

Revisiting History and the Question of Identity: A Comparative Study of *The Shadow Lines* and *Tamas*

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By

Pardeep Kaur

Supervisor- Dr. Rajinder Kumar Sen



Centre for Comparative Literature
School of Languages, Literature and Culture
Central University of Punjab, Bathinda
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CERTIFICATE

I declare that the dissertation entitled “Revisiting History and the Question of Identity: A Comparative Study of The Shadow Lines and Tamas” has been prepared by me under the guidance of Dr. Rajinder Kumar Sen, Assistant Professor, Centre for Comparative Literature, School of Languages, Literature and Culture, Central University of Punjab. No part of this dissertation has formed the basis for the award of any degree or fellowship previously.

(Pardeep Kaur)

Centre for Comparative Literature,
School of Languages, Literature and Culture,
Central University of Punjab,
Bathinda-151001.

Date:

CERTIFICATE

I certify that Pardeep Kaur has prepared her dissertation entitled “Revisiting History and the Question of Identity: A Comparative Study of The Shadow Lines and Tamas” for the award of M.Phil degree of the Central University of Punjab, under my guidance. She has carried out this work at the Centre for Comparative Literature, School of Languages, Literature and Culture, Central University of Punjab.

(Dr. Rajinder Kumar Sen)

Assistant Professor

Centre for Comparative Literature,
School of Languages, Literature and Culture,
Central University of Punjab,
Bathinda-151001.

Date:

ABSTRACT

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Name of student : Pardeep Kaur
Registration Number : CUP/MPh-PhD/SLLC/CPL/2011-12/07
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Identity is the central issue in contemporary literary discourses. The reason behind such centrality lies in the identity crisis faced by individuals or groups due to political and historical movements. In the postmodern world, history is regarded as a process wherein the writing of history has become more central than the history itself. Literature is one of the tools through which history of a particular time gets representation and such representation of an era gives voice to the common people who are ignored in the metanarrative of national history. The aim of present research, a comparative study of Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* and Bhisham Sahni's *Tamas* is to understand the nature of history and identity. Amitav Ghosh, the postmodernist Indian English writer has huge body of work to his credit; varying in travel essays, novels and historical non-fiction. The present novel deals with the issues of fragmented identities and histories based upon fragmented memories. Bhisham Sahni, a progressive Hindi writer and humanist gives realistic representation to the mid twentieth century India in his novel highlighting constructed divisions among different sections of the society and partition of the country as a consequence. The idea of 'voice to the voiceless' is materialised through relocating the subalterns in history. The comparative analysis has been carried out with an objective to trace the similar impact of dominant discourses upon human subjects. In both the novels, the passive subaltern is suffering and is ignored in official history. It is not about what is in history rather it is about what is missing in history.

(Pardeep Kaur)

(Supervisor- Dr.Rajinder Kumar Sen)

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Chapter 1

Introduction: History, Identity and Literature

Modern literary works deal with the question of identity, the identity of an individual or a group. The characters being representative of real life individuals become an important tool in the search for identity. The reason behind the urgency of the issues related to identity can be viewed in Komalesha's words,

[O]ne of the chief reasons behind why it has occupied a centre-stage in the contemporary world is that it is in crisis today. . . any study that aims to deal with identity has to invariably include identification too because, if identities are positions, identification is a process through which these positions are attained. (Komalesha 11)

History is a process through which certain identity positions are asserted. But the nature of history itself does not remain the same over a long period of time. Definitions of history as well as identity go on changing from fixed to fluid. The aim of this research is to seek how history plays a role in the construction of identity as well as how assertion of identity by different groups leads to historical upheavals. With the passage of time, meaning of the word 'history' has changed from "a narrative account of events" (Williams 146) in its traditional sense to "an unending dialogue between the present and the past" (Carr 24) in the postmodern sense as E.H. Carr defines it.

History as myth, story, discourse, and as partial representative of society are the concepts dealt with in postmodern studies for the formation of coherent identity. The word History has been replaced with histories with the logic that if the world is divided into nations having internal divisions on the basis of caste, creed, race, class and gender, it cannot find a full and unified representation in single interpretation of the past. For those, using Karl Marx's words "cannot represent themselves" (qtd. in Said Orientalism) groups like Subaltern Studies Group etc. come forward to provide representation. The rewriting process of history is elementary component in the decolonisation process. Once the dark clouds of colonisation are over, the marginalised people would find enlightened subjects in their own histories and the histories for the future too. Once the memories are materialised in the form of documented histories, people would be free from the shackles of past and be free and independent in the true sense and form. From

this point starts the journey of equality, fraternity and unity. About such role of memory Pierre Nora writes, “a process of interior decolonization has affected ethnic minorities, families, and groups that until now have possessed reserves of memory but little or no historical capital” (Nora 7). Literature makes use of these reserves of memory to document the past of marginalised masses. In the absence of history, there are stories to recollect the past, memories of those experiences to tell the next generation and the literature which is largely based on the ignored stories and memories. Memory plays an important role in the writing of historical fiction in addition to historical facts. Literature does not claim authenticity to facts but it makes use of facts to substantiate the representation of past. The people of third world countries are unable to forget their experiences of colonisation.

Different schools of historiographers approach the history of colonialism and partition of the subcontinent from different perspectives. There is one school of historians who blame individuals as well as groups for bringing such tragedy. They reveal the corrupt policies of the British regime (like the divide and rule policy) and the deceitful participation of high class leaders either political or religious for the freedom of the country. About this Brendan O’Leary views, “The top-down or “high politics” school behooves us to analyse the elites who supported partition, and scrutinize the instrumental motives behind the conduct of politicians” (O’Leary 901).

With the emergence of political theories, questions related to the identity and history of marginalised sections got popularity. Feminist historiographers have penned down the history of women through their experiences, memories and stories “not only to democratize the history of partition but also to give voice to those most often consigned to silence, the women of the sub-continent” (Whitehead 309). Women as the makers of family as well as group identity are mostly attacked during communal conflicts with the aim of spoiling the cultural identities of the ‘other’. It is due to the reason that women stand for nation building and men for state as Amrita Basu views, “the nation is represented as motherland and the state as the father. . . The paternalistic state offers protection to ‘its’ women and children on the assumption that they cannot protect themselves. In return for this protection, it demands control over women’s sexuality” (qtd. in Spyra 5). It becomes problematic in the times of chauvinistic wars between different groups or nations when their sexuality remains no more protective even if they

show devotion to their group. There are examples of women who were raped or killed by the members of their own family and community during subcontinent's partition. This wall depicting the fate of such women and their children is painted with nationalistic colours but literary scholarship can redraw history through traces on this wall.

Marxist historiographers advocated economic history as compared to political and cultural history. They highlighted the issues like class conflict between capitalist class and labour class. In the same manner, other marginalised sections of society like the blacks and dalits started documenting their own past. They were writing their experiences from their own perspectives. The events like India's partition were not related to one section or group of people but it was the ignored history of common people. They had to leave their homes, migrate to the unknown land, to lose their identity, women had to lose their chastity and poor were left with no choice but to become beggars or refugees. No doubt all the sections of society suffered due to this infamous act of division but the loss of identity was the greatest loss. People found it difficult to define themselves because they had no family to call their own, no nation of their own, no culture, no home to live in it and no name to define them.

The socio-political changes which took place in the twentieth century obliged the populace to think about the ways "to organize their lives and define and construct their identities" (Parekh 3). The quest for identity became the most discussed issue in the academic discourses with the beginning of First World War which shattered all the beliefs in religion, morality and ethics resulting in the movements like existentialism in Europe. The works like T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* mourn the loss of values and self. With the declining condition of England, demands for freedom in the colonies got spirit which brought not only freedom but separation, displacement and loss of home. The dominant theme of nationalism in the writings of major writers like the great trio R. K. Narayan, Raja Rao and Mulak Raj Anand lost significance with the occurrence of the event of partition which came along with freedom. The themes of literary works started focusing on the causes and effects of this partition holocaust on the common man as Jerome de Groot observes, "Questioning the legitimacy of narrative and undermining authority are fundamental to the ways that contemporary novelists approach the past" (Groot 108).

The event of partition has become the centre of Modern Indian History. If we visit the history of India it provides heaps of dry facts like the invasion of subcontinent by Mughals and reigning for centuries, the founding of East India Company in 1757, the shift of power to the British hands after Queen's declaration in 1857, the development and destruction caused by this rule of crown for two centuries ending up with the rise of religion based nationalism. On June 3, 1947 the Mountbatten Plan was declared by British government which made the partition of the country inevitable. Pakistan became a reality on 14 August 1947 under the provisions of the British Indian Independence Act 1947, and the nation further divided into three in 1971. Communal riots in the north-eastern region of the country, rise in demands for religion based free states like Khalistan in the 80's, the demolition of Babri Masjid in 1992, Kargil war in 1999 between two parts of once single nation, Godhra carnage in 2002, perennial violence in Kashmir, terrorist attacks in almost all the parts of the subcontinent are facts from history. Using differently, the words of Mr. Grandgrind in Dickens' novel *Hard Times* "what I want is [not] Facts. . . Facts alone are [not] wanted in life" (Dickens B2). The fissures and silences in the interpretation of these facts are wanted more.

History is full of facts but the human dimension of such events is absent from the hegemonic discourse of history. The writing of history becomes more important than the history itself. To seek answers to the problem of identity crisis, politics behind partition and the absence of masses in the national history, one has to understand the nature of history from historiography as well as the change in the definition of identity itself. The people of these once colonised nations seek "mastery not in the first instance over land or other peoples, but of history and self" (Boehmer 192). This makes the history of the nation based on the experiences of the masses a tool to avow the self. The colonial discourse made use of history in order to rule the colonies and it is seen as one of the several inventions done for the maintenance of rule over the slave countries. The birth of history as an invention to rule the colonies can be summed up in words of Dipesh Chakrabarty:

History as a developmental story, as an explanation of how things came to be the way they were in the present, history as a story of human action devoid although of divine intervention, history as a process of change both illustrating and subject to sociological laws-

all this was new and came to Indians as a result of British rule.

(Chakrabarty, Globalisation 129)

The centre remains the west and the histories of the other nations become derivatives of that history as if Europe is meaning and others are significances of this discourse. Dipesh Chakrabarty asserts that “‘Indian’ history itself is in a position of Subalternity” (Chakrabarty, Postcoloniality 1). In the postcolonial era West is still at the center with a shift from UK (coloniser) to USA (imperialist). In the essay “The Prose of Otherness” Gyanendra Pandey points out the treatment of partition violence in the discipline of history. Violence is naturalised through the discourse of history. He brings out problems “of language, of analytical stance, and of evidence” a historian has to face while representing violence in history. There is difference between the legitimate, well organized “violence of the state” and “the chaotic, uncontrolled, excessive and, almost always, illegitimate” totally opposite “violence of the people”; a binary opposition created by British historiography (Pandey 190-91). This kind of opposition has become a part of history as E. H. Carr claims:

History is a process of struggle in which results, whether we judge them good or bad, are achieved by some groups directly or indirectly- and more often directly than indirectly- at the expense of others. The losers pay. Suffering is indigenous in history. Every great period of history has its casualties as well as its victories. This is an exceedingly complicated question because we have no measure which enables us to balance the greater good of some against the sacrifices of others. (Carr 73)

History of this century made the people suffer due to power politics. The world wars, the nationalistic movements, tragedies like the partition of Indian subcontinent, violence in the name of religion and Jihad, Global terrorism, new-imperialism, dominance of United States, the projects for the establishment of democracy in the third world countries, racial violence against migrants from the third world, the use of women as passport to enter the developed world, nuclear power race, all these factors formed the history of the century a severe torture to humanity as a whole. The reason behind such aftermath does not lie in the act of any individual or nation but in the hegemonic power of discourses like religion, patriarchy, history, myth, colonialism, enlightenment and nationalism. All the

discourses force the individual to do what the discourse demands and individual remains no more free. According to Foucault the aim of a discourse is to make individuals subject through power/knowledge:

[T]o establish presences and absences, to know where and how to locate individuals, to set up useful communications, to interrupt others, to be able at each moment to supervise the conduct of each individual, to assess it, to judge it, to calculate its qualities or merits. It was a procedure, therefore, aimed at knowing, mastering, and using. (qtd. in Rouse 98)

This vicious circle of discursive power leads to the identity crisis. The partition of the country took place due to the construction of differences among groups, political parties, religions as well as castes by the different discourses. Long before the Britishers came to India, the differences were already used by the invaders for their own benefit. Going back to Portuguese invasion in 1498 one finds the roots of similar dividing policies as Mohan Dharia opines, “The Portuguese created an atmosphere of distrust among [Indian] kingdoms and controlled them with their ‘Divide and Rule Policy’” (Dharia 7). These very differences caused the division between people who belonged to same race. This division was not natural but the constructed one. This difference in identities is always in a process of change and the change is taking place not in the developmental sense but in regressive way as Stuart Hall writes about this construction of identities which are “never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions. They are subject to a radical historicization, and are constantly in the process of change and transformation” (Hall 4). The cause of this construction of division was colonial discourse and other discourses working at local level came into support the dominant one. To understand how the dominant discourse used the route of property division to turn Indians into British slaves Dow’s recommendation about the “rule of Law” for the subcontinent is worthy of citation:

To make the native of the fertile soil of Bengal free, is beyond the power of political arrangement . . . Their religion, their manners, the very disposition of their minds, form them for passive obedience. To give them property would only bind them with stronger ties to our

interests, and make them our subjects; or if the British nation prefers the name- more our slaves. (qtd. in Chakrabarty, Postcoloniality 6)

The textbooks in Indian and Pakistani schools taught the history constructed by the British in word and practice. One would easily support Vasudha Dalmia the way history as a discipline is taught to hate Indianness by teaching about “the vital onrush of Aryans into the subcontinent, the Dravidians who gave way; we became acquainted with vaguely sketched portraits of Mughal emperors and then, larger than life almost, with Clive, Dupleix, Hastings, Bentinck, Dalhousie” (Dalmia 69) in the school text books. Although the facts related to partition history of the subcontinent and the communal riots which led to this human tragedy are mentioned yet the readers are unable to get the essence of that experience as Krishna Kumar asserts,

What the riots meant to the people who lived through them is not even brought to the attention of the young reader, let alone delineated or discussed in any detail. Displacement, violence and resettlement remain unelaborated words. (Kumar 22)

These unelaborated words find place in the historical literature. The narrative aspect connects history with literature. History has close connections with story because history itself is a story about the past based on facts. W. H. Hudson writes in the context of England that literature is the autobiography of a nation whereas its history is its biography (Hudson 6). The subject of study is same nation, the only difference is that in case of history it is the ‘other’ (means the historian) who collects material to document its past but in case of literature it is the society itself through their representative characters records its past. This privileging of literature over history in the acute understanding of the society made modern critical thinkers do a parallel study of literary as well as non- literary historical texts. Literature documents the past by the self of society.

The partition literature presents the fate of losers who suffered at the victory of others. Historical accounts, either due to limits of objectivity and authenticity, overlook the introspective side of the episode through the stories and memories of the people who lived during that period of history. The subjectivity caused through the autobiographical accounts in the representation of past provides totality to the annals of actual experience. The event of India’s partition led to the major problem

of identity crisis which was faced by many people not at that time but at present as well.

The issue of identity has roots in the history which forms it, changes it and deconstructs it. The identity politics for being “premised on the idea that all people are different and that difference not only has to be respected, it also makes it impossible for one person to completely understand or empathize with another” (Buchanan 242), became the basis for political movements as well as critical theories irrespective of their demands for the members of their groups- women, workers and natives of ex-colonies. In the postmodernist world identity has lost its fixed nature. In the traditional sense of identity, shared culture and history become the basis of unified identity. In such a case the identity of Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi people would be same because they shared cultural traits and history, the partition history being one of it. This becomes the root cause of the movement of the people of these countries to go to their once brothers due to shared blood because “identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being” (Hall 4).

Religious differences were already there right before the Mughal invasion in the country but the economic inequality and caste discrimination formed the basis of this partition. The struggle for political power between different political parties like Congress, Muslim League and Hindu Mahasabha emerged out of their differences in needs. The dominance of colonial power was so strong that it used the people against themselves and the people destroyed their own unity with their consent according to the British master as the Colonialist historiographer Hodson claims that “no ruler can divide and rule unless the people are willing to be divided” (qtd. in Saint 14). Here Gramsci’s concept of hegemony would be appropriate to understand how Indians started fighting among themselves on the basis of religion leaving aside the unified idea of national freedom.

Modern nation-state is another invention of colonial discourse which divides the people on the basis of their attachment to certain geographical location. “[Nation] is an imagined political community- and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (Anderson 6). Relationship between nationalism and violence is repeatedly questioned in present and future centered approaches to history. It is the role of colonial discourse which developed the notion of third world

exploitation and destruction for the establishment of nation building process in first world. In the “nineteenth- century Europe is characterized by a strange paradox: a nation-state with liberty, equality and rule of law at home, and imperialistic exploitation abroad” (Gaubu 147). The need to revisit the history comes out of such paradoxes and their understanding becomes the way for identity assertion as Pramod K. Nayar observes:

Writers from former colonies often find the need to negotiate, understand, and recover from their traumatic pasts. This negotiation is often an attempt to achieve an identity different from the one imposed on them by the coloniser. (Nayar 52)

The partition was not an event which occurred in 1947 rather there are different shades of it which find traces in post-independence India. These partitions are caused by elite class interests and the reason behind their occurring is the ignorance of people who attach a sense of divine to their political leaders and the leaders become more religious figures than political ones. Modern day politicians take benefit from such kind of religious sentiments of the masses. This is the reason why people follow blindly the given ideology as divine orders by these “modern gods” as Harvey Arden uses the term for Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi (Arden 138). The use of religion as a discourse for political purposes still divides people after partition because every discourse “shows the historically specific relations between disciplines (defined as bodies of knowledge) and disciplinary practices (forms of social control and social possibility)” (McHoul and Grace 26).

Foucault, who used the term discourse for the construction of a certain kind of knowledge, was of the view that power determines knowledge. Power gives the definitions of right and wrong and with the desired knowledge pattern it constructs a certain kind of subject which follows its instructions:

The human body was entering a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it. . . . so that they may operate as one wishes, with the techniques, the speed and the efficiency that one determines. Thus discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, “docile” bodies. (qtd. in Rouse 98)

The dominant discourse determines the nature of social institutions and influence individuals through their working in favour of dominant discourse as in

the case of colonial discourse in Gyanendra Pandey's words, "Reason, progress, organization, discipline, (history itself?), belongs to the state and ruling classes; violence belongs to the Other, those left behind by history" (193). The subjects only come out of such givens when they start speaking about their past from their own perspective.

Literature being the reflector of society is more close to humanistic causes and impacts of such political movements because literature not only represents but also re-presents whatever is happening inside an individual and around that individual i.e. society. This importance of literature is asserted by Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin while recording partition history "what seems to have stepped in, at least partly, to record the full horror of Partition, is literature . . . it is the only significant non-official contemporary record we have of the time, apart from reportage" (qtd. in Whitehead 311).

After the Second World War colonial powers started losing their control over the colonised nations and the awareness among the subjects for the assertion of their identity led to the freedom movements in the Asian and African continent. India's Independence movement was a part of this world wide phenomenon. Many histories have been written about this historical movement by the historians who belong to the party of earlier colonial powers. Facts are provided about the loss of life and money. National history being a metanarrative also stands questioned and individual histories were provided space. In this manner, histories change with the perspective of the agency which is telling it. As Sudipta Kaviraj points out ". . . it is often essential to ask whose history this is, in the sense of history for whom rather than history of whom, because there are changes in the telling" (Kaviraj 4).

The modernist and liberal humanist approach places man at the center and believes in the goodness of mankind. It is based on the assumption that man is basically peace loving creature and unique but under the charge of different situations he loses control over its consciousness and works differently sometimes wild and violent. The modernists repent the loss of man's fixed identity. They present idealistic alternatives for the man to move towards their roots as a creature with all humanistic traits different from animals. The differences of caste, class, gender and color are condemned by them which cause tension among the otherwise equal creatures and sometimes in a didactic manner force man to be a man having universalistic traits.

Postmodernism celebrated the hybrid, unfixed, polyphonic nature of identity, culture and history. As Tim Woods points out in the introduction to his book, "Postmodernism does what modernism does, only in a celebratory rather than repentant way" (Woods 8). The question of subjectivity in the history writing process was raised by them, for which literature was condemned earlier while comparing with history. As the common factor of subjectivity is part of both, then no issue of preference is left in documenting the socio-political causes which made the world dynamic.

The poststructuralist theory supporting the earlier one lead to the replacement of fixed identities with subjectivity. Michel Foucault, the pioneer of this thought questioned the concept of linear history and stable identities. Keith Windschuttle elaborates on Foucault's views about history that it "does not display any pattern of evolution because the past is nothing more than a series of discontinuities or unconnected developments" (Windschuttle 5) and the identities go on changing with the change in discourses. During partition people had to leave their homes and country which led to the change in national identity under the discourse of nationalism. When the discourse of religion took over, people forgot everything about their place of birth and the communal violence paved its way through it.

Realist writers always take current issues and problems prevailing in society, and the socialist realist goes one step further to seek solutions or provide ideal alternative as a solution to that real life situation through artistic representation. The sense of identification in every person with the characters in the fictional work make it real than the real itself. The Marxist belief that society makes a man is further connected to the making of society by man and in this circular process man makes himself according to the change in society brought by him or the fellow members of society. The significance of economy as a wheel to move society in certain cases like subcontinent's partition where economic inequality alongside the social one prompted Muslims for the creation of a separate land where they will be the masters. Socialist realist staunchly believes in this give and take process between society and its social animals. For the realist present is real. To understand the realities of present past plays a pivotal role to seek roots of social problems, political relations and personal conflicts. In Andrew Whitehead's opinion,

“Most of the social tensions in the region can be traced back to 1947- not simply the conflict in Kashmir, the most obvious unfinished business of the independence settlement, but the millions of still divided families, the tension in Karachi and elsewhere between newcomers and host population, the suspicion between different religious communities, and the soul-searching in all three nations (Bangladesh was born in 1971 when Pakistan was itself partitioned) about pluralism, secularism and national identity.” (Whitehead 308)

Postcolonialism as a method also promoted the sister branch of subaltern history. At the same time political approaches towards the analysis of literature like new-historicism and cultural materialism treated literary and non literary works with equal attention. It is at this point that all the disciplines step out of the traditional boundaries which used to define them in the field of knowledge. The lines demonstrating certain essentialist features to differentiate various disciplines were shattered. The age celebrated the differences in every arena of life let it be knowledge, culture, history gender or race. Critical movements like neo- Marxism, feminism and postcolonialism with the critical studies of Foucault, Said and Fanon brought renaissance in the third world to re-read their past in order to understand their present position in political as well as individualistic terms.

History has lost any fixed definition with the change in its nature. Similar is the case with nation, language and culture. No static terminology can define them. At different times their nature and meaning change. Such ambiguity is the basis of postcolonial academics regarding the search for a home and the self. The historical marker which led to this ambiguous inquiry was the period of third world nationalistic movements and the resultant freedom or division. The attempt to dig into the past to locate our present position is the job of an intellect as Homi Bhabha writes, “to fully realize, and take responsibility for, the unspoken, unrepresented pasts that haunt the historical present” (18).

Due to the historical upheavals in the political life of many nations which left countless people homeless and displaced, the identity of refugee became another important question. Most of the refugees in the twentieth century had to leave their country due to the demarcation of international boundaries between ex-colonized countries and Indian subcontinent is its best example where a huge number of refugees near the boundary states still face identity crisis. They could not manage

to get the citizenship of either country. Moreover the term refugee is used with negative connotations, for the people without home. Related to refugees is the question whether these people are diaspora or not. In the Indian subcontinent the partition era caused a huge bloody mass migration which comes under the category of diaspora in one way but not in the other. As diaspora is voluntary or involuntary migration the refugees are people who are involuntary migrants. The study of problems faced by these people comprise the major portion of postcolonial literature and world literature as in Bhabha's opinion the "transnational histories of migrants, the colonized or political refugees- these border and frontier conditions- may be the terrains of world literature" (17).

There is a huge body of fictional works which deal with partition history as Tarun K. Saint in the introduction to his book *Witnessing Partition* points out that "The literature about the partition may be considered a corpus of writing based on the centrality of the events of 1946-47 or its later repercussions as a theme" (Saint 4) yet it remained a much ignored issue in the eyes of cultural and literary critics to analyse the latent history of masses inside this kind of literature.

Ranga Rao's view that "the nation itself has moved from the village centricism of the Gandhian era to the city-centricism of the post-Nehru period" (qtd. in Mee 128) is another aspect which led to the change in themes of fictional works. Before partition most of the works were based on rural experience even the nationalistic theme based novels like *Kanthapura*, *Waiting for the Mahatma* and *Untouchable* all have rural locality but after 1980's there was a shift towards urban society and its problems in the Indian English novel.

The fictional and non-fictional narratives based on the personal experiences of the authors also forms a part of history writing process. Literature written about historical events represents the common people. The works taken for present comparative study also belong to this category of fiction where the writers witnessed communal violence in their own lives and penned down their fictional narratives based on the theme of communal violence. The politically conscious writers do not write history to be taken for a source of entertainment but for the readers to identify themselves with characters and learn from their experiences. The focus of literature is not history but the silences and gaps in history. History questions myths on the basis of facts and literature questions history on the basis of human experience.

Personification becomes an important tool in political fiction where latent meanings and persons are engineered more clearly. There are examples of personification where either an individual or his ideology is personified in order to present the reality. As in some cases, democratic ideology of Indian subcontinent is personified in Jawaharlal Nehru whereas fundamentalist one in the Muslim League with Jinnah its leader. In other way, the characters with human follies and desires represent the elite class people who led to the infamous tragedy. Although there are direct references to these leaders in some works yet the censorship to provide popular facts, personification is used as a preferable tool by satirists from times immemorial.

The location of writer as well as the reader determines what he speaks and why; which provides solutions to various queries like what made him to write about such an incident of times gone and why the reader is interested in such a work of history. But the relevance of such questions can be judged when histories repeat themselves without learning any lessons from them. When the dreams like 'free India' remain a dream then visiting and revisiting history is needed.

The origin of present communal conflicts lies in the communal past. Even in the liberal, globalised world religion is such a dominant factor to associate a person with crime as in the case of 9/11 event Muslim community had to suffer and the problem of such identity crisis became the theme of literary works and films like New York and My Name is Khan. Sahni wrote his novel Tamas after witnessing riots in Bhiwandi 1971 and Amitav Ghosh wrote The Shadow Lines after witnessing 1984 communal riots. So repetition of history forced the authors to materialize it into artistic form to go deep into the roots of communalism. The literature tells everything except facts but history does not say anything except presenting the facts. Change in the socio-political scenario made a great impact on our comprehension of human life and the materialistic reality in philosophical terms. This altered the way how we understand ourselves. It becomes significant to understand the changing nature of "newer identities, which are often fragmented, hyphenated and palimpsestic in nature" (Komalesha 12).

A number of novels and short stories have been written in vernacular languages particularly in Punjabi and Bengali because the partition of the subcontinent led to partition of these two provinces mainly. It could not get a desired representation in Hindi as well as in English language however many

works have been translated from vernacular to these languages. The reason behind this may be the writers' involvement in the process of "stereotyping the aberrant variety as the other" (Dutta 277). Not only novels but other genres as poetry, drama and short story also accepted the influence of partition holocaust.

The novel *Azadi* by Chaman Nahal shows the touching scene of human brutality where women belonging to all the communities become victims of gendered violence in the form of murder, abduction or nude parade. *Train to Pakistan* by Khushwant Singh shows the plight of uneducated people who suffer due to their vulnerability towards rumours and they become victims of violence at the hands of fundamentalist ideology. The novel *What the Body Remembers* by Shauna Singh Baldwin presents the fate of women from the Indian subcontinent whose unhappy married life becomes symbolic of all those people who had to face exile and loss of identity due to the partition of the country. There are many films like *Silent Waters*, *Pinjar* and *Earth 1947* which depict the identity crisis of people aroused out of communal fundamentalism.

In her novel *Ice Candy Man*, Bapsi Sidhwa shows affectionate feelings towards her community and the Parsi identity becomes one of the major issues of the novel. But the writers of these novels (*The Shadow Lines* and *Tamas*) speak neither for nor against any particular community, let it be their own. A line cannot divide identities is a very cosmopolitan approach or more appropriately a humanistic one. If seen from geographical location of the authors both Ghosh and Sahni themselves cannot be seen as sons of the same soil. Ghosh is Bengali and the Sahni is Punjabi if seen from the location of states of West Bengal and Punjab. Their families migrated to the subcontinent from East and West Pakistan respectively.

The Shadow Lines (1988), Amitav Ghosh's second novel, "international in scope but very local in spirit" (Chakraborty 178) got Sahitya academy award the year after its publication. The novel is much discussed for its postcolonial themes of language, history and identity as well as the postmodernist techniques used by the author with the amalgamation of fact and imagination. Jenniefer Dkhar researched upon the use of historical facts in his novels in the Doctoral thesis "Re-Inventing history: A study of Amitav Ghosh's Novels" submitted to North-Eastern Hill University Shillong. There are many critical anthologies dealing with the critical analysis of the novel as Arvind Chowdhary's book *Amitav Ghosh's The*

Shadow Lines: Critical Essays and Bibhash Choudhury's book Amitav Ghosh: Critical Essays. Murari Prasad in his work "Amitav Ghosh's The Shadow Lines: Re-Reading its Craft and Concerns" deals with the technical aspects of the novel, Keyurk K. Parekh in "The Shadow Lines: A National Critique" shows how Ghosh has dismantled the idea of nation.

Bhisham Sahni wrote Tamas in the year 1973 and it won Sahitya Akademi Award in the year 1976. The novel is based on the theme of subcontinent's tragic partition in 1947. The novel has been discussed much for the representation of past and the techniques used by the author. I.D. Sharma in his book *Bhisham Sahni's Tamas: A Critical Analysis* discusses different aspects of the novel- its characterisation, tone and atmosphere, title and the political dimensions of the novel as a part of partition literature. Virender Pal in his paper "Anatomy of Communal Violence: A study of Bhisham Sahni's Tamas" deals with the causes and effects of violence as shown in the novel. Sharmistha I. Patel in her book *Bhisham Sahni Ke Upnyanson Mein Samvedna Aur Shilp* deals with critical aspects of representation, narrative orientation as well as social relevance of Sahni's all novels in an analytical manner. Vinod Shahi's edited book *Tamas: Ek Punarpath* is a collection of critical essays on Tamas to seek the relevance of the text in modern Indian context. The essays range from the analysis of multiple reading of the text, conflict of narration, plot construction, and issue of space etc. to the postcolonial reading of the text. Ravinder Gasso in his book *Bhisham Sahni Ki Opnyasik Chetna* makes a parallel study of all the novels of Sahni with special reference to Tamas for the realism in Sahni's art in the representation of political realities of the times. The visual adaptation of the novel paved the way for multiple interpretations of the novel in the field of film studies.

People are made to move in Tamas (Darkness) and are separated through The Shadow Lines but the humanity cannot be divided into compartments of religion, caste, class or nation because all these notions have lost fixed meaning and the identities associated with them have become equally fluid and unfixed. A peep into the history of India in Tamas and the history of India and England in The Shadow Lines show the destruction caused by antagonistic notions of fixed identities in form of World War II (1939), Partition of Indian subcontinent (1947) and the communal riots in Calcutta and Dhaka (1964) and the resultant identity crisis faced by most of the characters in both the novels.

The protagonists in both the novels are above those lines which divide people. They do not believe in the rigid or fixed identity but they become the victims of violence which flows through the fixed identity lines. In both cases Nathu and Tridib never talk about their religious identity but their passive liberalist philosophy comes into war with the rigidity of religious identity and they both die at the hands of mindless mob. Even in their death they are silent not being able to tell the reality and truth. The writers of these novels try to give the message of secularism, positive nationalism which Tagore talks about to accept the differences but not to reject the presence of equally good people residing on the other side of the mirror.

Both the narratives leave many unresolved questions. No idea is imposed but realities and gaps of history are filled through co-mingling of personal stories and public histories. People with multiple identities try to assert one against the adversary group. Reasons for communal history of the country are in the differences between identities which are formed according to set rules by certain discourse. Here the fight is not about the identity of an individual but a group. Even if characters like Ila who talk about personal freedom represent all those people who left India in search of freedom from the culture of India which they find restraining their personal freedom.

The comparative analysis of *The Shadow Lines* and *Tamas* aims at depicting the roots of the problem of communal violence by revisiting history of mid-twentieth century India. The theoretical approach to analyse the two individual works would be new historicism and cultural materialism following four major postulates as brought about by Hans Bertens - to study literary text as historical texts, seek history and politics behind the production of the text as well as inside the text and the appropriation of that study to present day socio-political world scenario (Bertens 176-77). The mid twentieth century historical event of partition of Indian subcontinent remained a popular theme among creative writers due to the presence of communal violence which erupted as an outcome of this event. The results of this horror in the form of identity crisis faced by people as individual and member of a particular group, displacement, psychological silences as an outcome of bloodshed and homelessness, problems of refugees, haunted memories and the partition of hearts all became the themes of several literary works written during and after partition. The realistic representation of history is given by Sahni

and the postmodern techniques are used by Amitav Ghosh to deal with the issue of history. If the question of identity from multicultural perspective is approached by Sahni then from Foucauldian perspective of unstable identities and multiple histories is approached by Ghosh novel. The novels belong to the sub-genre 'novel of ideas' which aim at propounding "some definite idea or ideas generally through debate, conversation" (Sarker 122).

The research is based on the hypothesis that the victims of history are the victims of society as well and the cause of such victimisation is their identity. The borders between people, nations and history are the constructed ones. They are not natural. Man is basically peace loving although he behaves like socially dead animal under different discourses. Despite the differences in nature, history and literature deal with socio-political conditions of different times and the two are regarded as processes changing with time and place.

Method used in this research is based on Edward Said's lines "to focus as much as possible on individual works, to read them first as great products of creative or interpretative imagination, and then to show them as part of the relationship between" history and identity with a belief in the command of shared history of society and the authors' experiences related to them in outlining the literary works (Said, Introduction Culture xxiv). The comparative analysis of two literary works written originally in different languages, time, location and approach based on common theme of mid twentieth century Indian subcontinent's history would be analysed focusing on close textual analysis.

This research proposes to study the social, cultural and political relationships among people and groups in the mid twentieth century India through a revisiting to the history inside the literary works. For the fulfillment of this aim primary sources including novels and interviews as well as secondary sources including critical books, articles and reviews would be taken into account.

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Chapter 2

Fragmented Histories and Identities in Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*

Amitav Ghosh, an eminent Indo-Anglican writer, journalist, essayist and anthropologist writes originally in the English language. Born of Bengali parents on July 11, 1956 in the city of Calcutta in the North eastern region of Indian subcontinent, Ghosh visited and stayed in different countries like Iran, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka due to his father's profession as a diplomat. After his schooling at Doon School in Dehra Dun, graduation in History from St. Stephen's College, Delhi University from where his artistic faculty got shape in the company of a group of intellectuals and he was "the first of the band of St stephanians to respond with the gusto to the challenge of *Midnight's Children*" (Mee 131). After completing Post-graduation in Sociology and attending the Oxford University for the degree of Ph.D. in Social Anthropology in the year 1982 he was appointed as Research Associate in the Department of Sociology at Delhi University. His job as a teacher of Comparative Literature in eastern and western universities, itself formed a comparative study of two world views geographically and culturally.

Like the characters of his novels who 'dwell in travel' (Dixon 10) he goes on travelling the world and spends time partly in India and the country where he works like New York at present. The characters in his writing are always on a move, most of them have diasporic experiences which include researchers, students, travelers, diplomats and victims of forced migration as during India's partition etc. (Mondal 2).

Privileged by birth into an elite family of diplomats and education at the most acclaimed institutes inside the country and later on abroad could not provide him much opportunity to interact with people of all sorts but his research in social anthropology while living in an Egyptian Village helped in his development as a novelist who shows a keen "interest in people and their lives, histories and predicaments" (Ghosh, Interview 7). The result of his interdisciplinary study in the subjects of anthropology, history and sociology oriented his understanding of human behaviour and its use for the diversity of themes in his art of writing. His work as a journalist made him keener towards facts. Most of his novels can be judged for their historical authenticity because he is very minute about using names

of actually existing places and the dates of historical events. There would hardly be any novel without facts penned down by him.

There is a group of writers who followed postmodernist style in their fiction emerged after Second World War and Amitav Ghosh is one of the names which spotted at the world literary map among-Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Arvind Adiga, Shashi Tharoor, Upamanyu Chatterjee etc. (Chenniappan 138). Amitav Ghosh, the internationally celebrated author, stands on the side of writing 'from below' (Hawley 59) or writing from 'other' side. His outward rejection of postcolonial term for his writing does not make much difference because his works themselves speak against the political or cultural markers of colonial past either in the form of thought or action. His associations with the prominent postcolonial scholars of subaltern studies group, and his own works being published in subaltern studies series (e.g. "The Slave of MS. H. 6" in Subaltern Studies VII: Writings on South Asian History and Society), make it unproblematic to comprehend Ghosh as a postcolonial writer; one who experiments with the questions of language, history, nation and identity. "Ghosh's training in historical and anthropological research, his eschewing of grand theoreticist gestures and his links with the Subaltern Studies project" (Dixon 10) insured his entry into the postcolonial arena.

The writer aims at providing the alternative histories, identities, cultures and languages to the third world. His writing corpus incorporates novels, travel essays and other forms of literary and historical texts. Among his key publications six are novels: *The Circle of Reason* (1986), *The Shadow Lines* (1988), *The Calcutta Chromosome* (1995), *The Glass Palace* (2000), *The Hungry Tide* (2004) and *Sea of Poppies* (2008). Main focus in these works is laid upon the understanding of human behaviour, rediscovery of history and the impact of socio-political phases like colonialism and globalisation upon the common people. Murari Prasad observes that the "directness and lucidity of his prose" and "brilliant perception of the complexities of human relations in the multicultural world" (Prasad 70) provides Ghosh a significant place among other writers of his time.

Apart from the fact that he writes in English language, the author finds hold to the mother tongue i.e. Bengali. In an interview he has asserts that he loves to read the reviews of his works in Bengali (Ghosh, Interview 13) which shows his emotional zeal regarding the response of the 'self', about the 'self', in the language of the 'self' while writing back to the 'other' (the west for them). His writing equally

aims at dismantling the notion of west being the representative of universal values rather he anticipates a world of fragmentation where nothing is universal or generalised. In such a world the author has no other way but to present a lost world of those people who disappear without having any mention in grandnarratives. Ghosh's novels surround these forgotten subjects of the past.

The author presents the identity crisis and related problems which resulted from the colonial experiences through the personal expression of such events which happened in his own life. Anshuman A. Mondal observes Ghosh's "abiding interest in exploring the confusions and conundrums of self-fashioning in the context of colonialism and its aftermath" (Mondal 30). Regarding the themes and concerns in his fictional and non-fictional works only a thin line or as Mondal uses the phrase 'the shadow lines of demarcation' exist. John C. Hawley observes the following themes and issues in Ghosh's writings:

[T]he role of the individual in the broad sweep of political events; the dubious nature of borders, whether between nations and peoples or between one literary genre and another; the role of memory in one's recovery of identity in the march of time; the role of artist in society; the importance of narrative in shaping history. (Hawley 5)

The author belongs to that school of Indian writers who "continued the trend of experimentation" (Mali 194) and these experiments he does with language, time, space, narrative technique, themes and genres by shattering all the boundaries related to these factors. As already discussed his academic background gave space to interdisciplinarity to his writing. Such interdisciplinarity shatters the traditional modes of knowledge and aims at bringing change in much more realistic manner. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's "theory of change" (Spivak 3) in case of Subaltern Studies Group is equally applicable to Ghosh's works. In this way Ghosh is not a traditional writer in any sense rather all the above given qualities makes his writing postmodernist. Ghosh's writing is not bound to places or times it is the representative of times and places beyond borders as Shubha Tiwari asserts "Colonisation, recolonisation, neo colonisation and decolonisation are recurring thoughts in Ghosh's work" (Tiwari 3).

The main influence on his writing was from Rabindranath Tagore and Satyajit Ray as "Ray's work is one of the main anchors that moors [him]" (Ghosh, Satyajit 8) and from Tagore he adopted the ideology of modernist humanism. At

the same time his writing shows the impact of social realism and the “legacy of Bengal Renaissance” (Mondal 37). From Tagore who “made occasional incursions into nationalist politics, although he was essentially an internationalist” (Iyengar 99), Amitav Ghosh took this paradoxical approach of nationalism and universalism.

Ghosh devoted his intellectual and artistic energy upon giving best representation to historical events in his fictional as well as non-fictional works. He wrote the novel *The Shadow Lines* after witnessing the 1984 riots which erupted as a reaction against Indira Gandhi’s assassination. Treatment of history and its impact on the individuals is the main theme of this novel. The novel, in words of Ramachand Guha is “determinedly realist” (Guha 451) because it deals with the events which actually took place. It depicts different historical events and their outcome like Second World War, partition of the country, India’s war with China, the theft of holy relic from Hazratbal 1963, communal riots in Dhaka and Calcutta in 1964 and India- Pakistan war in 1965. All these historical events took place due to the differences in the needs of different racial, religious and political groups as well as nations. The official histories document the facts about these events but the masses who become the victims of power politics remain victims of history as well. The narrative tries to document the histories of those individual through memories, family histories and stories. People suffering from identity crisis due to migration, displacement, political rebels appear in this work. Amitav Ghosh presents the differences in different sections of society and does not provide any unified, edifying or instructional explanation to overcome them. There is no centre which controls the world rather the polyphonic nature of the world is given prominence.

In *The Shadow Lines* there is absence of any chronological order of time and space. The characters are made to imagine their identities in “the multilayered, complex patterns of time and space in which past, present and future coalesce into one” (Ojha 137). The history is treated as a discourse written from a particular perspective for the construction of different subjects to that discourse. This fictional and partial character of history is observed by author’s mouthpiece Tridib when he explains that everyone lives in the stories told to them. They are like fictional characters placed in these stories/histories according to the dominant discourse. On the basis of these givens every individual constructs his own sense of reality and seeks freedom in it “all lived in stories, because stories are all there to live in, it

was just a question of which one you choose” (The Shadow Lines 182). Tridib teaches the narrator to create his own world through imagination in order to come out of others’ stories and inventions because “the alternative wasn’t blankness- it only meant that if we didn’t try ourselves, we would never be free of other people’s inventions” (The Shadow Lines 31). The partial, subjective and relative nature of history in the novel is based on postmodernist assumption that:

No document can tell us more than what the author of the document- what he thought had happened, what he thought ought to happen or would happen, or perhaps only what he wanted others to think he thought, or even only what he himself thought he thought. (Carr 10)

The novel being based on such assumptions finds close affinities with Salman Rushdie’s masterpiece *Midnight’s Children* in the use of postmodern techniques to deal with the theme of national identity and history as Priyamvada Gopal asserts, “Clearly influenced by *Midnight’s Children*, Ghosh’s novel is a family story profoundly aware of the ways in which the smaller stories of families and individuals are shaped by the larger stories of nations” (Gopal 81). The novel is about micro narratives of family members rather than of a nation.

The novel is divided into two parts where the first one entitled “Going Away” deals with going away from India and the opening paragraph “In 1939 . . . went to England” (The Shadow Lines 3) predicts association with diaspora. It sets a contrast to the colonial novels like *A Passage to India* where travellers from west come to explore the oriental culture because it “begins with an Indian passage to England: the natives are the travellers” (Dixon 18). From the very beginning the reader makes up his mind to seek contradictions to the set norms going to explore in the whole novel. The novel seeks differences as well as similarities by introducing the condition of England during the world war when there was death and destruction similar to that of Indian subcontinent’s partition. People like Ila give importance to the historical events taking place in the west where the dominant discourse of history does not give voice to “the silence of voiceless events in a backward world” (The Shadow Lines 104) like partition or communal riots in the East.

The second part entitled “Coming Home” deals with coming back to India. For Tha’mma, India after partition has become her home so she wants her uncle Jethamoshai to come home for the rest of his life. There is continuous move in the

narrative from individual to the general and from general to the individual. The episode of family home symbolises the partition of the country where several people became homeless and the land of shared memories and lives divided the hearts, and the history further divided them. Tha'mma presents the idea of nation, Ila of race and diaspora whereas Tridib of history. The novel is full of digressions, and non-linear plot construction makes the work more complex.

Tha'mma has the experience of colonial rule and the partition of the country which turned her into a nationalist. Her "desire for nationhood is historically determined" (Mongia 227). She gives the highest position to nation in the hierarchy of factors used to define a being. She could not take active part in the national freedom struggle "because she was a girl, a woman" (The Shadow Lines 39) and her gender identity became an obstacle for her. She is such a radical nationalist that she would have killed the English magistrate because "It was for [India's] freedom. [She] would have done anything to be free" (The Shadow Lines 39).

This experience of partition leaves a permanent mark on her memory. She is unable to decide her home. On one side she attaches a sense of topophilia with Dhaka where her ancestors lived and on the other to the land which she earned with blood of her relations so she has "no home but in memory" (The Shadow Lines 194). The fight for the freedom of one nation marks one's identity is her conviction which gives one the right to live in that nation. It is equally applicable to all nations including England because "Everyone who lives there has earned his right to be there with blood: with their brother's blood and their father's blood and their son's blood. They know they're a nation because they've drawn their borders with blood" (The Shadow Lines 78). Her condemnation of Ila is based on the similar assumption that the people of other country do not possess a right to live in others' country which indirectly condemns the presence of British rulers in India because they had no right to live in India.

She believes in the reality of nation. She develops hatred towards other countries after the incident of Tridib's death. When there is war with China her words "Let's hope we teach them a lesson" (The Shadow Lines 220) echo her negative nationalism. Meeting with the reality of her religious identity she attaches the sense of security to India and wants to fight against Pakistan "with tanks and guns and bombs" (The Shadow Lines 237). It is for this battle emerging out of her revengeful feelings to overcome the loss of Tridib's death that she gives away her

chain which was “a part of her” (The Shadow Lines 236) for the war fund. She gives reasons to the narrator why she supported India during war: “For your sake, for your freedom. We have to kill them before they kill us; we have to wipe them out” (The Shadow Lines 237). It is this hatred of invented nations that bothers the people on both sides who experienced partition. They seek solution in violence against each other for the assertion of their national identity.

Jethamoshai regards birth, Tha'mma regards territory and Ila regards personal freedom as the basis to assert their identity. The paradox is that everyone is entrapped in the triangle of these factors where they seek freedom in their own way. The postcolonial nation states idea is based on this slippery notion of national identity as Jethamoshai refuses to go with his Indian family members saying,

I don't believe in this India –Shindia. It's all very well, you're going away now, but suppose when you get there they decide to draw another line somewhere? What will you do then? . . . I was born here, and I'll die here. (The Shadow Lines 215)

Jethamoshai's sense of security and attachment to the place of birth is further mocked at by his murder at that very place in the communal riots however his inner desire to die at the place where he was born is fulfilled by these riots. Jethamoshai is the representative of all those people who did not leave their respective place of birth they called 'home' during partition because they felt that it is not easy to divide people by drawing a line on the map. They believe in dying at the land of their ancestors because “no graveyard, too, can be a final adobe of the body if it has not been sanctified by the presence of one's ancestors” (Bhalla 25-26). Tha'mma's concern is one step beyond such belief as she wants her ancestors to sanctify the new home with their presence so that she can die peacefully. With this thought in mind she goes to Dhaka to bring back her Uncle Jethamoshai to Calcutta, the place she regards her home after leaving the one during partition. The grandmother is disillusioned about her identity in Dhaka when Tridib makes her realise that she is “a foreigner now . . . more than May, for look at her, she does not even need a visa to come here” (The Shadow Lines 195). She remembers every nook and corner of the city of Dhaka when she left it during partition and tries to relocate it as such. She is not ready to accept change. She feels herself very much attached to Dhaka without really knowing its existence.

She repeatedly asks, "Where is Dhaka?" (The Shadow Lines 195) The trauma of partition led people like her towards identity crisis. For her the real India is the India before partition. She believes in the physical lines demarcating two countries. When the narrator tells her that there are no such lines, she asks:

Where is difference then? And if there's no difference both sides will be the same; it'll be just like it used to be before, when we used to catch a train in Dhaka and get off in Calcutta the next day without anybody stopping us. What was it all for then-partition and all the killing and everything- if there isn't something in between?" (The Shadow Lines 151)

The narrator's postmodernist justification of borders or international lines which divide one nation from another as "the border isn't on the frontier: it's right inside the airport" (The Shadow Lines 151) leaves the people like his grandmother bewildered at the thought that the acceptance of one's nationality on a piece of paper, at the airport automatically takes away the right over all the other things including the place of one's birth, if it is located in the other nation on the political map.

After the partition of the country many people felt nostalgic about the land from where they migrated. In their memories same picture of that home is inscribed and they want to visit that place in reality which they think and desire to exist as such in reality. Reality is relative and unfixed so are the perceptions about it which also go on changing with time and place. The steering wheel to bring such change remains in the hands of certain political, social and particularly economic discourses. The documentation of such change in the form of history again becomes a discourse which turns the attention of a democratic author like Ghosh from the observation of events happening in polyphonic society like India to "the responsibilities of those who record such events" (Hawley 39).

The partition of the country led Muslims to leave India. Saifuddin, the car mechanic in Dhaka tells the visitors from India that he was born in Motihari, Bihar but he had to come to "East Pakistan with nothing at all, other than a large family" (The Shadow Lines 190). Similarly Khalil, the Muslim rickshaw puller who looks after Jethamoshai also "came over from India too; from Murshidabad, in Bengal" (The Shadow Lines 209). They treat the Indian guests with respect and Khalil has to lose his life for the sake of the members of another religious group. They are

again victims of partition who have to leave their place of birth and in the long passage of partition they could not maintain their identity. Ghosh has introduced such characters to show the positive side of humanity which is basically peace loving and do not believe in the reality of religious borders.

The novel shows the social and economic inequality prevailing in the subcontinent. Before partition Tha'mma recollects how her uncle was "so orthodox that he wouldn't let a Muslim's shadow pass within ten feet of his food" (The Shadow Lines 210) but partition of the country separated people as well as brought them close to each other due to the shared loss of home and family. This kind of economic inequality became the basis for a separate state to Muslims but it could not bring much change as the two Muslim characters are shown as belonging to middle class not elite to which most of the Hindu characters belong. The borders constructed through such differences are overcome with the sense of humanity which leads Khalil to care the old man as well as sacrifice his life for him.

Through the character of Shaheb the novel shows "the existence of social hierarchy in India immediately after the independence" (Haldar 137) and middle class people like narrator's family feel proud of their anglicised elite relatives except the few nationalists like Tha'mma who hesitate to take help from them and even use derogatory terms like 'whore' for Ila who belongs to the upper class in hierarchy. The novel not only shows history before partition but after partition as well.

The narrator describes the feeling of fear which surrounds one when people start killing each other in the communal frenzy because such fear is severest of all. This fear coming out of communal hatred among the people of same nation leads to destructive outcomes like the subcontinent's partition:

It is this that sets apart the thousand million people who inhabit the subcontinent from the rest of the world- not language, not food, not music- it is the special quality of loneliness that grows out of the fear of the war between oneself and one's image in the mirror.(The Shadow Lines 204)

This perception of the narrator throws light upon the psychology of the people who become victims to communal violence without any fault of their own. The victims of partition, communal riots and world war all share such kind of fear. This fear grows out of the frictions between people made up of same flesh and

blood but they fight instead of being brothers as Tha'mma's father and her uncle divided their home. This partition of home sets a fear in the mind of Tha'mma that brothers can become aliens to each other due to difference in interests and the children who never visit other side of the divide start growing with odd kind of theories about their image in the mirror. Tha'mma constructed a discourse about the other side of partitioned house, while telling stories to Mayadebi which finds closeness to Orientalist discourse. The post-partition generation grows up with similar kind of hatred if they are taught stories about the badness of the other and they become like narrator who sees the world from others eyes till Tridib teach him to imagine the world without borders. Tridib teaches him that borders are not reality but claims to reality as Mushirul Hasan writes: "National borders were political constructs, imagined projections of territorial power" (Hasan 2666). The novel is a debate about the nature of borders of various kinds which unite as well as divide people. Political history makes us realise that there are borders but the author himself asserts that these borders are arbitrary and constructed ones and are "naturalised' by modern political myth making . . . [T]hese lines are drawn in order to manipulate our ways of thought: that is why they must be disregarded" (Ghosh Interview 9).

The history of violence prevailing all over the world especially Indian subcontinent is depicted through diverse private stories of individuals. If the communal violence of 1960's in the northern regions of India is depicted through Robi's experience when he studies at Delhi, the incident which Ila tells the narrator during playing the game "houses" shows the history of violence borne out of racial differences in the western world. The authority of the teacher makes the problem of racism more severe when discrimination is done not only by individuals but institutions also. The bodily description of the small girl in insulting language shows the ugly side of civilized society of England: "Denise was very ugly . . . dirty red hair . . . mother has left her and run away to Australia . . . skin was like dirty ice-cream-pale and grainy and peppered with blackheads" (The Shadow Lines 73). "Racism is another form of partition wall" (Das 265) which becomes an obstacle between Nick and Ila because "Nick was ashamed to be seen by his friends, walking home with an Indian" (The Shadow Lines 76). The failure of their marriage, done against the racial difference makes the premises of racism more

prominent. Ila suffers from identity crisis between two worlds- in the west she is looked upon as a foreigner and in India she does not find personal freedom.

The narrator of the novel also tries to cross the border of social discourse by making love to his own cousin Ila but she does not cross the border of incest and regards him as a brother. At the same time she crosses the border of national and race identity by getting married to an English boy living in England. This crossing of borders does not provide her any peace of mind as her unhappy married life is exposed to the narrator although she hides it from him. The novel shows the rigidity of these borders although the characters are given cosmopolitan outlook.

The concept of culture has also changed with time and the postmodernist believe in dismantling the fixed notions of identity, history, culture as Hans Bertens perceives, "No culture can claim authenticity- although many of them routinely do- and no culture gives access to truths that lie beyond itself, beyond its own discourse" (Bertens 176). The narrative is based upon this postmodernist definition of culture which "permitted a post-national thinking beyond centre-periphery models into a heretofore uncharted space without peoples, without 'local' culture, without even the conflicting claims of homeland and diaspora" (Sethi 31) as there is continuous change in the factors which comprised the traditional sense of the word. The mixed language used by different characters, the variance in dressing, the shifting of home and change in the perspectives and ideas after having different experiences. The idea of assuming an ethnonym 'Indian' for the people is dismantled. There is no particular language which can be called Indian rather they have their fluid identities according to their use beyond the national boundaries. The characters in India who are Indian by birth like Ila speak in English accent in India whereas the waiter Rehman in England speaks in Bengali dialect. The linguistic boundaries are also dismantled by the text by parodying it through the manner in which Queen Victoria, mother of Ila talks to the servants who speak and understand well the English language.

Amitav Ghosh is a politically conscious writer and humanist. He gives space to the suffering of common human beings in his writing despite the fact that most of his characters belong to upper class of society but their problems and experiences form the basis of his writing. The characters like Tridib show the author's belief in human values which can be summed up in the words of Arvind Chowdhary:

“Humanness here overruns the man-made boundaries, making the inexorable appear a little shadowy. . . .Nor does he suggest that people are the same everywhere. Differences must persist, but they should not breed hatred or violence” (Chowdhary 3).

The novel shows how the people who have nothing to do with nation, religion or caste become the victims without logic. Tridib is one such example, who is not even attached to his family, and the matters of religion, race or caste difference are secondary to him but he dies in the communal riots. The killing of innocents during partition or the communal riots which erupted before and after partition has become a well known phenomenon. The innocence, passivity and the socially imposed forms of identity become the cause of their suffering. The ones who kill them work under the same set of discourses either religion or nationalism. Man kills the other without knowing him such is the dominance of discourses. The omnipresent political gaze of religion or nationalism forces them to do the duty of killing each other. The ones who try to step out of these roles suffer equally. The novel shows how there were people serving each other above all differences:

[T]here were innumerable cases of Muslims in East Pakistan giving shelter to Hindus, often at the cost of their own lives, and equally, in India, of Hindus sheltering Muslims. But they were ordinary people, soon forgotten-not for them any Martyr’s Memorial or eternal Flames. (The Shadow Lines 229-30)

The characters observe the absence of these people in history but voice/represent them through mentioning their fate in the fictional narratives like the present one. The believer of universal brotherhood and secular ideology are soon forgotten and not recorded in official nationalistic discourse of history for the posterity to know about them. Ghosh poses several questions from the historian through his literary works. The writer of this novel tries to trace the fate of all those subalterns who were either killed in the name of religion, nationalism and ethnicity or the ones who did not take part in the communal war and served humanity equally. The depiction of Partition victims and later of the communal riots marks Ghosh as a sympathiser of humanity as Keyurk K. Parekh writes, “As a liberal humanist, Ghosh tries to understand the human loss caused by drawing a line on the map right through the homeland” (Parekh 206).

There are no subalterns in the novel in the traditional sense of the word rather the ones the victims of history like Tridib are between the centre and periphery. The families in the novel are well settled upper middle class. They freely move in different nations due to one reason or the other. But there are people who go to another land to find their identity in the past as Tha'mma does. She goes to Dhaka to find her 'real' home but this real itself becomes problematic when the present real comes into conflict with historical real. She goes there to find her old family members, her home both paternal and national as she says that she is visiting this land for the first time after her marriage. When it comes to the identification of those who could not find home in either country due to partition grandmother says, "We're not refugees . . . we came long before partition" (The Shadow Lines 131). She does not like to be defined as refugee, the people who migrated during partition but no land belongs to them and they belong to none. This exclusion of such words to define a person's identity is what constitutes the theme of this postmodernist narrative where identities are constructed by discourses and the rejection of word 'refugee' is done under the social discourse.

Nobody is shown as a 'class subject' who can represent his whole class/ community in the truest sense. It marks the anti-essentialism and individualistic character of society as the outcome of globalisation. Identity becomes a subjective and relative matter in this ilk of unfixity. The family servant in Sri Lanka is marginalised due to his inability to speak in master's language and repeating what the master wants. At the same time it is a way of asserting his self. Most of the third world people belong to this category of subaltern who have started using it as a way of expressing themselves in the hybrid language. Some people use it as a tool of resistance whereas the already subaltern accept it as another medium of their handicapping process. The queen Victoria is equally bad in speaking in English as she makes use of repetitive terms. It becomes a teasing to show the move of subaltern towards center or the elite towards the periphery.

The characters in *The Shadow Lines* are not attached to any temporal or spatial entity rather they are on a voyage through the ship of history. Their salient feature of moving physically as Ila does or metaphysically as Tridib and the narrator do brings about the idea that change is a continuous process. Sometimes the context changes or in other cases the text itself changes. The move between past and present is what constitutes the plot of *The Shadow Lines*. The lines are

the lines dividing one physically and metaphysically. Ila's identity crisis is transcontinental because she is the victim of globalisation a transcontinental postmodernist world phenomenon, where Tha'mma is a victim of history which is political and personal phenomenon not beyond the eclipses of national boundaries. Ila is unable to understand the meaning of national freedom because she was born when the nation was already free rather she feels that the nation does not provide freedom to an individual to live life in his/her own way. She moves to England in search for individual freedom.

The relation between culture and imperial rule shows how identities become multi-faceted when countries are divided and identities become unstable. In this way Amitav Ghosh believes in postmodern thought of unfixed identities which goes on changing according to situations. That is what Mondal views: "Ghosh's texts also represent the correlate view that identity is therefore 'unstable' and fluid, because what is made can be unmade, and often is- over time or in different contexts" (Mondal 20-21). Same is the case with history which goes on changing with the change in its interpretation.

The novel reconstructs the personal as well as public history through the medium of memory, dreams and stories founded upon manifold perspectives. Memory occupies an important place in the assertion of one's identity through recollection of past because ". . . the way people choose to remember an event, a history, is at least as important as what one might call the 'facts' of that history, for after all, these latter are not self-evident givens; instead, they too are interpretations, as remembered by one individual or another" (Butalia 10). People remember the events of past which influenced their life. When the narrator, Ila and Robi go to a restaurant in London, Rehman praised Robi for such a remembrance of the place which he visited years ago, the reason for such remembrance is given by Robi, "I remember it because my brother was killed there, he said. In a riot-not far from where my mother was born. Now do you see why I remember?" (The Shadow Lines 243) It shows how personal history paves the path to the remembrance of nationalistic history.

It was in London, when Robi, Ila and the narrator meet "fifteen years later, thousands of miles away, at the other end of another continent" that "a chance remark by a waiter in a restaurant" drove Robi to share his dream about his brother Tridib's death in Dhaka with both of them (The Shadow Lines 247).

Narrator's father explained Tridib's death as an accident whereas his mother unconsciously used the word "killed" for same accident. May narrated a totally different version by naming Tridib's death a "sacrifice" for which no explanations can be given "for any real sacrifice is a mystery" (The Shadow Lines 252). The incident of Tridib's death throws light on the history of communal riots through different versions of the same happening.

In addition to it he tries to relate the incident of Tridib's death with the riots which took place during his childhood days but he gets disappointed when he could not get any reference about Tridib's death in any of the newspapers he found in the library. What is important in the life of an individual may not count any importance in the metanarratives of history. This assumption can be the justification for the absence of Tridib's death in newspapers and the narrator wonders "what is it that makes all those things called 'politics' so eloquent and these other unnameable things so silent?" (The Shadow Lines 228) His search for an answer leads him towards other questions.

The narrator makes out from four different versions about Tridib's death from four different people he comes to know that it was a question of identity. Tridib may not attach himself to any family, class and nation but the inventions of other people like religion and nationality make him die without logic. Such an invention was the demand for Pakistan during partition which took the lives of several Tridibs. It is history of the nation which influences the life of the individual but it is the history of the individual which the nation does not bother to document. The absence of Tridib's death in newspapers confirms it.

The atmosphere of the novel is somber because the characters are not happy in their present and the memory of the past is equally nostalgic as the idealistic desires of liberal philosopher like Tridib are unfulfilled. Ian Almond finds reasons for such melancholy which emerges out of the unfulfilled desires of the characters like Ila's love for Nick, narrator's unrequited love for his cousin, Tha'mma's disappointment on going to Dhaka for bringing her uncle Jethamoshai back to India which makes it a novel "filled with characters forever running after things that elude them" (Almond 58). The sadness or gloom is the result of loss of such things, places and people who become the victim of historical movements either colonial or neo-colonial.

The novel dismantles the notion of authentic history and fixed identity. It aims at providing alternatives to the normative, through diversity of perspectives upon an incident in the life of an individual and relating it to the metanarrative of national history. It shows how identity assertion by a group either religious or nation give prominence to lines which divide people as well as nations. The people do not believe in the rigidity of these borders until rumours, revenge, history or personal experience force them to kill and fight with each other. The narrative tries to give voice to the subalterns of history through family stories and propounds the idea that the nature of borders is shadowy; they are constructed to divide people.

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Chapter 3

History as a Discourse of communal violence: Identity Crisis in Bhisham Sahni's *Tamas*

Bhisham Sahni, a well known actor, translator, teacher, but basically a writer was born on August 8, 1915 in a business class Arya Smajist family at Rawalpindi. He spent his childhood in Rawalpindi. The immoral holocaust of 1947 compelled his family to move from Rawalpindi to Amritsar but “unlike Intizar Hussain, Krishan Baldev Vaid, or Rahi Masoom Raza” (Bhalla 111), the writers who penned down their pre-partition childhood experiences in their narratives, there is absence of such kind of nostalgia in Sahni's works. After completing his Masters degree in the subject of English from the Government College Lahore where students due to their family background were neither interested not encouraged to take part in the politics, could only discuss the political issues at theoretical level, he joined ‘The Renaissance Club’ in Punjab University, a body consisted both Hindus and Muslims as members (Sahni, *Tamas* and 118-119). His entry into the Congress party got ensured after he did a job in a local college and met Gandhi personally. He stayed with his brother Balraj Sahni at Wardha ashram and as a congress activist he had to stay in prison for participation in the Quit India Movement of 1942. Under the guidance of his elder brother, Balraj, he got the job of a performing artist and later on directed a drama *Bhoot Gari* which got an exclusive reception. He became a part of the Progressive Writers' Movement which was among high-ranking waves in pre-partition British India and was the founder chairman of SAHAMAT.

He had a huge body of publication to his credit which includes seven novels- *Jharokhe* (1967), *Karian* (1970), *Tamas* (1973), *Basanti* (1980), *Maiyadas ki Marhi* (1988), *Kunto* (1993) and *Neelu, Nilima aur Nilofer* (2000); six plays- *Hanush* (1977), *Kabira khara bazaar mein* (1981), *Madhavi* (1982), *Muavze* (1993), *Rang de Basanti* (1996) and *Alamgir* (1999); twelve short story collections- *Bhagya Rekha* (1953), *Pehla Path* (1956), *Bhatkati Rakh* (1965), *Patrian* (1973), *Vangchu* (1978), *Shobha Yatra* (1981), *Nishachar* (1983), *Pali* (1989), *Dayan* (1998) etc. In addition to this he translated Russian books into Hindi, wrote his autobiography *Aaj ke Ateet* and his brother's biography entitled *Balraj- My Bother*. All the works deal with the problems of individual according to Sahni's belief that “life offers not only complexities but also solutions too. Literature captures man's

hopes and dreams and his capacity for problem-solving” (qtd. in Sharma 2). His works deal with issues like social change, theme of partition, study of human behaviour, problems arising from generation gap and historical events. His writings become the representative of all classes as Ravinder Gasso observes, “although Sahni experienced the urban middle class society but his writing addresses the whole nation and humanity” (Gasso 112). All his works are characterised by a sense of compassion for the values of universal humanism and lucid narrative.

There is social realism in his novels which brings him more close to society. The use of artistic devices like euphemism, wit, irony and satire make the reader an active participant in the decoding process of such works. Sahni belonged to the privileged class of writers whose works are read by international audience for being translated into several languages vernacular as well as international. On the whole, he had been an active member of the Congress party, participated in freedom struggle, remained member of different organisations, devoted time to theatrical performances and contributed to Hindi literature. He used theatre as a tool to make people politically conscious. His commitment towards society and literature helped him in earning various awards and honours of national and international prestige. Some of them are Uttar Pradesh Government Award for *Tamas* (1975), Madhya Pradesh Kala Sahitya Parishad Award for the play *Hanush* (1975), Sahitya Akademi Award for *Tamas* (1976), Shiromani Writers Award (1979), the Lotus Award from the Afro-Asian Writers' Association (1981), Soviet Land Nehru Award (1983), Padma Bhushan for literature (1998), Sahitya Akademi Fellowship (2002), and Colour of Nation Award at International Theatre Festival, Russia.

The language of his writing is very simple and lucid. Coming from middle or lower class strata, his characters make use of different dialects. The characters speaking in Urdu and Punjabi dialects show the linguistic enrichment of the author. Belonging to different strata of society and speaking in a variety of languages the characters in Sahni's works present the pluralistic nature of Indian society. His style was narrative and pictorial. The techniques like pictorial mechanism and “descriptive style helped Sahni to get a place among the writers of contemporary times” (Patel 210). This pictorial quality in his works enforced Govind Nihalani to make it into a television serial. The minute detail given by the writer shows his

keen observational sense of understanding the human behaviour at different times.

The novel *Tamas* (Darkness), originally written in Hindi was translated into various languages and author himself translated it into English in 2001 however an English translation by Jai Ratan was done in 1988. Due to its translation it got more readership and popularity as translation provides the work a privilege to be local as well as global at the same time. This work comes under the genre of partition literature which deals with the themes of communal riots and the bloodshed leading to the country's partition on the basis of religion into India and Pakistan. *Tamas* presents a realistic picture of this human tragedy by pointing out that the real victims of all sectarian violence are the hapless common folk. The work is based on real life experience of violence as the author himself asserted "I wrote *Tamas* after I witnessed the riots in Bhiwandi" (Sahni, *Tamas* and 112). In *Tamas*, Sahni shares three different patterns while dealing with the theme of partition- blaming British rule, seeking reasons in economic and political life of the nation, following liberalist philosophy (Upadhyay 70). The author himself asserts his:

[E]ssential concern has been the depiction of the situation of communal frenzy that gripped the West Punjab of pre- partition days. I have shown how it affected the people as individuals, as members of a caste and a society . . . the whole novel is based on facts, the first chapter is the work of my imagination. (qtd. in Kohli)

The assertion by the author himself that the work is based upon facts moves it towards history. The outline of imagination makes it little indifferent towards factuality. One thing is clear that through diversity of characters, their association with different social and political institutions the behaviour of man during times of conflict is shown to its best, taking a short time span of five days.

The present novel is based on facts which are collected by the writer from the 'vernacular memory' (Nayar 60) to reclaim history of India through his fictional narrative. The modernism in Sahni is reflected through the scheme of stream of consciousness which emphasises upon the mind of the character. Nathu presents the condition of a victim who does not know anything about the power politics he becomes a part of. This technique is one of the experimental modes used by the modernists. The "blurring of the distinctions between genres" (Barry 79) is done by

Sahni with the use of poetic language while describing the natural imagery before, during and after the communal riots take place. The country side description is more close to this kind of descriptive method. Although the plot develops in a linear progression but the novel does not deal with single character or group rather presents the different stories of different people leading towards a unified ending. This discontinuity in narration is another feature of modernist literature but “the modernist features it in such a way as to register a deep nostalgia for an earlier age when faith was full” (Barry 80) and the nation was seen as a unified entity.

The author himself claims his standpoint that of “a humanist” who feels sorry for the masses who “indulged in so much violence” (Sahni, Tamas and 133). In Tamas there is mention of the riots which took place in the northern region of the subcontinent in the year 1926-27 and common people like Khuda Baksh pray that the bell installed during those riots should never ring again. Same was the reaction of the old man in the meeting with Vanprasthi, who tries to seek out alternative solution other than violence. It shows that common people never favour violence. That is what comrade Dev Datt tells his friend: “the middle class – is easily affected by traditional influences. Had you come from the working class, the question of Hindu and Muslim would not have bothered you so much” (Tamas 184). For them the question of survival is primary. The common men working to earn a living are shown as indifferent towards politics, the ruler, the questions of religion and the idea of freedom. For them survival is more important than all these fanciful words and world of equality and freedom. One of the characters in Tamas says,

I was carrying a babu’s load from Ganj Mandi when the babu said, “Azadi is coming. India will soon be free.” I laughed and said, “Babuji, what is that to me? I am carrying loads now and shall continue carrying them then”. . . . ‘Our lot is to carry loads’. . . (Tamas 128)

Nathu belongs to similar kind of group. Unaware of political atmosphere of the country, he was suffering from poverty crisis. It is only after seeing a pig on the steps of mosque that he realises what part he is made to play for mounting the tension between two different religious or political groups.

Nathu’s passivity lies in his poverty; his profession, social life and place in the caste hierarchy oblige him to do the job he is given against his consent. His annoyance at accepting the job, his incapability to play a trick by providing Murad

Ali a dead pig from piggery, and the thought of returning back the advanced money, all seemed unfeasible for him to come out of this situation. The thought of another mess (poverty), he and his family could make a way through “the rustling five-rupee note that had gone into his pocket had made it impossible for him to open his mouth” (Tamas 4). He could have told everything to people to prove Murad Ali’s wickedness but his silence leads to destruction. Even if Nathu could make effort to tell the truth, Murad Ali could throw him “out of his house, hold [him] guilty and get [him] arrested. He is quite capable of doing this” (Tamas 205). The people like Nathu become multiple-victims. Even without telling any truth circumstances throw him out of his home. He dies for no reason of his own. The people like him feel guilty after killing a pig; the idea of killing a human being never cross their minds unless a dominant discourse does not force them to do so. Relativity of marginalisation is shown through the symbolic scene of Nathu (one marginalised) killing an animal (another marginalised). He kills it on the command of elite class. Later on this scene becomes a reality when human beings start killing each other like beasts.

Nathu is filled with the feelings of guilt and fear after undertaking “so repulsive and hazardous a task” (Tamas 5) through which man started killing each other like animals. In this war only the innocents like the pig are slaughtered and their slaughter is further used for political purposes by the ruler through people like Murad Ali, “a man of contacts. There was hardly a person, connected with the Municipal Committee, with whom he did not have dealings” (Tamas 4). The innocent feels guilty without knowing their crime but the actual culprits go scot free without any burden on their brain. Even after completing his job abiding Murad Ali’s instructions, he found the man turning from “a friend into a bitter enemy” (Tamas 7) which is the fate of common men who are used as things not as equals. Murad Ali’s presence is shown even in his absence which reinforces the omnipresence of evil in the darkness or ‘Tamas’. His identity is not due to his thoughts or action but his physique and attire without which “he would not be what he was” (Tamas 4).

There is parallel representation of real world and the world inside the mind of a character. Nathu’s inner turmoil sets a striking contrast with the turmoil in the society. Sahni tries to show through Nathu how common people feel when they unconsciously become a part of anti-social power politics. He feels sorry for the

eruption of communal riots and the bloodshed happening at his blunder. There is no proof that the pig killed by him is the one which was thrown on the stairs of the mosque. This narrative technique used by Sahni does not present an incident in holistic manner rather leaves gaps and silences for the active reader to fulfill them.

In real life no choices are left but in a fictional piece like novel they are very much there for the reader to have one or the other. As in case of Tamas, Virender Pal brings about three silences or gaps left by the author for the readers to make connection for the totality of picture. Sahni does not show-“connection between the congregation of Pir Saheb and the violence”, “whether the pig lying on stairs is same that was killed by Nathu”, and “Murad Ali gaining political importance” or not for which he used Nathu (Pal 149).

The narrative depicts the role of religion and nationalism to the people, scrutinise the inner conflicts in the minds of their subjects, and voice grieves and sorrows of plebeians as well as through the unhappy married life of Richard and Liza, the dark side of white society is depicted. Here again is seen Tamas, which is not because of difference of religion, race or caste but that of personal liking and disliking. What interests Richard, bores his wife. She is a victim of loneliness. Her character depicts the humanistic values existing inside the white society which may not find any valve to enter into ruled society due to the professional approach that “If the subjects fight among themselves, the ruler is safe” (Tamas 54). Liza asks her deputy Commissioner husband to stop Indians from fighting by bearing in mind their shared racial identity. This innocent view is darkened under the British ruler’s “eyes only on differences that divide their subjects, not on what unites them” (Tamas 51).

The novel shows how British went deep into the roots of Indian culture to sow the seeds of communalism. Richard understands the different religions on the basis of food habits, dressing style and nomenclature which enables him to recognise the leaders of different political parties and even the servants working under him. They belong “to the same racial stock” (Tamas 53) only there are superficial differences. “The names of Muslims end with such suffixes as Ali, Din, Ahmed, whereas the names of Hindus end with Lal, Chand or Ram”, “Every Sikh’s name ends with the word ‘Singh’”(Tamas 43). In the same way “the sikhs, besides keeping their hair long, adhere to four other commandments; that many Hindus keep a tuft of hair on their heads; that the Muslims too have their dos and don’ts,

they do not eat pork while the Hindus do not eat beef; that the Sikhs eat jhatka meat while the Muslims eat halal” (Tamas 51). After having close insight into Indian society the ruler has to choose what to use and where for his political purposes and Richard does it.

The history of colonisation is based on these grounds. The history which unites the nation on the racial premises is silenced by the dominant discourse of history of differences which divided the people geographically and emotionally. The literature tells everything except facts but history does not say anything except presenting the facts. The coloniser is shown as a victimiser who even views his marital life in context of career and its future perspectives which force him to be in good relation with his wife despite the loss of her beauty with overconsumption. He is very frozen hearted person who asks his wife to go with him for a picnic to the village Sayedpur where he has “to get a disinfectant sprayed into a well in which many women and children jumped to their death . . . It is a lovely drive. From there we can proceed to Taxila. We can have a look at the museum there- it is a unique museum” (Tamas 313). There is truth in Richard’s statement if the well is placed inside the museum. As in the case of Jalianwala tragedy it was the well where people jumped to death but after passage of almost one century it has become a place of picnic, a part of museum where signs of communal history are preserved. Richard’s interest is in the study of such past which he seeks in books and ruins because he belongs to the class who pen down the history of their subjects.

The writer has made use of various symbols like the Buddha statuette which symbolises peace and non-violence but it is shown as a puppet in the hands of Britishers to use of it the way they want. After the eruption of riots no meaning is left in the peaceful co-existence ideology of Buddha. It becomes baseless on the face of reality “as though they were not statuettes but heads of the dead Buddha” (Tamas 106). The chaos outside is depicted through the meaninglessness in Buddha’s idea of peace. It seems no more relevant to Liza.

The pig in the opening dramatic scene symbolises all the innocents either animals, women, children or aged people who have to lose their life to fulfill the British needs who was ruling at that time. Most of the characters in the novel go on moving in the dark lanes which symbolises the whole country going through the dark passage of its history from where it could not find an easy way out even after sixty years of partition event.

The story inside the story technique is used by Sahni to bring out the causes and differences which lead to the victimisation of one in the hands of another. The story which Karim Khan told to the people present in nanbai's shop revolves around the incident about Musa and Khizr but the moral of the tale becomes significant in the context of British rule in India:

“[A] ruler can see what you and I, ordinary folk, cannot see. The British ruler has all –seeing eyes, otherwise how can it be possible that a handful of firanghis coming from across the seven seas should rule over so big a country? The firanghis are very wise, very subtle, very far-sighted . . .” (Tamas 124)

Sahni presents the orient from the coloniser's eyes and Richard's interest in the spirituality as well materiality of India favours the cause of violence. Understanding the weaknesses of society in order to use/misuse and change it according to political requirements was the policy of the British.

Bhisham Sahni follows the traditional definition of 'cultural identity' according to which shared experiences and codes of a particular group bestows with its members a feeling of oneness, as in the case of Indians a feeling of Indianness, “with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual history” (Hall 110). This essentialist version of identity unites people above other differences of class, caste, colour, religion and gender. The roots of this unity lies in the shared history of the nation but the process of colonisation divides the people among themselves by understanding and misinterpreting this past according to the colonial needs as Richard tells his wife “These people know only what we tell them . . . Most people have no knowledge of their history. They only live it” (Tamas 41). This distortion of history is what Sahni presents through the character of Richard who shows a keen interest not only in reading and writing books about the history of India but also in the excavation of ruins to understand the history of the place where he represents the coloniser. He comes to know about the shared race history of Indian people but ironically in the hands of the ruler, narration and construction of history becomes a tool of suppression used against the subjects of that history. The whole novel is structured on the premises that the differences among people are widened by different discourses like nationalism, religion, caste,

economy, patriarchy and the most prominent one colonialism. In the foreword to his book *The Order of Things* Foucault explores discourse:

[N]ot from the point of view of the individuals who are speaking, nor from the point of view of the formal structures of what they are saying, but from the point of view of the rules that came into play in the very existence of such discourse. (qtd. in Howarth 51)

The activities and practices done by the subjects under these discourses and their treatment in the discourse of history is the basis of this analysis. So the term discourse here is used in the Foucaudian sense of the word. Sahni tries to dismantle the colonial discourse of history by providing a counter discourse of colonised's history from their own perspective. The socio-political conditions are dealt with deep understanding not only of the people who were working under such discourses but also the rulers who used them for their own vested interests. The identity of different characters as victimiser and victimised can better be understood than placing them in different categories of class or religion.

The meaning of Tamas is popularly taken for 'darkness' but critics like Prafull Kolkhyayan give a different dimension to the title and the whole work. According to him 'Tamas' stands for 'coloniser' "who sets every hand, weapon or mind including colonised's entire thinking power in war with its shadow (darkness)" (Kolkhyayan 41). The history of pre-partition era was history of communal differences created by the Britishers. The politics behind such history is very minutely discussed by Sahni with the use of cross genre techniques like the elements of detective fiction in order to make the reader understand the past not through story but through narration of the story. It is a journey of common man from man to animal which no longer remains docile due to the savagery conditioned by different discourses. As Jean –Paul Sartre asserts in the Preface to *The Wretched of the Earth* that it is not "impossible to change a man into an animal" (Sartre 14). People were actually made animals by violence and social institutions failed to socialise this animal. The symbol of pig is not for animals but for the intricacies which lead to the conversion of man into animal.

The Hindu and Muslim communities have shared history as slaves to British. Their identity as slaves stands them apart to fight against the ruler but the religion became more important at that time due to the inequalities of their desires as Jinnah asserted justifying his demand for separate nation for Muslims:

“India has never been a nation. It only looks on the map. The cows I want to eat, the Hindu stops me from killing. Every time a Hindu shakes hands with me he has to wash his hand. The only thing the Muslim has in common with the Hindu is his slavery to the British.”
(qtd. in Rao 21)

Such factors turned his two-nation theory into reality. The economic inequality was another cause because urban population was of Hindus whereas the majority of Muslims were financially unsound. In the novel the description of localities and the division of professions validates the argument that the economic condition of the Muslims was worse than the Hindus. There was not a single reason behind such a tragic holocaust.

The Indian subcontinent remained under the rule of invaders earlier Mughals and later on British. During Mughals rule there was no demand for separate state in the name of religion because Hindus were in Majority and Muslim population had the ruler of their religious community but “once they ceased to be rulers” as V. Pala Prasada Rao observes, “their sense of alienation from the mass of Hindu society became a cause of concern and fear” (Rao 27). This fear and insecurity for the loss of religious identity found a solution in the form of a separate state for Muslims.

The author has a balanced approach in condemning the brutality of different communities on both sides of the divide. The signifier ‘Pakistan’ originated from an arbitrary apolitical approach which seems of inclusive nature to adopt various communities than the fundamentalists interpret it, as Anatol Lieven observes that the word ‘Pakistan’ was “artificial construct, invented by Rehmat Ali, an Indian Muslim student in Britain in 1933, to describe a future Muslim state in the north-west of the then British empire of India embracing Punjabis, Pathans, Kashmiris, Sindhis and the peoples of Balochistan” (Lieven 10). But the signified ‘Pakistan’ dreamed and demanded by the members of Muslim League has a totally different nature of political and religious exclusivist dogma. They demand for a separate state of Muslims. This demand for separateness was raised not by the common people like the tailor, the tonga driver or the water carrier but the member of a political party who tried to seek their personal benefit in the origin of a separate state. The condition of Muslim did not change with partition in either country. This

politics of the upper class is observed by C. M. Naim while analysing “The ‘Muslim Problem’ in India”, he writes:

The chief leaders of the Pakistan movement were not obscurantist mullahs; they were in fact some of the most ‘modernist’ Muslims of their time. They also belonged to an elite section of the community which had its own motive of self- presentation. Their veneer of modernism hid a basically exploitative nature, concerned with obtaining privileges, not equal rights. In a most blatant fashion they used the emotional attachment of the Muslim masses to religion for their own ends. (Naim 40)

Tamas shows how differences were created among the otherwise peace loving society of India. The differences were already there but the ignition to the fire of darkness was provided by the ruler. The history, religion and politics were misused by the ruler to divide the country not only in the form of land but hearts also. The history was not only used but also created by the ruler to maintain the gap between individuals and groups even after the official departure of the British and its results are visible in the post-partition communal violence. Narrative technique of parallelism is used by Sahni in the life of a naive chamar and the common folk who had to face internal and external conflicts under the corrupt political discourses. Much difference is not made among the British elite and the political elite of the country itself.

The work belongs to the epoch of political writings. The novel is not about an incident taking place in the life of an individual but the incident taking place all over the society alongside the power imbalance at individual and national level. The recovery of the loss caused by this unconscious violence either erupted by individual action or by the state could not be possible. The restitution of power from British hands to the nationalist party was possible but it was not so in case of life and property. The attempts of congress party aimed at restoration of national identity, Hindu Sabha for religious identity and Muslim League for both. This search for identity was the reason behind all fights as Richard says “In the name of religion they fight one another; in the name of freedom they fight against us” (Tamas 50). The worst results of religion as a discourse to divide and kill people are shown in this narrative. Nationalism is not as bad a tool as religion is because religious coloring given to nationalism results in human divide. If nationalism would

be the key idea then men must be living or dying for the nation but here neighbors are killing each other for their survival.

The religious, political and social leaders themselves walk on the path of darkness as Aziz recites a couplet on the reality of those times relevant even today:

The mullah, the preacher and the
torch-bearer—all have one thing in
common—they show light to others while
themselves walk in darkness. (Tamas 13)

Partitions inside the partitioned India take place with same politically schematised intentions to gain political importance. The demand for separate states has less to do with the common man than with the greed for political power among the elites. The so-called religious guides divert from the true path of religion and start slandering others. In this case Vanaprasthi and Pir Saheb are interesting examples who preach violence in the name of defence of faith. After the recitation of Shanti Path, “a prayer for the universal peace” (Tamas 71-72), the religious teacher in a fit of fury recites,

“Much blighted has this land been by
the sins of the Muslims, even the
Divine has refused us this grace,
and the earth its bounty.”(Tamas 73)

Vanprasthi is an ironic character. He is well versed in Vedas outwardly but when it comes to reality, the whole meaning changes. Rather than non-violence and peace he ignites the innocent minds with the feeling of violence for the sake of religion. His interpretation of scholarly works to show the supremacy of Aryan culture plays a crucial role in the upcoming of communal riots. In the pre and post partition riots this element remained omnipresent due to its irrational or illogical premises. The people like him, modify religion to axe their own grind. They leave the traditions which no longer suit their political agenda. Prayers are added and deleted accordingly. According to his hostile advice a prayer preaching modesty was discarded for its “demoralizing effect” (Tamas 72) and religious intolerance is taught by him at the same time. If someone like the old man who had witnessed previous riots asks them to meet the Deputy Commissioner to prevent the repetition of history, Vanprasthi scolds him for his pigeon-hearted thinking. The

common people are not so much agitated as the leaders. Vanprasthi does not go with the deputation to the deputy Commissioner to make peace keeping efforts because “being a spiritual man could not be expected to concern himself with mundane matters” (Tamas 79).

It is the misguidance of religious gurus like Vanprasthi who exclude Muslims while praying for universal peace, Master Dev Vrat who fills the minds of youth with feelings of hatred against Muslims with the construction of particular kind of knowledge, “Mlecchas are unclean people, they don’t bathe, don’t even wash their hands after toilet, eat from one another’s plate, they have no regular hour of going to toilet” (Tamas 82) and Ranvir starts generalising these ideas upon all the people of this group he knew- the cobbler, the tonga-driver, and his classmate Hamid. Ranvir’s mind is filled with antagonistic ideal of Hindu nation that is why he justifies his violence “for the defence of the nation” (Tamas 89).

The victims of this war always remain confused under this darkness which sometimes comes in the shape of pig, religion, politics and colonialism. The darkness of the society which prevails in the novel has become the permanent character of ex-colonies where communal wars are fought even after sixty years of partition only the form or name of this ‘Tamas’ changes. This darkness links history to present socio-political scenario of India and its neighbors parted through the same darkness. The work was written with the purpose to come out of this darkness but the prevalence of that darkness in contemporary India would certainly make “the author feel dejected at the re-appropriation of his creations particularly Tamas” (Mani 53). The communal riots in the post independence India makes the politically conscious writers like Sahni to seek the roots of such violence as Leela Gandhi points out:

The reason behind the communal riots lies in the colonial past when people were made to fight with each other and such a past experience like the patient of “anamnesis” makes the writers of late twentieth century to find reasons for the communal behavior in contemporary nation states like India. (Gandhi 8)

The people of the colonised countries accepted the dominance of the coloniser without the use of physical power as Sartre points out how “the status of ‘native’ is a nervous condition introduced and maintained by the settler among colonised people with their consent” (Sartre 17). The people in the novel accept

the slavery given to them with their will that is the reason why they go to the British administrator with a request to impose curfew for the prevention of communal riots. They even believe that people would stop fighting with the fear that the administration is aware of the tension if a plane flies over the town. The power was in the hands of Britishers knowing well when to blow communal fire and when to make peace according to their policies. Bakshiji reinforces the power in British authority but its deliberate pessimism towards the condition of communalism, "Everything is under your authority, Sahib, only if you want to exercise it" (Tamas 96).

The characters are shown as fed up with their lives. Their efforts to reach home are symbolic of everyone's search for a shelter not for body but for mind as well. All the party leaders hurry up to reach their home or at least they feel comfortable among the people belonging to their own religion or caste. In this longing for home the white man is not an exception. He has to live away from home due to his profession. This profession could not provide him peace of mind because there is difference between his private and professional life. Sahni points out the inner conflicts in the minds of ruler who came to disturb the land and mind of the third world. The characters of Liza and Richard show the unhappy married/family lives of that British diaspora which came to India with the desire for material gain. This lust for power cost them peace of mind for which they move to non-living objects like statuettes. Richard's interest in reading about history and archaeology of distant lands provides him a different 'third world'.

It was his private world, his little England, with problems all its own, which were not even remotely related to the outside world. Within the home was his real life. In the outside world he pursued his profession, which was so extraneous to his 'real' life. Of course he had his books, his statuettes which belonged neither to one nor to the other world. He would bury himself in his books to forget both the worlds. (Tamas 309-310)

Through the views of progressive youth, Sahni throws light upon the 'divide and rule' policy of British administration but the people wandering in the darkness of religious fundamentalism do not give any ear to their thoughts. They are looked upon as the detectives of other party. The role of comrades like Dev Datt is shown in positive light who understands the roots of problem lying inside British policy of

'divide and rule' but the irony of situation is that people like him and Jarnail are called crazy who waste their time in telling people that ". . . Hindus and Musalmans are brothers . . . our real enemy is the Englishman" (Tamas 190) and this rioting only kills the poor people of both the communities and "India's wealth is swallowed up by that fair-faced monkey who bosses over us" (Tamas 190). But the darkness of differences was so deep that they could not follow the torch bearers. Even these torch bearers themselves get lost in this darkness and die without logic. Their victimisation was neither due to ignorance nor to religious fundamentalism but to their concern for humanity. They died in order to save others. Jarnail also belongs to this group of nationalists who are considered as crazy people, without any home or family and become the victims of their own ideology. After their death nobody remembers their loss or sacrifice. Such people are soon forgotten.

Ignorance of right makes the wrong decision vulnerable to repetition. This is the case shown in Tamas where all the three communities don't fully understand their history in the context of those times but try to act upon those lines which they later on realise their "big blunder" (Tamas 287) of decision. The characters realise their mistakes and correct them but the communal history of India is repeating it time and again which makes such literary works relevant to realise people their follies. The historian does not involve into this didactic process that is why facts don't teach as experiences do.

Political elite construct the official histories ignoring the marginal subjects-cultural, economic, religious or gender based. The very notion of identity politics played a pivotal role in the violence of twentieth century national and international historical events. History as a discourse is taken in this novel to look deep into the follies and desires of people and their fulfillment through different mediums. These human traits or anthropological understanding of an individual, mob, political /religious/gender groups during and after partition is done by the author taking the theme of communal violence in "a novel of small canvass" (Gujral 101).

The motif of darkness is supported by the suicide committed by women into the village well. The well itself is a symbol for dark silent waters which are static and deadly. This incident is the actual representation of such historical tragedy when several women became the victims of honor killing. In the village Sayedpur several women gave their life jumping into the well but did not lost their honor. The scene is based on the personal experience of the author as Andrew Whitehead

writes, “Bhisham Sahni, has first hand recollection of the incident, and saw some of the bodies being retrieved from the well” (Whitehead 311). The irony of the situation is that honor is given more importance than the life itself.

There are visual narratives like Amrita Pritam’s novel based film *Pinjar* (2003) and Sabiha Sumar’s directed film *Silent Waters* (2003) which present the life of the survivors of honor killing whose families did not accept them rather they wanted to kill them. Things are recovered but nobody cares about the women left behind with exceptions like the two progressive brothers in both these narratives. There are several reasons behind this disappearance of women as in the case of a Hindu girl Parkasho who is abducted by Allah Rakha, a Muslim man. She suffers because “she was afraid of both Allah Rakha and her father” (Tamas 331) means the discourse of patriarchy leads to her abduction but at the same time the abductor also becomes her savior as in the above mentioned films. The life is saved at the cost of identity. Her parents are unable to recover her due to the religious, social and economic reasons.

In the novel there are instances where women either committed suicide or were killed by the people of other party in name of honor. There is hardly any story which does not talk about the rape or abduction by the members of opponent religious groups but there is hardly any history which does so. It throws light on ‘the other side of silence’ using Urvashi Butalia’s book title dealing with these unheard voices of women, children and other marginalised people who were either marginalised before partition or partition left them as marginalised. The people who had to leave their homes and property behind had no option but to become beggars and the old couple in *Tamas*, is an example of such case who had lost their son as in terms of religious identity he was not a member of their group, lost their daughter who committed suicide to save the honor of her family and community, lost their home and shop because it belonged to the muslim majority land, lost his friend Kareem Khan who could not cross his religious boundaries in favour of friendship. This loss of everything at the cost of identity left behind nothing but *Pinjars*, using the title of Amrita Pritam’s partition novel. The destiny of this silent class is decided by different ideological state apparatuses not by themselves. They are just the passive receptors of their fate as Bina D’ Costa points out that during war or communal violence “identity [is] defined through state-sponsored welfare programmes by social workers, medical personnel, government

officials, religious groups and other- but not by themselves” (D’ Costa, 14). Such atrocities are inflicted not only on young girls but old age women as well which makes Harnam Singh reassure himself thrice that he would kill his wife Banto first with his own hands but “won’t let [her] fall into their hands” (Tamas 227).

The novel throws light on different kind of involvement in the violent activities- some are able to make others indulge in violence with the help of political, religious or economic tools but do not become part of this deadly act. Tamas is full of examples where people like Nathu have to kill a pig for economic reasons, Ranvir for social, Shahnawaz for religious and all the others like killing of Jarnail for political ones. There is no singular intention or action which leads the whole community to flames. More than the fire burning the grain market or the towns and cities it was the fire burning inside the hearts of different groups against each other. Even friendship gets questioned when the issue of religion comes in. This dimension of Indian history shows that a single explanation of an event cannot be given in such cases as Kaviraj asserts,

Any attempt at a generalisation of a ‘past principle’ is therefore impossible, and would at the same time both unite and tragically divide the people. . . Every move to appeal to an older large identity- Hindu or Muslim- was bound to create unities which were far more difficult to unite into further integrative forms. (Kaviraj 9)

Mythology and history are used as supporting factors for the justification of wrong deeds. Historical references are given to justify present action. The members of Sikh community associate Muslims with Turks and make use of their past experience in communal frenzy shouting “Turks! The Turks are coming!” (Tamas 249) In the similar manner the members of Youth League pose themselves as Rajputs and Ranvir “visualised himself in the role of Shivaji” (Tamas 193), the man who is known for his heroism. The author presented the latter case in a satirical manner because the destruction caused by this group of people is unbelievable. They represent the brainwashed trained youth for violence against humanity and the terrorist groups abounding in all the countries of the world belong to same class who are deprived of any human feelings. The poor pedlar becomes a victim to the violence of these so-called innocents even after the attack on him “He was dying, not so much from the wound inflicted on him, as from sheer fright. He still couldn’t believe that an innocent-looking boy could have

attacked him (Tamas 203). The victimiser himself is a victim of fundamentalist ideology.

The scene of Iqbal Singh's conversion from Sikh to Muslim community is very sentimental. The irony of the situation is that Ramzan, the person who is unable to kill Harnam Singh due to old acquaintance tortures Iqbal to extremes without knowing that the man is a son of Harnam Singh. It shows the darkness brought by religious discourse. Iqbal is unable to save his identity but he is able to save his life after changing his identity because:

“[A]ll the marks of Sikhism on Iqbal Singh's person had been replaced by the marks of the Muslim faith. A mere change of marks had brought about the transformation. Now he was no longer an enemy but a friend, not a kafir but a believer; to whom the doors of all Muslim houses were open.” (Tamas 281)

Although Iqbal's parents also suffer due to communal riots who “within the twinkling of an eye, had been turned into homeless outsiders” (Tamas 224) yet there is presence of humanity left in people like the Muslim woman Rajo. Rajo gives shelter to old Sikh couple and she also gives them food and the couple accepts the food from the hands of this Muslim lady who saved their life. Rajo's son Ramzan is shown as a member of Muslim league who goes on killing kafirs in the company of his fellow beings from village to village but when the turn of Harnam Singh comes he is unable to kill him because “it is one thing to kill a Kafir, it is quite another to kill someone you know and who has sought shelter in your house. A thin line was still there which was difficult to cross, despite the fact that the atmosphere was charged with religious frenzy and hatred” (Tamas 269).

The role of rumour and revenge adds fuel to fire. Most of the news about the opponent party is given with a sense of rumour because in a state of frenzy people do not make use of their minds rather go on killing each other on the basis of baseless stories. The feelings of revenge support the discourse of communal violence. The cow is killed by Muslims with the intention of taking revenge from the Hindus based on the assumption that the dead pig was thrown by Hindus to pollute the mosque however people of other than Hindu religion as Kalu, a Christian and Murad Ali, a Muslim were involved in this act. When the violence erupts rumours are taken as truth and only solution left to bring honor to their community becomes the killing of opposite community members without even

knowing them. The murder committed by Baldev Singh of “old blacksmith Karim Baksh, the only person to whom he had access, thereby avenging his mother’s murder” (Tamas 252), proves that the religious identity becomes so dominant a factor during communal violence that the person of other community is killed only due to his shared identity with the adversary group. The subjects of such violence are shown as poor people. The rich people have got themselves insured in safe places and they have got their property insured. The Sikh leader Teja Singh is again shown as a man economically powerful. When he shows inability to pay two lakhs of money a man comments ironically, “You alone can pay two lakhs, Teja Singhji, if you so desire. You have amassed quite a fortune” (Tamas 286). He was in the ability to save lives at the stake of money but he prefers wealth over lives. His own identity as a powerful man stands him in the row of victimisers who do not save others from victimisation. In this case religious identity fails before individual’s economic power.

The influence of different discourses is so prominent that the subjects are unable to distinguish between black and white they just go on following their master as:

Ranvir was only repeating what he had heard from Master Dev Vrat’s mouth. (Tamas 196)

The members of the congregation hummed or recited the verse after him. (Tamas 71)

Gandhi, sitting in Wardha makes statements, and they go on repeating them. (Tamas 307)

The influence of Gandhi is taken more as a religious leader than political. Right from the prefix ‘Mahatma’ attached to him makes it clear. Under the spell of his discourse/Gandhism, his devotees go behind him blindly as one of activists comment, “They are all Gandhi’s parrots. Gandhi, sitting in Wardha makes statements, and they go on repeating them. They have no mind of their own” (Tamas 307). Gandhi at the top of political hierarchy is in power to change people’s thought and action according to his own ideology but followers like Jarnail are killed brutally only because he had neither a home, nor a wife or child, neither a regular job, nor a regular roof over his head” and during lathi charge “he would bare his narrow, shriveled chest and get his ribs broken” (Tamas 23). He is the representative of all those people who did not fit into the frames of official history,

because of their abnormality (in Foucauldian sense who don't fit into society) of mind, social status and behaviour. These kinds of people were mostly the followers of Gandhi who with the help of religious politics made them believe in their fate and prepared them to fight for the freedom of country from British rule. Like other Gandhians Jarnail repeats the words of his master (Gandhi), "Gandhiji has said that Pakistan can only be formed over his dead body. I too say the same" (Tamas 34-35). The outcome of this kind of blind following is in the facts of history where Gandhi was alive even after partition. Here the victimisation of people in the hands of an ideology is shown where the victimiser remains safe. It is a different case that the victimiser was assassinated after partition about which several reasons are given in history.

The Muslim League raised the issue of separate state for Muslims. It is repeatedly claimed by leaguers that "Congress is the party of the Hindus" (Tamas 185). It was the Muslim League's war cry to save their culture and civilization which led to the birth of separate adobe of similar cultural background. Later on either it is diaspora or the minorities living in India start such wars to safeguard their group identity. This was the case in India-Pakistan conflict till date starting from the birth of two nations. It started from a group which got political authority leading to the question of national identity. The victims of these riots include women, children, animals and the aged people are soon forgotten but the leaders are shown as organizing meetings with the coloniser.

Millions of people were charred to death and the others left homeless. Such incident led India to become one of those nations who seek harmony in chaos and peace in destruction. According to Urvashi Butalia almost one million people were killed and 75000 women abducted during this tragic event (Butalia 1). The idea of revisiting history of Partition is based on avoidance of such tragedies which are recurring years after that, taking the toll of common man. Taking into account the recentness of violence taking place on the basis of oppositional patriotism/ responsibility towards their faith, as in the case of Babri Masjid, the demand for Khalistan in the 80's all make the question of history and identity more supplementary and complementary to each other. About the concept of partition and its relevance in the independent India, Tarun K. Saint writes,

The hardening of religious identity definitions in terms of being Hindu, Sikh or Muslim has spilled over into the post-partition period,

with Muslim localities being described as 'little Pakistan', even during times of normalcy and the persistence of the 'sikh problem', especially after the splitting of Punjab left the sikh community with the perception of being orphans. (Saint 17)

In this manner even the so-called secular state of India has times and places where religious identity overshadows the national identity. The above view about post-partition era is equally applicable to the pre-partition India as well. The novel *Tamas* presents several such 'little pakistans' and 'little hindustans' where people belonging to other religious groups dare not to enter without the help of the member of that community. Religion as a discourse is so dominating in social and political life to become the basis of communal riots which led to the formation of countries like India and Pakistan.

The consequences of communal violence are- "the worst sufferers in this violence are common people", elite class involves in violent acts "in sophisticated manner", and "once the violence starts people easily forget the current friendly relations between them and starts going back to the history of troubled relations" (Pal 151). The cruelty of fate is that violently victimised are historically subalterns. The mobs are easily mobilised by the corrupt politicians because they are ignorant actors of the game Nathu being one of them. The writer uses literature as a tool to make the people aware of harsh realities like the divide and rule policy of the coloniser and fake opportunist nature of high class people belonging to any religion like Hindu, Muslim or Sikhs. He makes the point that the helpless common folk have to suffer beyond spatial and temporal boundaries. The weak is always the victim and such concern about the common man shows a sense of compassion and respect for the universal humanist values in his writing.

After the riots or tragedies like partition of the country take place what the official discourse of history demands, "figures, only figures, nothing but figures" (*Tamas* 316) where no place to feelings and personal experiences is given. The literature written about such tragedies records the history of the masses that are ignored in official history. The novel shows the role of different discourses in the construction of divisions among people who otherwise believe in the ideal of peaceful co-existence. The experiences of masses are documented through the representative stories of different sections of society in this narrative to give voice to the subalterns of history.

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Chapter 4

Comparative Analysis and Conclusion

In the contemporary times, interdisciplinary and comparative studies are gaining popularity for the comprehensive understanding of any world phenomenon. Literature has evolved from the traditional boundaries of nation, language and time etc. with the emergence of comparative literature. The present research work is a comparative study of two novels originally written in different languages, in different times, at different locations which nevertheless seek to deal with the similar life-altering issue of communal violence. The novel *The Shadow Lines* was written by Amitav Ghosh in 1988 after witnessing the communal riots of 1984, in the northern India. The second novel taken for comparative study, *Tamas*, was written by Bhisham Sahni in Hindi in 1971 and was translated by the author into English language in the year 2001. These narratives seek to highlight the problem of identity crisis. The former deals with pre as well post partition events, on the contrary, the later deals with historical events before the subcontinent's partition.

The comparative analysis puts forth not only the differences but also the similarities between two literary works. In this study, the premises of distinction are the distinct approaches of the novelists- Amitav Ghosh is a postmodernist writer whereas Bhisham Sahni is modernist but both of them are humanist. The novels belong to the genre of historical fiction. The inclination towards facts in these novels is the outcome of the two authors' profession as journalists.

Colonialism, consumerism, capitalism and power polarisation from modernist and postmodernist orientation are observed as major concerns in the works of both the authors. If one shows the darkness due to materialism, the other shows the unhappiness brought out by the failed social institutions. The failure of social institutions is more in the white world as compared to the land of so called uncivilized people. They are very social and civilized creatures though superficially it appears that they are made to fight. The ending of *Tamas* shows how people soon put behind themselves the memories of riots and start interacting with each other. Along with the forgotten memories of the riots, people who have lost their lives or homes also become a distant memory as is shown through the absence of Tridib's death news in the newspaper in the novel *The Shadow Lines*. Such people are the victims of history.

These narratives reveal that most of the characters are caught between two different worlds either physically or psychologically-Tha'mma between past and present, Tridib between imagination and real, Ila between India and the world, the narrator between the world of his own experience and the world built upon the foundation of others' experiences, Nathu between self and society, Liza between east and west, Richard between personal and professional, Shah Nawaz between personal and community relationships. Nobody is happy at the given places which fills them with feelings of escapism and nostalgia. The characters either want to go back to past or to invent a world of their own for the claims to individual as well as group identity.

The problem of identity crisis is dealt with in both the texts. The only difference lies in the direction of their move from one part on the world to the other. When they move to their East they are shown as suffering- in *The Shadow Lines* Tha'mma, Tridib and May's visit to Dhaka and in *Tamas* Richard and Liza's move to India. In the West, they are more optimistic as Ila wants to live there and Richard also feels solace in his little England. The movement of people from West to East and from East to West can be regarded as the cause and the result of colonialism respectively. If on one hand, *Tamas* depicts the life of former kind of Diaspora through the characters of Liza and Richard in India, on the other, *The Shadow Lines* represents the later one through the portrayal of Ila and her family or relatives in England.

Both the history of identity and identity of our history remained ignored issues in colonial regime because they were constructed anew. Identity to divide and history to rule was used by the master. Repeated references to the past are given in order to legitimise the present. This legitimising process is taken over by the master for the ignored native to understand its givens. The modernists like Mulk Raj Anand and Bhisham Sahni repent for the follies and inability of the Indian to recognise the cultural politics whereas the postmodernist like Salman Rushdie and Amitav Ghosh celebrate the outcome of the cultural amalgamation originated from the same cultural politics.

The two novelists are full of love for humanity and they believe in the goodness of humanity. They minutely observe the nature of power politics and its impact upon individuals. Their writings reflect the extent to which they sympathize with the victims of partition who had to leave families, change homes, lose

identities and die without any fault of their own. This is represented in the novel *The Shadow Lines* where Tha'mma becomes homeless and Iqbal Singh in *Tamas* who turns into Iqbal Ahmed thus losing his identity.

These narratives also outline the keen interest of the communities to know about the other. In *Tamas* Richard's interest in Indian history and ancient art is equally seen in narrator's interest in London in *The Shadow Lines* which signifies cross culture relationships and interests. This cross cultural interest is shown through the medium of different characters. The characters like Ila who go on crossing the borders between nations represent a cosmopolitan ideology.

The separate identities of people are shown as responsible for the division between people in these narratives. The comparative analysis underlines the way through which during different phases of history how those identities formed, changed and overlapped each other. In pre independence India the formation of new political parties which were largely based on religious background, the influence of British rule on the life and culture of different generations, the acceptance and rejection towards the colonial legacy, the move from the third world to the first world by the marginalised or once 'other' people and the feeling of identity crisis (Ila), treatment provided by one group members to other in different time and space and the change of such identities under various pressures as Ila, narrator's grandmother, Shaheb all change their outlook according to different occasions and Iqbal Singh has to change his appearance due to conversion into other religion. This kind of change of identity under severe conditions formed the basis of many narratives dealing with the life of those women who were abducted during partition by another community and had to change their name, religion and nationality as well. Puro in *Pinjar* changes to Hamida whereas Saleem's mother Veero in *Khamosh Pani* turns into Ayesha, a Muslim from Sikh. In both these novels there is absence of any such subaltern. Except *Nathu* and *Khalil* both the novels abound in well-to-do people belonging to middle class section of society. It is not merely about the subaltern but the people who have already moved towards the center. *Tridib* is good instance of such mid way personality.

Sahni wrote about the turbulence which took place around the years of India's partition and captured the mass migration. For this Foucault's notion of history as a discourse has been taken. History as a discourse is penned down from a particular perspective. Sahni presents the tragedy of loss as a

consequence of the role played by political parties, social groups, genders, castes, and individuals like Nathu. The basis of representation of history is less class or religion based than the relation between a victim and victimiser: poor by the rich, Indians by the Britishers, women by men and animals by human beings, party members in the hierarchy of position. The narratives are less concerned with who they are than what happens to them. Sahni's narrative style is realistic which finds its basis in the idea of literature as a mirror to society.

The time span in *The Shadow Lines* is much broader comprising almost forty years from 1939-1980. The geopolitical arena is also much wider than *Tamas* from the East to West or covering almost the whole world. His approach towards history is secular, democratic and humanistic but its representational mode is postmodern where literature no more mirrors the society. Sahni tries to give a unified view of history but Ghosh tries to underline the fragmented identities and multiple perspectives to history, his novels mainly deal with political identity and multiple identities.

The comparison here in this study is between two writers standing on two different theoretical positions; one being a humanist, universalist, democratic (Sahni) and the other upholding postmodernist, poststructuralist, post colonialist view point (Amitav Ghosh) who talks about fragmented identities nationalities and realities in his book. If one is concerned about non-historic, the other is concerned about non-territorial. The purpose of both the writers is a political one for the people to learn from history. Sahni is more explicit in this regard but Ghosh's treatment of history is more an illusion since the political purpose commonly founded in postmodern writers is more implicit. Sahni is essentialist and seeks similarities whereas Ghosh is non-essentialist and seeks differences. Sahni's realism mirrors this feature in his writing whereas it is postmodernist theoretical premise that is highlighted in Ghosh's writing.

The study shows that the passive people are subject to communal violence. They become the victims due to lack of action. Tridib and Nathu are the passive victims who even though are always on the move, through imagination and body respectively, are unable to come out of their own world which as a consequence leads them into a suicidal condition. Nathu because of his poverty and Tridib due to his religious and nation identity have to die without any fault of their own. In their case eccentricity and poverty become the roots of submissiveness. Tridib without

any doubt belongs to an educated, upper middleclass family in contrast to Nathu, who is totally ignorant, uneducated, lower caste poor skinner. The lack of action makes them to stand on similar platform and both of them become victims of communal violence with which they don't show any kind of association. They live as individuals above the questions of nation or religion but politics of the time forces them to become a part of them and lose their lives as poor victims.

The two narratives are replete with differences which lead to the suffering of ones in the hands of others. In *The Shadow Lines* there is difference of social status in two families of the two sisters Mayadebi and narrator's grandmother, difference of race between Nick and Ila and difference of nationality between Tridib and May. The omnipresence of partition at the social, political and economic level becomes the basis of conflict in the lives of individuals; groups and this conflict gradually engulf the nations as well. In *Tamas* it is the difference of religion in two communities Hindus and Muslims which causes the conflict.

Discourse of nationalism comes into force with the discourse of violence. The characters like Ranvir in *Tamas* and Tha'mma in *The Shadow Lines* are pictures of such nationalists for whom violence becomes the last straw to attain freedom of the country. Tha'mma is shown as a nationalist by the author to emphasise the point how nationalists justify the use of violence for building of a nation. Ranvir in *Tamas* goes on using violent means either by attacking the halwai or by killing the hen or the poor man just in the name of a nation. The only difference is that Tha'mma is a nationalist without the cause of religion attached to it whereas in case of Ranvir it is the process of building of a Hindu nation he prides to be a part of.

If the novel *The Shadow Lines* is about fragmented histories, *Tamas* represents linear history. Nevertheless both works present the history of nation through the incidents occurring in the life of common people. They don't write about the government policies or the life style of Gandhi in order to be praised but present the atrocities of these people in order to show the reality or the other side of reality. The provinces of partition differ despite sharing roots in one nation. Owing to the differences in the geographical locations of these writers, *The Shadow Lines* deals with partition between India and East Pakistan (Bangladesh) and *Tamas* deals with partition of India from West Pakistan (present Pakistan). The former depicts the history through the experience narrated to the next generation

but the second novel captures that era itself where all the characters are very much part of the historical event.

Amitav Ghosh has portrayed history as a story whereas Bhisham Sahni portrayed history through a story. *The Shadow Lines* does not deal with the particular history or a particular individual due its postmodernist nature but *Tamas* deals with people at a more personal level starting with an incident in the life of an ordinary folk named Nathu who had to kill a pig which leads to communal riots. Both the novels show particularly the result of violent activities which were based on the question of religion.

The core of study in both the novels is common people not the historical figures who influenced the cause of partition. No doubt these common people come from diverse sections of society as in Sahni they range from the Deputy Commissioner to the lower caste man like Nathu but focusing on the latter; contrary to it is the focus on elite class diplomats and English relatives to poor rickshaw puller in Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*.

The atmosphere in both the novels is melancholic and full of conflicts which emerge out of the differences in nature, identity, ideology or objective. These differences make people susceptible to rumors and its aftermath in the form of communal violence. Revenge also emerges as an important factor to add fuel to the fire of communal violence. In *Tamas* also the same melancholically is reflected.

The titles of these novels also find close affinity as *Tamas* shows that people wallow in darkness of ignorance when riots are engineered by political minds to widen the gaps among peace loving people, *The Shadow Lines* shows that the lines which divide people are shadowy because they are the inventions by political minds in the form of nation, religion, race etc. and such lines can be overcome with the power of imagination by thinking beyond these borders. There is politics of differences whereas Sahni's message in the background of partition is that people in a nation should live above differences. Ghosh extends this idea beyond national boundaries and shows that it is not only for nation but for whole world where there would be no dividing lines to separate people and only shadow lines of difference exist which would not be in capacity to separate people.

The works challenge not only history but also the historiography. If one takes it as a story the other presents how official histories are based on bare facts

devoid of any human feeling. The revisiting process outlines the nature of history and the impact upon identity of such history. Memory comes to forefront as an important tool for documenting the experiences of different characters as well as the writers themselves for the works being the outcome of such witnessing experience of both the authors as both the works are born out of the real experiences of communal violence. Sahni witnessed the riots of 1927, partition of the country in 1947 and communal riots in 1971 of Bhiwandi whereas Ghosh wrote this novel after witnessing the communal violence which erupted in the northern region of India followed by Indira Gandhi's assassination in the year 1984.

The question of identity is dealt through the assertion of different identities of the different characters in the formation of such history and the game of history in the formation of such identities. The modernist writer proposes the idea of a nation where people of diverse cultures live together whereas the postmodernist writer does not take any essentialist stand either from the nationalistic or from cultural perspectives. Despite the vivid and lucid differences, the similarity lies in the fact that in both the narratives the history of nation is presented through the stories of individuals.

In conclusion we can say that both the novels are the 'novels of ideas'. These novels deal not only with historical events but also with the practice of history writing. If one treats history as subjective, unauthentic, partial and memory based account of past which is no better than a story, then the other shows how official histories are based on dry facts leaving aside human experience due to power of discourses.

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