higher representation than the thousands of other landlords.'

'It is not a question of numbers alone,' protested Uncle Hamid, sitting up and waving his pipe in negation. 'We Taluqdars have ancient rights and privileges, given by a special charter, which we have to safeguard.' . . .

'Yes, yes, of course. One respects tradition. One fights for one's self, one's interests. But you cannot expect the tenants to love you for it.'

That is because so-called reforms are destroying the personal ties between landlord and peasant. Surely a Government and its changing officers cannot have personal relations or traditional ties with the tenants? With whom are the people in constant touch? Their landlords or local political leaders? . . .

'How can landlords but be uneasy at the thought of such reserves of power being vested in officials at a time when it is uncertain what class of persons will obtain political power?'. . . (Uncle Hamid)

Saleem could not let an argument die an unnatural death. He began, 'What you said, father, about the landlords' fear of abolition is the crux of the matter. This fear for their existence is the basis for the formation of a new party which is interested in keeping the status quo intact, that is favoured by the British and is fundamentally opposed to progressive, national movements. . . .

'Words! Theories! Irresponsible talk!' Uncle Hamid burst out. 'I am a part of feudalism, and proud to be. I shall fight for it. It is my heritage—and yours. Let me remind you of that. And that you enjoy its "reactionary" advantages. You talk very glibly of its destruction, but you live by its existence. It is, in fact, your only livelihood.'<sup>32</sup>

No wonder, the landed elements in UP, as also the Jamaat-i Islami and sections of the *ulama* connected with the Barelwi 'school', Nadwat al-*ulama*, Firangi Mahal and Deoband, hitched their fortunes with the Muslim League at different points of time and for different reasons. Their overall strategy, one that suited the Raj during and after World War II, was to masquerade their hidden agenda and project the Congress, their main rival in the political world, as a 'Hindu' party inimical to Islam. Once the League bandwagon rolled on, other aggrieved groups, especially those who failed to secure employment, contracts or seats on regional and local bodies, jumped into the fray as defenders of the faith.

Still, Pakistan was not everybody's dream. Nor was Jinnah everyone's *Quaid* (leader). "In this respect, one should not, as is generally the case with both the Hindu and Muslim majoritarian discourses, lose sight of the perspectives of those who were intellectually committed to secular nationalism or were actively engaged in repudiating the two-nations theory. Their voices, which have been stifled by 'secular' as well as 'communal' histories, should not be relegated to a historian's footnote. Indeed, the part played by those Muslims, who are patronizingly described as 'Nationalist Muslims', the Khudai Khidmatgars in the North-West

Frontier, who were eventually let down by the dispirited Congress leadership on the eve of independence, the *ulama* of Deoband and the Momins in Bihar, should not be submerged beneath the rationalization of the 'victors'. Their main contribution, exemplified by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's exemplary conduct and performance,<sup>4</sup> was to keep alive the vision of a secular India. These 'marginal' voices should be recovered to rewrite the histories of partition.<sup>5</sup>

For these and other reasons, it is appropriate to ask if the Muslim League movement was as cohesive and unified as is made out to be by some writers in India and Pakistan. If the Congress was faction-ridden and ideologically fragmented, so was the League.<sup>36</sup> This is illustrated by the depth and intensity of jealousies and internal discord in the organization, the regional groupings, the *Ajlaf-Ashraf* divide, the Shia-Sunni strife at many places, and the unending doctrinal disputes between the theologians and the followers of the Barelwi and Deobandi 'schools'. Such differences, which are conveniently overlooked in the histories of the freedom movement in Pakistan, were real and not imaginary. If so, it will not do to portray the Muslim Leaguers as earnest and self-sacrificing crusaders or equate them with the *Muhajirs* or *Ansars* of Prophet Mohammad. What is perhaps challenging, as indeed intellectually rewarding, is to probe those critical areas where the 'faithful', despite having projected themselves as a community acting in unison, were themselves so hopelessly split. Such an exercise, far from reducing or tarnishing the reputation of historical figures, would enrich our knowledge and understanding of a complex phenomenon. Arguably, if we know our leaders better and question their reading of the authentic and vibrant histories of shared memories and experiences, we may not repeat their mistakes and errors of judgement which cost the nation dear at the stroke of the midnight hour on 14-15 August 1947.

### III

The decision about the creation of Pakistan had just been announced and people were indulging in all kinds of surmises about the pattern of life that would emerge. But no one's imagination could go very far. The sardarji sitting in front of me repeatedly asked me whether I thought Mr Jinnah would continue to live in Bombay after the creation of Pakistan or whether he would resettle in Pakistan. Each time my answer would be the same, 'Why should he leave Bombay? I think he'll continue to live in Bombay and continue visiting Pakistan.' Similar guesses were being made about the towns of Lahore and Gurdaspur too, and no one knew which town would fall to the share of India and which to Pakistan."

In the specific context of the Pakistan movement, the professed ideology of the nation-state itself, though celebrated on both sides of the border, had no significant impact on or relevance to the millions living in India or Pakistan. Contrary to the exaggerated claims made in both countries, most people were either indifferent to or unconcerned with national borders or the newly created geographic entities being laboriously demarcated. National borders were political constructs, imagined projections of territorial power. Although they appeared in deceptively precise forms, they reflected, at least initially, merely the mental images of politicians, lawyers, and intellectuals. Their practical consequences for most people were quite different.<sup>38</sup> Rajinder Sachar, jurist and human rights activist who has spent a lifetime struggling with his memories of Lahore, recalled: 'One day I ran into a Muslim villager who had come to Lahore all the way from Sargodha looking for my grandfather, a well-known criminal lawyer. Poor chap he didn't realize that partition had taken place and that the Hindus had left. It just shows how long it took for the implications of partition to sink in.'<sup>39</sup> Indeed, though such people were repeatedly fed with ill-informed and biased views and interpretations about the Other, they were neither committed to the land of Aryavarta nor the *dar al-Islam*. They had no destination to reach, no mirage to follow. Even though the trains had started carrying people to their destination, they were unclear whether Lahore, with its splendid Mughal monuments, beautiful gardens and boulevards, would be part of India or Pakistan. They did not know whether Delhi, the city of Mir Taqi Mir and Mirza Ghalib, would remain in Gandhi's India or Jinnah's Pakistan. Manto captures the mood in his brilliant story *Toba Tek Singh*, a character from a lunatic asylum. This is what he writes:

As to where Pakistan was located, the inmates knew nothing. That was why both the mad and the partially mad were unable to decide whether they were now in India or in Pakistan. If they were in India where on earth was Pakistan? And if they were in Pakistan, then how come that until only the other day it was India? . . .

Those who had tried to solve this mystery had become utterly confused when told that Sialkot, which used to be in India, was now in Pakistan. It was anybody's guess what was going to happen to Lahore, which was currently in Pakistan, but could slide into India any moment. It was still possible that the entire subcontinent of India might become Pakistan. And who could say if both India and Pakistan might not entirely vanish from the map of the world one day? . . .

Just before sunrise, Bisham Singh, the man who had stood on his legs for fifteen years, screamed and as officials from the two sides rushed towards him, he collapsed on the ground.

There, behind barbed wire, on one side, lay India and behind more barbed wire, on the other side, lay Pakistan. In between, on a bit of earth which had no name, lay Toba Tek Singh.

The paradox of how borders simultaneously separate and unite is discussed elsewhere.<sup>40</sup> The significance of Manto's description lies in describing an existentialist reality—the separation of people living on both sides who had a long history of cultural and social contact—and the paradoxical character of borders being a metaphor of the ambiguities of nation-building.<sup>41</sup> He was, in essence, offering a way of correcting the distortions inherent in State-centred national histories. 'India' or 'Pakistan' were mere territorial abstractions to most people who were ignorant of how Mountbatten's Plan or the Radcliffe Award would change their destinies and tear them apart from their social and cultural moorings. In their world-view, there was no nationalism, religious or composite. They were blissfully unaware that their fate, which had rested in the hands of the exploiting classes for centuries, would be settled after Mountbatten's three days of 'diplomacy' leading to the 3rd June Plan, and that the frontiers would be decided by Cyril Radcliffe in just seven weeks and 'a continent for better or worse divided'.<sup>42</sup> They had no clue whatsoever that these vain, insensitive and conceited representatives of the Crown, having received the mandate from Clement Attlee's Labour government to preside over the liquidation of the most important imperial possession of all time, would abandon them in mid-ocean 'with a fire in the deck and ammunition in the hold'. Nobody had warned them how Mountbatten's mentor Winston Churchill had, likewise, sat with T.E. Lawrence and the Emir Faisal in Cairo as Colonial Secretary in 1922 drawing nation-states on the map of what had previously been the Ottoman Empire. But then, how were they to know that the colonial powers divide people and territories when in ascendancy, as also in retreat.

#### IV

For a long time I refused to accept the consequences of the revolution, which was set off by the partition of the country. I still feel the same way; but I suppose, in the end, I came to accept this nightmarish reality without self-pity or despair. In the process I tried to retrieve from this man-made sea of blood, pearls of a rare hue, by writing about the single-minded dedication with which men had killed men, about the remorse felt by some of them, about the tears shed by murderers who could not understand why they still had some human feelings left. All this and more, I put in my book *Siyah Hashye*. (Saadat Hasan Manto)"

Every time I visited Amritsar, I felt captivated. But the city this time presented the look of a cremation *ghat*, eerie and stinking . . . . The silence was so perfect that even the faint hiss of steam from the stationary engine sounded a shriek.... The brief stoppage seemed to have lingered into eternity till the engine whistled and gave a gentle pull.... We left Chheharta behind and then Atari and when we entered Wagah and then Harbanspura everyone in the train felt uplifted. A journey through a virtual valley of destruction had ended when finally the train came to a halt at Platform No. 2—Lahore, the moment was as gratifying as the consummation of a dream."

Scores of writers reveal the other face of freedom, the woes of divided families, the agony and trauma of abducted women, the plight of migrants and the harrowing experiences of countless people who boarded the train that took them to the realization of their dream, but of whom not a man, woman or child survived the journey. A Zahid in Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column* or a Saddam in Masoom Reza Rahi's *Aadha Gaon* (Haifa-Village) offer a vivid and powerful portrayal of a fragmented and wounded society.<sup>45</sup> What political debate will never fully do—and the reason we so badly need the literature—is defeat the urge to lay blame, which keeps animosity alive. Only the literature truly evokes the sufferings of the innocent, whose pain is more universal and ultimately a vehicle of more honest reconciliation than political discourse.<sup>46</sup>

Board the *Peshawar Express* or the *Train to Pakistan* to discover the implications of what happened before and after the fateful, midnight hour. Consider the exchanges between Choudhry Mohammad Ali, a well-known landlord of Rudauli in Barabanki district (UP) and his daughter who left her father to settle in Karachi, or the correspondence of Brahm Nath Dutt, father of the historian V.N. Datta, to capture the poignancy of the moment. Turn to Rahi's Gangauli village—a world where people wrestle to come to terms with competing ideologies—in order to uncover how the intricate and almost imperceptible way in which the politics of partition worked its way into the interstices of people's consciousness.<sup>47</sup> Read Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column* or *Phoenix Fled* to discover how the Pakistan movement split families on ideological lines and created fears and uncertainties in the minds of people. To read her novel and collection of short stories is, 'as if one had parted a curtain, or opened a door, and strayed into the past.'<sup>43</sup>

Indeed, if the *histories of* partition are to be rewritten, there are several reasons why we must judiciously draw upon the intellectual resources made available to us by such creative writers. They expose the inadequacy of numerous narratives on independence and partition, compel us to explore

fresh themes and adopt new approaches that have eluded the grasp of social scientists, and provide a foundation for developing an alternative discourse to current expositions of a general theory on inter-community relations. Their strength lies in representing a grim and sordid contemporary reality without drawing religion or a particular community as the principal reference point. In their stories, the experiences of each community distinctly mirror one another, indeed reach out to and clutch at one another. No crime, no despair, no grief in exile belongs uniquely to anyone.<sup>49</sup> In the words of Krishna Sobti, whose best-known Hindi writings on partition are *Sikka Badal Gaya* and *Zindaginama*, the fiction written about that cataclysmic event preserved 'essential human values'.<sup>50</sup> That is probably why,

we emerge from the literature with a mistrust towards group solidarity of an oppositional bent. If so, we must emerge at the same time, paradoxically, with a conviction to oppose such mistrust with trust in the goodness of the human life-urge wherever we find it. Indeed, we emerge from the literature as searchers of such trust. If we find it in the solitary dissidence of even a single person, we feel obliged to offer him or her our companionship. And if we find it stitched into whole communities, we come away not necessarily more pious, but inspired. The literature as a whole seeds pathos for the suffering and inhumanity of the partition, and related instances of cultural chauvinism, but not merely so. It also sprouts a countervailing protest, a voice of justice that must be the surging of our humanity itself—something greater than our bestiality—within us. In this sense the literature does what religious leaders in each community failed to do: to make communities forces for the affirmation of humanity broadly.... If religious politics worked nefariously in favour of partition, it was because ecumenical religious politics never developed. We are in a different position than the men and women of August 1947. Our choices are not limited to exile, death or resignation....<sup>51</sup>

In other words, if creative writings can still stir the individual and collective imagination of sensitive readers in the subcontinent, there is no reason why people on both sides of the Wagah border cannot share the anguish of Faiz Ahmad Faiz and, at the same time, echo the optimism and plea of Ali Sardar Jafri in the following lines:

Turn aao Gulshan-i Lahore se chaman bardosh  
Hum ayeen subha Banaras ki raushni lekar  
Himalaya ki hawaon ki taazgi lekar.  
Phir uske baad ye puchain ke kaun dushman hai?

[You come covered with flowers from the Garden of Lahore  
We bring to you the light and radiance of the morning of Banaras,  
the freshness of the winds of the Himalayas.  
And then we ask who the enemy is.]

## NOTES

1. This essay does not cover the historical writings on the Bengal province, especially Bangladesh where the histories of Partition are being written differently since 1971. For a recent insight and references to other works, see Willem van Schendel and Erik Jan Zürcher (eds), *Opting out of the Nation: Identity Politics in Central, South and West Asia* (London, 1998).

2. Krishna Sobti, In conversation with Alok Bhalla, in Geeti Sen (ed.), *Crossing Boundaries* (Delhi, 1997), p. 78.

3. N.N. Vohra, '91, Garden Town', in *ibid.*, p. 54-

4. Some years ago, the historian Gyanendra Pandey commented that the history of violence accompanying Partition had not been written. Recently, Ashis Nandy bemoaned that the finest creative minds of India had maintained a profound, almost cultivated silence about Partition and the bloodbath. *Times of India*, 20 July 1997. See also, Urvashi Butalia on the 'Official Silence', *The Hindu*, 21 September 1997. My principal interest in this essay centres around articles published in newspapers, magazines and journals during the fiftieth year of Independence. I have, however, used scholarly writings, mostly published in 1996-97, to comment on the theme of Partition.

The Delhi-based weekly newsmagazine, *Outlook*, brought out a special issue on 28 May 1997. The *Asian Age*, edited by M.J. Akbar, published extracts from books on partition, personal memories and recollections and interviews. See, for example, the reports of the Reuters correspondent Don Campbell who arrived in India in March 1947 and spent the next fifteen months in Delhi. The coverage in the newspaper *The Hindu* (New Delhi) was quite extensive. The impressions of Phillips Talbot, an American, were particularly interesting.

5. For example, Urvashi Butalia, 'Blood', *Granta* (London), March 1997; Sunil Mehra, 'Sufferers and Survivors', *Outlook*, 28 May 1997, pp. 32-3; 'Bridging a Great Divide', *India Today*, 18 August 1997; Anita Mukhopadhyaya, 'The Last Journey', *The Hindu*, 31 August 1997; Ajeet Cour, 'I've Seen the Rootless Trees Wobbling and Walking', *Hindustan Times*, 4 January 1998 (courtesy: Nonica Datta); C.M. Nairn, 'Pakistan or Hindustan', *Communalism Comfcat*, September 1997; 'India's Unforgettable Divide', *The Guardian* (London), 30 July 1997; Iqbal Masud, *Dream Merchants, Politicians and Partition: Memoirs of an Indian Muslim* (Delhi, 1997).

6. *Femina* (Bombay), 1 August 1997. I am grateful to Nonica Datta for this reference.

7. For example, Patrick French, *Liberty or Death: India's Journey to Independence and Division* (London, 1997).

8. See, for example, the scholarly contributions of Gyanendra Pandey, 'Community and Violence', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 9 August 1997, and his 'Partition and Independence in Delhi: 1947-48', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 6 September 1997; also, Azhar Abbas, 'The Twice Displaced', *Outlook*, 28 May 1997, p. 66. For insights into ethnic violence in Sri Lanka in 1983 that had many features in common with the Hindu-Muslim riots before and after Independence, see S.J. Pambiah, *Ethnic Fratricide and the Dismantling of Democracy* (Chicago, 1986).

9. Urvashi Butalia, 'Blood'; Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India's Partition* (Delhi, 1998).

10. Mushirul Hasan, *Legacy of a Divided Nation: India's Muslims since Independence* (London, 1997), and India partitioned: *The Other Face of Freedom* (Delhi, 1997, 2nd edn).

11. For a critique of Mountbatten, see N.N. Vohra, '91 Garden Town' and F.S. Aijazuddin, 'Same to Same', from a different perspective, in Geeti Sen (ed.), *Crossing Boundaries*.

12. *Outlook*, 28 May 1997. Notice the following letter of Cyril Radcliffe to his son: 'I thought you would like to get a letter from India with a crown on the envelope. After tomorrow evening nobody will ever again be allowed to use such stationery and after 150 years British rule will be over in India... I am going to see Mountbatten sworn as the first governor-general of the Indian Union.... and then I station myself firmly on the Delhi airport until an aeroplane from England comes along. Nobody in India will love me for the award about the Punjab and Bengal and there will be roughly 80 million people with a grievance who will begin looking for me. I do not want them to find me. I have worked and travelled and sweated—oh I have sweated the whole time.' Quoted in Sunil Khilnani, *The Idea of India* (London, 1997), p. 201.

13. Ajit Bhattacharjea, 'Cyril's Scalpel', *Outlook*, 23 July 1997, p. 8.

14. Thus the following view: 'Looking back 50 years, the haste and self-delusion of Congress and Muslim leaders that contributed to the bloodiest religious cleansing in history emerges with disturbing clarity.' *Outlook*, 28 May 1997.

15. Leonard Mosley, *The Lost Days of the Raj* (London, 1961), p. 77.

16. For example, the presidential address delivered by Professor V.N. Datta at the Indian History Congress held in Madras, 1996.

17. Kuldeep Nayar, 'Was Pakistan Necessary?', *Indian Express*, 15 August 1997, and his 'Partition: An Inevitability', *The Hindu* (special issue on 'India'), August 1997. For earlier accounts of who is to blame?, see Chimanlal Setalvad, *India Divided* (Bombay, n.d.), pp. 4-7.

18. Gyanendra Pandey, 'The Prose of Otherness', David Arnold and David Hardiman (eds), *Subaltern Studies VIII: Essays in Honour of Ranajit Guha* (Delhi, 1994), p. 194.

19. This is the common refrain in the writings of Ayesha Jalal and Farzana Shaikh. For his critique of Jalal's work, see Gyanendra Pandey, 'The Prose of Otherness', pp. 209-10. And for her response, see 'Secularists, Subalterns and the Stigma of "Communalism": Partition Historiography Revisited', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 33(1), 1996, pp. 93-103. The tendency to exaggerate the difference in perspectives and to castigate each other for that reason is the hallmark of recent historiography on South Asia. Young and upcoming social scientists, many of whom have not even written their doctoral dissertations, are engaged in polemical writings. They regard this as a short-cut to establishing their scholarly reputation in the West. Ayesha Jalal's critique of my introduction to *India's Partition: Process, Strategy and Mobilisation* (Delhi, 1999, 5th impression) is based on a misunderstanding of my overall argument. Yet, I respect her views and her understanding of a highly complex phenomenon which should not, incidentally, be reduced to polemical exchanges among fellow-historians.

20. In a perceptive article, Aijaz Ahmad has critiqued 'the Congress-inspired mythology'. His analysis suggests (a) that the politics of caste and communalism was inherent in the structure of the colonial society itself; (b) that the reform movements usually contributed to solidifying such identities rather than weakening them in favour of ecumenical culture and a non-denominational politics; and (c) that the national movement itself, including the majority of the Congress under Gandhi, was deeply 'complicit in a transactional mode of politics which involved bargaining among the elites and a conception of secularism which was little more than an accommodation of the self-enclosed orthodoxies. Given the immensity of this historical weight the wonder

is not that there was a partition but that there one' (emphasis added). *The Hindu*, 'India' (special number), p. 28.

21. The judgement is harsh, although many contemporary observers believed that Jinnah may not have had the space to press his campaign in the UP if the coalition issue was amicably resolved. The Governor of UP felt that way. Harry Haig to Linlithgow, 3 June 1939, file no. 115/6, IOLR. See also, my introduction to *India's Partition*, pp. 12-15.

22. There is unmistakable evidence to suggest that talks for a Congress-Muslim League alliance were initiated some time in March-April 1937. Although Nehru had opposed all pacts and coalitions with small groups at the top'. (To Abul Wali, 30 March 1937, All India Congress Committee [AICC] Papers, G-5, K.W. 1, 1937, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library), Abdul Wali of Barabanki (UP) referred to a scheme 'being hatched with the help of Pantji [G.B. Pant] and Mohanlal [Saxena] to bring about coalition between the Congress and League parties in the Assembly'. To Nehru, 28 March 1937, AICC Papers. The governor of UP reported on 7 April that the League was looking forward to an alliance with the Congress and felt that 'at present it looks as if the new government will gradually attract to itself a fair number of the Muslim Leaguers.'

23. See Masud Hasan Shahab Dehlavi, in Mushirul Hasan (ed.), *India Partitioned* vol. 2, pp. 184-95.

24. Interview with Alok Bhalla, in Geeti Sen (ed.), *Crossing Boundaries*, p. 66. And the comment of J.S. Butalia, a retired journalist: 'I was born and brought up in a predominantly Muslim village, Butala. There were 300 Muslim families and only 10 or 15 Hindu homes but we lived in such close harmony that it was difficult to make out who was who. A Hindu-Muslim conflict was something we had not imagined even in our worst dreams. It is with a sense of horror and shame that I look back ... but, finally, I am overwhelmed by nostalgia.' *The Hindu*, 'India' (special number), 15 August 1997, p. 32. For Bengal, see Anita Mukhopadhyaya, 'The Last Journey' *The Hindu*, 31 August 1997.

25. See the contributions of Rakshat Puri, Muchkund Dubey and Sumanta Banerjea, in Geeti Sen (ed.), *Crossing Boundaries*.

26. This is quoted in full in Mushirul Hasan, *Legacy of a Divided Nation*, p. 168.

27. See Mushirul Hasan, *India's Partition* p. 405. For Punjab, see Sobti, pp. 67, 69-70. For Bengal, see Ranabir Samaddar (ed.), *Reflections on Partition in the East* (Delhi, 1997), and the review of the book by Sumanta Banerjee in *Biblio* (Delhi), July-August 1997, pp. 40-1; and Peter van der Veer, 'Playing or Praying: A Sufi Saint's Day in Surat', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 51(3), August 1992, pp. 545-64.

28. Phillips Talbot, 'Thus Independence Came to India', *The Hindu*, 4 and 24 August 1997.

29. Talbot filed this report on 10 August 1947.

30. I have borrowed these lines from Ayesha Jalal, 'Secularists, Subalterns and the Stigma of "Communalism"', p. 1.

31. Nawab of Chattari to Hailey, 28 October 1936, Malcolm Hailey Papers file no. 28c, IOLR.

32. Attia Hosain, *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (Delhi, 1992 edn), pp. 231-3, 234.

33. In this respect, my reading of the Pakistan movement is different from Avesha Jalal.

34. The following impression of Azad by Kanji Dwarkadas is interesting. 'Abul Kalam Azad', he wrote, 'is dignified and level-headed, but his health is giving way. Jinnah dislikes him heartily and a few years ago he called him the "show boy" of the

Congress and in private conversations Jinnah says much worse things about Abul Kalam Azad.' 'India---April 1944 to November 1945: What Next.?', 28 November 1945 (typescript), George Lumley Papers, IOLR London.

35. See Gyanendra Pandey, 'The Prose of Otherness', p. 214.

36. In fact, Jinnah exhorted various regional groups and other factions to overcome their differences and rival claims so that the League could concentrate all its energies towards the achievement of Pakistan. 'We shall have time to quarrel ourselves,' he said, 'and we shall have time when these differences will have to be remedied. We shall have time for domestic programmes and politics, but first get the Government. This is a nation without any territory or any government.' Quoted in Khalid B. Sayeed, *Pakistan: The Formative Phase, 1857-1948* (London, 1968), p. 297.

37. Bhisham Sahni, 'We Have Arrived in Amritsar', in Stephen Alter and Vimal Dissanayake (eds), *The Penguin Book of Modern Short Stories* (New Delhi, 1989), pp. 180-7.

38. These lines are based on Michael Baud and Willem van Schendel, 'Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands', in *Journal of World History* 8(2), 1997, pp. 211-2.

39. Quoted in *The Hindu*, 'India' (special number), 15 August 1947, p. 28.

40. Baud and van Schendel, 'Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands', p. 242.

41. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983; reprint, New York, 1991); E.J. Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983).

42. This is a line from W.H. Auden. See Khilnani, p. 200.

43. For my translation of *Siyah Hashye* ('Black Margins'), in this volume, pp. 88-101.

44. Mohammad Saeed, *Lahore: A Memoir* (Lahore, 1989), p. 94.

45. On *Aadha Gaon*, see Sudhir Chandra, 'The Harvest of Fear: A Retrospective Critique of Hindu-Muslim Relations in Two Hindi Novels', in T.V. Sathyamurthy, (ed.), *Region, Religion, Caste, Gender and Culture in Contemporary India*, vol. 3 (Delhi, 1996).

46. Jason Francisco, in this volume, pp. 371-93.

47- Chandra, 'The Harvest of Fear', p. 195.

48. Anita Desai, 'Introduction', *Phoenix Field* (Delhi, 1988), p. viii.

49. Jason Francisco, in this volume, pp. 371-93.

50. Geeti Sen (ed.), *Crossing Boundaries*, p. 77; and Alok Bhalla (ed.), *Stories about the Partition of India*, 3 vols (Delhi, 1994).

51. Jason Francisco, in this volume, pp. 371-93.

52. This le.prous daybreak, dawn night's fangs have mangled—

This is not that long-looked-for break of that day,  
 Not that clear dawn in quest of which those comrades  
 Set out, believing that in heaven's wtde void  
 Somewhere must be the stars' last halting place,  
 Somewhere the verge of night's slow-washing tide.  
 Somewhere an anchorage for the ship of heartache.

## I The Polemic