

MEMORY AND IDENTITY IN BENGALI PARTITION NARRATIVES

A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the award of the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in English

By

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DECLARATION

I, MAMUD HASSAN, hereby declare that this dissertation entitled “**Memory and Identity in Bengali Partition Narratives**” submitted to the University of Hyderabad in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy in English**, is a bonafide research work carried out by me under the guidance and supervision of **Dr. Girish D Pawar**, Department of English, School of Humanities, University of Hyderabad.

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Further, the student has following publication and seminar presentation before submission of the thesis in the relevant area of his research:

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Introduction

Chapter- I

Introduction:

Indian partition novel, as a major genre of fiction, gained prominence in post-independent India. Since then, many Indian writers have contributed to the growth of the genre in English and regional languages. Remarkably, compared to the mainstream Partition narratives of India, Bengali Partition tales have remained on the fringes. Tarun K Saint has focused on the paucity in the representation of Bengali Partition narratives. His work *Witnessing Partition: Memory, History and Fiction* (2010), argues that “the experience of partition in the East has been insufficiently addressed in Partition historiography and literary criticism” (Saint 2010, 3).

This study attempts to examine representative Bengali partition novels in English to address some crucial issues related to the genre. It would look at select novels in this category and see how they are distinct from India’s mainstream Partition corpus. More specifically, it would study the representation of ‘memory’ and ‘identity’ in select Bengali Partition novels in English vis-a-vis their Indian English counterparts elsewhere.

Bengal has witnessed three partitions to date. These are- the bifurcation of Bengal in 1905, the partition and independence of two newly formed countries in 1947, and the bifurcation of Eastern part (Bengal) from Pakistan which gave birth to a new country called Bangladesh in 1971. The present research would focus on the literature written in the context of the second partition of 1947. The novels studied for research are related to West Bengal and written in English and English translations from Bengali novels and memoirs.

1.1. Why Partition Studies now?

There has been a long silence regarding the partition violence and trauma after 1947. Several issues of partition like violence, killings, and forceful conversion became the sub-marginal issues within the marginalised representation of partition history. The partition of India is regarded as a series of political incidents caused by the opposition between Gandhi and Jinnah.

However, the history of partition seems to have been the consequence of political development. As Gyanendra Pandey argues, the experience of millions during partition, their sufferings, loss of lives, pain of separation etc. have been given a 'lesser status' in the description of India's freedom struggle (Pandey 1991, 6-7). The events of independence are given importance over the events of partition.

Post-1980's, several communal incidents occurred in the country. It began with the communal riot against the Sikh community in 1984. This was followed by the Hindu-Muslim riot in Bhagalpur of 1989, communal riots in Hyderabad of 1990, and the nationwide communal violence post-Babri Masjid demolition of 1992. The partition scholars took a relook at the events related to the partition of 1947. In the same way writers turned their attention to the issues of partition and its impact on the post- partition societies. The partition scholars began to "uncover and analyse the human experiences of the partition that are embedded in various locations and genres" (Akhtar 2015, 6). The research was conducted using literature, letters, journalistic writings, memoirs, and autobiographies. The writers have brought out new perspectives of partition studies which are more realistic to contemporary society.

1.2. Partition Narratives of India

Lord Mountbatten announced the partition of Indian sub-continent on 3 June 1947. On 14 August 1947 Pakistan, and 15 August 1947 India were declared as independent countries respectively. The partition marked the mass migration in human history where countless people from both sides were killed, sexually assaulted, forcefully converted, abducted, and mutilated in the course of displacement.

The partition has drawn the attention of many writers and critics who helped in creating the partition corpus. Diverse topics related to the partition, political history, and individual memories are documented in personal articles, official documents, and various literary forms. A significant amount of literature has been produced on the issue of partition, which fictionalises the effects of partition in Bengali society.

Many films have been produced on the theme of partition. Film makers have tried to depict the ground reality of partition which the mainstream partition historiographers failed to do. Some of the films on the partition of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh are: Nimai Ghosh's *Chinnamul* (1950) and *Dharamputra* (1961), Nirmal Dey's *Sare Chuattar* (1953), Sukumar Sen's *Ora Thake Odhare* (1954), Ritwik Ghatak's films on partitions are: *Meghe Dhaka Tara* (1960), *Komal Gandhar* (1961), and *Subarnarekha* (1962), M. S. Sathya's *Garm Hawa* (1973) and Govind Nihalani's *Tamas* (an adaptation of Bhisam Sahni's novel, 1987). Initially, very few films were made on the Bengali partition. However, after the 1990s, because of various religious and political developments in India, films made on partition started growing, and most of these happened to be in the Hindi language. Some of such films are Deepa

Mehta's *Earth* (1998), Pamela Rooks' *Train to Pakistan* (1998), Kamal Haasan's *Hey Ram* (2000), Anil Sharma's *Gadar Ek Prem Katha* (2001), Amrita Pritam's *Pinjar* (2003), Sabiha Kumar's *Khamosh Pani* (2003) and Vic Sarin's *Partition* (2007).

The scholars of partition have underlined the ignored sides of the partition, i.e., women's perspective and representation in the partition experience. Some women writers have tried to address this silence through their writings such as Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, Ritu Menon, Gargi Chakravarty, Kavita Dahiya and a few others.

Bengali Partition Narratives

The partition of Bengal, by consensus, was less violent in comparison to that of Punjab. The partition memory of Eastern Indians differs significantly from that of the North Indian victims. The Bengali partition narratives mainly deal with the fear of being attacked at any point of time, with the attendant apprehension that they would never get religious freedom in an Islamic country. Characters are often seen remembering their homeland (*Desher Bari*) nostalgically in the novels.

Bengali partition novels deal with various partition themes, but there is little mention of 'direct' partition violence as seen in some of the north Indian partition novels. The novelists show protagonists separating themselves from the events of partition, so that the witness may create a version of their past. Characters live in two worlds, the everyday reality in post-partition society and the memory of violence they encounter during and after the partition.

The partition of Bengal problematises the identity formation process. Several layers of identity came into existence due to the partition of Bengal, such as Indian Bengali Hindu, Indian Bengali

Muslim, Pakistani Bengali Muslim, and Pakistani Bengali Hindu. Various Bengali partition writers have also presented the *Ghoti* and *Bangal* identity issue among the Bengalis of West Bengal. Sunil Gangopadhyay's *Purba-Pashchim* (2000) has portrayed this *Ghoti* and *Bangal* issue extensively. The natives of West Bengal in India are known as *Ghoti*, and those who migrated from Bangladesh (East-Pakistan) are known as *Bangal*.

The Bengal province witnessed a movement for united Bengal. When Congress and Muslim League demanded Bengal on their respective sides, some Bengali intellectuals, and political activists like Saratchandra Bose and Suhrawardy campaigned in favour of a sovereign Bengal. However, their attempt was too weak to make a difference at the time. This counter-movement from Bengal to India's mainstream political parties has received attention in several Bengali Partition writings. The movement has remained unnoticed in India's mainstream partition narratives.

The Bengal partition has left a significant imprint on the intellectuals and creative minds over the years. The Bengali language has also produced many partition writings that have contributed to the Bengali literary spectrum. Some of the exemplary works are: Manik Bandyopadhyay's *Sarbojanin* (1974), Amarendra Ghosh's *Beaini Janata* (1952), and Jagadish Chandra Mandal's *Banga Bhanga* (1977), to mention a few.

Besides these novels, a considerable number of films have been produced in the Bengali language, which hinge on several issues concerning the partition of Bengal. Some notable works of this category are Nimai Ghosh's *Chinnamul* (1951), Nirmal Dey's *Sare Chuattar* (1953), Sukumar Dasgupta's *Ora Thake Odhare* (1954), Ritwik Kumar Ghatak's *Subarnarekha* (1975), Satyajit Rai's *Mahanagar* (1963), Buddhadeb Dasgupta's *Tahader Kotha* (1993) etc.

1.3. Review of Literature

There are several writers who have significantly contributed to partition literature. Gyanendra Pandey in his “Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism and History in India” (2001) appeared with a new subaltern angle towards the existing discourses on the partition. Sekhar Bandopadhyay, Ravinder Kaur, and Ian Talbot have also made considerable contribution in understanding the socio-political and historical dimension of the stratified identity of refugees after the partition of India.

Women writers like Urvashi Butalia and Kamla Bhasin offered women’s perspective on the partition. The writers interviewed people from the western part of India who survived the partition violence. Their works also address the complex dynamics of bureaucracy, as reflected in the manifestation of the government policies, related to the rehabilitation of the partition refugees. Similarly, Anasua Basu, Debjani Dutta and Partha Chatterjee presented their observations focused on the field study of Eastern India. Writers and historians like Nandi Bhatia has attempted to rediscover the discursive traces of marginalised voices of partition narratives. Bhatia in his article, “How Long does Lahore Burn? History, Memory and Literary Representation in India” (2002) focused on the necessity of unofficial memorialisation in literature, by showing the limitation and demerits of the nationalist version of history.

Ravinder Kaur in her article, “Since 1947: Partition Narratives among Punjabi Migrants of Delhi” (2007), focused on the twin processes of partition that transformed ordinary citizens into refugees, refugees into citizens and further turned them into locals. She points out that the partition’s grand narrative is characterised by two types of absence, i.e. of untouchables and

women. Such figures, according to her, remain unnoticed in the national historiography since independence.

Gyanendra Pandey argues in *Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism, and History in India* (2001) about partition stories, which Indian historians considered as violent and non-narratable. Thus, Indian historians present the event as a detailed description of Indian nationalist movements and the involvement of the leaderships (Pandey 2001, 23).

Mushirul Hasan pointed out in his work, “Memories of a Fragmented Nation: Rewriting the Histories of India’s Partition” (1998) that on the one hand historians have attempted to highlight the incidents related to the independence of India, on the other hand, writers and poets have depicted the problematic and painful theme of partition violence. He contemplates the role of literature in the absence of significant historiography.

Kaushik Roy in his edited book, *Partition of India: Why 1947?* (2012) discussed the rationale behind partition studies even after seventy years of India’s partition and the recent trends of scholars dealing with partition studies. He opines that the contemporary partition experts focus on the impact of partition instead of searching why the partition happened. He says:

The new group of scholars shows disenchantment with what they term as ‘state-centred history’. These writers evince empathy with the common mass in order to reconstruct their experiences of the partition trauma. They play down ‘high politics’ and portray the picture of common masses who experienced rape, abduction, separation and refugee status due to Partition (Roy 2012, XVII).

Anup Beniwal in his book, *Representing Partition: History, Violence and Narration* (2005) differentiates between early partition writers and their later counterparts. According to Beniwal, Khushwant Singh, Manohar Mangalkar and B Rajan come under the first group of partition writers who deal with the theme of the immediate effects of partition, and the tragic uprooting and displacement of people. Whereas writers like Salman Rushdie, Amitabh Ghosh, Shashi Tharoor, Mukul Kesavan and Gurcharan Das are the pioneering writers of the latter group of partition novelists. Their work tends to revisit the scenario from the vantage point of the contemporary mindset.

Rituparna Roy's book entitled *South Asian Partition Fiction in English: From Khushwant Singh to Amitabh Ghosh* (2010) attempts to explore the intention of partition novelists that motivated them to write on the theme of partition. Roy selected six novels written in a different period, between the mid-1950s to 1980s. She analyses the 'two nation theory' and British government's role behind the bifurcation of Indian sub-continent. Roy draws a parallel between historiography and literature regarding the partition and the independence of India. She believes that literature represented partition better than history. She writes, "The colossal human tragedy of the Partition and its continuing aftermath has been better conveyed by the more sensitive creative writers and artists... than by historians" (Roy 2004, 164).

Sudhanya Dasgupta Mukherjee, in her doctoral thesis entitled "Women's Narratives of Partition in Bengal" (2011) brings in oral testimonies/narratives of 116 people from different places/camps of East Bengal (Present Bangladesh) and West Bengal. Her research aims to put women's point of view to the forefront and their perceptions of a great divide (Mukherjee 2011, 2). The study explores how women recall past incidents in ways different from men. Since a woman's

voice is absent in the partition corpus, the attempt here addresses the absence by bringing in the women's narrative and perspective.

Kirankumar Nittali talks about the women partition writers and Bengali refugee women's experience in his article "The Partition of India: Through the experience of Bengali Refugee Women" (2013). Nittali discusses Joya Chatterjee, Ritu Menon, Ayesha Jalal, Jill Didur and Bhasabi Phraser's works and focuses on the experience of sufferings of women. He discusses the situation of the Sealdah station of Kolkata during partition and the exploitation of women by various agencies therein.

Nittali also talks about the abducted women, the official recovery operation and why the abducted women refused to return to their parents or relatives and protested against the recovery operation (Nittali 2013, 3). Similarly, in her famous book on the Bengal partition, Joya Chatterjee, *Spoils of Partition: Bengal and India, 1947-1967* (2007), provides a detailed discussion on Bengali partition with a modern perspective.

Louise Harrington in his article, "An-Other Space: Diasporic Response to Partition in Bengal" (1998) discusses the critical responses from the writers of Indian diaspora. He underlines that most of the partition writings are based in Punjab, and most of the notable Indian partition writers also come from the western side of partitioned India. Only a few writers from the eastern side are counted among the list of important partition writers. Harrington also pointed out that the works of Bengali writers deal with the liberation war of Bangladesh. According to Harrington, the partition corpus is mainly set in western side of Indian sub-continent and the writers are also from the western side except a few writers who come from the Bengal side. He says: "Rarely do writers from 'the other side' of Partition, from Bengal or Bangladesh, hold such

a privileged position” (Harrington 2011, 1). In partition narratives, Punjab is leading the discourse, either alone or with just partial reference to Bengal. According to Harrington, the short story is the preferred genre in the case of Bengali Partition narratives. He cites Bhasabi Phraser, who has written a collection of translated short stories based on the theme of partition, i.e. *Bengali Partition Stories: An Unclosed Chapter* (2006).

Sarbani Banerjee in her work “More or Less Refugee? Bengal Partition in Literature and Cinema” (2015) challenges the upper caste perspective of Bengali Partition narratives. According to her, most of the partition works present the migration and settlement issues of Bengali *bhadralok* migrants since these are written by upper caste Bengali writers. She highlights the writings by non-Bhadralok (lower caste) Bengali writers. Banerjee points out that these writers represent description of migration memory and sufferings of the working class and lower-class people instead of *bhadralok*’s perspective on partition.

Smita Jassal, along with Eyal Ben-Ari, has edited a book titled, *The Partition Motif to Contemporary Conflicts* (2007) which presents three contemporary partitions that happened after World War II. They look at the division of Germany, Israel-Palestine conflicts and Indian sub-continent’s partition and contend that the partition historians were largely concerned with the causes behind partition but not the effect of partition (2007, 22-23). The book discusses the process of remembering the painful events of the past. The writers cite examples of the Holocaust and Naqba. Israeli Jews, around the world, remember the Holocaust and have set up Holocaust memorials in various places. On the other hand, Palestinians remember as Naqba day, representing their forced eviction from their homeland in 1948.

There is an attempt to connect partition narratives of India with Hyderabad in a doctoral thesis titled “From Nizam to Nation: Representation of Partition in Literary Narratives about Hyderabad, Deccan” (2013) by Nazia Akhtar. She rejects the statement commonly made in the 1947 partition research that the trauma of partition failed to impact South India. She has presented the continuous impact of partition on the people of Hyderabad and has analysed three works on the partition.

Nilanjana Chatterjee focuses on the description of refugees from east Bengal in her article “Interrogating Victimhood: East Bengali Refugee Narratives of Communal Violence”. Chatterjee reflects on the stories of oppression, which appear to be portrayed in religious conflicts and demonisation of the Muslims. The article focuses on the post partition society of Kolkata and the real-life struggles of Bengali refugees. Chatterjee quotes Dr Shantimoy Roy who depicts the situation of Santoshpur colony, near Kolkata, and cites the anti-Hindu riot of East Pakistan in 1964 caused by the desecration of a shrine in Kashmir. The writer claims that the communists of West Bengal never let the Bengali refugees become anti-Muslim.

1.4. Research Objectives: Key Questions

The study will address the following key questions:

1. How the themes of ‘memory’ and ‘identity’ are discussed in the Bengali Partition novels, especially in the English translations?
2. How are they different from their mainstream counterparts?
3. How did the partition perform a critical role in developing the cultural and national identity of the country?

More crucially, the research would attempt to see how the second-generation Bengali partition writers have incorporated shades of memories and the difficulties of identity formation. The study aims to address the process of nation formation and its narration by focusing on the thread of memory and identity as it appears in the selected texts.

Representative Texts

Since the research primarily belongs to English Studies, and the readers would find it hard to deal with the original Bengali texts, the researcher shall concentrate on select novels in English translations for this research.

The researcher has chosen the following translated texts for examining closely:

1. Jyotirmoyee Devi's *The River Churning* (1995) which was translated into English by Enakshi Chatterjee from the novel *Epar Ganga Opar Ganga* (1967)
2. Sunil Gangopadhyay's *East-West* (2000), translated by Enakshi Chatterjee from the Bengali novel *Purbo-Pashchim* (1988)
3. Mahmudul Haque's *Black Ice* (1977), translated by Mahmud Rahman from the original novel *Kalo Borof* (2012)
4. Sunanda Sikdar's memoir *A Life Long Ago* (2012), translated by Anchita Ghatak from the original Bengali *Doyamoyeer Kotha*
5. Maloy Krishna Dhar's *Train to India: Memories of Another Bengal* (2009), originally written in English.

These novels have been written decades after the partition. Leaving behind the theme of violence, murder, rape, abduction and so on, the writers move forward to the theme of refugee problems and their rehabilitation, the memory of partition violence, the post- partition struggle of

migrated people in the newly formed countries, and the identity crisis of the Bengali community based on religion and nationality. The above selected works for the research would focus on the work of second-generation Partition victims who do not have direct partition memory of their own but continue to feel its impact in their individual lives. Such writers depict the transmission of memory from one generation to the next.

***The River Churning* (1995)**

The novel, *The River Churning*, translated from the Bengali novel *Epar Ganga Opar Ganga* (1968) by Jyotirmoyee Devi, was published in her anthology *Jyotirmoyee Devir Rachana Sankalan* in 1991. Enakshi Chatterjee translated the novel in 1995. It portrays the events and developments from a woman's point of view. It begins with Sutara Dutta's description, who is the protagonist of the novel. She teaches history at Jaggoseni (Yagyoseni) College. There she recalls the painful memories of the partition period. She goes back to the days before partition in Noakhali (at present in Bangladesh). The novel shows the struggle of a partition victim who is rejected by her family members.

***East-West* (2000)**

The novel *East-West*, translated from the Bengali novel *Poorba-Pashchim* written by Sunil Gangopadhyay, was published in 1989. It was translated by Enakshi Chatterjee. It discusses the effects of partition on both sides of Bengal. It cites various effects of partition such as migration, the refugee problem, sufferings of women and the working-class people, unemployment, poverty and the search for shelter. The novel also discusses the politics after partition, the enmity and the war between the newly born countries. It also covers various international issues like the partition of Germany, competition for power involving the U.S. and Russia, and Communism around the world. The novel also depicts the multi-layered politics and descriptions of the

liberation of Bangladesh from Pakistan. Memory is one of the essential themes of the novel. There are various instances where several characters discuss the memories they have left behind in another country. The discussion of religious identity is very prominent in the novel. When war breaks out, minorities in both countries are arrested without any crime; the only reason was that they were the people from the 'other side'.

***Black Ice* (2012)**

The novel *Black Ice* has been translated from the Bengali novel *Kalo Borof* by Mahmudul Haque. The novel was first published in 1971 in original Bengali, and the translation appeared in 2012. It is written by a writer from Bangladesh, translated by an overseas Indian and published by Harper-Perennial, New Delhi. Mahmudul Haque is a critically acclaimed writer of ten novels and several short stories. The journey of his experience illustrates the cultural ties binding both India and Bangladesh. The writer spent his childhood in West Bengal, near Kolkata, and he lives the rest of his life in Dhaka. *Black Ice* reflects Mahmudul Haque's own past life that encountered partition events to probe the invisible memories left to partition's inheritors where the protagonist remembers various incidents that took place before the partition. The writer displays a parallel description of memory and the contemporary issues happening around the characters.

The Black Ice describes a village in East Pakistan where the protagonist is a child. The writer's friend asks him to chronicle his youth which inspires him to head back to a wonderful place on the outskirts of Kolkata. The narrator remembers a girl who spoke to fish. He remembers the number of people who visited his family in those days. His love is outraged by his wife, who is irritated because of his behavior. Motivated by their family doctor, they choose to visit on a boat trip that causes them to face their dispute and aspirations. There is a constant shift between memory and the affected present.

***Train to India: Memories of Another Bengal* (2009)**

The book is written by Maloy Krishna Dhar, who has presented the direct effect of partition on the people of East Bengal. It presents the situation of Bengali society after the Independence of India and Pakistan and discusses issues that Bengali Hindus and Muslims of East Bengal had to face because of partition. Like other partition narratives, *Train to India: Memories of Another Bengal* also presents a society which was peaceful before the partition, but after the partition of India, the situation worsened, and Hindu-Muslim hatred and enmity flourished in the society. The work presents some incidents of attacks on minorities and the horrific train journey which traumatised the protagonist. It also discusses the themes like Movements for the united Bengal, Subhas Chandra Bose, and the Bengali language movement against the supremacy of the Urdu language.

***A Life Long Ago* (2012)**

A Life Long Ago is a memoir which is written by Sunanda Sikdar and translated into English by Anchita Ghatak from the original Bengali version of *Doyamoyeer Kotha*. The memoir is set in East Pakistan and presents the memory of a little girl Daya. It presents the migration of the Muslim community from Coochbihar to Dighpait of East Pakistan and the increasing animosity between different religious communities after the partition. The memoir depicts several painful scenes of departure of the Hindus from East Bengal and their mental dilemma on whether to leave for India or to stay back in their 'motherland'.

1.5.Methodology

The study would take a close look at the select Bengali partition novels in English translations using observations from scholarly works in the field of partition narratives of Bengal and elsewhere. It will be a historical and socio-political observation of the partition discourse. The

research would also bring in non-literary works that are of relevance to the study. It would make a detailed analysis of the texts and offer a comparative and socio-political reading to locate the theme of ‘memory’ and ‘identity’ in the selected novels in English translations.

1.6. Chapter Plan

The research explores the novels through three chapters, apart from Introduction and Conclusion. The ‘Introduction’ offers an overview of the doctoral project. It underlines the key objectives of the research as well as the rationale for the study. Along with the different layers of the Bengali partition experiences, it provides the background of partition. The chapter includes the genealogy of partition literature, underlining notable works in various genres and languages. It talks about select partition novels in Bengali and English translations, along with the film adaptations. The chapter highlights the research methodology and indicates a brief overview of the proposed thesis.

Chapter I presents the background study of partition literature. It examines the genre, highlighting the crucial aspects reflected in the field. The chapter discusses how the partition narratives challenge the dominant version of nationalist historiography by analysing various critical writings produced after the 1980s. It examines the works of various partition scholars and historians like Gyanendra Pandey, Mushirul Hasan, Jill Didur, Suvir Kaul, Alok Bhalla, Urvashi Butalia, Tarun K. Saint and others. This chapter also brings in an essential perspective on women’s representation by examining the critical works of Ritu Menon, Kamla Bhasin, Urvashi Butalia, Gargi Chakravorty, Joya Chatterjee and other women writers. The chapter studies the literature written in Bengali and English on partition, by locating it within the canon of Indian mainstream partition narratives.

Chapter II brings in the theoretical aspects of memory and observes how they have been represented in the select Bengali partition novels. The chapter inquires how the theme of ‘memory’ constructs partition in the writings by analysing select Bengali texts in English translations. It discusses the formation of memory in various contexts and situations in post-partition India. Various forms of memory constructions have been studied in the chapter such as the memory of ‘homeland’ (*Desher Bari*), pain of separation from the loved one and the motherland, the course of migration from one country to another, the struggle to get settled in the new country etc. The chapter focuses on the politics of remembering and forgetting.

Chapter III explores the theoretical aspects of ‘identity’. It studies multiple layers of identity formation and the identity crisis in the select Bengali partition narratives. It highlights the sufferings that Bengal experienced in the newly formed countries because of the various identity constructions, depicted in the novels. These fractured identities appear to be imaginary but they are based on real sufferings. The primary aim would be to understand the negotiations between lost-new and imaginary-real identities.

The Conclusion brings in the study’s significant findings while highlighting the strength and limitations of the project.

Chapter- II

Background Study of Bengali Partition Narratives

Chapter – II

2.1. Partition of India: A Background Study

The chapter presents the background study of partition literature. It examines the genre and highlights the crucial aspects reflected in the field. The chapter discusses how India's partition narratives challenge the dominant version of nationalist historiography by analysing various critical writings produced after the 1980s. It analyses the works of partition scholars and historians like Gyanendra Pandey, Mushirul Hasan, Jill Didur, Suvir Kaul, Alok Bhalla, Urvashi Butalia, Tarun K. Saint and others. This chapter also brings in an important perspective on women's representation by examining the critical works of Ritu Menon, Kamla Bhasin, Urvashi Butalia, Gargi Chakravorty, Joya Chatterjee, and other women writers. The chapter presents the study of literature written in Bengali and English on partition, by locating it within the canon of Indian mainstream partition narratives.

2.2. Who is Responsible for the Partition of India?

Historians and critics have blamed various agencies for the unfortunate event of partition. Historians who belonged to the dominant nationalist faction of India blamed British colonialism for destroying bonds between Hindu and Muslim communities. The rift among the Indian religious communities is the outcome of the British government's divide and rule policy. The colonial rulers attempted to divide Bengal in 1905 for the first time with the political strategy of

divide and rule. Primarily this policy was implemented because various revolutionary groups had started their activities to fight and expel the British government from India.

Indian nationalists more often raise fingers at Muhammad Ali Jinnah for the partition. Indians consider him a collaborator of the British rather than the father of Pakistan. Being president of the Muslim League, he engineered India's partition by refusing to recognize "nothing sort of a sovereign state for Muslims". Pakistani Historian Ayesha Jalal has presented a counter logic of partition. According to her, Congress forced Jinnah to demand separate nationhood. She says the key reason behind India's partition is the battle for greater constitutional power in the government between Congress and League, not the government's 'divide and rule' policy.

For a group of historians, the most controversial figure is not an Indian or Pakistani but the British Viceroy Mountbatten himself. Stanley Wolpert mentions in *Shameful Flight: The Last Years of The British Empire in India* (2006), – "For among all the important players of that time none played as tragic or central role as did Mountbatten" (Wolpert 2006, 2).

Joya Chatterjee in her critical work on partition *Bengal Divided: Hindu Communalism and Partition 1932-1947* (1994), mentions that communalism in the Indian socio-political scenario reached a higher level in the Bengal province in the 1930s. Chatterjee demonstrates that the threat of irreversible subjugation to a predominantly Muslim state has led Bengali Hindus to believe that the province should be divided along religious lines. That is why the provincial congress committee firmly supported the plan of partition approved by Nehru and Patel on the national level. Chatterjee presents the involvement of Bengali communities during the partition and independence of India. According to her, Bengalis were not mute spectators when their province was about to get partition. The Bengali Hindus tried to control the circumstances and

demanded their motherland to be divided based on religious line. Hindu Mahasabha and other Hindu nationalists started movement in support of a Hindu majority Bengal province because in undivided Bengal, the Muslims are supposed to be in majority. She argues:

Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha, campaigned intensively in 1947 for the partition of Bengal and for the creation of a separate Hindu province that would remain inside an Indian union (Chatterjee 1994, 227).

Writing about the partition histories which have been generated by both Indian and Pakistani, writers like Tai Yong Tan and Gyanesh Kudaisya opine in their combinedly written piece *Partition and Post-Colonial South Asia: A Reader* (2008) that “often, the heroes in one national discourse, end up as the villains of another” (Tan & Kudaisya, 2008, 9).

2.3. Partition: A Historical Background

The Viceroy Mountbatten unveiled the decision of dividing India into two separate countries in 1947. Pakistan and India became independent countries on 14th and 15th August of 1947 respectively. There was a mixed reaction among the Indian politicians regarding the bifurcation of India. Mahatma Gandhi campaigned against India’s partition plan and said – “the vivisection of India is like the vivisection of my own body”. Mohammad Ali Jinnah spoke in support of the bifurcation and compares it with “a surgical operation”.

2.3.1. Formation of Indian National Congress and Its Role in Freedom Struggle in India

Indian National Congress came into existence at a national conference in Bombay (Mumbai) in 1885. A.O. Hume had an active role in establishing the Indian National Congress. He visited many places in the Indian subcontinent and discussed with notable political and social

leaderships in various parts of India. Hume's engagement in forming Indian National Congress gave birth to several theories. One such conspiracy theory is known as 'the safety valve theory'. However, many historians have rejected this conspiracy theory. The hypothesis first appeared in a biography written by William Wedderburn. Shekhar Bandopadhyay mentioned in his book *From Plassey to Partition: A History of Modern India* (2009) that Wedderburn has mentioned in his book that Hume somehow came to know about Indian discontent against the colonial rule, especially the lower-class people are planning to overthrow them by force. This information made Hume worried and he met with British officer Lord Dufferin. Bandopadhyay writes

He became disturbed, met Lord Dufferin and together they decided to establish an organisation with educated Indians. This would serve as a safety valve by opening a line between the rulers and the ruled and thus would prevent a mass revolution (Bandopadhyay 2009, 218-19).

Hume's impression of the increasing resentment about the British government was evident. Therefore, as Bandopadhyay argued, he materialised an all-India set up which would represent the political and social interests of Indians. The Indian National Congress tried to eliminate regional differences among Indians from the beginning of its formation. In the beginning, Congress declared that one of its main objectives was to work for the nation, its development and national unity.

The Indian National Congress played a significant role in Civil Disobedience Movement which spread across the country and people started boycotting British products. Gandhiji himself inaugurated the movement by personally taking part in a salt march along with 76 companions

from Sabarmati Ashram to protest against the colonial government on March 12, 1930. Various socio-cultural groups took an active part in this movement. Rabindranath Tagore attempted to make this opportunity a platform for Hindu Muslim harmony. People started boycotting foreign goods, refused to pay taxes, and even government officials resigned from their jobs. In Bengal province, this movement is known as the Swadeshi movement.

The nationalist movement gained momentum after the 1930's. The socialist ideology started spreading within Congress leaderships. Jawaharlal Nehru and Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, two socialist congress leaders stood for the social change, later Bose became Congress president. But he resigned from his position as well as from the party and formed the Forward bloc, a socialist, communist party. He escaped from India in 1941 and contacted German and Japanese rulers. In 1943, he reached Singapore and prepared Indian National Army to liberate India by fighting against the British colonial power.

During World War II, when the Japanese army captured Singapore and advanced towards India through Burma, the Indian National Congress leaders started an anti- British movement which is famously known as the Quit India movement. Gandhiji gave a call "Do or Die" to force the British government to leave India. The British government arrested almost all top Congress leaders. India witnessed large scale violence, Rail stations, post offices, and other government establishments were attacked, and set afire. However, the British government had to call the army to suppress the movement.

Several writers have expressed their anguish over the failure of the Indian National Congress to resist the communal forces from entering the mainstream political spaces. It failed to mediate between factions that were using religion as a medium to achieve their ideological and political

goals. These writers also question Gandhiji's religious politics. Mushirul Hasan in his article "Memories of a Fragmented Nation: Rewriting the Histories of India's Partition" (1998), mentions that these writers discuss Gandhi's contribution in bringing religious politics in Indian scenario. Hasan also presents the activities of Hindu right wing led by the Hindu Mahasabha, the Arya Samaj and the RSS (Hasan 1998, 269).

In the beginning, Congress and Gandhiji did not accept the partition plan of the Indian subcontinent. The Congress Working Committee criticised the secession idea of the nation on April 2, 1942. Mountbatten announced on the radio about the division of India. However, there was a mixed reaction from various sections. N. Niyaz Ahmed mentions about this in his work "*History of Indian National Congress, 1885-1950*" (1987) –

The historic pronouncement was received with mixed feelings by the public. The Hindus and nationalists deplored the vivisection of India, while the Muslims of the League were not only fully satisfied with the "truncated and moth-eaten Pakistan", as Jinnah once described it (Ahmed 1987, 27).

2.3.2. The Rise of Hindu Nationalism

The Indian nationalist activists felt a necessity of bringing in an ideology that would counter the hegemony of the Indian National Congress. They invoke ancient history to present an alternative to the British rule. However, this alternative way of conceptualisation had some inherent contradictions and consequent dangers. This concept was introduced to promote Hinduism in a higher social rank and attempted to make India a strong united Hindu nation.

2.3.2.1. Establishment of Hindu Mahasabha

The Hindu Mahasabha or Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha is a Hindu nationalist organisation which was founded by Madan Mohan Malaviya in 1915. Initially, the objective was to work as a social group to safeguard the interests of Hindus but later it started its political activities in 1933. Vinayak Damodar Savarkar made the Hindu Mahasabha a fierce opponent of the secular nationalist Congress party. The Hindu Mahasabha abstained itself from joining several nationalist movements initiated by the Congress. When the British government involved British India in World War II without consulting Indians, the elected Congress ministries resigned and Hindu Mahasabha along with Muslim League formed a coalition government in Sindh and Northwest Frontier Province. In Bengal province Hindu Mahasabha helped Krishak Praja Party's A K Fazlul Haque to form a coalition government in December 1941 (Sarkar 2014, 349). This was also the time when Hindu Mahasabha demanded bifurcation of Bengal province during partition. Congress also joined Mahasabha, knowing the inevitability of partition. Hindu Mahasabha, under the leadership of Shyama Prasad Mukherjee was very active in materializing the demand for a 'Bengali Hindu Homeland' and organized many public meetings, press conferences and campaigns.

2.3.2.2. Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh was founded by Keshav Baliram Hedgewar on September 27, 1925. Hedgewar was heavily influenced by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar and adapted his ideology of Hindutva which demanded the creation of a Hindu nation. The organisation was first banned after the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi by Nathuram Godse in January 1948. However, this Hindu nationalism failed to attract the non-Brahmin and lower caste people of

India. The discourse used ‘history’ very selectively. They demonised the Muslim rulers and their activities, highlighting the ancient Hindu culture and tradition. This approach helped to alienate the minority community who became afraid of Hindu majoritarian rule in India. Muslims were side-lined by the military brand of Hinduism, as well as the Sikh community was also unhappy with what appeared to be a hegemonic cultural nationalism. The Singh Sabha’s existence based on distinctive Sikh identity is the ripple effect of the *Arya Samaj* movement.

2.3.3. Swadeshi Movement and Swaraj

Extremism in Indian nationalism began to flourish in the late 19th century and was prominent in the early 20th century. The people declared their ultimate target as Swaraj (self-government), which various leaders had interpreted differently. Bal Gangadhar Tilak considered swaraj as the medium to control the Indian administration but not the complete independence from the British. Bipin Chandra Pal thought that no self-government was possible under colonial rule; therefore, the Swaraj means complete autonomy from British rule. Aurobindo Ghosh defined it as “absolute political independence”. But Congress leaders considered Swaraj as the “self-rule within the parameters of British imperial structure” (Bandoadhyay 2009, pp-249).

The Swadeshi Movement came out as an outcome of the first bifurcation of Bengal. Although the British government planned to divide Bengal province for ‘their administrative convenience’ but Indian nationalists considered this move of the government as an attempt to curtail the anti-colonial movements. The radicals encouraged widespread mobilisation and a boycott of British facilities and products to fight for Swaraj. Additionally, some people started advocating for “revolutionary violence” to remove the British from power. The radicalisation of *Swaraj* was seen in the Swadeshi movement in the 19th century in various parts of Bengal. The protest

methods changed from the old techniques of prayers and petitions to passive resistance to colonial rule. These efforts aimed to resist the colonial government by challenging its unfair rules, boycotting British products and establishments, and advocating their native Indian alternative options. The Swadeshi movement (1905-11) might be considered as one of the most fruitful outcomes of nationalist politics, which started a response to Bengal province's partition in 1905.

The Congress party declared - "the complete national independence is their goal" in the Madras session held in 1927. All political parties agreed to accept the dominion status if the British government granted it before December 31, 1929. However, the government did not accept India's dominion status resolution. As a result, Congress passed the historic *Poorna Swaraj* or 'total independence' in Lahore resolution on 19th December 1929. On 31st December, a new tricolour flag was hoisted, and the Congress leaders asked the fellow citizens to celebrate January 26 as the Independence Day every year.

2.3.4. Secret Revolutionary Struggles in Bengal

In Bengal, the revolutionary struggle developed in the 1860s and 1870s, *Akhras* or gymnasiums were developed throughout Bengal. This was a psychological attempt to break away from the colonial stereotype of effeminacy on the Bengalis. The activities of secret groups started in a real sense from 1902, with four groups, one in Midnapore and three in Calcutta. The first was the Midnapore Society founded in 1902. It was followed by the establishment of a gymnasium in 1902 by Sarala Ghosal in Ballygunge Circular Road in Calcutta, the *Atmonnoti Samiti* by central Calcutta youths and *Anushilan Samity* by Satishchandra Basu in March 1902. The progress of

such movements was modest till 1905, but with the result of the Swadeshi movement, these groups had increased their activities.

The *Dacca Anushilan Samiti* was formed in October 1906, under the leadership of Pulin Bihari Das. All Bengal Revolutionary conference took place in December and the *Yugantor*, a revolutionary weekly started publishing in the same year. The first robbery to raise funds was organised in Rangpur in August 1906 and a bomb manufacturing unit was formed at Maniktala in Calcutta. They also had a failed attempt to assassinate presidency magistrate Kingsford, following which the whole Maniktala group of revolutionaries were arrested including Prafulla Chaki, Aurobindo Ghosh, Barindra Kumar Ghosh and others.

Many extremists believed that killing Europeans, use of force and violence, and looting could force the British to drive out of the country. Some revolutionaries went to European and American countries and established centres. The *Gadar* party was established in USA and Canada in 1913. The group planned to make an armed uprising in India. However, the British government got the news of this uprising and punished all the leaders and members of the *Gadar* party severely.

2.4. Emergence of Muslim Political Space

The Congress party started as a nationalist movement in India but failed to sustain its separation from increasing Hindu nationalism. Even several Hindu Mahasabha member became Congress leaders. The Indian Muslims contested this type of religious nationalism for the first time. Indian Muslims were never a homogenous community with a unified political representation till the late nineteenth century. In UP and Punjab, the Muslim population consisted of 13 and 51 percent respectively and surprisingly, in Bengal Muslims represented 49.2 percent. They were also

diversified on various grounds, divided by socio-economic identities. Muslims began to think of themselves as a “religiopolitical community” in the 19th century. Mushirul Hasan points out that a group of Bengali Muslims started to think themselves as a political entity which has a separate identity (Hassan 2000, 47).

In Bengal, the Muslim identity developed in the late 19th century; several Islamic reformation movements took place in Bengal. These movements advocated to Islamise and Arabise the Bengali peasant Muslims by rejecting anything and everything that belonged to the un-Islamic origin. These movements helped the lower social and economic class Muslims, provided a sense of social mobility, and they considered themselves aligning with upper-class or sharif Muslims. Bandopadhyay writes that the elite Muslims did not play any role in awakening the Muslim identity consciousness of lower and working class but still they raised voice for separate Muslim nationhood.

The Indian Muslims were not a political community until the late 1930s. They had regional and ideological differences within the Muslim community from the beginning. Even in the 1930s, Muslim politics was divided geographically, as their interest in Punjab and Bengal, differed from other areas where Muslims numbered very less. Fazlul Haque mobilised the Muslims, Dalits, and lower class-caste Bengali people under Krishak Praja Party’s banner and competed with the Muslim League in the province till 1936. Under the banner of the Unionist Party, Fazl-i-Hussain, Shakhawat Hussain, and Jat peasant leader Chhotu Ram had complete control over Punjab’s rural politics. After the election of 1937, the Muslim league flourished in almost every Muslim majority area and reached the general Muslim masses. Bandyopadhyay argues, “For Muslim leaders, who in 1921 saw no conflict between their Indian-ness and Muslim identity, recognition

of their separate Muslim nationhood became a minimum non-negotiable demand in the 1940's” (Bandopadhyay 2009, 341).

Mohammad Ali Jinnah started reorganising the Muslim League party on his return to India. Earlier, there were no district cells of the Muslim League; even there was no coordination between league leadership. Narendra Singh Sarila, in a book titled *The Shadow of the Great Game: The Untold Story of India's Partition* (2005) writes:

Jinnah constituted the League's central and provincial parliamentary boards, recruited volunteers from the Aligarh Muslim University to spread the League's message and to travel the country in order to unite Muslim leadership behind him (Sarila 2005, 89).

Jinnah succeeded in uniting various local social, religious, and political parties under Muslim League's umbrella. He was able to merge the Krishak Praja Party of Bengal, and Muslim Unity Board of United Provinces. Thus, the leadership of Jinnah made Muslim League an influential political opponent to the Congress party throughout India. Muslim League tried to become the mouthpiece of the Indian Muslim community. No parties were alarmed by the awakening of religious political communities. By advocating the self-determination rights of Muslims in 1942, India's communist party incorporated a realistic acknowledgment of Pakistan's appeal into its policy-making, but they remained marginalised in conventional Congress politics.

When the British government attempted to prosecute three officers of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's Indian National Army, a massive Indian uprising met the attempt. These officers were captured during World War II. The INA continued fighting to overthrow the British colonial rule from the Indian subcontinent. The three captured Indian National Army officers- Prem Kumar

Sehgal, Sahnawaz Khan and Gurbaksh Dillon were court-martialed by the British government which became the flashpoint of rising anti-British and anti-imperialist feeling among the Indians. The move witnessed protests against the government supporting the INA officers in various parts of India. Even the Congress party joined the protest seeing widespread outrage against the British rulers.

This bifurcation of India was not just the partition of nation but the partition of India's long-nourished composite culture/Ganga – Jamuni Tahezzeb for which the Indian society was known for. It divided the brotherhood of Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs, resulting in hatred and enmity among these communities. Other minority communities like Parsis and Christians were also not spared from the fire of partition. The failure of the Cabinet Mission Plan ended up damaging trust between the Muslim and Hindu communities. Muslim League in Bengal province called for Direct Action Day on August 16, 1946.

A deterioration of trust across numerous religious communities was witnessed in 1946, mainly because of the graphic news of communal attacks. The violent attacks in Noakhali and Bihar helped in spreading the riots in Kolkata quickly. There had been riots in Kolkata earlier, but the riot in 1946 was remarkable for its magnitude and severity. The nature of killing became brutal and sadistic, “women and children were attacked, and rapists worked alongside killers” (Khan 2007, 62). All these incidents happened outside Punjab, where the worst was yet to come. The tension intensified among the three major religious communities. This inter-communal hatred and enmity led to communal riots in many parts of India. The Punjab province was swept away by a terrible fit of brutal aggression, attacks, killings, torture, mass rape, and abduction. The misery, loss, displacement, and suffering experienced by the people of that time did not go unrecorded.

Partition has contributed to establishing Indian and Pakistani (also Bangladeshi) identities which gave birth to the never-ending conflicts that still exist today. In her work, *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan* (2007) Yasmin Khan says, “As a result of more than twelve million people became homeless, migrated to another country but it signifies more than that. It implies the division of provinces, independence of two separate countries, birth of a new country along with imprinting personal memories” (Khan 2007, 9).

Punjab and Bengal provinces were the centre of violence. Here, the violence went far beyond the territorial boundaries of Bengal and Punjab. The riots wreaked havoc in many other areas and cities that had been declared riot zones at different times like Delhi, Bombay, Karachi, and Quetta. Other cities also saw outbreaks of partition violence like Varanasi, Moradabad, Meerut, Pilibhit, Kanpur, Lakhnow, Aligarh, Allahabad and other cities from Uttar Pradesh, Ahmedabad, Godhra, Vadodara from Gujarat, Ajmer, Udaipur of Rajasthan, Chapra, Jamalpur and Jamshedpur from Bihar. Princely states like Hyderabad and Kashmir also witnessed partition violence in a significant amount.

Today, India and Pakistan are distinct nations that have followed paths envisioned by their founders and supporters in the 1940s. The decision proved disastrously wrong and destructive, primarily because it was thwarted by numerous rebel groups that did not adhere to the partition plan and partially because it has not been based on various grassroots realities. The plan was full of loopholes. The plan of partition was taken so abruptly and irrationally that various groups and communities did not get complete information about it. There was confusion in every corner of society. The plan also did not highlight the issue of protection of the minorities in both countries.

2.5. Partition of Bengal:

Bengal has witnessed three partitions to date. These are - the partition of 1905, the partition and independence of India (Bengal province also partitioned) in 1947 and East Pakistan's separation and creation of Bangladesh in 1971. In 1905, Lord Curzon attempted to divide Bengal to curb the nationalist movement, led by the Bengali Hindu *bhadraloks*. He thought that if Bengal was divided, then in East Bengal, the Muslim community would start dominating its political space which would resist the nationalist movement instigated by the Bengalis. The Bengali Hindus protested the move, and the British were forced to revoke the decision due to the continuing struggle.

2.5.1. Bengal Partition of 1905: Business Perspective and British Point of View

The decision of the first partition was approved on July 19, 1905 and implemented three months later, on October 16, 1905. It declared the creation of new provinces of Eastern Bengal and Assam, consisting of all districts of Chittagong, Decca, Rajshahi, Malda and Assam. The new province consisted of 31 million population, including 18 million Muslims and 12 million Hindus. The remaining Bengal province would consist of 54 million population, which included forty-two million Hindus and nine million Muslims. The Bengali Muslim population outnumbered the Bengali Hindus in the new province, and they were a minority in the old province, which also had a sizeable number of Oriya and Hindi speaking population.

Was the partition truly meant for administrative efficiency? The Curzon administration naturally defended the scheme on administrative grounds. According to them, the decision of first partition was to reduce the burden on Bengal provincial government. They also promised to commercial benefit for both provinces. Sekhar Bandopadhyay argues that the British understood a united

Bengal is a major power hub, hence divided Bengal, and thought that it will help the ruler to break such power centre. The revolutionary struggles, the nationalist movement and etc. got momentum from Bengal province. He opines:

Indeed, it was the anti-Bengali feelings of the communal beurocracy, which Curzon initiated, even before he became the viceroy and desired to weaken this politically articulated community. Home Secretary Herbert Risley made this point clear in his note of February 7, 1904 (Bandopadhyay 2009, 253).

The Muslims of Bengal felt alienated because of the Hindu agitation against the 1905 partition. The Bengali Muslims believed that the Swadeshi Movement was geared up to prevent the emergence of a separate province of East Bengal where Muslim life and culture could flourish independently. The British government introduced constitutional reforms of 1935, where the religious affiliation of a group happened to be the influential factor in forming the government. The Bengali Muslims came into conflict with the privileged high caste Bengali Hindus under the first Fazlul Haq Ministry of 1937-41.

Joya Chatterjee, in *Spoils of Partition: Bengal and India, 1947-1967* (2007) discussed Bengali partition issues very extensively. She has compared the first (1905) and second (1947) partitions. She observes that the Bengali Hindus started all round protest against the partition of 1905 but when it comes to the partition of 1947, the same Bengali Hindus accepted the division easily. Further they demanded the division of their province and started a movement to support their demand. She writes: "...the same Bengalis in 1947 had accepted this with no regret what Sir Cyril Radcliffe had done to them" (Chatterjee 2007, 00).

2.5.2. Direct Action Day

The Muslim League pushed for Pakistan. To fulfil this demand, they declared “Direct Action Day” on August 16, 1946. The League provincial government had declared August 16 as a public holiday. Though it was planned against the British, it was converted into a Hindu-Muslim riot. The counter riots were seen in Noakhali of East Bengal and Bihar where hundreds of Hindus and Muslims were massacred.

2.5.3. Movement for Divided Bengal

After the incidents of Calcutta and Noakhali, the movement for a divided Bengal gained momentum. Various organisations started campaigning for Bengal’s partition. The separation of Bengal started to seem like a solution for both the then crisis and their financial interests, even to the Bengali upper class (Bhadralok) people. Landowners, businessmen, and tea planters bombarded the Congress and government offices with petitions and telegrams appealing for the division of the region. Hindu Mahasabha’s leader Shyama Prasad Mukherjee strongly advocated for this cause. The Hindu Mahasabha and Congress leaders demanded Bengal and Punjab provinces’ partition, but neither Jinnah nor Bengal Muslim League leaders, were ready to accept the proposal. Jinnah requested the Viceroy of India to refrain from the bifurcation of Bengal and Punjab since the people of these two provinces had common history, cultural bonds and lifestyle. As Pandey argues, the Hindus have stronger feeling as Bengali than their ties with Congress.

Even Hussain Suhrawardy, a Bengal Muslim League leader, requested the viceroy to decide about the partition of Bengal till November 1947 so that their ‘sovereign Bengal’ campaign would get a little more time. Joya Chatterjee presents the situation of Bengal during partition in her book *Bengal Divided*. She writes about the upper-class Bengali Hindus, who considered

Bengal as their own province. They were never prepared to live under the Muslim majority rule. Because they experienced the first Muslim League provincial government which made them think that the partition was inevitable. She writes- “once the pioneer of nationalism in India, used every available ‘stratagem and device’ to demand that their province should be divided” (Chatterjee, 2005, 253).

2.5.4. Sovereign and United Bengal Movement:

When various parties contemplated Indian partition, Bengal province experienced a movement for a “sovereign and united Bengal”. Some Bengali leaders started campaigning for a united and sovereign Bengal and demanded united Bengal irrespective of their religious identity. The United Bengal plan was floated around April 1947 by certain Bengali political leaders such as Sarat Bose, Suhrawardy and Abul Hashim. Bidyut Chakrabarty’s article, ‘The 1947 United Bengal Movement: A Thesis without a Synthesis’ brings a business angle to the discourse of the partition of Bengal. Chakrabarty presents GD Birla’s role in accelerating Bengal Partition, because a separate West Bengal would be more favourable to the Marwari business interest which was facing competition from the Muslim business interest of the East Bengal. On the other hand, the Muslim businessmen pressurised Jinnah for the Suhrawardy plan. Patel and Shyama Prasad Mukherjee of Hindu Mahasabha also believed that under his “sovereign Bengal” proposal, Jinnah intended to capture all of Bengal. The United Bengal scheme also faced opposition from the anti-Suhrawardy lobby in the Bengal Provincial Muslim League. Nehru’s position regarding this united Bengal plan was that the Bengal province could remain united if it stayed within independent India. Finally, the consequence of Direct-Action Day under Suhrawardy’s administration made Hindu-Muslim relations bitter more than ever. As a result, the Bengal assembly approved the decision to bifurcate the province.

2.5.5. Migration in Post Partition Bengal:

The portrayal of the partitions on the Punjab side is emphasised equally in history and literature. Historians and literary authors seem to be worried about the incidents that have taken place in Punjab. However, the effect of partition was not similar in Bengal and Punjab. Ethnic violence took the form of a genocide that forced the government to intervene quickly on the western side. When it came to the eastern front, there was no sense of urgency. Hindu minorities in East Pakistan were not considered to be under immediate threat, and refugee flow in eastern front was mostly the subject of unflattering rumors and expected worries.

Partition has triggered one of the greatest migrations of people in history. Some twenty million people were migrated, marking it the largest displacement in the twentieth century, with twenty million people displaced in Punjab province alone. This unprecedented, forced transfer of people occurred despite the assurance of party leaders and the British administrators. The Indian subcontinent was divided to avoid violence, but it became the very reason for the great genocide that no one could have ever imagined.

The partition is one of the classic examples of “refugee generating process”. It left millions of people on the other side, it was one of the greatest exoduses in world history. Migration in Bengal happened in three phases. The first phase of migration occurred between October 1946 to March 1958. Those, who entered West Bengal during this time were termed as ‘old migrants. They comprised of elite Hindu *bhadralok*, who did not become a burden on the provincial government. Many of these migrated people had socially or economically influential relatives or assets in the newly formed West Bengal. The second phase of migration took place from 1958 to 1963. These refugees were called “in between migrants”. They consisted of the working class

and upper-middle class people. They were not recognised as displaced people and were not provided with any economic assistance. The people who migrated from East Pakistan for the government's offers were declared as refugees. Even the Nehru government had suggested the government to shut down the rehabilitation works. The third phase of migration happened during January 1964 to March 1971, this wave of migration started with the incidents of Hajratwal in 1964 when few miscreants desecrated Hajratbal Dargah, and in reaction to that incident, there were communal riots in various parts of Bangladesh (East Pakistan). In this phase, East Bengali people from the peasantry and the artisan sections left their homes for India.

Nilanjana Chatterjee, in her article 'Interrogating Victimhood: East Bengali Refugee Narratives of Communal Violence' analyses the reasons behind the migration of East Bengali people. She discusses three things that forced the people of East Bengal to leave their homeland for West Bengal. She opines-

East Bengali claims to victimhood used the language of Muslim communal violence-fear of losing life, property, and honour (*Pran, Dhan, and Maan*) to legitimate their claim to be political refugees and to gain public sympathy in India (Chatterjee 2006, 20).

The migration in the post partition Bengal was not just a politically forced mission but it was significant culturally as well as socially. It formed a new fractured identity not just of a nation but of its people. Who could not adapt to the imagined or rather a newly formed homeland. This was also the time when reverse migration began. There were incidents of reverse migration during partition because of the confusion regarding national boundaries. Preet Nagar Town near Amritsar and Malda district in Bengal province witnessed such

reverse migration. These two areas were first declared to be part of Pakistan, and most of the non-Muslims residing in that area vacated for a 'new' country. However, after a few days, both places were declared part of India and the people who left, returned to their homes and thus reverse migration happened.

2.6. Historiography and the Construction of History

The Collins English Dictionary provides a definition of historiography as “The writing of history, the study of the development of the historical method, historical research, and writing, any piece of historical writing.” Since the ages understanding the past has been a fundamental human desire and history has evolved separately from cultures worldwide. The historians reconstruct events from the past and render it in their words in their present times. Often at times it is seen that a historical text is influenced by the present time. It may cater the need of the present rather than sticking to the history, as it happened. This preference introduces the subjective aspects of the personality of historians. The reconstruction of the past in the minds of historians relies on empirical proof. However, refilling itself is not an analytical operation. This historiography is responsible for finding and evaluating information. In her book, *Of Many Heroes: An Indian Essay in Literary Historiography* (1998), G N Devi writes about historiography and historical narratives. She says that the narration is shaped by human awareness of race or gender with the understanding of history. She opines, “Every historical narrative was written in the ideological space within the consciousness of the historian much before it was written in a language” (Devi 1998, 7-8).

2.6.1. Indian Partition Historiography

The partition event emerged as a tragedy that the country has never healed from. Unfortunately, it is not articulated in historiography. Alok Valla, in his work *Collection of Partition Stories in English Translations* says, “there is not just a lack of great literature, there is a more serious lack of great history” (Bhalla 1994, 12). It is because it focused on the events of independence rather than the events of India’s partition. Basically, historiography follows the narratives of the government where importance has been given to the events and issues pertaining to national integrity.

R C Majumdar has presented the government’s direction in writing the partition historiography. He points out that sometimes governments also use history to promote some ideology such as Gandhi’s non-violence ideology. The Indian History Congress (1964) proceedings also represent the government’s interpretation of the representation of violence and trauma. The state version of history always tried to describe the ‘good’ side of the Indian freedom struggle and wanted to distance itself from the themes which may cause hindrance for the development of the nation. As R. C. Majumdar points out-

History must not call to the Memory of ghastly aberrations of a human nation, of dastardly crimes, of divisions and conflicts, of degeneration and decay, but of the higher values of life, of traditions of culture and the nobler deeds of sacrifice and devotion to the service of humanity (Majumdar 2001, 49).

This disciplinary divide has been widely taken up by historians. This approach of the historians, as Pandey argued, shows the battle against communalism in post-partition Indian society. He says-

While the partition historians in India have remained overwhelmingly concerned with causes, it is not suffering nor the issue of nationalism and nation-building, but the question of India's unity that has motivated these concerns and raised many more questions (Pandey, 2001:45).

The fact is that not every instance of large-scale violence has been narrated in the same way. There are certain types of violence, which as Pandey argued, 'we enjoined to remember'. Pandey brings the discussions of Jawed Alam, who has come up with three different forms of violence describes, -

The first form refers to those occasions when a state or state-like entity directly deliberately commits genocide or massacre: as it happened in Germany, Serbia. For example, the anti-Sikh riot of 1984 where 'the state became part of the violence'. The second form of violence is collective violence, as witnessed in India in 1992-93 when a large gathering incited the Babri Masjid-Ram Mandir issue. It was believed that the state was not part of violence, but it could have managed, and it did not. There is a third form where people become victims of violence, where the people begin to kill each other at a time of the collapse of rationality as it happened in partition violence (Pandey 2001, 59).

To explain Indian post-partition historiography, Smita Tiwari Jassal also presented the concept of national unity. She calls the event of partition a kind of 'intrusion' in the history of the Indian freedom struggle. She writes - "...the history of partition appeared as an intrusion. The Indian post-colonial historiography, driven by the need to demonstrate the unity of India's diverse people and traditions" (Jassal 2003, 33). The partition was a devastating experience that raised a

series of problems and concerns and much of the subcontinent's literature, arts and films have been attempting to address since independence. There are several reminders of how the partition, as Mushirul Hasan said, affected people to lose everything, millions displaced and divided the country and its unity (Hasan, 1997).

The novelists on partition like Khushwant Singh, Bhisham Sahni and Bapsi Sidwa seem to be objective in treating history, which exhibits historical awareness. Hard facts are not distorted at the expense of history. However, there are specific examples where Gandhiji appears on the canvas of the novels, like in *Azadi* and *Ice Candy Man*, which do not have any historical authenticity. Perhaps the novelists interpolate them in the historical account, intending to make the plot enjoyable and contextual. Anup Beniwal says, indicating such fictionalisation of historical events- "Such blending of the historical with the fictional entails the exigencies of the plot of the historical novels. They start from the particular, the historical and move to the universal" (Beniwal, 2005: 10).

No historical event occurs in a vacuum by itself but is shaped by an abundance of inputs and the nature of historicity. In this case, the forces responsible for partition and the consequences are responsible for forming the partition historiography. There are different types of historiographic interpretation; each emphasises its version of the 'truth/reality' of partition (Beniwal, 2005: 24). It has been observed that there are several types of historiographic interpretations to the history of partition. The colonial historiography presents the British perspective, which sees the partition as an inevitable and natural outcome of divisive tendencies of various Indian communities, not as a result of its empirical policies. Beniwal points out -

It imagines the Indian- subcontinent as a retrogressive hinterland peopled by an assortment of mutually exclusive, monolithic and antagonistic religious communities. This historical perspective invariably exalts the British as modern, moral, progressive patriarchs, thus legitimising their presence in the subcontinent as one fostering political unity among the warring nationalities, especially between the Hindus and the Muslims (Beniwal 2005: 26-27).

The Hindu nationalistic historiography diverges from the secular nationalistic view in its assumption of a fundamental religious divide between Hindus and Muslims as the fundamental fact of Indian history. It argues that partition resulted from the “secularist and the imperialist pampering of an essentially intolerant Muslim bigotry and their pan-Islamic worldview” (Beniwal, 2005: 29). It advocates for a hegemonic brand of cultural nationalism.

There is another version of communal historiography that is based on the ideological point of view of the Muslim League. Like its Hindu nationalist counterpart, it sees partition from a Muslim perspective and is based on ‘two nation theory’ politics. This perspective validates the creation of Pakistan as the natural logic of the past. Both these approaches, the self-consciously secular and the communal, arrange Indian history and two diametrically opposite poles. There is a lengthy discussion regarding the representation of partition in history and literature. Historians generally agree that the literature on partition represented the theme of partition comparatively better. Ayesha Jalal and Sugata Bose, write-

The colossal tragedy of partition and its continuing aftermath has been better conveyed by the more sensitive creative writers and artists – for example in Sadat

Hasan Manto's short stories and Ritwik Ghatak's films – than a historian (Bose, Sugata and Ayesha Jalal, 2014: 164).

There was a long silence after partition/independence. It seems that the authors were reluctant to portray the immense tragedy that they witnessed themselves. Some early partition narratives portrayed carnage, rape, abduction, etc., which seemed to present the demented hatred between two communities. However, the historiography of partition narratives carefully avoided the theme of violence and trauma for the sake of 'national unity and peace'. In partition historiography, the violence of 1947 has been considered as other's history. There is a considerable difference between the historian's approach in 1947 and the survivor's account between history and memory regarding partition. As Gyanendra Pandey argued in *Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism, and History in India* (2001) that, "Nationalism and national historiography, I shall argue, have made an all too facile separation between partition and violence" (Pandey 2011, 63).

2.7. Dalit Question and Partition of Bengal

The term Dalit is popularly known as '*chhotolok*' in Bengal. It means 'lower caste' and '*bhadralok*' refers to 'upper caste'. Jyotiba Phule had introduced the term Dalit, to represent the marginalised people in a Hindu social system. The term Dalit became familiar to identify all the socially discriminated people in India. In the context of Bengal, '*chhotolok*' refers to the person who was directly associated with the working class and lower caste people. At the social status level based on the Brahminic caste-system, the *chhotolok* struggled for their livelihood without necessary facilities and education to enlighten them.

The lower caste refugees were mostly from Namashudra background; they were also known as Chandals of Bengal. They mainly migrated from Dhaka, Khulna, Bakerganj, Faridpur, Mymensingh, and Jessore of East Bengal. The partition gave a decisive blow to the very establishment of the Namashudras. They lost their negotiating strength and lost their political power in both countries. However, this is just a part of an issue, the refugees from upper caste and class were settled in and around Calcutta, but the lower caste migrants, Namashudras were sent to the refugee camps of districts Dandakaranya forest areas.

When there is a discussion on Bengali Partition Narratives, it generally discusses or indicates the literature produced by upper-class Hindu migrants. Jyotirmoyee Devi's *Epar Ganga Opar Ganga* (1967 Trans. *The River Charming*), Sunil Gangopadhyay's *Purbo-Pashchim (East-West)*, and Ritwik Ghatak's film *Meghe Dhaka Tara* (1960) present an upper-class perspective of the partition. They have come up with Bhadra refugee issues where the problems faced by non-Bhadra or lower caste people got side-lined. The study discusses some of the partition works written by non-Bhadra Bengali refugees that challenge the upper caste narration of Bengal Partition and depict their plight and side the of partition. Such works are – Adhir Biswas' memoir *Deshbhager Smriti* (2010), Allar Jomite Paa (2012), Manoranjan Byapari's autobiography *Itibritte Chandal Jibon* (2012) and Sunanda Sikdar's memoir *Doyamoyeer Kotha* (2008). These writers present the Dalit perspective by describing their own experiences in their works.

2.7.1. Upper-Class Hindu Narratives on Partition:

Writers and filmmakers like Jyotirmoyee Debi and Ritwik Ghatak have presented the partition with specific reference to the migrants' experience. They have highlighted in their work; the

upper or upper-middle-class Bengali's status being changed as refugees. Sarbani Bandopadhyay, in her Doctoral thesis "More or Less Refugees? Bengal Partition in Literature and Cinema", argues that the partition narratives written by upper caste writers have failed to address the issue of Dalits or lower class people and their struggle in post-partition society (Bandopadhyay 2015, 4). Dalit people belonging to the Namashudra, Sadgop, and Poundras started migrating only after the 1950s and 1960s. With the introduction of the passport in 1952, two countries' borders were tightened, which changed the national government's perspective towards the religious minorities. The Muslim landowning classes occupied the places and lands that the Hindu people left in East Pakistan because of migration. The Muslim landowners decided to give their lands for cultivation to only Muslim farmers, which destroyed the Hindu-Muslim unity among working-class people. All these reasons forced the Dalit communities of East Pakistan to migrate to West Bengal, although Pakistan's Law Minister, Jogendranath Mondal, "had reassured their people to stay on in East Pakistan as their interest would be served there" (Banerjee 2015, 16).

2.7.2. Caste Discrimination in Refugee Camps:

Rehabilitation measures adopted for the two classes were also visible because of the caste system. With resources in their possession, the upper caste refugees could easily be integrated into the mainland of West Bengal. On the other hand, the lower caste people were forced to live on the fringes, and they went on to new places like Andaman Islands or the Dandakaranya forest. Jhuma Sen writes-

It must also be mentioned that in Calcutta and its vicinity, 149 unauthorised colonies, colloquially termed as '*jabor dakhil*', sprang up to house the bhadralok refugees.

Conversely, the chhotolok were placed in transit camps and forced out of the state (Sen 2015, 3).

Adhir Biswas and Byapari's memoirs claim that refugee camps and colonies have been organised in West Bengal concerning caste and class hierarchies. The upper class's poor refugees were also acutely dominated and distanced from the refugees of a lower caste. Following the migration, many socially upright but financially weak people resisted settling in the camps with other refugees. They considered it a shame to live with the Dalit people in the same camp. This was discrimination within discrimination.

2.7.3. Politics of Partition and Dalits:

Jogendranath Mondal reiterated that the Dalits and oppressed people opposed the decision of partition. He decided to stay in Pakistan after the partition and became a minister in the Pakistan government. Although, backward Bengali people, including most of the Dalits, sided with the narratives of Congress and Hindu Mahasabha. They preferred to stay in the Indian union and wanted to see themselves as a citizen of a Hindu majority nation-state. In the aftermath of the partition, the Dalits were the most backward community in each field. They were not welcomed with an open heart by West Bengal's people, despite belonging to the same linguistic group. The native people of West Bengal kept a distance from them. The lower caste refugees were denied any help by the upper and upper-caste migrants, with whom they left their homeland.

2.7.4. Discrimination by the Government:

The caste and class-based discrimination appeared in the rehabilitation project of refugees under Dr Bidhan Chandra Ray's ministry. The government planned to resettle the Dalit Bengali

refugees outside of West Bengal, to the places like Andaman Island and the Dandakaranya forest area. Sarbani Banerjee draws the status of lower-class refugees from East-Pakistan who led their insular life since their economical status was never good. They did not have any choice but to leave their 'own motherland'. They had no choice to choose their desired life style in post-partition society. The Bengal government also planned to settle them either in Dandakaranya forest or Andaman Island.

The lower-class people had earlier led an insular life in East Pakistan and would not be incorporated in mainstream nationalistic political movements. Because they did not have a monetary hold, they could not propose any choice about their desired style of living in the post-partition period (Banerjee 2015, 38).

On the representation of Dalits and other lower caste Bengali refugees, Jhuma Sen brings an account of discrimination and repression of *Chhotolok* or *Dalits*, in her article "Reconstructing Marichjhapi: From Margins and Memories of Migrant Lives" (2015). She says- "Bengal's romance with the upper caste bhadralok's 'traumatic and nostalgic memories of a lost homeland in East Bengal' has dominated the imagination of partition historiography so much" (Sen 2015, 1).

2.7.5. Dandakaranya Project

The Dandakaranya Project Area (DPA) covered about 77,700 km of Orisha and Madhya Pradesh. The process of sending refugees started as soon as the DPA began in 1958. Dandakaranya was an area culturally and socially removed from the known world of the refugees. Many refugee camps witnessed a mass protest dissenting against the attempt of the government to send them away. Even the government served the refugees notice to either go to

Dandakaranya or leave the camps within 30 days. However, from the first day itself, refugees started leaving the Dandakaranya forest. Since most of the refugees were poor, and from farmer background, they would not be familiar with other activities other than farming. The Dandakaranya forest area was not fertile. The refugees, who were sent to Dandakaranya were neglected for their basic needs because of the misconception between the state administration of Bengal, Madhya Pradesh and the DPA.

The Bangladesh government opened the national border for the *sharanarthis* (refugee-seekers) who fled during the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971. As a result, many refugees return to the newly formed country Bangladesh. However, the ruling state government planned to settle the remaining poor and Dalit migrants in the Dandakaranya forestry in Madhya Pradesh. Like Andaman, the government also expected to ‘use’ the refugees in cleaning lands or rigorous labour.

2.7.6. Political Movement and the Refugee Problem:

Lower caste refugees were not satisfied with the state and central government’s rehabilitation process. The beginning of the 1960s witnessed a political development in various refugee camps. The Communist Party raised their voices, supporting the demands of refugees. The leftist leaders protested against the Congress government regarding the implementation and failure of the Dandakaranya project. Communist leaders like Jyoti Basu had promised refugees to resettle them in the Sundarban areas of West Bengal. Jyoti Basu himself wrote a letter to the B.C Roy government on July 13, 1961, informing the protest and hunger strikes against forceful eviction that was going on in various camps by the refugees and lodged their disagreement against the plan of sending refugees to the Dandakaranya forest. The left front had insisted that no refugees

should be forced out of West Bengal against their wishes. Jyoti Basu demanded publicly in Bhilai while addressing an industrial workers' meeting on January 25, 1975, that the refugees from Dandakaranya would be allowed to settle in the Sundarban area once they came in power. However, he failed to fulfil the promise when he came to power, and the refugees thought that they have been deceived by the communist government.

2.7.7. Marichjhapi Massacre:

The Communist Party came to power in 1977. However, they failed to keep their promises that they made to the Dalit refugees residing outside Bengal. The refugees were outraged, thinking that the government had deceived them. The first wave of refugees started returning from Dandakaranya via Orisha's Malkangiri to West Bengal at the beginning of 1978. More than 10,000 refugees crossed Kumrinari and reached Marichjhapi on April 18, 1978. They requested the government to allow them to live on the island of Marichjhapi.

The communist party promised them to resettle but betrayed the Dalits and instead uprooted them from Marichjhapi by force. In her thesis, Banerjee notes that the Communist government instigated police brutality and they started random massacre of Dalits as some testimonials suggest. They destroyed refugees' lives and properties (Banerjee 2015, 41). The government falsely accused them of smuggling national treasures and damaging reserved forest property to expel the refugees from Marichjhapi. Goons sponsored by the government entirely annexed the island. Marichjhapi presented the forceful eviction of East Bengali refugees from Sundarban areas by the Left government in 1979. This forceful eviction caused greater human calamities in which hundreds of refugees died. Jhuma Sen, in her article, "Afterlives of Partition: citizenship and legal belongings" says that "Marichjhapi Massacre, was the product of some factors

including partition, migration, questions of caste, ecology and discriminatory refugee policy and finally of a reversal in a policy adopted by the West Bengal government” (Sen 2005, 2).

2.8. Partition Literature of India:

The partition marked the largest mass migration in human history where innumerable people from both sides were killed, sexually assaulted, forcefully converted, abducted, and mutilated during displacement. Several writers and critics have helped in creating the Partition corpus in English and other vernacular languages. There are several literary works which fictionalise the stories of partition.

Following writers have enriched the Partition corpus from various languages and regions. Khushwant Singh was amongst the first writers to write a novel on the partition of India. He wrote *Train to Pakistan* (1956) which was followed by other partition novels in English like Attia Hossain’s *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961), Manohar Malgonkar’s *A Bend in the Ganges* (1965), Chaman Nahal’s *Azadi* (1975), and Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* (1980). In the late 1980’s, scholars and writers paid attention to the theme of partition because of religious and political developments in the country. Many creative and critical works have appeared since then. Some of the later novels on partition literature of India are Bapsi Sidwa’s *Ice Candy Man* (1988), Amitabh Ghosh’s *The Shadow Lines* (1988), Anita Desai’s *Clear Light of Day* (1992), Ahmed Ali’s *Twilight in Delhi* (1994), Mukul Kesaban’s *Looking Through Glass* (1995), Shiv K. Kumar’s *A River with Three Banks: The Partition of India - Agony and Ecstasy* (1998), Rohinton Mistry’s *A Fine Balance* (2001),

Shauna Singh Baldwin's *What the Body Remembers* (2001), Samina Ali's *Madras on a Rainy Day* (2004), Amit Majumdar's *Partition* (2008) and others.

Several individuals have tried to pen down their personal experiences of partition. Some of the memoirs, which represent the partition violence, trauma, and experiences in refugee camps are- Anees Kidwai's novel *In Freedom's Shade* (1974), Kamla Patel's *Torn from the Roots* (1997), Sunanda Sikdar's *Doyamoyeer Kotha* (Bengali, 2008), Adhir Biswas' *Deshbhager Smriti* (Bengali, 2010) and Manoranjan Byapari's Bengali memoir *Itibritte Chandal Jibon* (2012).

The theme of partition has also attracted short story writers. There are collections of short stories published on the various themes of partition. Some of the short story collections are Sadat Hasan Manto's work *Kingdom's End and other Short Stories* (1987), Alok Bhalla's *Stories About the Partition* (1994) Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies* (2000), Sampooran Singh Gulzar's *Raavi Paar and Other Stories* (2000), Bhasabi Phraser's *Bengal Partition Stories: An Undisclosed Chapter* (2006) contains some of the partition stories.

Apart from English, other Indian languages have also contributed to the gamut of partition scholarship. Several Hindi writings, have been written on the theme of partition. Some of these are Bhisham Sahni's *Tamas* (1974), Krishna Sobti's *Zindaginama* (1979), Rahi Masoom Raza's *Aadha Gaon* (1984), Krishna Baldev Vaid's *The Broken Mirror* (1994), Kamleshwar's *Kitne Pakistan* (2000) and a few other works. Urdu writers also have tried to capture the violence, trauma, and the experience of partition in their novels like Nasim Hijazi's *Khak Aur Khoon* (1950), Mumtaz Ali's autobiographical work *Ali Pur Ka Ali* (1961), Razia Butt's *Bano* (2010) and etc.

2.9. Bengali Partition Literature:

Bengali Partition novels also contributed to the partition literature of India. The Bengal Partition has left a significant imprint on intellectuals and creative minds over the years. The Bengali language has come up with many partition writings that helped in contribution to the Bengali literary spectrum. These novels are- Amarendra Ghosh's *Bhangche Sudhu Bhangche* (1951) and *Beaini Janata* (1952), Jyotirmoyee Debi's *Epar Ganga Opar Ganga* (1967), Atin Bandopadhyay's *Nilkontho Pakhir Khonje* (1971), Manik Bandopadhyay's *Sarbojonin* (1974), Hiranmoy Bandopadhyay's *Ja Dekhechi* (1977), Jagadish Chandra Mondal's *Banga Bhang* (1977), Pratibha Basu's *Samudre Hridoye* (1983), Samaresh Basu's *Khandita* (1987), Shanta Sen's *Janmer Mati* (2007), Mahmudul Haque's *Kalo Borof* (Black Ice, 2012) and the list continues.

2.10. Movies based on the Partition of India:

A number of movies were also made on the theme of partition. The directors have tried to depict the ground reality of partition, which the mainstream partition historiography avoided narrating. Some of the movies on the partition of the Indian subcontinent are Nimai Ghosh's *Chinnamul* (1950) and *Dharamputra* (1961), Nirmal Dey's *Sare Chuattar* (1953), Sukumar Sen's *Ora Thake Odhare* (1954), Ritwik Ghatak's *Meghe Dhaka Tara* (1960), *Komal Gandhar* (1961), and *Subarnarekha* (1962), M. S. Sathyu's *Garm Hawa* (1973) and Govind Nihalani's *Tamas* (an adaptation of Bhisam Sahni's novel, 1987). Initially, films on partition were made in Bengali except for one or two. However, after the 1990s, because of various religious and political developments in the Indian scenario, movies made on partition started increasing, most of which are in Hindi. Such movies are Deepa Mehta's *Earth* (1998), Kamal

Haasan's *Hey Ram* (2000), Anil Sharma's *Gadar Ek Prem Katha* (2001), Amrita Pritam's *Pinjar* (2003), Sabiha Kumar's *Khamosh Pani* (2003), and Vic Sarin's *Partition* (2007).

2.11. Contemporary Critical Writings on Partition of India:

The post-1980 era has witnessed the emergence of scholarly writing on the Indian partition, criticising and challenging the nationalist version of Indian historiography of partition. Some of these works are Gyanendra Pandey's "In Defense of Fragment: Writing About Hindu-Muslim Riots in India Today" (1991) and *Remembering Partitions: Violence, Nationalism and History in India* (2001), Mushirul Hasan's *India's Partition: Process, Strategy and Mobilisation* (1994) and *Inventing Boundaries: Gender, Politics, and the Partition of India* (2002), Urvashi Butalia's *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* (1998), Narendra Singh Sarila's book *The Shadow of the Great Game: The Untold Story of India's Partition* (2006), Tarun K. Saint's *Witnessing Partition: Memory, History, Fiction* (2009), and Jisha Menon's *The Performance of Nationalism: India, Pakistan and the Memory of partition* (2013). Some of the anthologies deal with the issue of the refugee problem and their rehabilitations, such as Vazira Fazilu-Yacoobali Zamindar's *The Long Partition and the Making of Modern South Asia: Refugees, Boundaries, Histories* (2007), Kali Mohan Mukhopadhyay's *Partition, Bengal and After: The Great Tragedy of India* (2007), Gera Roy and Nandi Bhatia's *Partitioned Lives: Narratives of Home, Displacement and Resettlement* (2008), Monika Mondal's *Settling the Unsettled: A Study of Partition Refugees in West Bengal* (2011), and Debjani Sengupta's *The Partition of Bengal: Fragile Border and New Identities* (2016).

2.12. Women's Writing on Partition of India:

Partition writers have underlined the ignored sides of the partition, i.e., women's perspective and representation in the partition experience. Some women writers have tried to address this silence through their writings. Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin's *Borders and Boundaries: How Women Experienced the Partition of India* (1998), Ritu Menon's *No Women's Land: Women from Pakistan, India and Bangladesh Write on the Partition of India* (2004), Jasodhara Bagchi and Subhoranjan Dasgupta's *The Trauma and the Triumph: Gender and Partition in East India* (2005), Gargi Chakravarty's *Coming out of Partition: Refugee Women of Bengal* (2007), and Kavita Daihya's *Violent Belongings: Partition, Gender, and National Culture in post-colonial India* (2008) are a few examples.

2.13. Characteristic Features of Bengali Partition Narratives:

The Partition of Bengal was less violent in comparison to that of Punjab. The Partition memory of Eastern Indians differs significantly from that of the North Indian victims. The Bengali Partition narratives mainly deal with the fear of being attacked at any time, with the attendant apprehension that they would never get religious freedom in an Islamic country. The characters in such narratives are often seen nostalgically remembering their homeland (Desh Bari) in the novels. Bengali Partition novels deal with various partition themes, but there is little mention of 'direct' partition violence seen in some of the North Indian Partition novels. Characters live in two worlds, the everyday reality in post-partition society and the Memory of violence they encounter during and after the partition.

The Partition of Bengal problematises the identity formation process. Several layers of identity became a reality because of the partition of Bengal, such as Indian Bengali Hindu, Indian

Bengali Muslim, Pakistani Bengali Muslim and Pakistani Bengali Hindu. Various Bengali Partition writers have also presented the *Ghoti* and *Bangal* identity issue among the Bengalis of West Bengal. Sunil Gangopadhyay's *Purba-Pashchim* (2000) has portrayed this *Ghoti* and *Bangal* issue extensively. The natives of West Bengal are known as *Ghoti*, and those who migrated from Bangladesh (East Pakistan) are known as *Bengal*.

The Bengal province witnessed a movement for a united Bengal. When Congress and Muslim League demanded Bengal province on their side, some political activists like Saratchandra Bose and Sohrawardy campaigned in favour of a sovereign Bengal. However, their attempt was too weak to make a difference in the situation. This counter-movement from Bengal to the mainstream political parties of India has received attention in several Bengali Partition writings. The movement has remained unnoticed in the mainstream partition narratives of India though.

2.14. Present Trends in Partition Narratives:

The present study aims at early and contemporary partition novels to discover the changing trends and perspectives in the novels written just after the partition and the novels, written on the threshold of the 21st century. Since 1947, different literary forms are continuously being produced on the theme of partition and its aftermath. Even in the contemporary age, the issues of partition are the source for many writers. The early partition narratives deal with the theme of suffering, loss, displacement, murders, rapes, abductions, the pain of separation from the loved one, etc. However, among the modern partition narratives, some contemporary issues such as rehabilitation, an adjustment in different societies, the rise of nationalism, the life of refugees etc. that are the result of the partition of the country, have been added to the list of vast partition

narration. The study also looks at the socio-economic and political changes that shaped the narratives of contemporary partition novels.

Contemporary partition writers are mostly second-generation partition writers who narrate stories from their second-generation perspective and the contemporary situation of partition victims. Some of the contemporary novels are Zaheda Hina's *All Passion Spent* (2011), Anis Kidwai's *In Freedom's Shade* (2011), Amit Majumder's *Partitions* (2011), Sunanda Sikdar's *A Life Long Ago* (2012) and Manjit Sachdeva's *Lost Generation* (2013).

Chapter-III

Identity and Bengali Partition Narratives

Identity in Bengali Partition Narratives

3.1. Introduction

Various layers of identities have been formed due to the partition of India in 1947. The post-partition Bengali community got divided and further sub-divided based on newly constructed identities. Bengali partition narratives have presented the issue of identity construction and the problems that the people of Bengal encountered due to the identity crisis and identity formation based on religion, caste and geographical location. The partition is the meta-narratives which describes the formation of newly independent nations of India and Pakistan (1947) and Bangladesh (1971) in the twenty-first century. Regardless of which side of the border they grew up on, Bengalis have lived with the various stories of two partitions. There are two histories, regarding the first partition in 1905, when India was under British rule and the second partition of 1947 when India got its independence from colonial rule. The partition of Bengal has helped in the formation of identities among the Bengalis.

This chapter will explore the theoretical aspects of ‘identity’. It will study multiple layers of identity constructions in the select Bengali partition narratives. Similarly, it will also present the identity crisis of the post-partition Bengali community with the formation of two separate countries. It would highlight the sufferings that the people of Bengal experienced in the newly formed countries because of the identity construction depicted in the novels.

The Oxford Dictionary mentions ‘Identity’ as “the fact of being who or what a person or thing is” or “characteristics determining who or what a person or thing is” which is common

knowledge of the word. Identity is a term that defines a description of the various facets of one's individuality to establish 'who you are'. It can be taken from one's own blood/racial origin, social class, religion, beliefs, and other things to form an identity. It can also be easily exploited, which shows that the human population relies on their 'identities' to feel protected and can be committed to the assurance of who they are. All that commitment and protection to oneself comes at the price that if one encounters another 'identity' with opposite or incompatible ideologies, thoughts, or feelings towards another, it has always caused tension throughout history.

Oscar Wilde mentions in his famous work *De Profundis*, that; "Most people are other people. Their thoughts are someone else's opinions, their lives a mimicry, their passions a quotation." It means that when a person changes or shapes his or her identity, it is generally because of the influence of others and the situation around him. This is apparent in *Ice Candy Man* by Bapsi Sidhwa as the story progresses and the partition takes place. The novel *Ice Candy Man* revolves around people's religious identity. It reflects how people are viewed once the conflict starts. Religion became a vital feature of an individual in India and Pakistan because of the partition. It became the primary identity of the citizens irrespective of other factors. This theory implies that there are two methods for formulating an 'identity'. They are - identity through 'self-identification', by selecting an identity or identifying with a specific attribute, such as being vegan, or by 'cultural' identity, an identity based on perceptions and labelling by others. While two approaches lead to the creation of 'identity', there are several variations of identity as it is a broad spectrum. As stated earlier, it can be ethnic, religious, sexual identity etc. However, all these things are supposed to be a part of one's identity that is shaped and evolved as one grows older. Famous philosopher John Locke formed a theory which is known as 'blank slate' or

‘tabula rasa’ in an essay titled “Concerning human understanding”. The theory suggests that all humans were created as a blank slate without inherent prejudices, and we have acquired our knowledge through perspectives and experiences. This can be seen as an interpretation of how we obtain identity, but this only supports the notion that we ‘grow’ our identities and neglect the probability of being born with an identity.

...the mind to be, as we say, white paper void of all characters, without any ideas.

Whence comes it by that vast store which the busy and boundless fancy of man has painted on it with an almost endless variety? Whence has it all the materials of reason and knowledge? To this, I answer, in one word, from EXPERIENCE (Locke, 1994, 311).

The sense of individual identity describes a person asking themselves “Who am I?” that challenge their preconceived notions about themselves. The process defines individuals both to others and to themselves. A sense of persistence, distinctiveness from others, and a sentiment of association depending on affiliation in diverse groups such as family, race, and occupation all contribute to a person’s true identity. These group identities show people’s desire for association or to describe themselves in the sight of someone else and themselves. Identities are formed on a variety of levels. Although from a personal and interpersonal viewpoint, the ‘micro-level’ comprises personality, interpersonal interactions, and difficulties. The ‘Meso-level’ concerns how immediate communities and families perceive, develop, and challenge identities. The ‘macro-level’ refers to the relationships between individuals and concerns on a national basis. People, issues, and communities are linked on a worldwide platform at the global level.

3.2. Theories on Identity Studies:

There are several theories for identity and identity construction. Some of the theories are discussed below.

3.2.1. Erikson's Theory of Identity vs Role Confusion:

According to Erikson's theory, people go through eight stages of crisis throughout their lifetime. Each stage takes place at a different point in life and therefore, must be managed to complete before moving to the next. One of the most important stages is - "Identity versus Role Confusion" stage, it is applicable to identity construction that occurs during adolescent development. Adolescents in the "Identity versus Role Confusion stage" struggle to sort out who they are in addition to creating a fundamental identity on which they will construct most of their lives, particularly in terms of social and professional identities. If the "Identity vs Role Confusion" issue is not handled satisfactorily, teenagers will be confused about upcoming ambitions, especially their grownup duties. The lack of self-identification leads to the inability to develop a common identity with everyone else.

3.2.2. Marcia's Identity Status Theory:

Marcia constructed a formal interview to categorise teenagers into identification status. These stages are used to characterise and evaluate the status of the formulation phase of a young person's identity. The four identity statuses in James Marcia's theory are - 1. Identity Diffusion, 2. Identity Foreclosure, 3. Identity Moratorium, and 4. Identity Achievement. Marcia's theory defines *identity* as whether a person has examined other choices and formed firm commitments towards an occupation, a religion, gender or sexuality and a series of political convictions.

3.2.3. Jeffrey Arnett's Theories on Identity Formation in Emerging Adulthood:

The theory of Jeffrey Arnett suggests that identity development at the early age of 18-25 was most prominent. Arnett argues that identity-building involves taking several options of life and finally making crucial life choices. He feels that this age of life contains a wide range of identity building prospects, especially in three main fields. These are love, work, and worldviews. Arnett's theory of identity largely focuses on the socio-personal interaction of an individual. The 'identity formation' is the stage from early life to 'experiencing' stage of life. These stages are sometimes dynamic and tend to change the individual's perspective on love, work and worldview.

3.3. Types of Identity:

There are different types of identity that can be found in human society, such as- cultural identity, religious identity, national identity, ethnic identity, linguistic identity, gender identity, disability identity and many more. Identities are formed due to various reasons and variations.

3.3.1. Social Identity:

The impression of the human being as a member of specific social group is referred to as social identity. Characters connected with society come to be perceived as an aspect of the social self. Social identity has cognitive and emotional dimensions. The categorising of oneself into a specific group is the cognitive component. People's emotional attachment to the communities they identify makes up the overall importance of social identity. The concept of social identity is a fluid one. While it maintains a rather relative aspect of the self, it also allows for fluctuation across social circumstances and community factors. There is always social negotiation with identity forming agencies, such as geography, language, and social apparatuses within the society.

3.3.2. Religious Identity:

Religion may be an essential aspect of one's identity. Contemporary definitions describe it as an organised set of practices. Being part of a religion means more than sharing the same beliefs with a group of people or community. Within each religion, there is a great deal of variation in how people see their interactions with it. Religious, theological beliefs, and worship activities are important to certain people. Others are more attracted to the identity and culture of faith. There are people who being part of a particular religion, do not participate in any religious rituals and practices. Pnina Werbner writes in her article "Religious Identity" that –

To speak of religious identity is to refer to a particular way of approaching 'difference'. Religious identity is, above all, a discourse of boundaries, relatedness, and otherness, on the one hand, and encompassment and inclusiveness, on the other – and of the powerful forces that are perceived to challenge, contest and preserve these distinctions and unities (Werbner, 2009, 1).

There are numerous dynamics of religions in the world. India has diversity and when it comes to the matter of religion. Sometimes it divides people, and sometimes it unites but above all, it gives human beings one particular identity. This identity is based on some distinctive principles by which people from a particular religious community are known.

3.3.3. Linguistics Identity:

Language is, as we know, a medium of communication. It also gives us an identity through which we associate with each other in known and sometimes unknown linguistic community. Along with religious identity, this linguistic identity is also one of the strong feelings that human

beings borrow from them. There are several languages in the world and various linguistic identities have been constructed based on the speakers of these languages like Bengali identity, Hindi identity, Spanish, Arabic, French and other linguistic identities. Linguistic identity becomes one of the most defining factors in identity formation largely because of the nation's acceptance or rejection of one nationalised language. Certainly in India, linguistic identity comes with geographically located and which follows with 'unity in diversity' of various cultures.

3.3.4. National Identity:

The whole world is divided by nationalities. Geo-politically, the world is separated from one another. This national identity could be based on geography, religion, language, or ethnicity. Generally, people internationally introduce themselves with their national identities. 'National identity' is a concept where individuals are classified into divisions and termed as per the nations they represent. "Members of the nation", as an ancestor, parenthood or lineage, share a similar identity and often a shared origin. According to Benedict Anderson, national identity is the 'most volatile' form of identity. Anderson opines that such identities offer an undue advantage to a few powerful countries and create a hegemonic relation with other nations. Anderson specifies various reasons of such hegemonic national identity; 'currency, army and Geo-political relations' could be influential factors in complex but 'volatile' identity formation.

3.3.5. Ethnic Identity:

People also associate themselves with their ethnic identities. Mainly they were somehow marginalised from the mainstream identities. They introduce their ethnic identities to assert their ethnic-ness to the people. Ethnic identity is a sense of belonging to a particular ethnic group, usually based on shared history, culture or lineage. Recognition as a separate ethnic community

by others is frequently a component in the development of this identity. Cultural, behavioral, linguistic, ceremonial, or religious features are commonly used to link ethnic groups.

3.3.6. Cultural Identity:

It consists of one's individual conceptions, which are connected to various cultural identifiers based on different cultures. Some cultural identifiers are gender, race, nationality, language, ethnicity and even food. Various cultural identifiers can be found in one's identity. There could be multiple cultural identities in one individual based on the association of that individual with the number of cultural identifiers. For instance, the phrase Indian Bengali Muslim male has layers of identity markers, and each marker has a different identity in that individual's life.

3.3.7. Gender Identity:

Biologically, human beings are divided into various categories. Such as male, female and transgender. *Gender identity* is a term used in sociology to characterise the gender by which an individual identifies. It can also correspond to the gender that certain individuals attribute to as a person based on their knowledge (social behaviour, clothing, hairstyle). Gender identity can be influenced by several social constructs, such as an individual's ethnic community, financial status, religion and family.

3.3.8. Professional Identity:

This type of identity attaches to the individual based on their profession or work, along with their social identities. Professional identity is well constructed in society such as teacher, doctor, lawyer, police and many more. Professional identity is the affiliation with a profession, as it assumes, via an alignment of roles, duties, values, and moral values. Professional identity is a formulation of business based on traits, values and needs. The professional identity is developed because of various layers of the corporate culture.

3.4. Identity and Partition Narratives:

The partition witnessed the formation of various complex identities on various grounds. The Partition of Bengal problematises the identity formation process. Similarly, the partition of Bengal also brings in several layers of identities such as Indian Bengali Hindu, Indian Bengali Muslim, Pakistani Bengali Muslim, and Pakistani Bengali Hindu. Bengali community is also divided into two categories on linguistic grounds such as Indian Bengali and East- Pakistani Bengali. Debosmita Paul, in her article, “Inventing the New, Re-defining the Old: Bengali Identities in post-1947 Bangla Stories” (2014), has tried to portray various layers of identities constructed in post- partition Bengali society. Paul attempts to show that redefined identities continuously defied religious identities. There are writings on the formation of Bengali identities and Bengali short stories which deal with partition from Bengal, such as Bhasabi Phraser’s “Bengal Partition Stories”, Devjani Sengupta’s “Mapmaking: Partition Stories from Two Bengals” etc. Paul also pointed out the construction of new identities in Bengali society She writes that the *Bangal* identity of pre-partition East Bengali society transformed into *Udvastu* identity. She argues-

The people of the Bengal region continuously redefined their identities which were based on their cultural, linguistic and regional identities. The short stories prove the fact that the *ghoti-bangal* identity of the pre-Partition era was renewed as the *udbastu* identity in the post-partition era in the Indian part of Bengal. Although the Partition and the resultant communal riots formulated new identities on the basis of religion which subdued the presence of other identities in Bengal, the older identities were re-discovered in the years following the Partition (Paul 2014, 26).

Various Bengali partition writers have also presented the *Ghoti* and *Bangal* identity issue among the Bengalis of West Bengal. Sunil Gangopadhyay's *Purba-Pashchim* (2000) has portrayed this *Ghoti* and *Bangal* issue extensively. The large-scale migration also created the refugee or *Sharanarathi* identity among the Bengali community. Similarly, caste identity is also visible in the partition narratives of Bengal, where refugees/people from lower castes have been treated differently than the upper caste people.

The colonial understandings of community identity through religion continued to form policy decisions after 1947, as both states sought to claim their rightful citizens. Nationalism thus advocated was inherently inclusive in its attempts to encompass and project a plural nation irrespective of class, caste, religious, regional, or ethnic affiliations. However, the rules of the game began to change when the government introduced different electorates for each religious group in 1937. The Morley-Minto Reforms, which upheld the rights of separate representation, were successful in politicising religious identities. By the 1930s, the Congress, and its nationalist movement faced opposition from the Muslim League that tried to represent the Muslim community and their rights. It is important to note here that the demand for Pakistan that the Muslim League declared as its goal in 1940 did not indicate the partitioning of India as a method of creating a separate Muslim homeland. Sekhar Bandyopadhyay argues- Hindu organisations started mobilising the Namasudras in Bengal in the more prominent Hindu fold in the 1930s. In Bandyopadhyay's view, subsequent improvements in class and cultural ties have been essential to sustaining the partition of Bengal. However, Taj ul Hashmi shows that the Muslim peasantry in Bengal also organised along communitarian lines. In this context identity was the key reason for people to debate about and understand its changing nature. Identity inevitably becomes who we

are, or indeed the imposing notions set out by society and others that we consciously or unconsciously abide to pursue.

Jyotirmoyee Devi, in her novel *The River Churning*, presented one such horrific event where Muslims of a village attacked the Hindus who were residing peacefully along with them before partition. Those who were friends turned into enemies after the partition. It changed everything; religious identity became stronger than humanity. The leading cause of conflict is identity. The novel focuses on how some people cannot acknowledge that there will always be people that do not share the same values. However, the actual cause of the controversy is that people cannot recognise and understand the differences, instead of embracing the 'other' and recognising that a few conflicting characteristics of identity are normal and that there is no real purpose to establish animosity. Instead, it begins to breed unnecessary hatred among people, because they do not completely understand what it means to be 'different' and instead, it is based on what they believe and what they know.

Devjani Sengupta, in her book *The Partition of Bengal: Fragile Borders and New Identities* (2016), focuses on the intellectual torment Bengal went through during the second partition of Bengal. The trauma associated with the division, as she points out through a careful study of the literature, indeed fiction, written over the years on the partition in both West Bengal and Bangladesh, has remained not only with the generation compelled to leave its ancestral home but also with its descendants whose knowledge of the crisis is clearly of vicarious. The simple truth is that many Hindus, fearful of Muslim wrath, left East Bengal. In contrast, a comparatively smaller number of Muslims made their way to East Bengal/East Pakistan from West Bengal.

Debjani Sengupta's work *Mapping: Partition Stories from Two Bengals* is a collection of Bengali short stories from Bangladesh and India about the 1947 Partition. In the 'Afterword' section of her book, she depicts the process of becoming a refugee class. Sengupta terms the genre as 'colony fiction'. Similarly in her article "Of Boundaries and Border Crossing: Undocumented Bangladeshi Infiltrators and the Hegemony of Hindu Nationalism in India" (2006), Sujata Ramachandran opines –

9 million people crossed the border. Bengali refugees migrated to various parts of India, mainly in West Bengal. Although the period shortly after 1947 saw Hindus and Muslims cross borders in order to settle in the country that the Partition process had recommended for them the successive migration was due to a political turmoil that was spreading its wings in East Pakistan. Following the rise of Bengali nationalism in East Bengal, the West Pakistani army launched a brutal attack on Bengali, particularly the East Pakistani Hindus, in order to suppress the nationalist movement. This resulted the Bengali Hindus to flee to the Indian side (Ramachandran 2006, 238).

The journey of the refugees was perilous. They faced attacks on the way to their new country. Migrants were killed, women were raped and abducted, and families were separated from each other. They even had to face an anti-refugee attitude from the native people of their newly adopted country. There are instances from the selected novels where clashes happened between Bengali refugees and the people who were residing before independence. The *Ghoti-Bangal* dispute was visible in the "context of a refugee-indigenous conflict in West Bengal". The fight for survival in the post-partition society made the conflicts between different factions more hostile. Whereas in the Indian part, the Bengalis recreated an identity that further separated them,

and their counterparts in East Pakistan, they constructed a linguistic based identity surpassing the religious identity. The East Bengali society strongly demanded that their mother tongue should become more prominent in Pakistan's political sphere. The affirmation of Bengali identity significantly disputed the very concept of religious identity.

In the case of India, the direct relationship between 'population exchange' and identity construction has been evident. Its independence and separation created two states and communities, thereby redefining the definitions of 'us' and 'them' in the country. During the India-Pakistan war, the minorities of both countries suffered because of their religious identities. In both countries, suspected minorities were detained and tortured. Dr Roopesh Chaturvedi says in his paper "The Partition of Indian Subcontinent: Crisis of Identity and Uprooted Nationalities Resulting in Double Disaster for Pakistan" (2016) that there is an issue with the 'two-nation theory'. It viewed the people of South Asia as two homogeneous subgroups of Hindus and Muslims. This notion left no space for local culture, racial, and linguistic differences that led to the fascinating diversity of the subcontinent. The fact is the very opposite. A Muslim Bengali had so much in common with a Hindu from Kolkata than with a Gujarati Muslim. The genuine differences are obscured by the over-generalisation on which the two-nation method is based. Bangladesh was created because of this identity crisis in post-partition Pakistan. But, as Haimanti Roy points out in her book *Citizenship and National Identity in Post-Partition Bengal* (2016) that "these conflicting attempts to homogenise national identities in religious terms were contested in the post-partition period, as identities based on region, language and culture competed for primacy" (Roy 2016, 65).

Refugee rehabilitation remains controversial as it applies to the concept of 'refugee' as an undifferent community whose perceptions of displacement and rehabilitation are homogenised.

Further, these examinations assume that the Bengal partition generated a singular and automatic ‘refugee’ identity, which was dissociated from the minority question that engulfed public and political debates on citizenship after 1947. Irrespective of the tensions created by this, there will always be occasions where identities of all kinds bring people closer.

As there are people who turn to erase the ‘otherness’, but still there are people who do the opposite. Instead of hatred and enmity, they support each other. Historically, all religions have been in dispute with each other, but some people value each other. As it can be seen in the case of Sajahan, an Indian Muslim, depicted in the novel *East-West* by Sunil Gangopadhyay, who was not ready to leave India and decided to stay with his Hindu friends like Tridiv and Sulekha. *The River Churning* presents the theme of brotherhood between Tamijuddin Saheb and Gopal Babu. They were very good friends. During communal riots, when Muslims attacked the family of Gopal Babu and killed everyone except Sutara, Tamijuddin Saheb rescued her and gave shelter to her in his home for six months.

3.5. Identity in Select Bengali Partition Narratives:

The Bengali community has created various identities which have separated as well as unified the community. Such identities have been established based on ethnicity, language, religion and country. The 1947 partition, however, rendered the citizens with identities that were communal and overtaken several other identities. The post-independent Bengali society has been a fascinating area of research as one witnesses the redefinition of identities that have been subjugated by partition and the creation of new identities. Various layers of identity became essential factors in post-partition Bengali society. The selected novels depict the issue of identity and the problems that the people of Bengal suffered because of identity construction.

The novel *East-West* is originally written in Bengali by Sunil Gangopadhyay. The Bengali title of this novel is *Purba-Pashchim*. The novel depicts various themes of partition, such as the partition of land, pain of separation, issues people faced during and the aftermath of the partition, and problems that occurred due to the change of identities from individual to national level. The novel depicts various layers of identities and the formation of new identities as a result of partition cum independence of the Indian sub-continent. The novel presents the post-partition Bengali society.

After the partition, people from both communities became identity conscious. Hindus of East Pakistan started leaving their own country because they wanted to protect their religious identity and protect their *Dhan*, *Praan*, and *Maal* (wealth, money and life). It is seen in the novel that when people were leaving East Pakistan for India, Bhabadeb Majumdar, the father of the protagonist Pratap Majumdar started purchasing lands and promised people that if they returned to East Pakistan, they would get their land back at the same price. He soon died of heart attack, and his family finally left for India from East-Pakistan. The partition of India presented the issue of refugees. Sunil Gangopadhyay mentions in the novel that the Punjab side of the partition was violent, and the people migrated to India within a very minimum period. However, the partition of the Bengal side was comparatively less violent. Bengalis migrated to India for a more considerable period of time from East Bengal. This became a nuisance for the then Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, since the chief minister of Bengal demanded more and more help to settle the refugees coming to India in different periods. The novel also presents Harit Mandal who is a refugee leader and expert in grabbing lands. He used to visit areas and select the areas to settle the refugees in those land. Suddenly, he would appear with the selected land to

occupy. Sometimes they had to face resistance from the native people of West Bengal (Gangopadhyay 1974, 23-24).

Such an incident happened with Pratap's relative, Asitbaran. Asitbaran is the husband of Pratap's sister Supriti. Supriti was a Bangal while her husband was a *Ghoti*. He was killed in a clash between refugees and *Ghoti* Bengalis. Although Pratap also is a refugee, they had nothing to do with the clash with other refugees. However, Asitbaran's brother Jaladbaran behaves in such a manner as if he is a part of the refugees; he is also responsible for Asitbaran's death. The *Ghoti* and Bangal identity are also discussed in this novel. The people who are residents of West Bengal are known as *Ghoti*, and those who migrated from East Bengal or East Pakistan are known as Bangal. The novel presents a few incidents where the Bangals, after migrating from East Bengal, entered the lands of the *Ghoti* people and forcefully occupied those places. There are several instances of *Ghoti-Bangal* clashes because of this forceful grabbing of lands by the *Bangals*. As the day passed, the *Ghoti* and Bangal identities became more vigorous.

Whenever some communal incidents happen, refugees started to migrate from East Bengal. Lacs of refugees entered Bengal during various stages in the post-partition period. The conversation between Biswanath and Pratap shows how big the problem of refugees is going to be for the native people of West Bengal.

Lacs of refugees, can West Bengal alone manage all this? They will spread over Bihar, Orissa and Assam and there would be some problems regarding that. Problem! Problem! The problem will continue. Muslims have tried to drive out Hindus from East Bengal but after all, these, are they happy? It seems that East Bengal has become the colony of West Pakistan?" (Gangopadhyay 1975, 49).

During the partition, literary personalities were also divided based on their religious identity. Pratap's friend Mamun, who represented the East Bengali side of partition after the independence, wrote a poem, following the line of famous Bengali poet Kazi Nazrul Islam. However, he was mocked by his classmates in college because of that poem. One of his classmates commented - "Yes. I know who has written this, a Mullah. Huh! Is he also a poet? Nowadays, Kazi Nazrul Islam is destroying all the Muslim boys. They all want to become a poet" (Gangopadhyay 1974, 26). The sense of Hindu-Muslim identity was much deeper in Bengali society. When Pratap went to visit Mamun's home, his father greeted him with a warm welcome but told Pratap that he wouldn't be allowed to stay in the house since Pratap is from Hindu community. He felt insulted by the behaviour of Mamun's father. However, Mamun and Pratap later came to know that Mamun's grandfather was insulted by a Hindu Brahmin. He went to a Brahmin's house, but the Brahmin shouted at him. That is why his grandfather had forbidden any Hindus' entry in his house. Knowing this incident, Pratap asked Mamun that he should not be punished for the bad behaviour of any Brahmin. He says- "During Nabab rule, many Brahmins and Kayasthas were forced to eat cow meat. Should we also remember all those things? Should someone else get punishment for another person's crime?" (Gangopadhyay 1974, 31-32).

There is a perception among Bengali Hindus that Muslims are not Bengali. Although Muslims also speak the Bengali language exactly like them. Their mother tongue is only Bengali. Mamun had to face this question several times. Once, he goes to his friend, Binayendra Sanyal's house. His father is a congress leader. His mother could not recognise Mamun as a Muslim. However, when Mamun offers them a packet of sweet on Sab-e-Barat, Binayendra's mother asks with wonder in her eyes - "Oh My God! You are Muslim? I thought you are Bengali" (Gangopadhyay

1974, 69). This expression represents the typical Bengali Hindu mindset where they see Muslims not as Bengalis but as only Muslims. Being Bengali shows one's cultural identity, but they completely ignore this aspect and see Bengali Muslims as only Muslims.

In the novel the 1937 election by the British government gives hope to the Muslims. Their religious identity gets more resonant with this election. After the election of 1937, the Muslim League forms the government with the help of the Krishak Praja Party and Europeans. Abul Kasem Fazlul Haque becomes the first prime minister of Bengal province. Mamun's friend Mannan shouts with joy, saying- "Now our day has come? Are Muslims not Bengali? Now see who is real Bengali? See who is governing Bengal province?" (Gangopadhyay 1974, 71-72).

When the Pakistan movement started, Bengali Muslims were at the forefront. Even after the formation of Pakistan, Bengali Muslims were in majority in the newly formed country. Logically, Bengali should have been the national language of Pakistan. However, without any discussion, Karachi became the capital, and since most of the leaders were from Urdu speaking, they decided to make it an official language. In 1948, Jinnah reiterated this decision in a conference in Dhaka where Bengali Muslims protested. Later, on 21st February of 1952, Bengali Muslims protested against the forced imposition of the Urdu language. As a result of that resistant movements, many Bengalis became martyrs. In this context Mamun asks himself – "is it the same Pakistan they dreamt of?"

Due to the overload of refugees, the West Bengal government decides to send refugees to the Dandakaranya forest. Harit Mondal, being a refugee leader, protests against the decision. He exclaims, "the government is sending us to the Dandakaranya forest, is it right?" He asks

Sahajahan, a Bengali Indian Muslim, “you people demanded Pakistan and you would stay in Kolkata, and we will go to Dandakaranya in Orissa? Why?”

In the novel the Bengali linguistic identity gets challenge from its counterpart, whether it is Hindi or Urdu. The Pakistani government forces the Urdu language on the Bengalis of East Pakistan. However, the strong protest and sacrifices of human lives forces the Pakistani government to accept Urdu and Bengali languages as the official languages. In India, a proposal gets initiated to dissolve West Bengal by including it in the state of Bihar. Jawaharlal Nehru supports this proposal, and Govind Ballabh Pant is a strong supporter of this. Chief ministers of Bengal and Bihar, Dr Bidhan Chandra Roy and Srikrishna Singh accept this proposal. However, Bengali community considers this as a conspiracy against their Bengali identity. They start protesting against this decision.

In the course of the novel, the Communist Movement starts in various refugee camps. With the slogans of injustice, oppression and due political rights, the communists establish their stronghold in various refugee camps across the state. The Communist Party starts protesting about various issues related to the refugees in Kolkata. They establish a study circle in Kolkata, where they discuss the class struggle and communist ideology. The revolutionary leader Charu Majumdar and his comrades start the communist movement in Siliguri and village areas of West Bengal. During the Indo-Pak war of 1962, thousands of Communist activists get arrested by the government.

Sunil Gangopadhyay presents the incidents of Naxalbari incidents. The Communist Party gets its momentum within the sphere of working class and lower-class people. After 30 years of Congress rule, the left alliance comes to power. The armed tribal farmers occupy a village under

Naxalbari police station. The owner leaves the village because they were not prepared for such developments. The farmers hoist red flags across the occupied land and declare that the land belongs to Kishan Sabha. They further occupy lands in three nearby areas which follows by deadly clashes with police. “On 25th May, there was a clash between police and organised armed farmers. Police was not ready; several policemen were injured. One inspector died a few days later” (Gangopadhyay 1974, 585).

Black Ice by Mahmudul Hassan is originally published in the Bengali language. It was later translated into English by Mahmud Rahman. The original Bengali version of this novel is titled *Kalo Borof*. The novel *Black Ice* begins on the Indian side of Bengal. At the beginning of the novel *Black Ice*, it is noticed that the writer remembers his childhood days back in Kolkata, then united Bengal’s western part. From there, they migrate to East Pakistan, presently Bangladesh. The writer narrates the story of their childhood days. The writer at the beginning of this novel describes a village in West Bengal where different communities lived together in peace and harmony. Hindus and Muslims were residing in that village. Children from one community would meet and play with the children of another community. There was no communal hatred among various communities. As it is mentioned in the novel-

As the days passed, the roads loomed larger in my awareness, feathers of various colours floated in the sunlight, and fresh air and I become friends with many houses and the name of the people who lived in them. I came to know the Dutta house, the Mitter house, the Ghosh house, the Bose house, Gode Burir House, Korimon Bibi’s house (Haque 2012, 20).

The novel shows that the Muslims of Bengal used to participate in Hindu festivals. Muslim boys believed in Hindu religious traditions and followed their Hindu friends. The narrator says his father would purchase a variety of saplings or crafts every year from Rath Mela and would distribute those to them. It also shows that the religious communities used to celebrate festivals. The narrator once heard from his distant uncle that every living creation of Allah is equal, irrespective of their caste and religion. “He said, ‘M for Muslim, M for Murdafarosh (the one who handles the dead), M for Muchi (Cobbler)- everyone is equal” (Haque 2012, 29).

The village consists of two sections or paras- Choudhuripara and Dokkhinpara. The narrator and his many Muslim and non-Muslim friends are from Choudhuripara. However, the people of Dokkhinpara used to maintain distance from the people of Choudhuripara. Although there was no enmity, the people of Dokkhinpara had a sense of untouchability. They were afraid of being impure by touching people from other communities. As it can be seen in the novel- “The people of Dokkhinpara were afraid of being polluted by contact with others; they always walked around keeping their body aloof. They called us *Mochonman* (Distorted version of Mussalmaan) (ibid. pp-30).

There are examples of Hindu-Muslim tension in the village, but that never leads to any violence. Once Moni Bhaijan, the elder brother of the narrator, engages in a brawl where he yells at a Hindu boy named Panu. He makes Panu panic by threatening to cut his penis and make him Muslim. Moni also tells him to shout ‘Allah’. Panu says with fear- “Bhagwan will get angry. I can’t do it, Moni Da, I just can’t do it” (ibid. pp-45). This leads to a huge controversy. However, because of Kenaram uncle the controversy calms since he pleads with folded hand on behalf of Moni. When the partition times gradually neares, the Hindu-Muslim communal harmony starts decaying from its root. The Pakistan movement starts getting momentum in the country. Hindu-

Muslim division is easily seen in society. Tension between Hindus Muslims starts to rise in the locality. The communal shift takes place. The brotherhood of boys in the village gets split up because of some issues arising from the Hindu Muslim division. There are incidents of clashes that take place in Kazipara. Hindu-Muslim politics starts growing in the village areas of Bengal. In Kazipara, a nearby Muslim populated village, Muslims start meeting regularly and getting united. The narrator has no idea about what Pakistan is all about. However, he has to face the questions about Muslims of Kazipara and Pakistan from his Hindu neighbours. As it can be seen-

I landed one day in front of Haripada Ghoshal. Prodding me with the end of his walking stick, he asked, ‘What’s this I hear, boy? Kazipara ‘Muchalmans’ are regularly meeting at your house? Does your father want Pakistan? I had no idea what Pakistan meant. I understood nothing about matters like that” (ibid. 77).

Bengali communal Hindus, as it is found in the novel, use a derogatory term for Muslims, that is *lereys* or *nerey*. Bankimchandra Chatterjee’s novel *Anandamath* also mentions this term. Muslims from Kazipara, Moyna and further gather for Eid prayer in a Mosque at the Champadali intersection. The year the narrator and his family go to the mosque for prayer, suddenly a rock is tossed at them. Someone shouts from behind, “Look, look. See how the tail on their head *lereys* are walking over to bang their foreheads” (ibid-77). The novel is a realistic portrays of partition. The protagonist is always surrounded with uncertainty which represents the times and mood of the time.

A Life Long Ago, written by Sunanda Sikdar and Translated by Anchita Ghatak, won Ananda Puraskar in 2010. This memoir by Sunanda Sikdar depicts her experience that she gained through partition period. *A Life Long Ago* brings alive the childhood of a Kayastha Hindu girl in

rural East Pakistan in the 1950s. It also raises important questions about class, caste, community, religion and gender that continue to trouble us in contemporary times. Dayamoyee or Sunanda Sikdar, the writer of this memoir, comes to live in West Bengal, India, in 1961. This is her first book and was initially published in the magazine *Antahsar*. She lives in Bally, near Kolkata, with her husband and two daughters.

A Life Long Ago presents a little girl, Dayamoyee, who lives in East Pakistan in the 1950s with her widowed aunt. Dayamoyee's parents live in India because they are both teachers in West Bengal. Dayamoyee lives in East Pakistan in a village called Dighpait, till she is ten. As a child, she watches the transformation of her village, Dighpait, as many people start to leave Pakistan for Hindustan or India. She sees her aunt prepare for the inevitable move. And as she struggles to make sense of the turmoil around her, life, inevitably, goes on.

On the surface, Dayamoyee's life is secure as she grows up protected by the comforting love of her aunt, who is, for all purposes, her mother, and their family helper Majam, a Muslim, she calls him as Dada (older brother). She is devastated when she has to leave the place that has been her home and on her way to Hindustan from Pakistan. Dayamoyee resolves that she will never again talk about the country she has left behind in East Bengal. Therefore, Dayamoyee suppresses her first ten years' memory. It is her Dada, Majam's death in the early nineties that opens up the floodgates of memory.

This memoir chronicles through family memories, the changes affecting post-colonial South Asia. Both Pakistan and Hindustan may be newly independent democracies, but life in the village of Dighpait is still feudal. Very few dare to challenge the might of the powerful landed zamindars, and life goes on, governed by rules of obeisance to established orders. Muslims and

Hindus are neighbours and held together by strong bonds of affection. However, some lines may not be crossed. They may gift each other grains, milk or fish, but Muslims and Hindus will not eat together or even eat food cooked in each other's houses. The book talks about an incident where her favourite Majam Dada from Bangladesh visits the narrator. However, her neighbours raise suspicion about his visit. Because he is a Muslim man from Bangladesh and still loves 'his little' Dayamoyee even after the partition of the country. They smell a hidden agenda behind the old man's visit. Her relatives also are sure about a conspiracy about Majam Dada who has come to India to see her only after selling his precious cow. "A few of my relatives were sure that there was something suspicious about this destitute, hungry man who had, it was rumoured, sold his precious cow to cross the border into India and visit me" (Sikdar 2012, 2).

In her childhood days, her foster mother used to warn Dayamoyee about the old man, Majam Dada. She discourages little Dayamoyee from meeting with him. He does not belong to their blood relation, so there is no point in getting closer to him. However, she never listens to the warnings, and as he is the person she depended on the most throughout her childhood. After partition, the narrator starts living in a town of West Bengal. But she never forgets the way of living she got from East Bengal, where they used to reside before partition. She seems fascinated by Dada's religion. Although she does not become a Muslim. She could not "become either Muslim or Hindu or Christian". Majam Dadamoyee used to pray for Allah's mercy on all human being, animals and plants. Dayamoyee would often ask him – "what about Hindus? Those who worship Durga, Lakshmi and Kali?" He used to answer her that Allah does not quarrel with either Durga or Lakshmi. In paradise, all of them are friends. There is no occasion for quarrels and killings. People only do such things." Majam Dada would never differentiate between

Hindus and Muslims. For him, every human being is worthy of being treated equally with love and care.

Like every partition novel, this novel also presents Dighpait village, which is in peaceful situation. But gradually, the situation starts to change, and the familiar world changes very fast. The narrator could “sense a great disquiet all around”. Hindu people from Dighpait village start leaving east Bengal for the newly Independent India. Although they are leaving Muslim Pakistan, they have a good relationship with the Bengali speaking Muslim community. That is the reason, when Hindu people are bidding farewell to their motherland Bengali Muslims would come to meet them. Although there is no such communal sentiment between Bengali Hindus and Bengali Muslims. Hindus and Muslims used to stay together, but there is a line that separates the two communities within a religious boundary. If any Muslim guest visits a Hindu family, they offer food to the guest in plates and glasses that could be easily thrown after they are used. “Sadi Kaka would come from Haridrata, Yadali Kaka from Sontia, to bid farewell to those who were leaving” (Sikdar 2012, 11-12).

The refugee identity is also discussed in this novel. There are several characters shown in the novel, migrated from Cooch Bihar, India. The narrator understands that they are *ripuchi* or refugees. Dighpait village witnesses the migration of Muslims from Cooch Bihar area of West Bengal. Some people migrate with the refugee exchange program. Some people just migrate to the village and capture areas for their living. In the novel Dayamoyee’s foster mother differentiates between the Bengali Muslims from East Bengal and the Muslims, coming from India or refugees. She says that the Hindus own the lands, fields and money. She says- “Five Muslims together could not afford to buy the lands or properties owned by one Hindu. Don’t you

see these *ripuchi*? Can they afford to buy a gaamchha during Eid?” (ibid. pp-15). She gets angry when Dayamoyee compares the ‘sons-of-the-soil’ Muslims with the outsider refugee Muslims.

There are several examples in the novel that show the theme of untouchability. Dayamoyee becomes friends with Shamsher Chacha’s daughter Achia. They used to play together. Sometimes Dayamoyee would go to Achia’s house, and sometimes Achia would come to Daya’s House. However, she maintains distance very carefully since Achia is a Muslim and she should not touch any Muslim because her foster mother would never tolerate that. “If I played in our house, I would have to be careful not to touch her because she was Muslim, and my mother would not approve” (Sikdar 2012, 18). There are other examples where the theme of untouchability is found in the novel. Dayamoyee, the narrator, presents a discussion of Chhaincha Chacha and his family. They migrate from Coochbihar of West Bengal to Dighpait of East Pakistan. They are good people, and Dayamoyee has a good relationship with Chhaincha Chacha and his family members. The women of this family, whom Dayamoyee used to call Chachi, would bring her freshly prepared muri. However, her mother warns her that she should not drink water in their house. She would say, “Daya, don’t drink water in their house. It’s a sin to drink water touched by Muslims. Eating dry stuff is fine” (ibid, 55).

During Parul Di’s wedding, Daya narrates one incident where discrimination is shown based on religion and caste. On the day of the feast, relatives of the brides and groom, the Brahmin and Kayasthas of the village, sit in the inner courtyard. The middle courtyard has people from other castes like Kaivartas, weavers, washerman, and barbers. The Muslims were all placed in the outer courtyard. Good quality food is served in the inner courtyard as it has the groom’s family, zamindars and the upper caste people. They are served with fish, meat, yoghurt and payesh. In the middle courtyard, they get yoghurt but not payesh. The outer courtyard neither gets yoghurt

nor payesh, but they are given fish and meat. This angers the people from Muslim community. Feeling insulted, the Maulavi Saheb leaves the meal, saying “We have not come here to beg”. This episode defines the structural discrimination amongst various communities.

The narrator presents some character in the novel who acknowledge themselves that they do not have any religion or caste. Their only concern is to save lives. When Radhia Di and Jhumia Di steal some rice from Dayamoyee’s family. She tells them that she can fool her mother, but she cannot fool God. They reply-

Daya, grandfather’s father left his home in Darbhanga district in search of work. Since then, we are without caste or religion. The only caste or religion. The only faith we subscribe to is that of saving of lives. If we don’t survive, what will we do with either religion or caste (Sikdar 2012, 22).

They are not sure about their religious identity or caste identity. They say that they are Hindus, but do not know which religion or caste they belong to. Her father-in-law survived the famine because he fed on rice, ‘gruel in a Muslim home’.

The characters face the issue of national identity in post-partition Bangladesh (East Pakistan). Muslims of newly formed East Pakistan wants to visit Ajmer Sharif, and Many Hindus who decide to stay in East Pakistan are keen to visit Kalighat, Dakkhineswar, Varanasi, Mathura and Vrindaban for religious purposes. If this trend is to become successful, the heads of the two countries need to be friends. That is why Dayamoyee’s foster mother would be interested in the contours of the relationship between Jawaharlal Nehru and Ayub Khan. Otherwise, passports and visas will stand in their way. National identity and religious identity shape the education policy of East Pakistan. Children are given a few poems of Kazi Nazrul Islam, Bande Ali Mia and

Jasimuddin. As Daya points out that she has never heard any poems written by Rabindranath Tagore. If someone recites Rabindranath's poem, then he/she would get additional compliments, especially if it happens during the rare visit of a school inspector. However, Yadali Kaka once tells her that Rabindranath Tagore is a famous poet in India. "I had no idea who Rabindranath was, and hadn't read any of his poems when I lived in the village. Yadali Kaka told me, much later, that there was this famous poet in Hindustan, who was counted amongst the greatest poets of the world" (Sikdar 2012, 40). The memoir is a nostalgic gaze at a glorious but full of communal hatred and its past.

The book *Train to India: Memories of Another Bengal* is a memoir written by Maloy Krishna Dhar. Unlike other novels selected for the research, this book is originally written in English. The book discusses the direct effect of partition. The writer depicts the freedom struggle of India, Bengali revolutionary groups, working for INA, Netaji, Hindu-Muslim relations, and etc. Maloy Krishna captures the focus of the novel in the following statement, "...the composite and culturally sublimated society develop cracks; the small joys of life turn into huge liabilities". The novel shows cultural as well as religious divide. The novel also shows how the common folk deities like Olai Chandi (the deity of cholera), Bon Bibi (of forests), Sheetala (of smallpox), Manasa (of serpents) and Peer Dargah (a holy shrine of a Sufi saint) are suddenly divided into communal lines. Hindus are not encouraged to visit the Dargah, and the Muslim women are strictly prohibited from taking part in the worship of folk deities derived from Hindu and animalistic pantheons.

The devotional songs of Hindus and Muslims are common in the novel. The narrator's father and his companions sing the same *bhatiali*, *bhawaia*, *mahishali* and boat songs. They are equally adept in *murshedi* songs and *qawwali*. Hindu pat (scroll) paintings depict the exploits of Hindu

deities, and Ghazi pats describe the exploits of Muslim heroes. These are their shared cultural heritage. Suddenly Hindu and Ghazi pats start splitting and decrying Hindu and Muslim religious practices and persons. The devotional songs symbolize harmony and secularism in the first half of the novel. But as the narrative progresses we see cultural, religious, social and political divides amongst the Hindu and Muslim community. People start falling apart. Hatred replace love, and scowl replace smile, social exchanges cease and gradually, violence is imported and imposed by politically inspired separatists.

As the spate of violence spreads, the people of Bengal bleed physically and emotionally. The violence turns virulent after the Direct Action of 1946. The narrator takes the first journey to the princely state of Tripura, temporarily avoiding the violence that gradually infected areas of East Bengal. The lure and love for the soil prompts them to return soon. Some of them do not lose hope and pursued the dream of unity. However, their dreams are sold in the markets of political expediency and communal segmentation. Uprooting is an irredeemable disaster compounding by the bloodshed around them. Dhar confesses, “The ambience of hatred and violence brought me three gifts: I came closer to my father and understood the person he was and the values he stood for; I did not swap love for hate for my Muslim friends” (Dhar 2009, XII).

The narrator is baptised in blood while making the first aborted effort to escape his village, and the knife and blood syndrome haunt him even after landing in an uncertain India, a supposed homeland. It takes time to develop a bond with the new home, and new peoples. He abandons the blood-knife complex only at that critical moment in the narrative, when he loses his father. His death propels the narrator to undertake a new journey and rediscover that his tryst with blood, hatred and revenge was not tailored for him. There is “a poet, a troubadour and a loving creature in him”, inherited from his father. The imposed train journey to India gives rise to profound

hatred. Hatred, aggression, rage, and mistrust numb his mind for a while. It takes him more than half a century to realise that they are all hostages of history, forced on them by the colonial powers and by the political desire of leaders who thought that religion alone was a factor in establishing nationality and national identity in different segments of the population. As he recovers from the profoundly entrenched bias and hate, he realises that he has been chasing the life, friends, and almost everything that he is forced to leave. There is no scope for hatred, there is no room for political and geographical division, and no weapon that could divide minds. He says:

The journey of hatred had finally become a journey of love and faith in humanity. That is the real story of my journey aboard the *Train to India*. It has taken me over fifty years to understand that with my train journey to India, a light has not been extinguished. The theatre changed, the lights and props changed-instead of the Meghna and Brahmaputra, I had reached the banks of the Ganga and Yamuna (Dhar 2009, 305).

Train to India is a part of that journey, which takes us “back and towards the light and the people” who are forced to redraw the geography of the country. The story unfolds from light to darkness and the rediscovery of the unbroken chain of light and life. The narrator says –

We, the supposed original inhabitants of India, had not received any promises. We, the Hindus and Muslims, fought a common enemy, the slave masters who ruled us, with the assurance that we would have a Common Land, Our Own Land-Hindustan. It was not to be. We were being told that religion was the universal constant that determined the history and geography of a people (Dhar 2009, 302).

Regarding the recording of the partition history, the narrator is not satisfied. According to him, the story of the Great Human Exodus has not been recorded faithfully. Hindus and Muslims have come up with their respective histories based on their perspective. Historians, who evaluate and present history from their perspective, often rationalise human tragedy with their own interpretations. Dhar says, “We were offered Congress, communist, Hindu, Muslim, swadeshi and several other versions of history. They dared not chronicle the pains of the Great Exodus because they were busily cushioning their chairs” (Dhar 2009, 283).

Throughout the book, there are several mentions of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and the Indian National Army. The narrator and other Bengali youths are impressed with the struggle of Netaji. Newspapers and radio brought in horrific stories of political sword fencing between major political parties, the reappearance of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose in the eastern war theatre and the formation of the Indian National Army (INA), Japanese advances and communal divide. The Bengali tradition of armed resistance against the British is rekindled with the news of Netaji’s Indian National Army gaining a foothold in Indian territory. Dhar writes, “Subhas Bose was the first people’s general mandated by the freedom fighters of India to fight a historical war against the British occupation forces. Some of our clan member supported his call: “give me blood, I will give you freedom” (Dhar 2009, 07).

The next novel for the study is, *The River Churning* written by Jyotirmoyee Devi. It was translated into English from the original Bengali novel *Epar Ganga Opar Ganga*. The novel presents the direct stories of partition. It presents a situation of Bengal which depicts the religious, social, and political conflicts based on different identities. The novel begins with a Hindu- Muslim riot in east Bengal. The protagonist Sutara Dutta loses her family, and her father is killed by Muslim mobs in their village. Before the riot, there was Hindu-Muslim communal

harmony. People from different communities assimilated with each other. Children from different religious communities used to play together. Even Sutara had many Muslim friends in the village like Fatima, Sofia, Hasina, and Meher Roushan along with Hindu friends Usha, Beena, Alaka, and Durga. The Hindu-Muslim identity barrier could not be successful in dividing the friendship between Sutara's father and Tamijuddin Biswas, a schoolteacher in West Bengal. When the Muslim mob attacks Hindu Muhalla and kills many Hindus, including Sutara's father, Tamijuddin Biswas, gives shelter to Sutara, risking their own life. She stays for six months in the house of her Muslim chacha, Tamijuddin Saheb. Tamijuddin and Rahamatullah Saheb rescue some Hindu women and give them shelter in their own house. However, the Muslims of that village object to their helping attitude. They say-

We know, you gave shelter to Hindu girls and women in your house. Why did you keep them? Oh! You are helping them? Some other people said- "Let's burn their houses also. You will get a lesson, indeed." The Mullah of that village just warned Rahamatullah Saheb since he is a good zamindar (Devi 1991, 105).

Jyotirmiyee Devi presents the character of Tamijuddin and Rahmatullah, who behave above their religious identity and try to help people from another community; to them, humanity is above all. There are two categories of people from the same identity. One group, engaged in killing, raping, and looting while another is trying to help people by keeping their religious identity aside. There are two separate lines created in Bengali society based on their religious identity. There is rioting everywhere; people are afraid of each other. Hindus are afraid to visit Muslim muhallas, and Muslims are afraid to visit Hindu muhallas.

In the novel, Tamijuddin Saheb tries many a times to inform Sutara's brothers who stay in Kolkata that they should come to Noakhali and take Sutara with them. He writes letters but does not receive any response. Finally, a letter arrives, where Sutara's brothers give excuses that the situation is still not normal. Once it gets back to normal, they promise to come and take back Sutara with them to India. Meanwhile, Police and Hindu Mahasabha start rescuing Hindu girls and women scattered during the riot. Mahatma Gandhi visits Noakhali to appeal to the people to maintain peace and harmony. Since Sutara takes shelter in Tamijuddin's house, her family member start thinking that she was physically abused and therefore "polluted". On such grounds they try to abandon her from the family. When Tamijuddin himself takes Sutara to Kolkata to her relatives, they are shocked. Her brother used to stay in his in-law's house who are not ready to keep her in their house. Although they agree to keep her, but she is forbidden to enter the kitchen, and touch things that are used for family purposes. Sutara's sister-in-law hugs her, but she is scolded by her mother for – "touching a girl who has just arrived from a Muslim house".

Sutara feels herself alienated from the family. She does not understand where to sit, or with whom to speak. Almost daily, she is humiliated by the lady owner of the house. They have daughters the same age as Sutara, but she can never comfortably speak with them. If other family members try to speak with Sutara to spend time with her, the lady owner would say-

Have you people lost your mind? She was in Muslim's house for six months. Do you think her caste is still intact? You people have brought her home, that's good. But should not she, maintain the distance and stay herself at the corner of the house? Nothing is left! Nobody has known what she has eaten, what she has done! (Devi 1991, 120).

Since Sutara stays six months in a Muslim family, others start labeling her 'polluted'. The 'polluted girl' becomes her new identity. The family members worry that nobody would marry her because of her 'polluted-ness'. Even if she stays in their house, nobody will marry their daughters. Once, a relative comes to their house and raises questions about why they have accepted Sutara in their house. She replies that "if any Hindu girl stays for a single day in a Muslim house, then their relatives are not accepted in the society, but Sutara has stayed for six months, have taken food with them" (Devi 1991, 126). In the novel, there happens to be a marriage event, where Sutara goes to eat but she was given food in a different plate and place just to make sure that she does not touch anybody. Very soon, in the novel, due to her character assassination she is sent to a boarding school. Gradually she passes her B.A. and M.A. while staying in hostel. She gets a job of a lecturer in Yaggoseni College, Delhi. Sutara encounters lacs of Punjabi refugees in Delhi. She is interested to know their stories of partition. She wants to listen to their journey of leaving everything behind, their belongings and their motherland. She wonders whether they also suffered like her while leaving the country. Devi writes, "They have been displaced, deprived of their motherland. Do they have to go through the painful separation of loved ones? Have they come in this country leaving behind their abducted, oppressed women?" (Devi 1991, 144-145).

The above corpus of partition narratives is a sketching depiction of the ugly side of the tragic events. On the one hand a few nations were created, on the other, hundreds and thousands of lives were displaced, murdered, lost identities and found themselves in a debilitating land.

Chapter- IV

Memory and Bengali Partition Narratives

Memory and Partition Narratives of India

Punjab province was affected severely because of partition; the violence and trauma faced by the people of Punjab is the central theme of mainstream partition novelists. The novels from North India depict the memory of partition's direct effects like violence, trauma, rape, abduction, forceful conversion, and mass migration, to name a few. Some novels directly deal with the partition violence, like Khushwant Singh's novel *The Train to Pakistan* (1956), Bapsi Sidwa's *Cracking India* or *Ice Candy Man* (1998) and a few others. The partition of Bengal was less violent in comparison to the Punjab province. Subsequently, memories of Bengali victims differ from the north Indian partition victims. The Bengali partition narratives mainly deal with the memory of fear of 'being attacked at any point of time', the reason for leaving East Pakistan thinking they will never get religious freedom in an 'Islamic Country'. The characters in such narratives are often seen remembering their homeland (*Desh Bari*) in the novels.

4.1. What is Memory?

Memory is the skill to encode, record, maintain and continuously retrieve data and personal experience. Memory deals with what people remember and can learn from past knowledge stored in the human brain. It is the ability to remember previous events and retrieve previous knowledge. Memory is a kind of data hub that has been learned and preserved through interaction or understanding.

4.2. Types of Memory

Human memories can be classified in various types. They are discussed briefly below:

4.2.1. Sensory Memory:

Fast-moving signals at the night are the most frequent sensory memory markers: whether one has ever lit a firework or noticed a traffic light, the light leaves traces as well. This type of memory does not participate in brain functions; the memory also does not regulate consciously.

4.2.2. Short-Term Memory:

This is also known as functional memory. It only retains a few objects and remains for nearly twenty seconds. The information can be transferred to permanent memories via rehearsal procedures. For instance, when someone orally tells a person a phone number, they utter it repeatedly so that they can write it down or store it in memory. If someone stops their rehearsal, they easily forget the number because it is only stored in this human memory.

4.2.3. Long-Term Memory:

This type of memory includes every information that the human being stores from the early childhood. This type of memory has large storage in the human mind, and it holds to store data for a longer period. The Long-term memory is present in wide varieties. Explicit memories require deliberate recall; it includes the information that is deliberately stored or remembered. Explicit memories could be divided into semantic and episodic memory. Semantic memory refers to the memories recalled out of context, while episodic memory refers to personal memories. There is another type of long-term memory which is implicit memory. These memories are based on information being unconsciously processed and recalled but on unconscious learning. This memory is also used to develop new cognitive abilities. For example,

if someone learns to drive a car or drive a bike, they do not have to recall how to ride a bike consciously. They remember the process automatically.

4.2.4. Episodic Memory:

This type of memory is used for contextualised information. Generally, these are experiences of events or incidents in human life. It includes the feelings and emotions involved with the event. Moreover, this type of memory provides information about how, when, why, and what has happened in a particular event. When someone recalls any incidents of the past, he or she also remembers the background information along with that incident.

4.3. The Process of Forgetting:

Memories may be encoded incorrectly or fade over time; the preservation and retrieval method is not seamless. Remembering an incident at a later stage in time requires both biological and psychological processes. The way a person interiorises memories is by perceptions, descriptions, and feelings. This may cause a difference between memory and event; it can also encrypt experiences inaccurately or not at all.

According to Trace Decay, “the theory of forgetting states that all memories fade automatically as a function of time; under this theory, one needs to follow a specific path, or trace, to recall a memory”. This theory suggests that memory erases from individual’s mind gradually, until people rehearse it. If someone delays recalling the incidents, there is a possibility of forgetting information associated with any event.

4.4. Memory and Holocaust study:

Genocide against the Jew community during World War II by Germans is known as the Holocaust. The Jew community started writing about their past experiences about the Holocaust and thus, the holocaust study has come into existence.

In an article “The witness in the archive: Holocaust Studies/ Memory Studies” (2009), Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer write.

Focusing on witness testimony, we argue that the theoretical and philosophical efforts to grasp and define its contours have provoked a radical rethinking of the workings of memory and transmission. However, we caution against a hyperbolic emphasis on trauma and the breakdown of speech. We find that the very aporias that have made the Holocaust a touchstone for the twentieth-century study (Hirsch & Spitzer. 2009, 2).

Ernst Van Alphen writes in his article “Caught by Images: on the role of Visual Imprints in Holocaust Testimonials” (2002) that -

The Holocaust has disrupted the conventional notions of seeing, of the visual domain in Western culture. Being an eye-witness of something implies almost automatic apprehension and comprehension of the observed situation or event. However, this link between seeing and comprehension has been radically disrupted in the experiences of Holocaust victims. Because of this interruption, the depiction of visual imprints has a central role in the testimonies of Holocaust survivors (Alphen 2002, 4).

Anna Bernard indicates some international events behind the study of partition memory of the Indian sub-continent. In the article “Forms of Memory: Partition as a Literary Paradigm” (2010) Anna Bernard writes that the unification of East and West Germany and the split up of Yugoslavia have motivated scholars to re-look at the events of partition. Similarly, some communal incidents which occurred in the 1980s and 1990s have inspired Indian partition scholars to revisit the partition of Indian sub-continent, focusing on the issue of memory and experience of individuals and communities. Bernard opines:

There are evidently pressing historical reasons for a turn to partition studies in the last twenty-five years: several scholars cite the reunification of Germany and the break-up of the former Yugoslavia as motivation and in Indian partition scholarship the ‘intercommunal’ violence in Indian cities in the 1980s and 1990s is often described as having triggered collective memories of Partition violence, which in turn compelled historians to break the long official and academic silence surrounding the atrocities (Bernard 2010, 13).

4.5. Partition of India and Memory:

The memorisation of history often leads to the historicisation of memory. The former is bland reality without imagination; the latter process mixes up memory with remote history, mythological tidbits, prejudices, love, and anger. Richard Kearney, in his “Remembering the past: the question of narrative memory” (1998), writes –

If fiction is free to recreate the past as it might have been, history must recount the past as it was. In that sense partition is an enduring fact, living in the present as much

as in the past. Partition gave rise to new social arrangements, a new consciousness, and new subjectivities (Kearney 2001:50).

Urvashi Butalia, in her *Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* (1998) depicts the reasons behind the silence of refugee women regarding their experience of partition violence. The abducted women, writes Butalia, whose ‘honour’ has been violated by the people of other communities, were forced to ‘forget’ the memories of partition because they were afraid of society. The people and society might disown women who were raped or ‘polluted’ during the journey of their migration to the new country. Butalia writes-

Dominant accounts of the subcontinent’s partition in both Pakistan and India largely eliminated reference to tens of thousands of abducted women: those who never returned to kinsmen, as well as those who did. Moreover, these narratives reinforce a community’s need to protect survivors, and particularly women who were abducted and eventually returned to husbands who accepted them back. Remembering and recounting are too dangerous for these women, or for their families, whose ‘honour’ had been violated by repeated incidents of rape (Butalia 1998, 40).

The novelists of the partition like Khushwant Singh, Bhisham Sahni and Bapsi Sidwa seem to be objective in treating history, which exhibits historical awareness. Hard facts are not distorted at the expense of history. However, there are particular examples where Gandhiji appears on the canvas of the novels, like in *Azadi* and *Ice Candy Man*, which do not have any historical authenticity. Perhaps the novelists interpolate them in the historic account intending to make the plot enjoyable and contextual. Anup Beniwal says, indicating such fictionalisation of historical events, “such blending of the historical with the fictional entails the exigencies of the historical

novels' plot. They start from the particular, the historical and move to the universal" (Beniwal 2005, 10).

There was a long silence after partition/independence. Some early partition stories were written in Hindi and Urdu, which portrayed carnage, rape abduction etc. which seem to present the demented hatred between religious communities. However, the historiography of partition narratives carefully avoided the theme of violence and trauma for the sake of 'national unity and peace'. In partition historiography, the violence and trauma of 1947 have been neglected by historians. There is a considerable difference between the historian's approach in 1947 and the survivors' memory of the incident. As Gyanendra Pandey argued in *Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism and History in India* (2001), "Nationalism and national historiography, I shall argue, have made an all too facile separation between 'Partition' and 'Violence'" (Pandey 2001, 64).

Attempts to portray partition violence, as consequence of historical trauma, also created contrasting trends of testimonial narratives. Indeed, writing about the partition has created a descriptive language that portrays physical abuse and the loss of communication between societies. Tarun K Saint points out the influences of the historical turmoil of 1947 which appeared to resonate both in the individual and the collective cultural national memory. Since the event of partition could not achieve success and was not able to respond to the injustice, many riots and massacres happened in the post-partition Indian society. Saint writes in his article "Witnessing Partition Memory, History, Fiction" (2010) –

The use of communal or sectarian rhetoric reminiscent of the riots and killings in the Partition era in both India and Pakistan is a reminder of the failure to achieve

reconciliation between estranged communities. Furthermore, the emergence of a culture of impunity and complicity with respect to later instances of massacres of minority groups in India such as the anti-Sikh pogrom in 1984, the Bombay riots in 1992–93 and the Gujarat violence in 2002 can in part be traced back to the failure to come to terms with the ghosts of 1947 and the miscarriages of justice that accompanied the birth of these two nation states, India and Pakistan (Saints 2010, 10).

Collective memory is a common experience of a traumatic incident witnessed by a community or state. It is not an individual experience, because there are normally different sources of common history. Collective memories are conveyed by historical documents, both scholarly and traditionally. Wulf Kansteiner in his article “Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies” writes that –

Memories of Partition circulate not just among those who experienced it directly, but more importantly (especially in the case of memorialising them online), as the mediated post-memories of later generations whose ‘memory’ of an event that they have not directly experienced is imaginatively constructed. These post-memories are often a patchwork based on accounts of Partition recounted by ancestors, and images, stories, movies and digital archives available in the public domain (Kansteiner, 2002, 180).

The partition of India is considered as the darkest periods in the modern history of the Indian sub-continent. The trauma it involved was of such significance that there was a widespread refusal in literature and other fields to deal with it. Scholars have recently started uncovering the

suppressed memory of partition victims. In his article “Refugee, Memory and the State: A Review of Research in Refugees Studies” Pradip Kumar Bose brings the recent phenomenon about memory studies related to the partition of the Indian sub-continent. He writes-

For a long time, the issues emanating from this violent transition and its product, the refugees, did not receive the attention from social scientists that they should have deserved. In recent times, however, it is possible to notice a surge of interest in partition and its consequences, not so much from a historiographic perspective, but more from sociological, narratological, and anthropological perspectives (Bose 2012, 1).

Latest studies have shown that while little has been documented about refugees in the past, even these stories have been adopted by depicting victimhood. Refugees have been presented as the victims of partition, who were forced to leave their motherland. Bose compares the ‘collective memory’ and memories by individual people. Generally, ‘collective memory’ is preserved by the state while the people who experienced the migration, partition and the trauma related to the event of partition, create their own memories, survived and forwarded through many forms. Bose continues:

Memory is seen as an important key to consciousness and represents experience in temporal order, experience as a succession. For many of those displaced and uprooted during partition, the events of the trauma survive not so much through history as we know it, as through the memories of the past. As nation state creates and preserves its ‘collective memory’, the displaced and dislocated create a memory of their own that survive in many different forms (Bose 2012, 1).

The characters live in two worlds - the everyday reality in post-partition society and the memory of violence that they encountered during and after the partition. The selected novels for the research present the description of second-generation partition victims who do not have direct partition memory but continue to feel its impact on their individual lives. Writers have depicted the transmission of memory from one generation to the next and the hardships faced by the first-generation partition victim in post-partition society.

S. S. Tabrej and D. Sambandhan, in the article “A Title of Two Partition”, write that India-Pakistan and Israel-Palestine’s partition are similar regarding the memory remembrance concept of nation-building. It shaped the partition from the perspective of the first-generation. The scholars of second-generation partition narratives are revising these dominant or official narratives. The shadow of partitions is still defining the relations between the countries. The partition narratives remain instrumental in constructing and demonising the inimical ‘other’. There are attempts to forget the partition incidents by applying selective amnesia and highlighting the events up to and followed by India and Pakistan’s independence. The theme of violence, trauma, rape etc. have been sidelined by celebration of independence and the creation of two separate countries.

In her article, Rabia Umar Ali says that Muslim women’s suffering during India’s partition is one of the most neglected partition histories. There is a historiographical silence in women’s descriptions. Unfortunately, this silence of Muslim women gets more serious where patriarchal holds in Muslim society and social rules and regulations are comparatively stricter. Rabia Umar Ali says that in Muslim women’s case, the historical silence takes place with family. The events of rape, abduction, and violence can hardly find a place in the collective memory. Ali brings a comparative discussion between the valence of Punjab and Bengal. She says that although

Bengal encountered a violent situation, the situation of northern India was way more violent. That is why partition narratives mainly mention violence, trauma and sufferings from India's western part. Although the riots of Kolkata and Noakhali had already happened. For the lack of discussion of Muslim women, Ali holds responsible the entire partition scholarship. She also discusses the feminist historiography of partition, but in their approach, the issue of Muslim women's suffering remains neglected. As Ali declares, "Muslim women and India's partition is a subject that has hardly been proven into".

Anasua Roy Choudhury, in her article, "Nostalgia of Desh, Memories of Partition" says that the partition narratives present the feelings and emotion of migrated people about their left 'homeland'. The partition of 1947 separated the people from their real homeland. They have a new country that is supposed to be their new identity based on that country but as Choudhury has presented from the personal narratives of refugees, the memories of their 'desh' or motherland would remain their homeland. She writes-

Each individual refugee story is a tale of individual loss, of escape and survival in a new land; a narrative rendered especially poignant by the sudden whiff of nostalgia for a lost homeland or 'desh'. In the more jingoistic present, 'desh' has taken on a connotation similar to the patriotic fervour, 'nation' evokes. However, for refugees, as the personal narratives reveal, 'desh' will forever remain in place as one's homeland, now only sustained by memories (Chaudhury 2004, 1).

4.6. Memory and Select Bengali Partition Novels:

The Novel *Black Ice*, written by Mahmudul Haque, presents Abdul Khaleq's story and childhood memory. Throughout the novel, the writer draws various incidents that happened in the life of

Poka, the childhood name of Abdul Kadir. It has been observed that Abdul Khaleq remembers various incidents of partition when they used to live in the West Bengal side before migrating to East Pakistan. If memory means remembering something of the past, then it can be said that the novel *Black Ice* does its work thoroughly. It remembers the partition incidents that happened long ago and whose effect was still seen among the characters. The novel begins with remembering Abdul Khaleq's childhood habits - "Back in those days, I had a habit of sucking my thumb. Sometimes on the ghat by the pond, on the veranda steps, sometimes sitting alone on the window sill, I would just sit and suck my thumb" (Haque 2012, 1). The village where Abdul Kadir and his family used to live before partition, was mixed. Hindus and Muslims would live peacefully and in a friendly manner with each other. They would know each other, and their children used to play together.

There is an incident in the novel, which depicts the Hindu-Muslim relationship before the country's partition. A blind man meets with the family of Abdul Kadir. He is completely blind; both of his eyes are made of stone, but surprisingly he could tell everything was happening right in front of him. Poka's mother offers him rice asking him whether he is Hindu or Muslim. He replies that he is a Hindu. The mother again asks her whether he would eat cooked rice from a Muslim family. He answers, "Does food have a race or community, Ma?" (Haque 2012, 43).

After the partition, Abdul Kadir marries Rekha. His elder brother Tipu Bhaijan goes to Saudi Arabia, and practices medicine there. It can be noticed that Abdul Kadir's married life is not going smoothly. They often quarrel over a girl named is Giribala, Kadir's childhood friend before partition. In his childhood, Poka had a friend called Puti, who claimed to understand the bird's language. Once, they go to the jungle to listen to what the birds would say about them. Seeing one bird's broken leg, Poka asked Puti to know why its leg has been broken. The bird

started screeching with sounds like ‘kya kya’. After listening to the bird’s sound, Puti says that the bird is evil and says that she is low born. Hindu birds broke her leg as the bird was demanding Pakistan. This is evident in the following quote –

Did you see, did you see how wicked she is? She cursed me as a low-born. She says Hindu birds have broken her leg because she wants Pakistan. Can you blame it? How is it my fault? And listen to what she says now. She says, “It’s your kinsmen who did it? (Haque 2012, 41).

The writer remembers the day when his mother told him to go to school for the first time. The name of the school is Kali Krishna Primary School. He was afraid and firmly replied to her that he would never go to school. He asked his elder brother Tipu to teach the lesson at home instead of school. Another elder brother Moni increased the fear of school by saying “They will drag you by the neck. They will put a whole brick on your head and make you stand on one foot in the blazing sun” (Haque 2012, 65). Listening to that Poka said rather he would die instead of going. His brother Moni told him that it is better for him to die. If he dies, he will become a vulture bird. Many people died and became various birds. “Each person died and became a different vulture, Lord Clive, Jagath Seth, Umichand, Warren Hastings, Nadir Shah, Tamerlane and Chobi’s Thakurma. They all became vultures” (Haque 2012, 66).

The writer talks about the changes that started happening before the partition process. He remembers that a peaceful society is changing rapidly. Their harmony and brotherhood begin to split—Hindu-Muslim sentiment gears up to such a level that they start considering one another as the enemy. Communal clashes started taking place because of religious enmity and hatred.

Once there was a huge clash with a group from Kazipara. The Martin train used to run at that time, advancing at a crawl. By jumping onto a moving Martin train, the boys from Kazipara managed to save their heads. As they left, they threatened that there would be a settling of accounts, there would be a trail of corpses lying on the ground (Haque 2012, 77).

The author presents a river trip through boat by Abdul Khaleq and his wife, Rekha. On the way, Abdul Khaleq suddenly remembers his elder brother Moni Bhaijan when the boat reaches to a riverbank called Louhojong. He and his brother, used to visit that place earlier in their childhood days. Rekha asks him to say something about Moni Bhaijan. Then Abdul Khaleq starts describing some events about the partition of India and Moni Bhaijan. He remembers that when Pakistan's creation was declared, a kind of silence fell on the family. He did not understand anything since he was a child. Although there were celebrations of happiness in his locality, people were distributing *rasogollas*, but they were not supposed to do anything. His father strictly had forbidden him to go outside of their house. As it is depicted in the novel- "Then one day, suddenly, Pakistan came into being. I did not understand what happened, all I can remember is that on that day an extra-ordinary stillness fell upon our household" (Haque 2012, 119).

Despite everybody's opposition, his father alone leaves for Pakistan. However, even after the partition, Abdul Khaleq and his brothers continue their schools and colleges. However, they start feeling alienated. As the narrator mentions, nobody takes kindly his father's decision to leave for Pakistan. His mother, on the other hand, does not want to go to Pakistan. She is not ready to leave her land for an unknown land. However, according to his father, his country is where he could hold his head high. That is why he departs for Pakistan. He says, "The important thing is to

be able to walk with our heads held high. My country is where I will be able to walk with my head high” (Haque 2012, 120).

He remembers the days after his father’s departure, and his friends raise various uncomfortable questions regarding his father. His friends ask him why his father left India. Is his father a bad man? Such questions are harrowing for them. Because of all these, his elder brother Tipu stops going to college. Kenaram provides them with information about the happenings in society. After a few months, all his family members decide to leave their homes for Pakistan. Moni Bhaijan hesitates to leave India because he loves a girl named Chobi. Although he leaves with family, he could not overcome the pain of separation from his beloved. One day he swallows sleeping pills and ends his life; “Moni Bhaijan could not collect himself; he did not want to. If he could, he would not choose to die as he did” (Haque 2012, 123). The novel depicts its narrative structure through memory of the characters. These memories affect their past, present and imagined future.

A Life Long Ago presents a little girl, Dayamoyee, who lives in East Bangla with her aunt and her foster mother. The novel brings the description of society and political situations of post-partition Bengal. Dayamoyee lives in Dighpait village. She sees and experiences the development and transformation of Bengali society. When she leaves her motherland, she promises that she would never discuss partition and her motherland. Suddenly she remembers her childhood days after receiving news about the death of her Majam Dada’s death. The narrator mentions that the news of the death of Majam Dada comes as a relief for her. She feels immense pain and anguish, which she bears with her for over thirty years. She feels a sense of weightlessness. She writes- “For thirty years, I had been obvious to the frozen tears inside. And those tears were now streaming down my face” (Sikdar 2012, 1).

She remembers an incident where her Majam Dada visited her for the first time after they migrated to India. He crosses the border of India to see her only after selling his cow. He would probably sell another cow to pay off his debts. However, her relatives in India doubt the intentions of Majam Dada's visit. They think that "he was only a manservant in the family" of Dayamoyee when they were staying in East Bengal. "You know, he had come to your house, the Muslim manservant, who looked after you when you were little," says her neighbour, "He says that he has come to see you. But it's obvious he has a hidden agenda" (Sikdar 2012, 2).

She also remembers her foster mother's sayings who used to warn little Daya about getting closer to a Muslim servant. She used to say that Majam is their employer; he has been responsible for caring for cows, calves, and fields. Daya's foster mother suggests that since Majam is not from her blood relation, she should not have a close relationship with him. However, to Dayamoyee, he was the companion of her childhood. She would depend on him and would wander various places in her area with him. Dada only helped her know various places like Dighpait, Sontia and Haridrata while taking her on his shoulders. She writes "Despite these warnings, Majam, my Dada, was the person I depended on the most, throughout my childhood" (Sikdar 2012, 3).

During the partition, she starts feeling disquiet in society, though nobody explains anything. She sees many families leaving for India. Their belongings piled up on a bullock cart. Gradually their familiar people started vacating their homes and left their motherland. When they prepared to leave, the neighbours would surround them and start crying for bidding them farewell. Muslims of those areas also come to accompany them while they depart for another country.

All their possessions were piled on a bullock cart – the pots and pans, the flat stool made of wood from the jackfruit tree, huge bundles of homemade snacks, pillows and mattresses tied in large rags, and of course several suitcases and trunks. I have seen something very similar, when Kanai and Balai, who lived in the house behind us, left (Sikdar 2012, 11).

She recalls that when Hindus depart from Dighpait or Sontia villages, they go through the roads in front of their house. Her foster mother notices their departure with tearful eyes. Biswas Thakuma, Khuki Pishima of the Ghoshes and Jethima from Choddogawnda leave one by one. Some people leave quietly, and some leave while weeping their tears. They ask for forgiveness from each other while leaving the village. They do not know whether they will be able to see each other in the new country. The neighbors say to her foster mother, “Buri, we are leaving. We are going for good. We are unlikely to meet again. Do look us up when you too are in Hindustan” (Sikdar 2012, 12).

Dayamoyee narrates the education system of Dighpait village before the partition. Their village people are rich and prosperous. They organise various religious festivals, but there is no facility or awareness for education in the village. They had a junior high school, but they have neither teacher nor books, and the number of students was also less. There is a traditional syllabus and set of poems that students have to read or memorise, written by Kazi Nazrul Islam, Bande Ali Mian, and Jasimuddin. Although Rabindranath Tagore is one of the famous Bengali poets, his poems are not included. If someone recites his poems, then teachers appreciate him or her. She still remembers Gani Mian’s name, who used to read and write letters for the people of Dighpait. Before she could start writing letters for her foster mother, this Gani Mian used to write letters for her. Daya’s aunt (foster mother) would write letters to her cousin and his wife every month.

The writer spends many years after the country's partition and after migrating from Dighpait to a small town in West Bengal. However, she wonders about the "memories of the first ten years of her life" that she had spent in East Pakistan. Those memories are dearer to her even after so many years. She feels like a trespasser in West Bengal as if she does not belong to this place. She does not deserve to recite the lines of Rabindranath Tagore's poem, as if it is wrong to be fascinated by the songs of Amir Khan or Bhimsen Joshi.

Those who deal with the workings of the human mind will I perhaps be able to say why I have clung to the memories of the first ten years of my life and why they are so dear to me. Where had I hidden the rough and ready notes of folk music like *jaari*, *shaari* and *bhawaiya*; and the plaintive notes of the namaz '*la ilaha illallaha muhammadur rasulullah*'? I had buried them in some deep corner of my mind. Keeping my childhood hidden and secret, I have gone through most of my life feeling like a crow in peacock feathers. I have lived and been deeply involved in a small town in West Bengal for more than forty years now, yet I feel like an interloper here (Sikdar 2012, 43).

Although the book *A Life Long Ago* discusses the lives of the Dighpait village of East Pakistan, migration to India and the memories attached to it, there are also discussions of migration from India. There is a mention of Acchar, who leave the princely state of Coochbihar of India and migrates to the Dighpait village of East Pakistan. He starts his new life in the newly built country, but he still remembers the world he must forsake because of the partition. While remembering his previous life, he also cries sometimes. "He talked to Ma about the Cooch Bihar palace that reached up to the clouds, and the king's pond that was as large as the sea. And the Raas festival there that had no equal on this earth" (Sikdar 2012, 60).

She recalls her first encounter with other siblings in India. After the partition, her parents leave for India since they get a government job, West Bengal. She stays back for several years with her aunt (father's sister). However, at the age of ten, Dayamoyee and her foster mother also migrate to India, and she faces her siblings with several questions regarding east Bengal. They ask her whether there is a river in East Bengal. She replies that they have many rivers like the Padma, Buri Ganga, Icchamati, Brahmaputra etc. His brother teases her by saying that all those rivers go to east Bengal after crossing India. If India blocks the source of the water, then East Bengal will never have water. Listening to them she becomes angry and says- "Only Jawaharlal Nehru can do things like that. Nehru will not do such things. He is a good man" (Sikdar 2012, 133).

In *Train to India: Memories of Another Bengal*, the writer Maloy Krishna Dhar depicts East Bengal's stories and experiences during the journey from East Bengal to India. He recollects the natural beauty of Bengal before the partition. He says-

We, the Bengali speaking people, living in our tiny corner of the universe and India were there with our rivers, the Meghna and Brahmaputra, the memorable Teetas Beel, Satmukhi Beel (the lake with seven inlets and outlets), paddy fields, orchards full of flowers, fruits, spices, ducks, herons, cranes, Bengal robins, finches and parrots, goats, cows and ponds full of fish. I had my own pets: Chandana the parrot, Pintu the white goat, Tomtom the dog and Sonai the duck. Mother had Victoria, the all-white furry cat (Dhar 2012, 3).

The narrator is very fond of the natural beauty of the Kamalpur area of East Bengal, where they lived before the partition. He mentions the name of his childhood friends with whom he plays and spend times together. He remembers the railway station, Bhairab which was connected to

Calcutta, Dhaka and Mymensingh. East Bengal is full of rivers, their village Kamalpur also is surrounded by rivers like Meghna and Brahmaputra. He writes –

There was everything- my primary school, our teacher Dhuru Acharya, friends Lutf-un-Nissa (Lutfu), Jasimuddin (Jasim), Saifullah (Saifi), Mehboob Alam, Haripada, Mani and scores of cousins. Living next to the wild, moody and surging Meghna and Brahmaputra rivers, only a dead soul could escape the turbulent love of creation (Dhar 2012, 4).

The memoir discusses the socio-political developments in the Indian sub-continent during the partition. The writer presents the description of the political rivalry between Congress and the League and increased communal hatred in Bengali society. Hindus and Muslims start dividing themselves into the communal lines. It also depicts the support and co-operation that the revolutionaries of the Indian National Army received from people irrespective of their religion.

We lived in a period of confusion of the Congress's political skullduggery, the Muslim League and Hindu Mahasabha leaders, rebellious anger generated by the followers of Subhas Bose and confusion in the minds of the staunch British loyalists. There was no one to lead the confused Hindu and Muslim masses (Dhar 2012, 6).

The Second World War devastated millions of homes, and the British Empire was about to emerge victorious, as usual. The narrator presents a Bengali Zamindar, Grandpa Chandra Kishore, who is very fond of the British government. He proudly says that “the sun would never set below the horizons of the Empire of the descendants of the Queen”. He does not wait for the news of the fall of Berlin and the surrender of Japan. Dressed in a silken dhoti and Punjabi, the traditional male Bengali long kurta, he leads a delegation of the loyal subjects of His Majesty

King George VI's representative to the district collector of Mymensingh, to express solidarity with the Allied Powers.

However, the narrator and his friends from the village disagree with Chandra Kishore and his loyalists. Even Chandra Kishore's wife also secretly supports the young activists. The latter is with the resistance movement started by the Bengal Provincial Volunteers, a remnant of the rebellious movement started by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. Subhas Chandra Bose was the first people's general mandated by India's freedom fighters to fight a historical war against the British occupation forces.

Some of our clan members secretly supported his call: 'Give me blood, I will give you freedom'. My father, a Benares and Calcutta trained ayurvedic medic was associated with one such group headed by Uncle Satish and his band of revolutionaries (Dhar 2012, 7).

Maloy Krishna Dhar narrates one incident where the supporters of Pakistan and Hindustan clashed with each other. That skirmish happens in the Bhairab market near Kamalpur. Pakistan supporters led by Dulu and Dhala is defeated by the mixed undivided Hindustan crowd headed by Subhan and Joinath Dhar, the narrator's uncle. Dudu mian's gang suffers five casualties from pellet wounds, and three of the Subhan group suffered sword blows. He writes- "It was a victorious day for the undivided Hindustan protagonists" (Dhar 2012, 31).

The writer presents another incident that happens before the partition on the Eastern side of Bengal province. They go to play football under the captainship of Majid Khan against Kalipur after the Durga Puja festival. They play well; their captain Majid Khan scores two goals. Some enthusiasts from the audience raises the slogan 'Bande Mataram, Kamal Zindabad'. Union board

president of Kalipur Jalil Sarkar objects to such slogans in the sports ground. He shouts at the loudest voice, “Who raises the Kafir slogan? Allah ho Akbar. Ladke Lenge Pakistan” (Dhar 2012, 83). Jalil Sarkar’s supporters start pelting stones at the supporters of Kamalpur. Rahman, a player from Kamalpur, asks Jalil Sarkar what is wrong with the Bande Mataram slogan? Jalil replies that this is a Hindu slogan and against the teachings of Islam. He also declares that within months, they would achieve their own country under the leadership of Jinnah.

Listen you Kafirs and slave Muslims. We are only a few months away from independence. We will have a pure Muslim homeland under Jinnah Sahib. Those who support Pakistan come to my side. Those who support Hindustan go behind those Kafirs (Dhar 2012, 83).

The writer narrates his memory of the declaration of independence and the partition of India and Pakistan. They gather at Wilson’s parlour to listen to the radio. The Bengali News announces the decision of partition and independence of the country. It also informs that a new separate homeland would be created for the Muslims of India. The eastern part of the Bengal province would be incorporated into the newly formed Pakistan. He also remembers that a radio broadcast follows the news of partition by Hasan Shaheed Suhrawardy. He requests that Bengal province’s people-maintained peace and harmony and assures that every province’s citizen would be provided equal rights and opportunities.

Next Evening, we assembled at Wilson’s parlour around the radio. The 7 p.m. Bengali news bulletin announced that the British government had decided to transfer power on 15 August 1947 to India and Pakistan, a new homeland for the Muslims of

India. East Bengal would be incorporated into the new country called Pakistan (Dhar, 2012, 123).

The writer Maloy Krishna Dhar depicts the attitude of Bihari Muslims towards the Bengali linguistic community. There is a mention of communal harmony between Bengali Hindus and Bengali Muslims, but the migrated Bihari Muslims are aggressively anti-Hindu. Not only they hate Bengali Hindus, but they also consider Bengali Muslims as less Muslims. Bihari Muslims start grabbing land, goats, and ducks from the people of the Bengali community. Bengali Muslims, to them, were, 'dark-skinned Muslims'. They looked different, and their tradition, culture, and customs were also different from their Bengali counterpart. They consider dark-skinned Bengalis as half Hindu and inferior to them since they are the ruling class's direct inheritors. The Bihari Muslim women also looked different, white-skinned, wear attractive dresses that Bengali Muslim women of that area could never see. Their names also were different from Bengali Muslims.

The Biharis looked different, spoke a different language and practised social rituals and habits that were alien to the Bengalis. They flaunted long and complicated Arabic names, while our Bengali neighbours used traditional names. A new and strange culture had invaded us. The fair-skinned Bihari women dressed in revealing and provocative clothes that attracted the young Bengali Muslims. People with fair skin and knowledge of the language of the Muslim rulers demanded social superiority. The dark-skinned Bengali Muslims, they said, were half-Hindus and were inferior to the direct inheritors of the Mughals and Pathans (Dhar 2012, 140).

The writer presents several Bengali Muslims who think of themselves as Bengali first and Pakistani second. Mainul Khan is one such person, who is a ‘fanatic Bengali’. He explains to the narrator that Pakistan is the name of the country, and it consists of various linguistic and cultural groups such as Sindhis, Punjabis, Balochis and Bengalis. These Biharis are only a group of Mohajirs or migrated people. However, they are occupying lands of Bengali speaking people. There is also tension regarding Urdu language among the Bengali speaking community. The national anthem of Pakistan is composed in the Urdu language. The Bengali students consider the anthem as strange since each word and sentence is alien to them. On his visit to East Pakistan, Jinnah advocates for Urdu as the official language. Urdu is introduced in schools as a compulsory subject. The school authority provides Urdu textbooks to the students. The narrator writes about the Urdu language- “The alphabet looked like a spider web and we were advised to read from right to left, not from left to right” (Dhar, 2012, 148). The Bengali students of East Pakistan were not happy with the imposition of the Urdu language on them. Many students protest this decision of the government. Senior students at the school start singing a Bengali song, “*moder ghorob moder asha, amori Bangla bhasa*” (My Pride, My hope, my Bengali language), in protest against the Urdu language. They see it as an attempt to keep them away from their mother tongue. The writer says-

We had no idea who Jinnah was but young as we were, the consensus was that no one, not even Jinnah, had any right to ask us to forget our mother tongue. How could a Mymensingh Bengali dialect speaker imagine forgetting his uniquely flavoured language? Could anyone compose Mymensingh Geetika and Bhatiali songs in Urdu or English? Could any other language capture the pathos of Chand-Sundari folktale

songs, and the lilting songs composed by my father or the ballads of Mymensingh and local boat songs? (Dhar 2012, 149).

There are several instances from the book it can be seen that most of the time, Hindus of East Bengal are attacked by the migrated Bihari Muslims or Muslim league sponsored Ansars. They are engaged in attacking Hindu muhallas, looting properties, and abducting women. Bengali Muslims do not help the attackers. Instead, they protect their Hindu neighbors from the crowd who are out to take revenge for their Muslim brothers and sisters, killed in India by Hindus. However, he is astonished when he sees a group of Bengali-speaking Muslims attacking a train that is leaving Mymensingh for Tripura. Later, in India, he also experiences that Bengali Hindus have done the same and attacked fellow Bengali Muslims in the name of religion.

To my horror, I realised that they were Bengali Muslims and not Biharis. My experiences with the Muslims in our area had comforted me that only the immigrant Biharis, Dhakai Kuttis and Jamait and Muslim League sponsored Ansars killed Hindus. It did not dawn upon me that all Bengali-speaking people, whether they were Hindus or Muslims, whether they belonged to Hindustan or Pakistan, were not pacifists. Later, in India in 1964 I was to see that sections of Hindus too were no better than mindless butchers (Dhar 2012, 247).

Maloy Krishna Dhar also describes his father's optimism regarding East Bengal's situation and the dilemma while deciding whether they should move to India, leaving their motherland. After the train's horrific experience, the narrator finally decides to leave East Bengal while his mother is still hesitant. However, his father completely opposes the idea of leaving their own country. He believes that Fazlul Haque will manage to settle all the problems, and Bengal will be rescued

from the religious fanatics from groups like the Muslim League, Jamaat-e-Islami and Ansar Bahini. He strongly supports the United Bengal movements and is a critic of provincial congress leaders. He believes that the newly formed country will become a place for Hindus and Muslims again as it used to be in the past.

His hope that the trauma of partition would die down and traditional brotherhood and amity would occupy the space temporarily wrested by the rabid communalists was buttressed by a close band of political colleagues who dreamt of a Bengal for both Hindu and Muslim Bengalis (Dhar 2012, 246-247).

The writer presents Bengali culture and society in the post-partition period in West Bengal. He mentions “a football match between East Bengal and Mohun Bagan” (Dhar 2012, 288). The East Bengal team consists of people migrated from Eastern Bengal, established in 1920. They are known as Bangal. In contrast, the Mohun Bagan team consisted of players from native people of West Bengal who are known as Ghoti, established in 1889. When the East Bengal team scores two goals, Mohun Bagan’s supporters become angry and start fighting each other. The narrator is beaten up badly in that fight since he is also a Bangal. People from these two groups consider their prestige issue on the result of the matches. The other important club is Mohammedan Sporting Club, founded in 1892. The narrator mentions massive competition between these three clubs, and their sports often lead to skirmishes between the groups. If East Bengal win, the match, then the price of Hilsa fish would increase. They would purchase Hilsa fish out of happiness since it is the symbol of the Bangals. On the other hand, if Mohun Bagan wins then the price of prawns will get higher. Because prawn was the symbol of Ghatia. If Mohammedan SC defeats either Mohun Bagan or East Bengal, some Hindus or Muslims would be stabbed for sure.

Mullick added that on the day Mohun Bagan won against East Bengal the prices of chingri (prawn) maach would skyrocket. Prawns were the symbol of the Ghatis. Reversely, the price of hilsa fish would skyrocket when East Bengal defeated Mohun Bagan. He hastened to add that whenever the Mohammedan Sporting Club happened to defeat either the Mohun Bagan or East Bengal, some Hindus or Muslims were sure to be stabbed (Dhar 2012, 288-89).

The River Churning by Jyotirmoyee Devi presents the writer's own experience of partition. The novel is set in the Eastern part of the undivided Bengal. After the partition of the country, it moves to the Indian part of Bengal. *The River Churning* presents the description of Sutara Dutta, a teacher at Yaggoseni College of Delhi. She remembers her life's painful experiences in her early life in East Pakistan and India. Although she is well established in her life, her past experiences still haunt her; memories take her back to the days of partition of the Indian sub-continent.

The novel begins with the remembrance of The Great Calcutta Killings that happens in August 1946. Sutara and her family live on the sides of the Padma River in East Bengal. Her father is a school teacher in the village school. The village where Sutara's family lives is a mixed village. Hindus and Muslims reside in that village very peacefully. They know each other by their names. Even they know who possesses how many cows and goats in the village. Sutara also has many Muslim and Hindu friends with whom she plays. Her elder brother and two younger brothers study in Kolkata. They are supposed to visit their village, but suddenly, communal incidents take place in Kolkata. Sutara still remembers the year when the Muslim league leadership ordered Direct Action Day. Due to the order there is a Hindu-Muslim riot on the streets of Kolkata. Many people die in that riot. However, that riot does not stop there. The Muslims of Noakhali, East

Bengal plan to take Calcutta killings on the Hindus of Noakhali. She recalls that Muslims attack their muhalla, burn houses, and kill people irrespective of their age and gender. The rioters kill Sutara's father, mother and sister. She is rescued by her father's friend, a Muslim headmaster of the village school, Tamijuddin Saheb. Although she survives, she is not sure about the fate of her family members. She always asks Tamij kaka about her father and mother. She also asks if her sister died in the riot.

Sutara's brother is not ready to take her back to Kolkata. He writes a letter to Tamij Kaka that the situation in Kolkata is still terrible. Once the situation gets well, he will come to take her. Otherwise, he can send Sutara to Kolkata; they will receive her from there. However, Sutara frequently asks Tamij uncle whether the riot has stopped in Kolkata. She requests him to take her to the Sealdah station of Kolkata, from where her brothers will receive her. However, she receives news about Kolkata every day that riots and killings are still taking place. Every day people are getting killed.

Various news was coming from Kolkata through various people. However, Tamijuddin Saheb was unable to understand the situation of Kolkata. He has heard that during the Great Calcutta Killings, the people of Kolkata became a wild beast. Suddenly, they became a cruel enemy of their neighbour, and they did not hesitate to kill their familiar people. He is getting information that still people are being killed here and there in Kolkata (Devi 1991, 110-111).

Finally, Tamijuddin Saheb starts his journey to Kolkata from Noakhali with Sutara. During the journey, he thinks if the family of Sutara will accept her since she has spent six months with the Muslims. According to them their concern was logical. Usually, people in Hindu society do not

accept a girl if she stays in a Muslim family. Tamijuddin's wife tells him to bring her back if the family members of Sutara do not accept her. They will look after Sutara if she has no problem with it. In the book, she mentions that her brother and sister-in-law welcome her with an open heart when she reaches her brother's house. However, her brother's mother-in-law seems disturbed by her presence. Since her brother is staying in his in-law's house, he cannot say a single word above his mother-in-law. She humiliates Sutara frequently. She instructs Sutara not to enter the kitchen and touch food items prepared for whole family members as she has stayed in a Muslim family. She often says that Sutara has spent months in a Muslim family. That is the reason she considers Sutara as a polluted girl. That lady owner says, "Watch her; she should not touch bedsheets and dresses. She has to be purified by Ganga bath. Nobody knows what she has eaten there" (Devi 1991, 118).

Since she is a refugee from East Bengal and has spent six months in a Muslim house, the lady house owner's attitude is different. Although her brother and sister-in-law are speaking with love and affection, she starts feeling alienated from the house, as if she does not belong to the house. The old women fear the consequences of keeping 'polluted girl' in the house. Some of her relatives also warn her that if Sutara stays in the house, she will face difficulty marrying her daughters (Devi 1991, 125). To avoid the problem, the family plans to send her to a boarding school. She will stay in the hostel away from them.

The narrator presents her memory of Gandhi's assassination. While she is in her boarding, the schoolmistress calls all the girls to the standard room. When all the students gather, she pronounces in her serious voice that someone has killed Mahatma Gandhi. All the teachers, girls, servants, and guards are shocked to listen to that news. Some of them hear the news earlier but could not believe it. They remain silent for two minutes. Sutara notices that everybody is full of

tears; the servants and guards also cry. One teacher from east Bengal says that Mahatma Gandhi never wanted to divide the country. Another teacher opines that at last, he accepted the partition. That could be the reason he might have been killed.

Sutara heard at that time; Gandhi did not want partition. Then why did he accept?

Several questions appeared. She has thought it many times that who asked for such bloody independence that oppressed and devastated the people of the country? Who got independent? (Devi 1991, 133).

While staying in Delhi, Sutara receives a letter from Sakina, her childhood friend and daughter of Tamijuddin Biswas. She informs Sutara that she will go to Karachi via Delhi. She will stay a couple of days in Delhi and visit her there. When Sakina visits her, they discuss things about their motherland (Desh bari). She informs her that this year, there is a probability of many mangoes being produced in the garden of Sutara's family. Sutara starts thinking that what would have happened if Tamijuddin uncle had not given her shelter in the days of riots and helplessness. She remembers that her friends, with whom she used to play before partition, had no information after the riot. Nobody knows what happened to them. She does not know where they are if they are still alive.

The love, company and shelter she received from Tamijuddin, Aziz and Mainu in the days of her trauma and disaster. What would happen to her if they would not give shelter to her? Nobody knows what would have happened. It is not like nobody knows – she knows very well what could have happened with her during the riot. She starts shivering from within thinking the answer. A blurred image of torture and humiliation of her childhood friends come to her mind. In the very inner space of her

mind, there is a picture depicted with the horrific description of her perplexed mother's cry, terrified sister, and helpless father. Even after so many years of partition, those pictures did not get vanished from her mind (Devi 1991, 146-47).

Koushalyavati, her neighbour in the Delhi hostel where she stays, tells her of an incident on the western border. She hears this story from a milkman who migrates from the western side of Punjab. The decision of partition is not taken officially by the government. There are two Punjabs, two Bengal and different communities. When they cross the border from the west, they see a few Hindus and Sikhs abducting some Muslim girls. Later it is published in the newspapers too. Koushalyavati says that she was a minor and does not know what happened to those abducted women. Sutara is surprised to know about that incident. Her inner self utters from within that "They are not alone to be humiliated and tortured. Her own community people also abducted Muslim women!" (Devi 1991, 153). The novel memorises the realities of partition and aftermaths that defined the course of the history of two countries.

The novel *East-West* presents the story of Pratap and Mamun. They are friends from undivided Bengal. After the partition of India, Mamun remains in East Pakistan while Pratap migrates to India. Sunil Gangopadhyay describes the issues they face and experience in the two newly formed countries after India's partition. The book depicts the political and social developments that happened in the post-partition Bengali society. Pratap's father, Bhabadeb Majumdar is a man full of optimism about the reunification of the divided nations. The partition seems unrealistic to him. He believes in Sri Aurobindo Ghosh's prophecies, according to which, both countries would unite again within ten years of partition. He believes – "the battle of Plassey happened in 1757, the sepoy mutiny happened in 1857, the same way India and Pakistan will be united in 1957. Thus, a history will be created" (Gangopadhyay 1989, 10).

The writer presents the political scenario immediately after the partition of the Indian sub-continent. He says that the two foreign returned barristers are ruling the two newly divided countries. However, Jinnah could not ‘enjoy’ the power for a longer period. On the contrary, Nehru not only becomes the prime minister of India but also emerges as the world leader. Both are ‘pakka sahib’ (exactly like Britishers), they are swadeshi only by appearance, but their lifestyle, ruling style, and other things are like foreigners. A country with eighty per cent of people from the poor class, oppressed and hungry come under the rule in the old British style.

The writer mentions that Pakistan’s general election brings the hope of unifying two Bengals among the Bengalis. Fazlul Haque wins with a majority in the general election. The people of West Bengal also think that Fazlul Haque can never be a communal leader. Before India’s partition, Fazlul Haque wanted to form Bengal provincial government, but Indian National Congress’s central leadership did not show any interest in the proposal. He was against the decision to divide the Bengali community in the name of the partition. After forming the national government, Fazlul Haque removes the visa system, creating problems to cross India and Pakistan’s borders. He never likes the border barriers that divided the Bengali community irrespective of their religions. However, it lasts for only a month; the Western leaders of Pakistan do not tolerate him, Gangopadhyay writes, “Governor General of Pakistan Golam Mohammad became angry on Fazlul Haque and dismantled the ministry formed in East Bengal. Fazlul Haque kept under house arrest, and Shaikh Mujibur Rahman was sent to jail” (Gangopadhyay 1989, 93).

Pratap and Mamun once visit Malkhanagar in East Bengal. Mamun’s father welcomes him and discusses many issues. However, surprisingly, he says that he will not allow Pratap to stay in his home. Because Mamun is a Hindu boy, and he cannot allow any Hindu to stay. Pratap does not

expect such an attitude from his friend's father and feels insulted by the rude behaviour. However, Mamun's father himself manages a Hindu family, and his friend from the same village. He has to spend a night in a neighboring Hindu house. Mamun also does not know that there is such a tradition in their own family. Later, he realises that once his grandfather goes to a Kayastha house, he insults him badly and throws away all the water and water pots stored in their house. That incident angers his grandfather and he declares that no Hindus will be allowed ever in his house.

The novel shows refugees trying to capture lands in West Bengal, and sometimes there are fights between the people of West Bengal and the migrants from East Bengal. One of the characters, Asit Baran is killed in such a fight between refugees and the native people. Pratap has to bring her elder sister back to their house. This family reunion reminds Pratap that they had such a family union in Malkhanagar of East Pakistan before the partition. His father was also alive. Before four years, they all gathered in Malkhanagar on the occasion of Durgapuja. There was happiness all around. However, this reunion is painful for him:

After years, the reunion has happened in a different country in a different environment. Father is no more, Asit Da has also left. His father's and forefather's memory loaded home, ponds and mango garden also lost. There is no sound of drums, the smell of paddy fields, and the familiar faces of neighbours from their village, and only the sky is the same (Gangopadhyay 1989, 68).

Refugee leader Harit Mondal actively participates in the protest march against West Bengal's government, demanding necessary facilities and rehabilitation for them. The government plans to send the refugees to Dandakaranya forest and Andaman Island. They protest against the state

strongly supported by various communist organisations. Police beat Harit Mondal several times because of his involvement in the refugee struggles. He leaves his home, properties, and ponds in East Pakistan and after migration he struggles to settle himself. He says, “I had my house over there with three rooms, one kitchen, one cowshed. Besides these, I had a small pond, and one shared big pond, thirteen bighas of paddy field. I was never worried about food and other things” (Gangapadhyay 1989, 115).

Harit Mondal blames the Muslims for all the pains and sufferings that they encounter because of partition. He thinks Muslims are responsible for his motherland’s partition since they demanded a separate country for Muslims. The novel presents a conversation between Sajahan and Harit Mondal, where Harit blames Sajahan, an Indian Muslim for partition. During the partition, he does not migrate to East Pakistan. Harit says educated people like him are to be blamed for the partition because general illiterate Muslims are not concerned about the separate homeland or partition. Because of such people only, he has to leave his beloved motherland and other belongings. On the other hand, Muslims of West Bengal, especially people like Sajahan, are living peacefully. He says -

I am not saying that every Muslims are responsible. The Muslims neighbouring our villages were not aware of Pakistan. We had no enmity with them. Some of them even cried when we left for India. I am telling you about the educated Muslims. They have led our country into ashes (Gangapadhyay 1989, 115).

The novel presents the struggle of Tapan, a refugee from Sarail, East Bengal. Their family decides to stay back in Pakistan. He passes his matriculation from there. However, after his father’s murder, they were forced to leave the country for India. His uncle disapproves his

further study. However, he takes admission in a college. A teacher manages to reduce half of the college fees. And to pay another half of the fees, he has to sell eggs in Sealdah station's platforms. After completing graduation, Tapan looks for a job in several places, but he cannot manage any job.

Meanwhile, he joins the study circle where other Bengali youths discuss various ideas irrespective of their social status or cultural identities. One of them asks Tapan his opinion about 'desh' or his homeland. He replies -

I consider my 'desh' is Sarail of Comilla. Forgive me. I am staying in India, but still, I see Sarail in my dream. I am speaking only truth. After the partition, we stayed in Pakistan. We accepted Pakistan as our country, never thought we have to leave our motherland. Would anybody want to leave his home where he has been grown up, the streets on which they walked through the school? However, we had to leave, and now we are living a refugee life in a camp (Gangapadhyay 1989, 321).

The writer mentions the death of Jawaharlal Nehru and the reaction of Bengali refugees. The refugees are sent in the Dandakaranya forest. However, due to the cyclone, their camps are blown up. The government does not do anything for them, and camp officers flee, expecting a backlash from the refugees. Suddenly, they hear a drum with an announcement of Jawaharlal Nehru's death. After listening to this news, refugees start dancing because they believed that Nehru is the reason for their misfortune. They think Nehru's step-motherly attitude towards Bengali refugees deprived them of many facilities that the Punjabi refugees availed.

A news of death brings the tide of happiness despite their sufferings and pain. They surrounded the announcer and wanted to know further information. Has someone

shot him? Did he suffer pain while dying? Was there someone beside him to give him water while he was dying? (Gangapadhyay 1989, 347).

The above novels visit the trauma of partition through memory and nostalgia. The memory of partition plays a very vital role in the characters' identity formation. The memory of partition does not just haunt the characters of the novels but also the writers. The characters try very hard to forget such memories, but they cannot. May it be social, political, psychological, or personal reasons. They could never really resist the effects of the partition memory.

Chapter-V

Conclusion

5. Conclusion

The partition narratives deal with the themes directly or indirectly relevant to the description of the partition and independence of the Indian subcontinent. Memory and identity are two of the dominant themes of partition narratives of India. Different forms of partition literature have been attempted to depict the issues of an identity crisis, the problems encountered by people of diverse identities and the issue of remembering events associated with the partition. The study attempted to describe the representation of memory and identity depicted in the selected partition narratives. It also studied how the Bengali partition narratives differ from mainstream partition narratives. The study also addressed one of the ignored sides of the partition, i.e., women's perspective and experience of partition and their representation in the partition literature. Some women writers have tried to address this silence through their writings. The research discusses women's perspectives by studying *The River Churning*, written by Jyotirmoyee Devi, who shared her own experience of partition.

As we know, the Bengali community have witnessed three partitions to date. They are- the bifurcation of the Bengal province in 1905, the Partition of India in 1947, and the last one, the bifurcation of East Bengal from Pakistan in 1971. The research focused on the literature written on the second partition of India in 1947 in the context of West Bengal. It also studied the third partition, the independence of Bangladesh presented by some writers. Thematically, partition novels follow a pattern of order-disorder-order. Anup Benial pointed out in his book *Representing Partition: History, Violence and Narration* that "The narratives move from pre-partition communal harmony to partition discord and then back to post-partition visionary

utopia” (Benial, 2005, 184-85). Partition novels begin with a peaceful society or village where different religious communities live together happily in harmony. Then suddenly, Hindu-Muslim, Congress-Muslim League or India-Pakistan issues appear in society, and the situation starts getting tense and communal. Then there are communal incidents and riots followed by migration to another country leaving the motherland. Some novels also provide the struggle and sufferings of people during the migration process. Partition novels also present the theme of refugee settlements in the new country and their struggle regarding rehabilitation and searching for a job in their migrated country.

Almost all the selected novels and memoirs follow the pattern mentioned earlier. The novels present the problems faced by Bengalis during and after the partition of the sub-continent because of various layers of identity. There were several identities present among the Bengali community, and the identities were created as a direct effect of partition in post-independent India. The study also covered another significant aspect which is memory. Selected novels and memoirs presented several characters who remember their home, homeland, and friends they left in another country. Often, the characters recall the memories of their own social and cultural aspects that they had in their previous homeland before the country’s bifurcation. The study also covered the political developments and the activities of several political organisations, which the characters mention in their conversations.

The thesis presented the historical background of India’s partition. It included the establishment of the Indian National Congress, Muslim League and Hindu Mahasabha. It also described the freedom struggle, India and Pakistan’s independence, and the national politics led by Mahatma Gandhi, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, and Subhas Chandra Bose and others. Since the research focused on the Bengal side of the partition, the thesis also discussed the historical developments

that led to the Bengal province's bifurcation. The Congress and Muslim League played a significant role during the province's partition in 1947. It depicted different political movements and counter-movements that happened in Bengal. The United Sovereign Bengal movement remained aloof from the mainstream partition narratives; the study attempted to discuss the issue in the light of selected novels. The research also brought the description of the historiography and Bengali Partition Narratives. The study presented several historians and literary personae who tried to make their point that India's partition historiography did not do justice to partition events.

One of the major concerns of the partition literature is the refugee issue. Mainstream Indian partition literature and Bengali partition literature discuss the issue as a dominant theme. The study presented the discussion of refugees, their issue of settlement, and the struggle for existence in the newly formed country. Unlike Punjab province, where the people migrated from Pakistan within a particular period because of large-scale violence, the Bengal province witnessed a different situation regarding migration. The partition of eastern India was less violent, and East Bengali people migrated to India for a more extended period because of many reasons like losing respect and wealth, fear of being subordinate in the 'Islamic Pakistan' and doles offered by the government of India. Nilanjana Chatterjee analyses the reasons behind the migration of East Bengali people in her article, "Interrogating Victimhood: East Bengali Refugee Narratives of Communal Violence" (2006). She opines, "East Bengali claims to victimhood used the language of Muslim communal violence- fear of losing life, property, and honour (*Pran*, *Dhan*, and *Maan*) to legitimate their claim to be political refugees and to gain public sympathy in India" (Chatterjee 2006, 20).

Dalit or *Namashudra* people's migration is also important which is the theme neglected in the study of the partition literature, whether in national partition literature or Bengali partition literature. The research also discussed migration and the struggle of Dalit or '*chhotolok*' people who also migrated from their motherland to India and their problems because of being from Dalit communities. It highlighted the step-motherly attitude of the government towards the *Namashudra* or Dalit or *chhotolok* people. It has been observed that the Dalits were sent to refugee camps situated in various districts. In contrast, the refugees from the upper class and castes were allowed to settle around Kolkata. Novels selected for the research showed that they were sent to the Dandakaranya forest area, located on the border of Orissa and Madhya Pradesh (currently Chhattisgarh). Jhuma Sen, in her article "Reconstructing Marichjhapi" (2015), writes - "It must also mention that in Calcutta and its vicinity, 149 unauthorised colonies, colloquially termed as *jabor dakhal*, sprang up to house the *bhadralok* refugees. Conversely, the *chhotolok* were placed in transit camps and forced out of the state" (Sen 2015, 3).

The research provided a comparative study of mainstream partition narratives and Bengali partition narratives. It highlighted the distinctive characteristic features of Bengali partition narratives that are absent or less focused in India's partition narratives. The partition of Bengal was less violent in comparison to that of Punjab. The partition memory of Eastern Indians differs significantly from that of the North Indian victims. For example, the partition of Bengal problematises the identity formation process. Several layers of identity became reality because of the partition of Bengal, such as Indian Bengali Hindu, Indian Bengali Muslim, Pakistani Bengali Muslim, and Pakistani Bengali Hindu. The Bengal province witnessed a movement for a united Bengal.

The thesis explored the theoretical aspects of 'identity'. It studied multiple layers of identity constructions in the select Bengali partition narratives. The third chapter also presented the post-partition Bengali community's identity crisis with the formation of two separate countries. It highlighted the sufferings that the people of Bengal experienced in the newly formed countries because of the identity construction depicted in the novels. Various layers of identities have been formed because of the partition of India (1947). Several layers of identity came into existence because of the partition of Bengal, such as Indian Bengali Hindu, Indian Bengali Muslim, Pakistani Bengali Muslim, and Pakistani Bengali Hindu. The post-partition Bengali community got divided and further sub-divided based on newly constructed identities. Bengali partition narratives have presented identity construction and the problems that the people of Bengal encountered because of the identity crisis and identity formation based on religion, caste, and geographical location.

Several novels presented a peaceful village where there are no conflicts based on identity. People used to live in harmony. Suddenly, their religious identity got more assertive, and the village's environment became violent. People from both the community and the majority community suddenly became intolerant of 'others'. People of one community became ready to attack other community. Partition changed everything; religious identity became stronger than humanity. Jyotirmoyee Devi, in her novel *The River Churning* (1991), presented a horrific event where Muslims of a village attacked the Hindus who were residing peacefully along with them before partition. Those who were friends turned into the enemy after the partition. Partition changed everything; religious identity became stronger than humanity.

Mahmudul Haque has come up with the description of a village in West Bengal in the novel *Black Ice* (2012). The people of different religious groups had no enmity between them

before the partition. However, when the Pakistan movement geared up in the Muslim muhallas, the religious harmony started to break apart. Similarly, Sunanda Sikdar, in her book *A Life Long Ago* (2012), also depicted Dighpait village in East Bengal. The majority of the villagers were from the Hindu community, and Hindu Zamindars had the authority over the village. Nevertheless, after the partition, when Bihari Muslims migrated to Dighpait from West Bengal, the situation started to change.

Sunil Gangopadhyay's *Purba-Pashchim* (2000) has extensively portrayed the Ghoti and Bangal issue. There are several instances in the novel where the novelist has mentioned this *Ghoti* and *Bangal* issue and its effects on both communities. The novel presented a few incidents where the *Bangals*, after migrating from east Bengal, entered the lands of the *Ghoti* people and forcefully occupied those places. There are several instances of *Ghoti-Bangal* clashes because of the forceful grabbing of lands by the Bangals. As the day passed, the *Ghoti* and *Bangal* identities became more vigorous. Maloy Krishna Dhar, in his *Train to India: Memories of Another Bengal* (2012) presented a football match in Kolkata between East Bengal and Mohun Bagan. The Mohun Bagan team players were native of West Bengal, while the players in the East Bengal team were from East Bengal, migrated people. Jyotirmoyee Devi also brings a description of *Ghoti-Bangal* issue in her novel *The River Churning*. When Pramod desired to marry the protagonist Sutara, his mother gets angry and reacts, "she would never accept a *Bangal* girl who stayed six months in a Muslim house" (Devi 1991, 180).

The partition of India also created the refugee or *Sharanarthi* identity among the Bengali Communities. The selected works, such as the novel *East-West*, memoirs *A Life Long Ago* and *Train to India: Memories of Another Bengal*, discuss refugees who migrated to India from East Pakistan. Harit Mondal in *East-West* is a refugee leader struggling to settle the

refugees in West Bengal. He organises a protest march against the injustice of migrated people by the government. There is a description of a clash between native people and refugees in the novel. Caste identity is also visible in the partition narratives of Bengal where refugees from lower castes have been treated differently than the upper caste people.

In his work, *Train to India: Memories of Another Bengal*, Maloy Krishna Dhar has discussed refugees who migrated from India to East Pakistan. Throughout the book, the writer described the Bihari refugees as communal and anti-Hindu. The Bihari refugees started looting goats and abducting Hindu women once they settled in East Pakistan. They considered Bengali Muslims half Muslim and encouraged them to discord the social relationship with the Hindu community. Sunanda Sikdar, in her memoir *A Life Long Ago*, presented them as good refugees and bad refugees.

The study also found out the description of Direct-Action Day or The Great Calcutta Killings of 1946. The incident changed the discourse of Bengal Politics. Muslim League demanded Pakistan, a homeland for the Muslims. It further divided the Bengali community on the line of religious identity. On 16th August 1946, the Muslim League called for Direct Action Day to fulfil their demand for Pakistan and pressurise the British government. The Muslim League provincial government had declared 16th August as a public holiday. Though it was planned against the British, it was converted into a Hindu-Muslim riot. Yasmin Khan writes- “Three days later, at least 4000 of Calcutta’s residents lay dead and over 10000 were injured” (Khan 2007, 63). The counter riots were seen in Noakhali of East Bengal, where hundreds of Hindus were massacred. Jyotirmoyee Devi’s *The River Churning* is set in the background of the Noakhali riot, which started as a reaction to the Calcutta riots of 1946. Maloy Krishna Dhar in *Train to India*:

Memories of Another Bengal described the events and narrated the background, causalities, and effects of the Calcutta riots.

The Bengal province witnessed a movement for a united Bengal. The movement has remained unnoticed in the mainstream partition narratives of India, though. When Congress and the Muslim League demanded the Bengal province on their side, a group of Bengali intellectuals and political activists like Saratchandra Bose and Suhrawardy campaigned in favour of a sovereign Bengal. However, their attempt was too weak to make a difference in the situation. This counter-movement from Bengal to India's mainstream political parties has received attention in several Bengali Partition writings. Hussain Suhrawardy, a Bengal Muslim League leader, requested the Viceroy to decide about the partition of Bengal till November 1947 so that their 'sovereign Bengal' campaign would get a little more time. Dhar presented some characters who are adherent to the idea of the United Bengal movement and "owed allegiance to Sarat Bose and Abul Hashim, all protagonists of United Bengal" (Dhar 2012, 65).

After the incidents of Calcutta and Noakhali, the movement for divided Bengal got momentum. Various organisations started campaigning for a divided Bengal. Petitions and telegrams from landowners, merchants, businessmen, and tea planters were flooded into the Congress and government offices demanding the partition of Bengal. Hindu Mahasabha, under Shyama Prasad Mukherjee's leadership, favoured the partition of Bengal even earlier and started campaigning demanding the bifurcations of Bengal. Joya Chatterjee presents the situation of Bengal during partition in her book *Bengal Divided*. She argues that-

The *Bhadralok* Bengali Hindus, who thought of Bengal as their province, were not ready to live under the permanent domination of Muslims and persuaded by the

incidents that occurred during the first Muslim League Ministry the province that partition was necessary. Once the pioneer of nationalism in India, used every available 'stratagem and device' to demand that their province should be divided" (Chatterjee, 2005, 253).

Some novels talk about the abducted women or women who stayed a few days/months in the house of people from other religions. As Kirankumar Nittali, in her article "The partition of India: Through the experience of Bengali Refugee Women" (2013), writes, "Many of the abducted women refused to return to their parents or relatives and protested against the recovery operation. Because they know very well what was waiting for them, their society would never accept them" (Nittali 2013, 3). The research showed that the novel *The River Churning* (2012) presents such a discussion. The protagonist of the novel, Sutara, took shelter in a Muslim family, her father's friend. When she reached her relative's house, her relatives told her to keep her distance from other family members. She was not supposed to touch anything since she had spent six months in a Muslim family. While staying in Delhi, Sutara's neighbour Koushalyabati told her that Sikh people easily accept girls who were abducted and raped by Muslim rioters. But Hindu society is not ready to accept them. Instead, they term her as a polluted girl.

The study also observed the issue of caste identity during the partition of India. The migrated people from East Bengal were settled in various refugee camps across the state. The novel *East-West* pointed out that the upper caste people refused to stay in the same camp along with the refugees. They migrated from 'Muslim Pakistan' with the expectation that they would get respect and settle life in a 'Hindu country'. However, they were not welcomed by the native Bengalis despite belonging to the same linguistic and religious roots. Sarbani Banerjee, in her PhD thesis "More or Less Refugees? Bengal Partition in Literature and Cinema" (2015), mentioned that –

In the immediate post-partition Indian setting, Hindu Dalits were the most disadvantaged in every sense. They did not get the espousal they expected from the native West Bengalis, who generally maintained a distance from the refugees despite belonging to the same linguistic group (Banerjee 2015, 37).

The research presented the study of memory, memory process and various types of memory related to the partition of India. The study briefly analysed Holocaust studies since it also deals with memory. People, especially Jew community, started writing about their past experiences, and sufferings that they had to face during the Holocaust. The thesis highlighted the depiction of memory, remembering the incidents in the mainstream partition narratives. There was a long silence after partition/independence. There is a considerable difference between the historian's approach in 1947 and the accounts of people who experienced the partition. As Gyanendra Pandey argued in *Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism and History in India* (2001) that "Nationalism and national historiography, I shall argue, have made an all too facile separation between partition' and violence" (Pandey 2001, 37).

Anasua Roy Choudhury, in her article, "Nostalgia of Desh, Memories of Partition" says that the partition narratives present the feelings and emotions of migrated people about their left 'homeland'. The partition of 1947 separated the people from their real homeland. They have got a new country that is supposed to be their new identity. In the selected novels, characters are often seen remembering their homeland (*Desher Bari*). Pratap, in the novel *East-West*, remembers his father, who refused to leave his motherland with the expectation that both countries would be united again. There was an old house in East Pakistan which was once filled with happiness. He remembers an incident where Pratap went to his friend Mamun's home. There he was insulted by the behaviour of Mamun's father. Sutara Dutta in *The River*

Churning remembers the incident that happened in the past that snatched her family away. When Sakina informed Sutara about the mango flowers in their garden, she remembered their house, and their garden with pain. When Daya heard the news of her beloved Majam Dada's death, writes in her memoir *A Life Long Ago*, she was compelled to recall the memories she was trying to suppress in the post-migration period. Hence memory becomes an integral part of such characters' past, present and future.

The study further found out that the characters live in two worlds, the everyday reality in post-partition society and the memory of violence they encounter during and after the partition. Sometimes the memories take characters to a utopian imagination of their motherland which they left on the other side of the border. Mahmudul Haque, in his novel *Black Ice*, depicted the character of Abdul Khaleq, who could never overcome the journey of migration in his life. Although he is always settled in Bangladesh, he seems to be in an absent-minded condition; he can concentrate neither on his work nor on his family. Because during the partition, he lost his brother Moni bhaijan. Sunanda Sikdar also mentioned similar things in her *A Life Long Ago*. Although she left East Pakistan and settled in a town in West Bengal, she could never sideline the memories of her first ten years. She tried to block the memories – “I'd block all this out and pretend that I had no memories of the ten years before 1961” (Sikdar 2012, 2).

The research also presented remembering the past's painful events, which happened during or after the partition. Maloy Krishna Dhar recalls a train journey that they took in East Pakistan. They boarded the train to Brahmanbaria. During their journey, Bihari Muslims attacked the train and killed many Hindus in front of his eyes. That incident traumatised the narrator, he stopped going to school, and he had many nightmares about the incident. He writes- “The horror of the

journey finally started sinking in after the hullabaloo of the reception was over. I felt I had journeyed through a tunnel of death and destruction” (Dhar 2012, 242).

The identity crisis and the issue of refugees are still there in contemporary Bengali society. Those who have migrated from East Pakistan or Bangladesh still demand citizenship from the government of India. The Matua community in West Bengal are still protesting for the same. They are afraid that if the National Register of Citizenship is applied throughout India, the Matua community would be excluded from the list, like Assam, where 19 lakh people from the various religious community have failed to enlist their names in the NRC list. To overcome refugee problems, the government has already amended an act known as the CAA. The discussion of migration and partition has come to the forefront once again. In the context of the NRC (National Register of Citizens) and CAA (Citizenship Amendment Act), the government, as well as citizens, have started debating on the issue of partition, migration, and infiltration. Therefore, the research provides a contextual background for contemporary developments and will grow interest among the readers to study Bengali partition narratives further.

Most of the partition narratives are written in vernacular languages. The same applies to Bengali partition narratives also. Bengali partition corpus is rich and vast. Short stories, novels, poems etc., are written in the Bengali language. However, when it comes to the discussion of Bengali partition narratives written in English or translated into English, the number is very limited. Only a few famous novels have been translated into English. Therefore, there is very limited scope to access the vast and rich Bengali partition narratives for non-Bengali researchers. But the work done in English shows a promising future for the further research in the area.

The research presents a historical study of partition narratives and provides a detailed discussion of the partition of Bengal, which has been discussed in the select Bengali partition narratives. Thus, the research tries to cover the gaps between partition historiography and partition narratives and responds to history through interdisciplinary studies. The genre of Indian partition literature is generally considered as either the literature written in English or the partition of the western side (Punjab). The research attempts to represent the Bengali partition narratives written in the Bengali language in the spectrum of mainstream partition narratives of India by highlighting the literature written in the Bengali language. It also highlights the distinctive features of Bengali partition narratives that differ from India's mainstream partition narratives.

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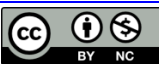
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Issue of Dalit Identity and the Partition of Bengal

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Abstract

This paper attempts to present the history of partition of Bengal and the issues of Dalit communities that they faced during and aftermath of partition of India in 1947. It presents the experiences of the 'Chhotolok' or Dalits and the sufferings they encountered because of the bifurcation of the Bengal province. The paper deals with the migration process in Bengal side and the treatment of government and higher-class societies towards lower class/caste people in their 'new homeland'. The paper presents an account of representation of Dalits in Bengali partition narratives and the literature written by Dalit writers. The paper also presents their struggles in Dandakaranya forest and the incident of Marichjhapi Massacre in post-partition Bengal as depicted in several Bengali partition novels written in Bengali and English language.

Keyword: Partition, Bengali Partition Narratives, Dalit, Dalit Literature, Partition of Bengal 1947, Dandakaranya, Marichjhapi Massacre

Introduction

Indian Partition Novel, as a major genre of fiction, gained prominence in post-independence India. Since then, Indian writers have contributed to the growth of the genre in English and regional languages. Compared to the mainstream Partition narratives of India, Bengali Partition tales have remained on the fringes. This paper examines representative Bengali partition novels in English to address some crucial issues related to the issue of Dalit identity in post-partition Bengali society. The Dalit identity in Bengali partition narratives is one of the sub-marginalised areas of studies in the broader aspects of partition narratives of India.

The paper intends to apply the historical analysis of the partition of India and more specifically the partition of Bengal. It would also use to textual analysis method to find out the representation of Dalit communities in various partition narratives written in the context of 1947 Bengal partition.

Bengal has witnessed three partitions to date. These are- the bifurcation of Bengal in 1905, India and Pakistan's independence and partition in 1947, and separation of East Pakistan from West Pakistan, resulting in the creation of Bangladesh in 1971. The present research would focus on the literature written in the context of the second partition of 1947. The novels studied for research are connected with West Bengal and written in English and English translations from Bengali novels and memoirs.

Sarbani Banerjee in her work "More or Less Refugee? Bengal Partition in Literature and Cinema" (2015) challenges the Bhadrak (Upper caste) perspective of Bengali Partition narratives. She cites partition works by upper-caste writers like Jyotirmoyee Devi's *Epar Ganga Opar Ganga*, 1967 and Ritwik Ghatak's film in Bengali language *The Cloud-Capped Star* (*Meghe Dhaka Tara*, 1960). According to her, presents the migration and settlements belongs to Bengali *Bhadrak* migrants. She highlights the writings by Non-Bhadrak (lower caste) Bengali writers. According to Banerjee, these writers "represent a point of departure from the Bhadrak refugees' romanticised description of refugee memory." (Harrington 2015, 3)

Joya Chatterjee in her critical work on partition *Bengal Divided: Hindu Communalism and Partition 1932-1947* (1994), mentions that the communalisation of Indian politics and societies reached a higher level in the Bengal province in the 1930s. Chatterjee shows that the possibility of permanent subordination to a Muslim majority province let many Hindus conclude that the Bengal province must be divided into religious lines. That is why the provincial congress committee firmly supported the plan of partition approved by Nehru and Patel on the national level. She argues:

"Bengalis were not passive bystanders in the politics of their province; nor were they victims of circumstances entirely out of their control, forced reluctantly to accept the division of their 'motherland'. On the contrary, a large number of Hindus of Bengal, backed up by the provincial branches of the Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha, campaigned intensively in 1947 for the partition of Bengal and for the creation of a separate Hindu province that would remain inside an Indian union." (Chatterjee 1994, 227)

Dalit or *Namashudra* people's migration is also an important theme, neglected in the study of the partition literature, whether in national partition literature or Bengali partition literature. The research attempted to present the discussion of migration and the struggle of Dalit or '*chhotolok*' people who also migrated from their motherland to India and their problems because of being from Dalit communities. The study also highlights the step-motherly attitude of the government towards the *Namashudra* or Dalit or *chhotolok* people. It has been observed that the Dalits were sent to the refugee camps situated in various districts. In contrast, the refugees from the upper class and castes were allowed to settle themselves around Kolkata. Novels selected for the research shows that they were sent to Dandakaranya forest area, located in the border of Orissa and Madhya Pradesh (currently Chhattisgarh).

Jhuma Sen in her article "Reconstructing Marichjhapi" (2015) writes - "It must also mention that in Calcutta and its vicinity, 149 unauthorised colonies, colloquially termed as *jabor dakhal*, sprang up to house the *bhadralok* refugees. Conversely, the *chhotolok* were placed in transit camps and forced out of the state". (Sen 2015, 3)

The study observes the issue of caste identity and during partition of India. The migrated people from East Bengal were settled in various refugee camps across the state. The novel *East-West* points out that the upper caste people refused to stay in the same camp along with the refugees. They migrated from 'Muslim Pakistan' with the expectation that they would get respect and settled life in a 'Hindu country'. However, they were not welcomed by the native Bengalis despite belonging to the same linguistic and religious root. Sarbani Banerjee in her PhD thesis "More or Less Refugees? Bengal Partition in Literature and Cinema" mentioned that –"In the immediate post-partition Indian setting, Hindu Dalits were the most disadvantaged in every sense. They did not get the espousal that they expected from the native West Bengalis, who generally maintained a distance from the refugees despite belonging to the same linguistic group. (Banerjee 2015, 37)

Due to the uncertainty sparked by the partition, the East Bengali Hindu refugee women suffered enormously. The emergence of refugee women from private space to public space brought about a profound shift in the thought and mindset of Bengali women as a whole and introduced a new dimension to their personality. Many refugee women returned to the domestic world as soon as their families were comfortably situated, financially and physically.

Local people felt that the East Bengali women were forcibly taken by the Muslims as if they had all been raped by the Muslims. The local people did not even allow the women in the shelter to collect drinking water from the common water point. Gradually, refugee women have progressed far beyond the sense of survivor bound to a triumph hood. They have built a sense of trust and willingness to survive and have achieved success.

The partition of India also created the refugee or *Sharanartha* identity among the Bengali Communities. The selected works such as novel *East-West*, memoirs *A Life Long Ago* and *Train to India: Memories of Another Bengal*, discusses refugees who migrated to India from East Pakistan. Harit Mondal in *East-West* is a refugee leader who is struggling to settle the refugees in West Bengal. He organises protest march against the injustice on migrated

people by the government. There is a description of a clash between native people and refugees in the novel.

Caste identity is also visible in the partition narratives of Bengal where refugees/people from lower caste have been treated differently than the upper caste people.

The term Dalit is popularly known as '*chhotolok*' in Bengal. It means "lower caste" and *bhadralok* refers to "upper caste". Jyotiba Phule had introduced the term Dalit, to represent the marginalised people in a Hindu social system. The term Dalit became familiar to identify all the socially discriminated people in India. In the context of Bengal, *chhotolok* refers to the person who was directly associated with the working class and lower caste people. At the social status level based on Brahminic caste-system, the *chhotolok* struggled for their livelihood, without necessary facilities and education to enlighten them.

The lower caste refugees were mostly from Namashudra background; they were also known as Chandals of Bengal. They have mainly migrated from Dhaka, Khulna, Bakerganj, Faridpur, Mymensingh, and Jessore of East Bengal. The partition gave a decisive blow to the very establishment of the Namashudras. They lost their negotiating strength and lost their political power in both countries. However, this is the part of an issue only, the refugees from upper caste and class were settled in and around Calcutta, but the lower caste migrants, Namashudras were sent to the refugee camps of districts Dandakaranya forest areas.

When there is a discussion on Bengali Partition Narratives, it generally discusses or indicates the literature produced by the upper-class Hindu migrants. Jyotirmoyee Devi's *Epar Ganga Opar Ganga* (1967 Trans. *The River Charming*), Sunil Gangopadhyay's *Purbo-Pashchim (East-West)*, Ritwik Ghatak's film *Meghe Dhaka Tara* (1960). These works present upper-class perspective of the partition. They have come up with Bhadra refugee issues where the problems faced by non-Bhadra or lower caste people got side-lined. The study would discuss some of the partition works written by non-Bhadra Bengali refugees that challenge the upper caste narration of Bengal Partition and representation their plight of partition. Such works are – Adhir Biswas's memoir *Deshbhager Smriti* (2010), Allar Jomite Paa (2012), Manoranjan Byapari's autobiography *Itibritte Chandal Jibon* (2012) and Sunanda Sikdar's memoir *Doyamoyeer Kotha* (2008). These writers present the Dalit perspective by describing their own experience in their works.

Migration

It is obvious that equally in history and in literature, the representation of partition is emphasised on the Punjab side. Both historians and literary writers appear to be concerned with the events that took place in Punjab. However, the partition experience turned out to be quite different on the Punjab and Bengal borders. The crisis in Punjab was seen as a national emergency, the communal violence took shape of genocide which forced the government to act promptly on the western side. This sense of immediacy was totally lacking when it came to the eastern border. Hindu minorities in East Bengal were not considered to be in great danger and the westward migration of the refugees was regarded mostly as the product of imaginary fears and baseless rumours.

Partition caused one of the largest displacement of people on world history. Some 20 million people were migrated making it the largest displacement in the twentieth century, 12 million people displaced in Punjab province alone. This unprecedented, forced transfer of people took place despite assurance of party leader and the British administrators. The Indian subcontinent was divided to avoid violence, but it became the reason for great genocide that could have ever imagined. Partition of the Indian subcontinent into India and Pakistan in one of the classic examples of “refugee generating process”. It left millions of Hindus, Muslim and Sikhs on the wrong side, which is the responsible for the greatest exodus of world history.

Migration in Bengal Side-

A major difference between Punjab and Bengal partition in terms of migration was that while in the former case there was a mutual agreement of virtual exchange of population, but in case of Bengal, the migration happened in various phases and the government tried to limit the transfer of population. Anasua Basu Roy Choudhury has listed three basic factors that affected and speed up the migration of Bengalis from East Pakistan to West Bengal. These three factors are- *dhan* (wealth/property), *maan* (honour/prestige) and *praan* (life).

Migration in Bengal happened in three phases. First phase of migration happened between October 1946 to March 1958. Those entering into West Bengal during this time frame are considered as ‘old migrants. They were comprised of the upper caste and upper-class elite Hindu migrants, who were not became burden on the provincial government. Many of this type of migrated people had socially or economically influential relatives or assets in the newly formed West Bengal.

The Second group of migration happened during April 1958 to December 1963. The government called these refugees as “in between migrants”. The second group of migrants comprised of middle class and upper middle class. This group was not recognised as displaced persons and was not given any financial assistance, as the government treated the group as a group of economic migrants motivated by the doles offered by the government. In fact, the central government advised the West Bengal government to shut down its rehabilitation ministry. Ranajit Roy claims that a great segment among these middle and upper middle-class people, who had earlier connection with Calcutta, did not register themselves officially as displaced persons, even though they greatly added to the population of post-partition West Bengal, Tripura and Assam. (Roy, 53).

Third phase of migration happened during January 1964 to March 1971, this wave of migration started with the incidents of Hazratbal in 1964 when few miscreants desecrated Hazratbal Dargah and in reaction to that incident there were communal riots in various parts of Bangladesh (East Pakistan). Mainly from peasantry and the artisan section of East Pakistan left their home for India in this phase. This migration continued to infiltrate into India until the late 1970s. The poor and Dalit migrants were entitled to rehabilitation only if they want to resettle outside of West Bengal because they were seen as an economic burden.

The reasons behind first and second wave of migration were mainly the fear of losing *dhan* (wealth/property) and *maan* (honour/prestige) and for the third phase of migration which

is also known as 'new migrants', comprising from the lower castes of Bengal, the reason behind their migration was *praan* (Life).

Upper-Class Hindu Narratives on Partition

Writers and filmmakers like Jyotirmoyee Debi and Ritwik Ghatak have presented the partition of Bengal in their writings by bringing a specific representation of migrants' experience. They have highlighted in their work, the upper or upper-middle-class Bengali's status changed as refugees. Sarbani Bandopadhyay in her Doctoral thesis "More or Less Refugees? Bengal Partition in Literature and Cinema" argues –By speaking mainly for a select upper-caste Hindu refugee group through an emotional content and emphasising exclusively "Bhadra" issues, these works failed to address the Dalit position. (Bandopadhyay 2015, 4)

The Dalit people belonging to the Namashudra, Sadgop, and Poundras did not migrate until the post-partition socio-political situation of East Bengal changed in the 1950s and 1960s. The introduction of passport in 1952, two country's borders was tightened which changes the national government's perspective towards the religious minorities, and the Muslim landowning classes occupied the places and lands that the Hindu people left in East Pakistan because of migration. The Muslim landowners decided to give their lands for cultivation to only Muslim farmers, which destroyed the working-class people's Hindu and Muslim unity. All these reasons forced the Dalit communities of East Pakistan to migrate for West Bengal although Pakistan's Law and Labour Minister, Jogendranath Mondal "had reassured their people to stay on in East Pakistan as their interest would be served there." (Banerjee 2015, 16)

Caste Discrimination in Refugee Camps

Rehabilitation measures adopted for the two classes also visible because of this caste reason. With resources in their possession, the upper caste refugees could easily be integrated into the mainland of West Bengal. On the other hand, the lower caste people were forced to live on the fringes, and they went to new nations like Andaman Island or Dandakaranya forest. Jhuma Sen writes- "It must also be mentioned that in Calcutta and its vicinity, 149 unauthorised colonies, colloquially termed as *jabor dakhal*, sprang up to house the bhadralok refugees. Conversely, the chhotolok were placed in transit camps and forced out of the state". (Sen 2015, 3)

Adhir Biswas and Byapari's memoirs claim that refugee camps and colonies have been organised in West Bengal concerning the caste and class hierarchies. The upper class's poor refugees were also acutely dominated and distanced from the refugees of a lower caste. Following the migration, many socially upright' but financially weak people had resisted settling themselves in the camps with other refugees. They considered it a shame to live with the Dalit people in the same camp.

Politics of Partition and Dalits

Jogendranath Mondal reiterated that the Dalits and oppressed people opposed the decision of partition. He decided to stay in Pakistan after partition and became a minister in Pakistan government. Although, backward Bengali people including most of the Dalits sided

with the narratives of Congress and Hindu Mahasabha. They preferred to stay in Indian union and wanted to see themselves as a chiefly citizen of a Hindu majority nation-state.

In the aftermath of partition, the Dalits were the most backward community in each field. They were not welcomed with an open heart by West Bengal's people, despite belonging to the same linguistic group. The native people of West Bengal kept a distance from them. The lower caste refugees were denied help by the upper and upper-caste migrants, with whom they left their homeland.

Discrimination by the Government

The caste and class-based discrimination appeared in the rehabilitation project of refugees under Dr Bidhan Chandra Ray's ministry. The government planned to resettle the Dalit Bengali refugees outside of West Bengal, to the places like Andaman Island and Dandakaranya forest area. Sarbani Banerjee says-

"The lower-class people had earlier led an insular life in East Pakistan and would not be incorporated in mainstream nationalistic political movements. Because they did not have monetary hold, they could not propose any choice about their desired style of living in the post-partition period. Instead, they became pawns in the mission for fashioning a progressive, independent India. The Dalit Refugees were urged to live up to the criteria of 'socially useful' people. For example, Prafulla Chandra Sen, Chief Minister of West Bengal for 1961-67, suggested that these people make Andaman agriculturally one of the highest rice producing regions." (Banerjee 2015, 38)

On the representation of Dalits and other lower caste's Bengali refugees, Jhuma Sen brings in an account of discrimination and repression on Chhotolok or Dalits, in her article "Reconstructing Marichjhapi: From Margins and Memories of Migrant Lives" (2015). She says-

Bengal's romance with the upper caste bhadralok's 'traumatic and nostalgic memories of a lost homeland in East Bengal' has dominated the imagination of partition historiography so much that very little or no attention has ever been paid to the bulk of refugees who settled outside Bengal and who had to directly face a lopsided discriminatory rehabilitation and policy practised by the government. (Sen 2015, 1)

Dandakaranya Project

The Dandakaranya Project Area (DPA) covered about 77,700 km of Orisha and Madhya Pradesh. The process of sending refugees started as soon as the DPA began in 1958. Dandakaranya was an area culturally, socially removed from the known world of the refugees. Many refugee camps witnessed a mass protest dissenting against the attempt of the government to send them away. Even the government served the refugees notice to either go to Dandakaranya or leave the camps within 30 days. However, from the first day itself, refugees started leaving Dandakaranya forest. Since most of the refugees were poor, and from the farmer background, they would not be familiar with other activities other than farming. The Dandakarnya forest area was not fertile. Those, who were sent to Dandakaranya were neglected

from their basic needs because of the misconception between the state administration of Bengal, Madhya Pradesh and the DDA.

Refugee leader Harit Mondal actively participated in the protest march against West Bengal's government demanding necessary facilities and rehabilitation for them. The government planned to send the refugees in Dandakaranya forest and Andaman Island. They resisted sending them from Bengal and protested the state strongly supported by various communists' organisations. Police have beaten Harit Mondal several times because of his involvement in the refugee struggles. He left his home, properties, and ponds in East Pakistan and after migration he is struggling to settle himself.

I had my house over there with three rooms, one kitchen, one cow-shed. Besides these, he had a small pond, and one shared big pond, thirteen bighas of paddy field. They never worried about food and other things. (Gangapadhyay 1989, 115)

The Bangladesh government opened national border for the sharanarthi (refugee-seekers) who fled during the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971. As a result, many refugees return to the newly formed country Bangladesh. However, the ruling state government planned to settle the remaining poor and Dalit migrants to the Dandakarnya forestry in Madhyapradesh. Like Andaman, the government also expected to 'use' the refugees in cleaning lands or alike rigorous labour.

Political Movement and the Refugee Problem

Lower caste refugees were not satisfied with state and central government's rehabilitation process. The beginning of the 1960s witnessed a political development in various refugee camps. The Communist party raised their voices, supporting the demands of refugees. The leftist leaders protested against the Congress government regarding implementation and the failure of Dandakaranya project. Communist leaders like Jyoti Basu had promised refugees to resettle them in the Sundarban areas of West Bengal.

Jyoti Basu himself wrote a letter to the B.C Roy government on July 13, 1961, informing the protest and hunger strikes against forceful eviction that was going on in various camps by the refugees and lodged their disagreement against the plan of sending refugees in Dandakarnya forest. The left front had insisted that no refugees should be forced out of West Bengal against their wishes. Jyoti Basu demanded publicly in Bhilai while addressing an industrial workers' meeting on January 25, 1975, that the refugees from Dandakarnya would be allowed to settle in Sundarban area once they come in power. But he failed to fulfill the promise when he came to power, and the refugees thought that they have been deceived by the communist government.

The writer also mentions the death of Jawaharlal Nehru and the reaction of Bengali refugees. The refugees were settled in the Dandakaranya forest. However, due to cyclone, their camps were blown up. The government did not do anything for them, and camp officers fled expecting backlash from the refugees. Suddenly, they heard the sound of a drum with an announcement of Jawaharlal Nehru's death. After listening to this news, refugees were started dancing because they thought Nehru was the reason for their misfortune. They thought, Nehru's

step-motherly attitude towards Bengali refugees has been deprived of many facilities that the Punjabi refugees have been availed.

A news of death brings the tide of happiness despite their sufferings and pain. They surrounded the announcer and wanted to know further information. Has someone shot him? Did he suffer pain while dying? Was there someone beside him to give him water while he was dying? (Gangapadhyay 1989, 347)

Marichjhapi Massacre

The Communist Party came to power in 1977. However, they failed to keep their promises that they did to the Dalit refugees residing outside Bengal. The refugees were outraged, thinking that the government has deceived them. The first wave of refugees started returning from Dandakarnya via Orisha's Malkangiri to West Bengal at the beginning of 1978. More 10,000 refugees crossed Kumrinari and reached Marichjhapi on April 18, 1978. They requested the government to allow them to live on the island of Marichjhapi.

The communist party promised them to resettle but betrayed the Dalits and instead uprooted them from Marichjhapi by force. In her thesis, Banerjee says "Testimonials by Nirmalkanti Dhali and Radhikaranjan Biswas attest to the brutality subsequently instigated by the Communist government, who encouraged the police force to carry out random massacres of Dalits and sabotage their lives and property." (Banerjee 2015, 41)

The government falsely accused of smuggling national treasures and damaging reserved forest property to expel the refugees from Marichjhapi. Goons sponsored by the government entirely annexed the island. Marichjhapi presents the forceful eviction of East Bengali refugees from Sundarban areas by the Left government in 1979. This forceful eviction caused greater human calamities in which hundreds of refugees died. Jhuma Sen, in her article "Afterlives of Partition: citizenship and legal belongings" says that "Marichjhapi Massacre, was the product of some factors including partition, migration, questions of caste, ecology and discriminatory refugee policy and finally of a reversal in a policy adopted by the West Bengal government". (Sen 2005, 2)

To conclude the paper, it can be said that most of the Bengali partition writers are from upper caste/class communities and have come up with their own issues, difficulties, and sufferings. Although novelists like Sunil Gangopadhyay, Jyotirmoyee Devi have tried to deal with the lower caste people and their issues in the novel *East-West* and *The River Churning* but still Dalit narratives and perspectives are missing from mainstream Bengali partition narratives. There are certain writers from Dalit community like Manoranjan Byapari, Sunanda Sikdar have tried to highlight their partition stories- reactions while leaving their homeland for another country that is supposed to be 'there', pain of separation from their relatives and closed ones, process of migration and the issue of rehabilitation in the newly formed country in their memoirs. The decision of sending lower caste refugees to Dandakarnya forest and incident like Marichjhapi massacre demand for further research in future.

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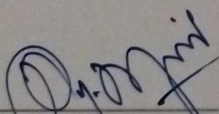
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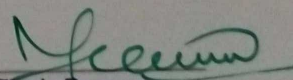
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